

The Almighty Dominance - kidnapped 191[1,051 words]

Chapter 191

Viper's ragged breath filled the silence. His eyes stayed locked on Alex, hate and grudging respect mingling in his

*stare.

"Fine, kid," he muttered at last, swallowing his pride. "We'll call it quits. You let me go, I let all of you walk out alive."

The punk in white gaped at him. "B-but, Big Bro-"

Viper rounded on him, snapping, "Shut your mouth! I don't need a backseat driver right now."

Alex watched him a moment longer, then slowly loosened his grip.

The jagged glass came away from Viper's throat, leaving a thin line of blood behind.

The whole bar practically exhaled in relief.

Even the punk in white flinched and pulled his knife away from Jack's neck, shoving the idiot forward.

Jack went flying into Sophia, who just barely kept him from hitting the floor. Florence rushed over, fussing like a mother hen that forgot she'd been insulting Alex five seconds ago.

Viper rolled his shoulders, rubbing at the red streak on his neck.

"You've got more nerve than most losers who show their faces around here," he said, a glint of danger still in his

eyes.

"But don't get cocky. If we cross paths again, it'll be the last time you have both hands attached."

Alex tilted his head in a careless shrug, flicking the broken shard onto the ground. "That's funny. I was about to say the same thing."

A hush clamped down on the bar, everyone's brains short-circuiting at the fact that Alex had just held a bottle to Sir Viper's neck... and walked away breathing.

Finally, one bold onlooker whispered, "I've seen some crazy shit, but this? Next- level."

Sophia released a shaky breath, whirling on Alex. "Are you insane? You almost got all of us killed!"

Jack glowered, mouth twisted in a scared, angry snarl. "What'd you do that for, jerk? I nearly got my throat slit thanks to you! Stop acting like some goddamn superhero."

Florence was right there with him. "If Viper changes his mind and comes after us, we're screwed! You think we're supposed to thank you for that?"

Her voice wobbled between fury and terror.

A soft, mirthless laugh spilled from Alex's lips.

"Actually, yeah. All your limbs are still attached, and your heads are still on your shoulders, aren't they? You're welcome."

That shut them up-but only for a heartbeat.

They didn't like it, but they couldn't deny that they owed him big time. Resentment simmered in every glare.

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Suddenly, a commotion stirred near the entrance. A fit, middle-aged man in a tailored suit strode in, bodyguards

at his flanks.

"He had a natural swagger, that aura of someone used to dominating every room he walked into.

"Sir Raymond?!" someone gasped, and an electric shock seemed to pass through the bar. Whispers ignited:

"Aw shit, that's the real boss. We're talking the guy even Viper bows down to..." "Just when we thought the drama was over."

Sophia's stomach twisted. Viper was terrifying enough-so how bad could the man who owned Viper be?

"This can't be happening," she muttered. We just got out of one nightmare-now we're stuck in another.

Florence and Jack looked pale.

They'd been terrified of Viper, and this was the man at the top of his food chain. Their worst luck had just multiplied tenfold.

"Perfect timing, Sir Raymond!" Viper called, his voice jumping a full octave in relief.

He turned a predatory grin on Alex. "Boy, you're finished now. You hear me? You should've run when you had the chance."

The punk in white wasted no time, rushing to Raymond's side. "Sir, you've gotta help us out. That bastard tried to kill Viper!"

Raymond raised a brow, scanning the battered crowd until his gaze landed on Alex.

Suddenly, his expression went blank, like a computer freezing mid-task. "Alex?" Alex froze, too. Raymond Wellington. Of all people, it had to be him.

Viper, oblivious to the tension, jabbed a finger at Alex. "Sir Raymond, just give me the word, and I'll hack this prick into pieces. I swear he-"

But Raymond stepped forward, ignoring Viper entirely. "Alex, what's going on? Did my men... offend you somehow?"

Alex rubbed the back of his neck, lips curving into a wry smile. "Small world, huh? Didn't realize Viper was one of yours. Little disagreement, that's all."

"Wait-you two... know each other?" Viper croaked, suddenly feeling like a big dumb guard dog whose owner just walked in to find it barking at the wrong target.

To everyone's shock, Raymond's expression grew colder by the second-but not at Alex.

"You morons messed with my friend?" His gaze raked over Viper and his men with open disapproval.

