

## RISING FROM THE ASHES (ANDREW AND LAUREN)

### Chapter 1426

In the back, Andrew could not help but shake his head. Emily was turning into a second Christina-blindly arrogant with excessive self-confidence. He thought this brutal slap in the face was inevitable.

Meanwhile, Duncan appeared to be yielding but was actually advancing silently, having already secured his alliances like the cunning old fox he was. Emily did not have even the slightest qualification to compete with this seasoned manipulator.

"Ms. Emily, you can see the situation for yourself!" Duncan's cane rested casually across his knees as he spoke with mock regret.

"It's not that I won't step aside for you, it's just that this is the will of the people, and I'm being forced into this position against my wishes!"

He laughed, but his eyes held no warmth whatsoever. Instead, they were filled with nothing but contempt and ice-cold calculation. If George were not sitting there protecting her, he would have already slapped this naive little girl across the

room.

Not only would he slap her, but he would destroy all three of these ignorant Keller bitches who did not know their place. He had been waiting for the Chamber of Commerce chairman position for years and had been laying the groundwork for just as long.

Nobody was going to take it from him now.

Hannah panicked and turned desperately to the assembled members, "Everyone, are there... Are there any of you who support Emily?"

Freya quickly added her own plea, "Anyone who supports Emily will become an ally of the Kellers and will receive our friendship and assistance in the future!"

One family head sneered dismissively, "Ladies, please sit down and stop embarrassing yourselves! Your only skill is name-dropping the Kellers and relying on your family connections! Without Mr. Keller Senior's reputation backing you up, what else do you have that could possibly convince anyone?"

Another member spoke up without any attempt at politeness, "The Gabo Creek Chamber of Commerce chairmanship is critically important! It affects the interests of all our Chamber members and our competition with the Somaeth Chamber of Commerce.

"Even if Mr. Keller Senior gets angry with me today, I have to speak my mind! Ms. Emily, you should just find someone to marry and settle down. While Mr. Keller Senior is an amazing leader, you have none of your father's capabilities! That delusional confidence you just displayed would have gotten you thrown out of any other venue!"

The other Duncan supporters quickly joined the verbal assault. "That's right, Ms. Emily is far too young, and her recent speech shows her level is absolutely pathetic!"

"Why don't you girls just find good husbands like you're supposed to? Why are you meddling in men's business?"

"The Keller sisters? Seeing you today proves the rumors are true: beautiful but completely useless!"

The various harsh verbal attacks left the three sisters feeling utterly humiliated and exposed. As the main target, Emily was particularly devastated, with tears welling up in her eyes from the brutal criticism.

She was on the verge of a complete breakdown as she screamed at the entire room; "Y-You look down on me because I'm a woman and think I'm just riding on my father's coattails and the Keller name! But I want to tell all of you that I'm not inferior to any of you! I could manage the Chamber of Commerce better than any of you!"

The beautiful widow who controlled billions in assets sneered with cold disdain. "Actions speak louder than words-anyone can talk a good game! Ms. Emily, if you think you're so capable, then why isn't a single person here supporting you?"

Emily was left speechless, her face turning as red as a tomato from embarrassment and rage. All her previous pride and confidence had been completely shattered and swept away.

The widow continued her cold

assault, "Even I, who have way more

money than you could dream of,

wouldn't dare to covet the chairman

position! Ms. Emily, spend at least

another 20 years building your

reputation, then come back and

compete! Not everyone has Mr. Keller Senior's skills and capabilities!"

Emily was not the only one devastated and humiliated beyond belief. Even Freya and Hannah's faces were burning hot with embarrassment. Today, all three had been shamed in the most spectacular way possible.

At this moment, George finally spoke up, "Emily, all three of you sit down now! I gave you the opportunity, but as you can see, you couldn't seize it!"

Emily was unwilling to accept defeat but felt completely helpless, so she could only sit there with red-rimmed eyes, silently fuming. Duncan sensed his moment had arrived and stood up leisurely, adjusting his suit collar with practiced confidence.

He laughed and said, "Mr. Keller Senior, I will certainly continue your bold and fearless leadership style in the chairman position! I also thank everyone here for your generous support!"

A series of applause erupted from below, all coming from Duncan's supporters who were celebrating their anticipated win.

When the applause died down slightly, George chuckled softly, "Duncan, you're being a bit too hasty there!"

Duncan was stunned. "Mr. Keller Senior, what do you mean by that?"

George replied nonchalantly, "Nothing much, I just wanted to remind you and all your supporters of something. I'm still the Chamber of Commerce chairman right now, and I haven't used my nomination rights yet!"

Duncan's face immediately changed color as panic set in. "But Mr. Keller Senior, didn't you just nominate Ms. Emily?"

