

### Chapter 3

The private jet landed smoothly on the tarmac of Eagle Industries' secluded airstrip. As Robin stepped off, the city skyline stretched before him, shimmering under the evening lights. Tomorrow, everything would change.

"Sir, the takeover is scheduled for tomorrow morning," Katherine Hayes informed him as she walked beside him. "Coincidentally, it aligns with the company's annual anniversary gala. Every major player in the city will be in a endance." As she spoke, she handed him a document. "This is the list of the companies that'll be in a endance."

Robin took the document from her and casually glanced through. He was just about to shut the document when he caught sight of a company from the corners of his eyes.

Tozer Group.

Marcus Tozer's family empire.

Hah, they say enemies oen meet in the strangest of places.

His fingers ghtened impercep bly on the paper. A slow, icy smile curved his lips.

Things are getting interesting.

Katherine—his designated bodyguard—drove him to a villa nestled in the hills overlooking the city. The estate was massive, its modern architecture blending seamlessly with the surrounding forest.

"Your father had this prepared for your return," Katherine said as she pulled up to the entrance. "It has top-er security, an underground training facility, and direct access to a private airstrip. There's everything you'll need."

Everything, Robin mused, except the one thing that matters.

Power thrummed beneath his skin, volatile as live wires. The ring's energy had unlocked something primal in him—but it wasn't enough. Not yet.

He needed one more thing—Voidfire Crystal, a legendary mineral that can amplify a cultivator's connection to the unseen energies of the world.

And it can also stabilize the energy he'd absorbed from the ring. Without it, his body wouldn't be able to handle the intensity of the training he was about to undertake.

The ring had unlocked something inside him, but it was like trying to contain a wildfire.

The crystal would help him control it, strengthen his foundation, and prepare him for what was coming.

It's rare beyond measure, but lethal to the untrained.

And he knew exactly where to find it.

Emerald Vault.

It wasn't just a crystal shop—it was a sanctum for the elite, its doors barred to all but the wealthiest collectors.

"I'll go to Emerald Vault. There's something I need to get." He said, turning to Katherine.

Katherine nodded, her expression didn't shi. "Okay. I'll go with you."

She didn't ask what he needed—it wasn't her place to ques on him. Robin was her employer now, and her role was to execute, not to inquire.

The drive into the city was quiet, the luxury SUV cung through traffic effortlessly. Robin stared out the window, watching pedestrians bustle along the sidewalks.

Less than 24 hours ago, he was nothing but a discarded orphan. Now, he was about to step into one of the most powerful roles in the country.

"Your mind seems occupied," Katherine noted.

Robin turned to look at the woman in the steering, nong just how beauful she was. Though she always wore a serious expression, she was strikingly beauful. And with great curves to go with it. If Sarah was a star in the sky, then she was the moon and the en re galaxy.

Katherine noced Robin staring at her. She flushed red. "Sir?"

"Oh." Her voice snapped Robin out of his thoughts. He chuckled awkwardly and looked away. "It's nothing serious. I was just thinking about tomorrow. The people I'll meet. The people I'll have to deal with."

Katherine chuckled. "They are just big players in the city, not worth you thinking about."

As she reached for the gear shi, the curve of her hip grazed his thigh. He could feel the warmth of her skin even through the fabric of his sleeve. A flicker of heat rose in his chest, a recon he quickly tried to suppress.

Robin cleared his throat, trying to focus. "Do you know about the Tozer Group?" he asked, his voice slightly rougher than he intended.

"Tozer Group?" Katherine arched a brow. "Nah. Never heard of them." She shook her head.

Robin wasn't surprised to hear that. With the power his father wields, Tozer Group was merely an ant to him or even less than an ant, so it wasn't surprising that Katherine didn't know about them.

"Why do you ask, sir?"

"It's nothing." Robin shook his head.

He would handle his things himself.

Katherine didn't push him since he didn't want to speak. But she knew it definitely wasn't nothing. She made a mental note to check out this Tozer Group and their rela on to Robin.

A few minutes later, Katherine pulled up in front of Emerald Vault.

The so chime of the bell signaled Robin's entrance into Emerald Vault.

"Katherine, wait outside," he said as he stepped through the entrance.

Katherine raised an eyebrow. "You sure?"

"It won't take long."

She gave a small nod but didn't move far.

The moment Robin pushed open the engraved pla num doors of Emerald Vault, the air itself seemed to s ffen—like the shop was holding its breath.

This wasn't a store. It was a temple.

The walls were lined with illuminated display cases, each housing gemstones that could buy entire city blocks. A single Skyblood Diamond glowed under a beam of light, its price tag discreetly marked "POA"—Price on Application, a euphemism for "you wouldn't dare ask."

The clerk, a gaunt man in a tailored suit that probably cost more than Robin's former yearly rent, didn't even glance up from his ledger. His voice was polished ice.

"Appointments only, sir."

Robin didn't blink. "Voidfire Crystal."

That got his attention.

The clerk's pen stilled. His gaze dragged up Robin's frame—the unremarkable jacket, the lack of a wristwatch worth auctioning, the absence of the smug assurance of old money. A muscle twitched near his temple.

"I'm afraid," he said slowly, "that particular item is not on display."

Robin leaned forward, just enough to cast a shadow over the ledger. "Try the vault."

A beat. The clerk's lips thinned. He'd dealt with bluffers before—rich kids slumming it for a dare, collectors who thought haggling was a sport. But something in Robin's voice, the certainty, made his fingers twitch toward the security panel behind him.

"Even if we had it," he said, testing, "the reserve price starts at \$4.2 million per gram." He paused, waiting for the flinch.

Robin didn't move.

The clerk exhaled through his nose and tapped a code into the panel. A biometric scanner slid out. He pressed his palm to it, and the entire back wall hissed open, revealing a climate-controlled chamber.

Inside, suspended in a null-gravity field, was a sliver of crystal the color of a supernova's last breath—deep violet bleeding into ember-red at its core, its facets fracturing the light into unnatural, prismatic shards.

Even from three meters away, Robin's skin prickled with its resonance. The air around it warped, as if reality itself struggled to contain it.

The clerk didn't remove it from the field. Instead, he gestured with the sterile reverence of a museum curator. "As you can see, we currently hold 1.8 grams—the largest verified specimen outside of the Black Bazaar's auctions." His tone sharpened, just slightly. "The non-refundable deposit alone is \$750,000."

Translation: Prove you're not wasting my time.

"Wrap it up," Robin said calmly and reached into his jacket. "I'll take all of it."

A beat of silence. The clerk's skepticism wavered.

This wasn't the hesitant bartering of a tourist; this was the tone of someone who knew exactly what they were buying—and what it was worth.

But before Robin could even reach for his

black

card in the pocket, the bell above the door chimed.

"Ugh, finally!" Madeline Radcliffe's sharp

and arrogance voice cut through the air. "Alistair, darling, is the Voidfire still

there? I'll take it!"

The clerk—Alistair—swallowed hard.

Robin's mood soured instantly. Not now.

He turned his head slightly and saw two unwanted faces entering the store—Madeline Radcliffe and her precious daughter, Samantha.

His ex-fiancée's mother and sister.

Just great.