Viper's jaw nearly unhinged. "Friend?"

"M-my apologies, Sir Raymond, we, uh..." the young man in white faltered, the color draining from his cheeks.

Raymond's tone was frosty. "You owe Alex an apology. After that, we're done here."

He flicked a hand dismissively. Viper swallowed. So did his men.

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"Understood." Viper forced a smile-an ugly, twitching thing and bowed to Alex. "Sir, I'm so sorry. I didn't realize you and Sir Raymond were... I mean, I would've never touched you if I'd known"

"Alex shrugged. "Just don't try to stab me next time we meet, and we'll call it even."

"Yes, of course!" Viper hurriedly wiped sweat off his brow

"You and your friends are VIPs here from now on. Drinks on the house, everything. Just... let's forget about all this."

The gangster's sudden humility nearly gave the crowd whiplash.

All of which left the onlookers gaping.

Sophia, Jack, Florence-they looked like they'd collectively swallowed a box of thumbtacks.

A minute ago, Viper wanted Alex's head on a spike; now he was practically offering to polish Alex's shoes.

Raymond inclined his head to Alex. "Let's talk somewhere private," he said, ushering him toward the bar's upscale VIP lounge upstairs.

They disappeared, leaving behind a barful of people bursting with questions. "Was that really Sir Raymond acting all buddy-buddy with Alex?" Jack muttered, as if trying to convince himself it was a hallucination.

Florence's face twisted sourly. "It must be Jasmine Kingston connection, right? She is the only powerful person that bastard knew. That's gotta be it! No way a nobody like him actually has those kinds of ties on his own."

Megan nodded, lips thinned. "Seems like he's just riding someone else's coattails for status. A woman for that. Can't say it's impressive; it's just opportunistic." Jack joined the chorus. "Yeah, let him enjoy his high horse. It won't last. Bet his alliances will crash and burn soon enough."

'No one remembers the bridge that saved them, only the river that tried to drown them.' 3

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Alex strode down the corridor leading to the VIP room, but he didn't need to look over his shoulder to sense it.

The tension.

The ring of bodyguards fanning out behind the walls, posted at every exit and window.

With a quick mental sweep, he detected their martial auras, each one bristling with skill far beyond the average rent-a-thug.

So Raymond's rolling out the red carpet, huh? he mused, lips twisting into a wry grin.

No matter. He pushed the door open and stepped inside.

"Raymond," he said, skipping pleasantries, "you told me you'd secured a five- hundred-year-old Wild American Ginseng. I'm here for it. Where is it?"

Raymond Wellington-dressed sharp in a tailored suit-lounged on the plush armchair like he was king of the world.

"So impatient," he teased, cl

apping his hands once.

A bodyguard slipped in, carrying a polished wooden box.

Raymond took his time setting it on the table between them, sliding the lid open slowly-almost theatrically.

Inside lay a dark-yellow root, no bigger than a palm, its long strands curling around themselves. Alex's eyes lit up like he'd just struck gold.

"That's it, all right-five centuries of potent ginseng," he murmured, leaning in to inspect it. He could practically feel the energy radiating off its twisted shape.

"How's that for quality?" Raymond asked with a silky smile. "Satisfied?"

"Very." Alex reached for the root without hesitation.

Snap! The box's lid slammed shut on his fingers.

"Whoa," Raymond drawled, that easy smile fading into something colder. "What's the rush? Have a seat. Let's... chat first."

Alex withdrew his hand, eyes narrowed. "What's this about? We agreed you'd hand over the ginseng to settle your debt."

Raymond gave an airy shrug.

"You did cure me before, and I compensated you with that swanky hotel, right? So let's say this precious little root is up for trade only if you share something of equal value. Your Panacea Pill formula, for instance."

"That wasn't the deal. We said you'd owe me the ginseng-period," Alex retorted, his voice cooling to ma Raymond's.

Raymond's thin smile grew razor-sharp.

"Memory's a funny thing, isn't it? Listen, I'm not a cheap bastard. I'll throw in another fifty mil, in cash if you want-just hand over the formula. You'll never have to lift a finger again."

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"You think I need your pocket change?" Alex let out a short scornful laugh. "I'm not selling that formula- especially not to a snake who cannot keep his word."