George waved his hand dismissively, "I never nominated that girl-she's not that capable, and she was just playing around! Besides, everyone saw that she took it upon herself to come forward and make a fool of herself!"

Duncan's expression instantly turned dark as storm clouds, and he spoke through gritted teeth, "Then may I ask who you're nominating, Mr. Keller Senior?"

George smiled and slowly raised his hand, pointing toward the corner of the room. Everyone immediately looked in that direction, their faces showing expressions of confusion, anger, disbelief, or outright contempt.

"Dad, you still want Andrew to take over? If I can't do it, he most definitely can't! Nominating him is just tarnishing your reputation and the Ketter family name!" Emily's voice exploded with fury and disdain.

Immediately, Freya and Hannah chimed in with their own objections. If Emily had been treated like a joke, Andrew would have fared even worse.

The Chamber of Commerce members probably would not even bother to give him a proper look.

Duncan burst into laughter, "Mr. Keller Senior, you're not seriously nominating Andrew, are you?"

George remained completely unfazed, "That's right, it's Andy. Do you find this funny?"

Duncan's laughter stopped abruptly, and his face took on a theatrical expression of mock seriousness,

"Not funny at all-absolutely not net

funny just find it absurd that Some nobody who knows a bit of medical tricks wants to be our chairman!"

He laughed again, saying, "This is the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard! Let him treat patients and e save lives-maybe he's good at that. But forgive my bluntness, managing the Chamber of Commerce and leading so many elite figures within our Gabo Creek Chamberof Commerce?

"This kid is too green, way too inexperienced! What does everyone else think?" Following his lead, most people immediately began echoing his sentiments.

"That's right, Ms. Emily at least had some qualifications to compete, but Andrew? Who does he think he is?"

"Everyone here controls real money and power; he's just some young doctor, a complete nobody!"

"Mr. Keller Senior, your joke is really hilarious! I'm laughing so hard I'm crying!"

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Amid all this mocking laughter and sarcasm, Logan's face gradually darkened with anger. Meanwhile, Andrew himself remained completely unmoved by the ridicule.

George pressed his hands downward to quiet the room, "If everyone's done laughing, please settle down!"

The crowd gradually stopped their laughter, but the contempt and dismissiveness in their eyes remained clearly visible.

George continued calmly, "I think Andrew is perfectly suited to take over my position. Anyone who disagrees can speak up directly!"

Duncan was the first to respond, "Fine, Mr. Keller Senior, you obviously favor this kid, and we can't argue with that! But I have just one question-what qualifies him for this position?"

George grinned. "What qualifies him? I honestly don't know myself."

Then, he turned toward Andrew. "Andrew, why don't you tell everyone yourself?"

Andrew sighed with resignation, "Mr. Keller Senior, maybe you should find someone else for this Chamber of Commerce chairman position."

George raised an eyebrow. "Why is that?"

Andrew shrugged indifferently, "Because I don't think much of it—it's basically a thankless job. Managing a bunch of idiots while having to consider their welfare and interests—that kind of unrewarding work is just lame!"

The sound of furious fist-pounding on tables erupted instantly throughout the room.

"Andrew, what the hell did you just say?"

"Young man, you've got some nerve—do you have any idea how much power our

Gabo Creek Chamber of Commerce wields?"

"Idiot! Even our competitor, Mr. Hawkins from the Somaeth Chamber of Commerce, wouldn't dare underestimate us—who do you think you are, you reckless punk?"

"Arrogant fool, you're completely shortsighted and don't know when to quit while you're ahead!"

The Keller sisters were equally stunned by Andrew's audacity.

Where did this guy get the confidence and nerve to say something so outrageous?

George chuckled with amusement, "This is getting interesting! Andrew, since you look down on our Gabo Creek Chamber of Commerce, why don't you share your credentials with everyone? That way, we can put all the doubts to rest!"

Andrew snorted coldly, his sharp gaze meeting Duncan's and the others without flinching.

"The Gabo Creek Chamber of Commerce membership requirement is ten billion, am I correct? Supreme Capital Group currently has 60 billion in registered capital -real money, not inflated numbers! I think that's more than enough to qualify for your little Chamber of Commerce!"

The wealthy widow sneered mockingly, "Kid, with 60 billion, you certainly have the right to be arrogant! But looking down on our Chamber of Commerce? That's just showing off! What if I told you my assets total 100 billion?"

Andrew did not even glance at her,

responding with complete indifference, "100 billion? That's nothing special. My 60 billion is just from me company! You might ot

know this, but the Vitality Pills and Titan Essence Pills that are currently sweeping through Gabo Creek

Province are my products!

