

Chapter 775 This Collection Of Failures

Cole walked into the council hall like a storm in human form, paying no mind to the curious stares or hushed whispers that followed him. His every step carried purpose. He was here for one reason—his daughter. The air seemed to grow colder around him, his presence heavy with arrogance and authority.

Before anyone could even locate Sophie, Cole was already beside Anita, sweeping Beatrice out of her arms in one swift, fluid motion.

The possessive fire in his eyes and the unyielding way he held his daughter left Anita and everyone else frozen.

Cole cradled Beatrice close, his expression hard as stone as he glared at the crowd. Then, like sunlight breaking through frost, his face softened when he looked down at Beatrice's tiny face.

As if on cue, Beatrice broke into a sweet, innocent, and utterly disarming smile.

Everyone watched, shocked as the man who had walked in like an ice sculpture was suddenly melting before their eyes, his smile warm enough to thaw winter itself. He was clearly enchanted. If Beatrice asked for the moon, no one doubted Cole would climb the heavens to bring it down for her.

Beatrice's smile erased the world around Cole. He began to coo, his voice gentle in a way no one had ever heard before. For the next ten minutes, he was lost in her completely, blind to everyone else.

But babies got tired easily. After a few minutes of his doting, Beatrice's eyes fluttered shut, and she drifted into sleep.

Only when she was fully asleep did Cole finally lift his head to face the Griffiths family again.

Not a soul had dared approach him. They stood rooted, watching the strange, tender display.

The sight was oddly captivating. A man so tall and intimidating showing such gentle care—it was mesmerizing. They couldn't look away from the shocking contrast. Moments ago, he'd been a cold god of wrath. Now, he was a doting father, whispering softly to his little girl without a hint of restraint. Terrifying in anger, tender in love—he was a man of extremes.

When his icy gaze finally swept over them again, the Griffiths family flinched. The warm father vanished. The cold, dangerous Cole returned.

Before anyone could speak, Cole's voice cut through the silence. "My daughter taking the surname Griffiths? Keep dreaming."

Elliana almost laughed. Even now, Cole's possessiveness amazed her. He wouldn't give an inch when it came to their daughter.

The younger members of the Griffiths clan shrank back under his glare. Anita, forcing calm into her voice, said, "Mr. Evans, please control yourself."

"Indeed, Mr. Evans. Your wife leads this family now. Let her decide what's best," an elder added smoothly.

"Our request isn't unreasonable. Your daughter is to be our next leader," another said.

"This is the Griffiths council hall," one of them reminded him sharply. "Only Griffiths women are allowed entry. You shouldn't be here."

"You've made it clear you want nothing to do with us," another added. "You are the head of the Evans family. Leave our matters alone."

"Indeed. Please leave this instant."

Murmurs of agreement rippled through the hall. They spoke with the quiet confidence of age and rank. Their voices were calm, their tone dignified. They truly thought reason would sway him. How wrong they were.

"Enough," Cole snapped, his words like a blade. "I don't care about your rules or your reasons. My daughter's name stays Evans." A dark smirk

crossed his lips. "Unless Elliana prefers Campbell. That I can live with. But Griffiths? Not a chance."

The room went still. Campbell? Of all names, that one? Rage rippled through the elders. Faces turned crimson.

Cole had struck a nerve, and he knew it. The Griffithses and Campbells had been enemies for generations. To even mention that name was a pure insult.

"You—" Anita faltered, her face pale with fury. "How can you say that? If she bears the Campbell name, how can she ever lead the Griffiths family?"

Cole scoffed, "Who cares about leading the Griffiths family? My daughter doesn't need the Griffiths family. The Evans name will open doors you can't even imagine. If Maxine hadn't pleaded with her dying breath and blackmailed Elliana with Rita's secrets, she'd never have agreed to lead this pathetic family—let alone tie our child to it."

The room fell silent. Pathetic family? The words echoed, heavy and cruel.

Cole wasn't finished. "You should be thanking us for even considering letting my daughter inherit this collection of failures. And yet you dare demand more? Shameless."