Snake, am I?" Raymond tapped the wooden box with a finger, the subtle threat echoing in the room.

"Call me whatever you like, but I'm still the guy who decides whether you leave here with your precious root-or dead body."

Alex's eyes flashed with anger. "Listen carefully, Raymond For Lyra's sake, I'm willing to keep things civil. But if you try to screw me over-

Raymond's façade cracked for a second, showing a flash of impatience. "And if I don't hand it over? Then what, hero? You planning to just take it?"

"Exactly," Alex said calmly. "You owe me that for saving your life."

Raymond's laugh was all cruelty now. "Try it. I've practiced martial arts for decades, and I've got thirty men posted outside who'd love to break your bones. Go ahead, be my guest."

Alex didn't waste another breath. He lunged for the box, hand darting across the table.

Raymond's arm snapped into a claw-like grip, clamping down on Alex's wrist. For a moment, he wore a smug grin-right up until he felt the terrifying surge of force ripping through Alex's muscles like an electric current.

What... the... hell? Raymond's eyes bulged.

His bones felt like they might splinter if he squeezed any harder. Panicking, he released Alex's wrist and hurled a desperate punch at Alex's chest.

Alex met the blow head-on with his own fist.

Their knuckles clashed in a thunderous collision that rattled the entire VIP suite.

Chairs flew back.

Raymond was sent flying, his body hurled across the room like a ragdoll. He skidded across the cold floor, momentum unrelenting, until his spine crashed against the wall with a sickening thud.

The force of the blow was so brutal that the chair he'd been sitting in didn't just break-it exploded into splinters, its remains scattered like debris from a wreckage.

Meanwhile, Alex sat calmly, like an immovable mountain. The difference in power was undeniable.

Raymond's cheeks flamed with humiliation. Coughing, he forced himself upright. "I-I had no idea..." he sputtered, dazed.

Alex grabbed the wooden box off the table, shoved it under his arm, and strolled to the door.

"We're done here, Raymond. Don't ever try to do business with me again."

Raymond's eyes burned with fury as he watched Alex walk away.

"Where do you think you're going?!" he snapped, fumbling for his phone. "Guards! Get in here right now!"

But the hallway outside stayed eerily silent.

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No answering footsteps, no surge of reinforcements. Viper who'd been lurking just beyond the threshold, took one peek around the corner and cursed. ong

"They're all down," he hissed. "Every last of them is laid out like they got hit by a truck. He must have an accomplice. Or... or something."

"Impossible," Raymond growled, phone pressed to his ear hearing nothing but static. "I had the entire perimeter locked. How did they...?"

Viper looked stunned, helplessly glancing between Alex's retreating form and the unconscious bodyguards

littering the hall.

"Are we just letting him leave?"

Raymond's fist clenched until his knuckles popped. "Not a chance in hell. I'll get that formula, if it's the last thing I do."

A twisted chuckle rumbled from his chest.

"Alex won this round, but I've got plenty of ways to break him."

Meanwhile, outside Paradiso Bar, Megan ran up to Sophia and the rest, eyes darting anxiously. "Ms. Lancaster, is it over?"

Sophia inhaled slowly, struggling to calm her racing heart. More or less."

Megan nodded. "So it went smoothly, right?"

She spotted Charles off to the side, face dark with barely contained rage.

But then Megan spotted someone else emerging from the bar's doorway. "Huh? Alex?"

He walked toward them, carrying a wooden box under his arm.

His expression was cool, as though he'd just finished some boring errand, not waltzed off from a brawl with one of the Vancouver's biggest criminals. Alex shot them a glare so cold it could freeze a bonfire. "Seriously?" he snarled. "What are you still hanging around for? Hoping trouble's just gonna stroll through the door so you can cry for my help again? Newsflash-I won't be here next time." Florence huffed, folding her arms. "Help? You're kidding, right? You're the most insufferable man I've ever met -always acting like some big damn hero."

Jack crossed his arms, a mocking smirk playing on his lips.

"Aww, did your little connections abandon you, Alex? Guess you've got no one left to call when you finally bite off more than you can chew."

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Alex glared at them all, his patience long gone. "Next time I'll just watch while they hack off your damned "hand," he snapped, turning away from the group. Sophia squared her shoulders and stepped closer, voice cold and unwavering.