"Jayrodale's Moonlit Apothecary—I'm sure those of you who are not ignorant have

heard its reputation. All of that belongs to me. When you add everything together,

I wonder if it's more or less than this lady's hundred billion?"

One family head stammered in disbelief. "Jayrodale's Moonlit Apothecary belongs to you? The Titan Essence Pills and Vitality Pills are yours too? T- These miracle drugs have already been valued by financial magazines at least 500 billion! This is... this is absolutely incredible!"

His shaking words hit the other Chamber of Commerce members like thunder. Instantly, everyone fell silent, no longer daring to challenge Andrew on wealth.



Compared to Andrew's astronomical fortune, their assets looked like modest middle-class savings.

The seductive widow immediately shut her mouth. Her face turned grim, looking as deflated as if someone had knocked her favorite boy toy right out of her hands -absolutely humiliated.

Duncan saw the tide turning against him and slammed his cane down, snorting coldly, "Having money alone doesn't mean everything! The GaboCreek Chamber of Commerce chairman needs more than wealth-you need reputation, martial arts strength, dignity, and experience. Only then can you command respect and lead effectively!"

He added, "Andrew, you're still too young-aside from having some pocket change, you're worthless in every other way!"

Andrew smiled and countered, "If I'm worthless, then I suppose you're worth something?"

Duncan replied proudly, "I'm no genius, but when it comes to money, my family deals in luxury cars-we might lack other things, but we definitely don't lack cash! As for reputation, the support I just received from so many friends speaks for itself!

"Regarding dignity, experience, and martial arts—my family has been combining scholarly and military traditions for generations, and we're second to none in any of these areas!"

Andrew nodded thoughtfully. "That does sound decent enough! But compared to me, you're still lacking in many ways!"

Duncan exploded with rage. "Andrew, stop spouting nonsense! Lacking in many ways? Then tell me exactly what qualifications you have to compare with my family!"

Andrew snorted coldly and spoke with measured calm, "In martial arts, I could destroy your entire family with one hand-does that count as a qualification? Experience? Ha! That's never been about age or how long you've been around!

"Having real strength and getting things done-that's what experience truly means! As for reputation, I wonder if being the Grand Medical Summit champion and currently Blumedale's most sought-after figure gives me enough standing to compete with you?"

Duncan's expression finally changed. It shifted from arrogance to wariness, then to explosive anger. This damned kid was clearly determined to fight him for the Chamber of Commerce chairman position.

The other members also became conflicted. Several who had previously followed Duncan's lead now showed hesitation in their eyes. They were looking toward Andrew, considering whether they should switch sides.

George sat at the head of the table, leisurely sipping his tea. Then, he smirked— this was exactly the effect he had aimed for.

Nominations were just words, and Andrew himself had to demonstrate real power and dominance. If Andrew were useless, then even if George nominated him or forced him into the chairman position, he would likely be ousted within days.

Emily sneered. "Andrew, even if your overall capabilities are convincing! You're still ultimately just a newcomer! The Gabo Creek Chamber of

Commerce represents the interests and dignity of established powers like us! As a newcomer, you simply cannot command our trust and respect!"

Duncan immediately chimed in, "Exactly! Ms. Emily is absolutely right! Andrew, you do have the qualifications to be chairman—you're perfect in every aspect! But the one thing you lack is seniority.

"Even if you joined our Chamber of Commerce right now! You'd have to wait until the next chairman election for your chance, so just sit back and wait your turn!"

Duncan burst into loud laughter after finishing his speech. He had been wheeling and dealing in the Gabo Creek Chamber of Commerce for nearly 30 years. He knew every member inside and out and had built substantial relationships with all of them.

With this advantage alone, what could Andrew possibly use to compete with him? Would the Chamber members really trust a complete stranger, some young punk, over their old friend? Impossible—it was absolutely impossible.

Logan frowned deeply, "Mr. Irving Senior, the Chamber of Commerce needs fresh talent like Andrew, someone who's practically a perfect young genius! Why are you being so stubborn and relying on seniority here? Handing the Chamber of Commerce over to Andrew would be great news for you and all the other members!"

Duncan scoffed mockingly, "Mr. Keller, I'm afraid I can't agree with that sentiment! This kid being young is true enough, but that's exactly the problem—he's too young! There are many situations he simply can't handle properly! That's precisely why I can't trust someone like him to lead our Chamber of Commerce down the wrong path!"

Instead of being convinced, Logan found himself outmaneuvered by Duncan's argument. His face immediately turned extremely ugly with frustration and anger.