A collection of failures? The Griffiths elders trembled with rage. Anita looked ready to strike him.

Chapter 776 Quiet Anchor

"You insolent boy! A Griffiths descendant, behaving like this?" Anita's voice sliced through the air as she jabbed a finger at Cole. "Such disrespect!"

Cole arched an eyebrow, amusement flickering in his eyes. Had the woman not been a hundred and two, he might've thrown in a few words just to rattle her more. But he chose silence instead. He didn't respect her, but he respected her years—and that was enough. Still, that didn't mean he was backing down. His resolve stayed unshaken.

"Let me make one thing perfectly clear," Cole said, his voice calm but cutting. "Elliana agreed to lead this family only as a promise to Maxine—until our daughter is ready. That doesn't make them part of the Griffiths family. If my words offend you, pick another leader. Elliana doesn't care for the position, and my daughter has no interest in being heiress."

Before anyone could utter a sound, he reached for Elliana's hand. "Let's go home for dinner."

Dinner? The word felt oddly domestic, almost out of place coming from him.

The entire hall went dead silent. No one dared move. They simply watched as Cole led Elliana out.

When the doors shut behind the two, the tension in the room broke. A collective breath escaped, all eyes turning to Anita. Once served as the matriarch, she was the one they always looked to when chaos struck.

"That boy is far too arrogant! Who does he think he is?" someone hissed.

"If we don't put him in his place now, he'll walk all over this family! What are we going to do?" another asked.

Anita listened quietly and then sighed, "You all talk about putting him in his place. Tell me, which of you has the plan—or the strength—to actually do it?"

Silence. Every gaze dropped to the floor.

Anita's frown deepened. "Thought so. He's still a Griffiths. The young act rashly—it's in their nature. For now, we'll endure him."

Endure him? That was just a polite way of admitting defeat. What choice did the Griffiths family have? If they pushed too hard, Cole would take his wife and daughter and vanish. Then, the Griffiths would have no leader, no heiress—and Maxine's dying wish would crumble.

Everyone knew that without Elliana, the Griffiths family wouldn't stand a chance. She was the only one capable enough to hold them together. Anyone else in charge, and the Griffithses would be swallowed whole. Especially with Miguel waiting in the shadows. Without Elliana, they'd be easy prey.

No one spoke another word.

Anita's gaze drifted to Sophie, and she motioned Sophie forward.

Sophie stepped up quietly. "Yes, Anita?"

Anita softened her tone. "Sophie, Cole is your son. You must talk to him. The Griffiths name carries weight and decorum. Even though he doesn't live among us, he should remember who he is and act accordingly. Don't you think so?"

Unable to rein Cole in herself, Anita placed her hopes in his mother. Maybe a mother's hand could reach where authority could not.

Sophie almost laughed at the irony. Years ago, her brilliance had made her the family's pride—until her illness turned her into an outcast. The elders had shunned her, and the younger ones had mocked her. Respect was the last thing she had ever gotten since then. Now, suddenly, Anita spoke to her with warmth.

And Sophie knew why. It wasn't her the Griffiths family respected—it was Cole's power. Without him, they wouldn't even look her way. But she let it slide. Since Elliana was now leading the family, she had no reason to hold grudges anymore.

Keeping her composure, Sophie said evenly, "I'll do my best to keep him in check."

"Good," Anita replied with a small, relieved smile.

A murmur of agreement swept through the room. Just like that, Sophie had become the family's quiet anchor—her position subtly restored.

Outside, Elliana walked hand in hand with Cole, a faint smile playing on her lips. Cole's fiery display back there had thrilled her more than she cared to admit. Still, he had gone a little too far. Those family elders would be losing sleep for days.

Catching her gaze, Cole smirked. "What? Dissatisfied with my performance?"

Elliana chuckled. "Not at all. But maybe next time, take it easy. Anita is not getting any younger. If you give her a heart attack, it'll make life very hard for your mother and grandmother."