"You think you're such hot stuff, don't you? Don't let a little backing from Jasmine Kingston make you stupid. I'm telling you to think before you throw your weight around."

She raised an eyebrow, her tone dripping with condescension.

"Face it, Alex. It's one thing to have powerful friends pave your way, but it's another to actually have the chops to keep climbing. Don't trick yourself into believing you're invincible. Let this be my final warning."

Alex rolled his eyes, letting out a derisive chuckle. "You talk like you're some holy saint who's got it all figured out. You're so sure I'm just mooching off the powerful?"

"Oh, spare me the act," Sophia shot back, spitting the words like venom.

"If Jasmine Kingston hadn't put her name on the line, Viper would've turned your bones to dust by now. You're lucky you've got her shadow to hide under."

Alex gave a short, scornful laugh.

"Nothing I do matters to you, does it? In your eyes, I'm just a worthless piece of trash. Fine. Think what you want. I'm done playing the game your way." Sophia's expression softened for a fleeting second-then hardened again.

"Alex, I'm being real with you. Stop letting people dangle you on a string. You've got one life; use it to prove you're more than just a lazy freeloader."

Alex shrugged, throwing his hands up in mock surrender.

"So what if I am a freeloader? Gotta admire a man who takes the easy route. That's called working smart, honey."

Sophia's nostrils flared. "You are infuriating. You don't even have the decency to be ashamed! It's like talking to a wall."

Before she could insult him further, the distant wail of sirens ripped through the tense air.

The squeal of tires cut off the rest of their argument, and within seconds, squad cars blocked off the intersection.

Uniformed officers jumped out, guns flashing under the sunlight.

"Hands in the air! Now!" one cop roared, finger on the trigger.

Alex's gaze swept over them, cold as ice. "Easy, officer. Mind telling me what this is about?"

Another cop sneered. "We got a tip you were trashing a bar and snatching valuables. Looks like we've got ourselves a bunch of thieves. You're all under arrest."

Alex's jaw tightened. "There's been a mistake-"

"Shut up and get on the ground, or I'll put a bullet in you," the
bat

Pale-faced and trembling, Florence, Megan, and the rest of the Lancaster family raised their hands in surrender.

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Jack's voice trembled as he pleaded, "Officer, there's gotta be some misunderstanding-"

But the cops had already moved in, cuffing everyone without mercy.

Alex glanced over and spotted Raymond watching from the shadows, a satisfied grin plastered on his smug face.

Rage coiled in Alex's gut like a hot snake. That coward had set them all up, using crooked cops to pin false charges on them.

An officer yanked Alex's arm behind his back, snapping the cuffs so tight they cut into his skin. "Don't move, punk."

"Hey, what's in this box?" another demanded, pointing at the package Alex was carrying.

"Wild ginseng," Alex replied, dead-eyed.

"That's stolen property," the cop snarled. "All of you-into the cars. Now!"

"Officer, we didn't do anything!" Sophia protested, her face white as chalk as an officer forced cuffs onto her wrists. "This is insane!"

"Zip it. You'll get your turn to talk after we haul your sorry butts to the station," the cop growled.

Her pleas fell on deaf ears.

The officers shoved them roughly toward the patrol cars, loading up Alex, Sophia, and the entire Lancaster clan. They all wore expressions of shock and helpless fury-except Alex, whose glare never left Raymond's triumphant face.

In a whirl of flashing lights and shrieking sirens, the convoy took off.

At the station, the Lancasters were dumped into one communal holding cell.

But Alex and Sophia vanished somewhere else.

"Police! We're innocent!" Florence screeched, shaking the bars in a wild panic.

A smirking officer strolled by and gave them a mock salute. "Yeah, sure, sweetheart. Prove it with something green, and maybe we'll let you out."

He rubbed his thumb and forefinger together suggestively, then turned his back on their outcries.

Florence's rage erupted. "That slimy, corrupt bastard! This is all Alex's fault. That worthless sack of flesh got us all in this hellhole!" 1

Jack glowered, pounding a fist against the cold metal bars. "If the fool wants to ruin his own life, fine! But why drag us into his mess? Curse him!"

Megan tried to keep her voice steady. "Look, yelling isn't getting us out of here. We need a plan. Bribe, a call to a lawyer-anything to get these cops off our backs."