Duncan saw his opportunity and waved his hand, "Alright, I was just playing around with you earlier, Andrew! Did you really think you were qualified to compete with me? What a joke! Now let's do this property-well vote by show of hands! As long as the majority

approves, then I'll be the next

Chamber of Commerce chairman!"

As soon as he finished speaking, his previous supporters immediately raised their hands. Looking around, nearly a third of the people were showing their support for him.

Emily let out a huge sigh of relief. She had failed, but at least Andrew was not succeeding either. Otherwise, it would make her look even more incompetent than him.

Duncan laughed heartily, "See that, Andrew? This is the influence that comes with experience and relationships! Even if you meet all the qualifications, you still don't have what it takes to compete with me!"

Andrew replied coolly, "Is that so? I think you're celebrating too early, Mr. Irving Senior! I can promise you right here and now-as long as I'm around, you won't get that chairman position even in your dreams!"

Everyone gasped in shock.

The Keller sisters burst into mocking laughter, unable to believe Andrew's continued arrogance. They truly could not understand where his confidence stemmed from.

Duncan sneered with contempt. "Andrew, you're still not giving up even now! But what exactly are you going to fight me with?"

Andrew did not even glance at Duncan, instead sweeping his gaze across everyone else in the room. Then, he spoke coldly and deliberately, "Ladies and gentlemen, you're all smart people! I assume none of you would refuse an opportunity to make serious money!

"I won't go around talking to each of you individually, as that would be too much trouble! Anyway, my two miracle drugs are about to go into production right here in Blumedale! From manufacturing to sales, then expanding production and more sales...

"The scale of this entire supply chain operation is massive, and I don't need to spell out how big! I'm wondering if anyone here is interested in partnering with me on this venture?"

As soon as those words left his mouth, several pairs of eyes immediately brightened and fixed on Andrew with obvious interest.

However, his cards were not limited to just this offer. He said, "Supreme Capital Group is currently working on government contracts! In other words, my investment company is feeding directly from the government channel! In this vast world, whose money tastes the sweetest? You all know the answer to that!"

After pausing to let everyone digest this information, Andrew continued his pitch with smooth confidence.

"I'm telling you this because I plan to secure several mega-projects directly from Governor McCormick! I don't know exactly how much money we're talking about, but I know it's countless, inexhaustible, astronomical figures!

So, I wonder if anyone wants to become my business partner and get rich together, hm?"

Now, it was not just a few pairs of eyes showing interest. A sea of eyeballs was all turning toward him, revealing wolf-like hunger and desire.

However, Andrew was not finished yet. He felt the fire was not hot enough, the flames were not spreading fast enough. He wanted to ignite a blazing inferno in every Chamber of Commerce member's heart. He wanted to make these opportunistic people howl with greed.

Andrew laughed and added, "You all know how lucrative government projects can be! I have limited spots and limited patience-first come, first served!

"The bottom line is simple: everything the Irvings can offer you, I can provide, and I'll give you more! Whatever Duncan has promised you, I'll double it immediately! And all of this is just the tip of the iceberg of what I'm willing to show you!"

He leaned back in his chair and crossed his legs with supreme confidence. An aura of absolute authority radiated from his entire being.

Compared to Duncan's dark and brutal energy, Andrew projected something far more dangerous, an unfathomable depth.

"Who knows what the future holds? For instance, the head of the Wright family from The Five Apex Families is my sworn brother! Setting up a collaboration would be

simple-ridiculously easy!

"Also, I have complete market control in both Jayrodale and Bridgefields. Alright, I'm done speaking-who supports me for the chairman position? And who opposes me? Let's start voting!"

Having played all his royal flush cards in one devastating hand, Andrew's

approach was brutally simple and direct, with no wasted motion.

Logan stared at him in amazement. "Andy, with speaking skills like that, it's a shame you're not running for President of Meurico!"

The others did not immediately speak up. Nonetheless, without exception, every single person was staring at Andrew with burning intensity.

If Andrew had been a woman, he might have been stripped bare by all those predatory stares.

"I agree! Prima Group gives full support for Mr. Lloyd to take the position!" The first person to speak up was stammering with excitement, barely able to get the words out coherently!

Immediately, a second, third, and more supporters erupted.

"The Maddock family gives full support to Mr. Lloyd!"

"No more pretending-Thrive Enterprise recognizes only one chairman, and that's Mr. Lloyd. Nobody else matters!"

"The McDaniel family wants Mr. Lloyd and nobody else everyone else can step aside!"

"Laguna Industries is waiting for Mr. Lloyd to help our group take off. Let's go!"

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The endorsements kept coming in

waves of enthusiasm and opportunism. As Duncan watched the members around him rush switch to Andrew's side one after another, he felt his vision go black and nearly coughed up blood from rage and shock.