"Yeah," Florance grumbled, "I've got a cousin in the local government, maybe he can-"

Their voices trailed off as the corridor lights flickered.

Meanwhile, in a small, cramped office, Viper lounged across from a police inspector with a grin that made the officer's skin crawl.

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"Alex is a tough nut," Viper mused, tapping his fingers on the desk.

"Bet that woman, Sophia? She's his ex. Keep her locked up till the bastard hands over whatever formula or secrets Sir Raymond wants. That'll twist his arm real good."

The inspector leaned back in his chair, eyes gleaming with greed. "Sounds like we can have some fun. You fork over a million and I'll squeeze out every last bit of info on that magic pill or whatever the hell he's hoarding."

Viper's grin widened, snake-like. "Double it if you get the job done right."

A sick chuckle rumbled from the inspector's throat. "Relax pal. This is my playground. I'll make him squeal."

That Night Interrogation Room

The flickering bulb cast a harsh glare over the grime-streaked walls. Alex and Sophia were strapped tight to metal chairs, ankles bound, wrists cuffed.

Alex cleared his throat, voice level despite the tension. "I'm sorry you got pulled into this circus."

Sophia cut him a scathing look. "So you really stole something, or is this just another con? Because if it's the latter, I'm not keen on rotting in a cell next to you." Alex's mouth twisted into a humorless grin. "You truly think I'd be stupid enough to loot some two-bit bar? Use your head."

She rolled her eyes. "Then it's a setup. Likely Viper's doing?"

"Viper's the puppet," Alex corrected, a low growl humming in his throat. "The real puppet master is Raymond."

Sophia paled. Her voice quivered with disbelief. "Sir Raymond? Seriously? You used to be on decent terms, so what did you do? Spit in his face? Pee in his cereal?"

"I decked him," Alex replied casually.

Her breath hitched. "You what?! Are you out of your mind? Do you realize who Sir Raymond is? He snaps his fingers, and half the city scrambles to do his bidding." Alex shrugged, unfazed. "He threw the first punch. I finished it."

She glared daggers. "You've got a real death wish, don't you? I can't believe this... You can't possibly handle the fallout."

An uneasy silence settled. Despite her anger, Sophia's eyes flickered with fear.

She let out a shaky breath. "You better hope you can call Jasmine. She's the only one with enough sway to get you out of this nightmare."

The words chafed at her pride-she hated admitting that she, on her own, was too small a fish in this dirty pond. But it was the cold, brutal truth.

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The clang of metal against concrete shattered the silence, and the heavy door groaned open.

A harsh overhead light snapped on, searing Alex's and Sophia's eyes until they squeezed them shut.

Their hearts thumped in the stale, suffocating darkness, though Alex wore a calm look that bordered on nonchalance.

A broad-shouldered man lumbered in, sporting a gut that looked like it belonged in a beer commercial.

He dropped onto a rickety chair beside the table, flipped a switch on the lamp, and leaned in with a smirk that made Sophia's stomach knot.

"Pfft. So you're Alex," he drawled, voice dripping with contempt.

Alex kept his gaze steady, adjusting to the glare. "Yeah. I'm Alex. Nice to meet you, I guess."

The man's smirk widened. "You have any idea who I am?"

Sophia met his stare but didn't speak.

Alex simply shrugged. "Beats me."

The big man made a show of puffing up his chest. "Name's Bernard. Folks around here call me 'The Vampire. Not that I'm a bloodsucker by choice-I just do what needs doin' to get what I want."

Sophia's face went pale.

She'd heard that nickname-this inspector was renowned for extortion, cruelty, and turning prisoners into desperate, broken shells.

Everyone in the underworld knew it was best to stay off his radar or cough up cash if you fell into his clutches. But right now, she and Alex had no escape route.

Despite the tense air, Alex offered a polite nod. "Mr. Bernard. We've heard stories, sure. Seems you've got a... reputation."

Bernard picked up a cigar from his coat pocket, slipped it between his lips, and struck a match.

Smoke curled above his head as he fixed Alex with a predator's grin. "Since you're already wise to the rumors, let me lay it out nice and easy. We can do this the friendly way, or I can get real nasty. And let me tell you, 'nasty' is something I excel at."

He inhaled deeply, then exhaled a plume of acrid smoke in Sophia's direction.

She clenched her fists, but Alex spoke first. "What do you want from us?"

"Wild Ginseng root," Bernard said, leveling a stubby finger at Alex. "You and your girlfriend stole it—so they tell me-and now the rightful owner wants compensation. You cough up what they want, and maybe I'll forget about pressing charges." 1

Alex forced a calm grin. "I didn't steal anything. That's my Ginseng, fair and square."

Bernard's booming laugh rattled the furniture. "Listen, punk, I don't give a rat's ass

if

you think it's yours. You're on my turf now. My word is law."

"If I say you're a sneaky, underhanded thief, then guess what-you're a sneaky, underhanded thief. Got it?"

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Sophia felt a chill across her shoulders at his words. This man's arrogance was suffocating. Nonetheless, Alex kept his composure.

That's hardly reasonable."

Bernard's eyes narrowed to hateful slits. "You calling me unreasonable? Son, you have no idea how generous I'm being. You've got two choices: Either strike a deal with Sir Raymond, or rot in a cell until your hair turns gray. And if you pick door number two, well..."

He jerked his thumb at Sophia. "Your lovely lady here can keep you company. But, ah, let's just say a knockout like her might draw some extra attention behind bars. If you're cool with your 'delicate flower' gettin' trampled, by all means, tell me to shove off."

An ice-cold fury flashed in Alex's eyes. His voice turned lethal. "You lay so much as a finger on her, I'll make you wish you'd never been born."

For a split second, Sophia's chest tightened. She'd seen Alex's temper flare before, but never this fierce.

Despite her own terror, a small jolt of pride flickered in her.

Yet Bernard just roared with laughter.

"Oh, I'm so terrified, hotshot," he mocked, words dripping with sarcasm.

"Please, spare me! You're just another loser who thinks he can waltz in here and talk tough. I see your type every damn week."

He made a point of eyeing Sophia from head to toe.

"I'm feeling generous, so I'll give you thirty minutes to snap out of your delusional fantasy. If you're not ready to cooperate by then, I'll bury you and your beautiful woman so deep that even the cockroaches won't remember

your

names."

With a final sneer, Bernard slammed the door behind him, leaving Alex and Sophia in a darkness.

Outside the Police Station

The night dragged on, bleak and endless. Jack, Florence, and several other worried faces gathered outside the station, having just managed to bail themselves out for a couple hundred bucks.

They paced anxiously, glancing at the station doors every time they swung open.

Sophia meant everything to the Lancaster clan-without her, their entire family might collapse.

"I can't believe it's come to this," Florence muttered, arms crossed tight around her torso. "If anything happens to her, we're done."

A policeman named Joseph stepped out of the station, and Jack rushed forward. "Mr. Joseph, any luck? Can you get my sister released?"

Joseph rubbed his temples, eyes shifting. "I asked around. Here's the deal. Bernard wants ten million. Cold, hard cash."

Florence's gasp sounded almost comical. "T-ten million? Is the man insane? Where the hell are we supposed to pull that out of thin air?"

"That's highway robbery," Jack spat, his anxiety turning to anger. "We don't have that kind of money. What else

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can we do? Is there any way to make him see reason?"

Joseph held up a placating hand. "I'll see what I can do, but no promises."

Jack fumbled with his wallet and pulled out a sleek bank card. "Listen, I can give you three million-right now. Just please, do something. That's all I've got."

Joseph pocketed the card with a discreet nod. "I'll give it my best shot," he murmured before turning on his heel and disappearing back inside. Florence watched him go with doubt etched across her face. "Jack... that's three million bucks. Do you seriously think he'll come through?"

"We have no choice," Jack bit out. "This might be the only chance to free Sophia."

Florence's eyes burned with fury as she spat onto the cold ground. Her voice trembled with venom, each word laced with pure, seething hatred.

"I hope he chokes on that filthy money-gasping, clawing, begging for air-until there's nothing left of him but silence!"

Today's Bonus Offer

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Inside his office.

Bernard slouched in his plush leather chair, puffing cigar smoke toward the ceiling like he owned the entire damn city-which, if you asked him, he practically did.

"Hey, Mr. Bernard," Viper began, voice laut. "Any chance that scrawny Kid confessed yet?"

Bernard snorted, a cruel grin twisting his jowls.

"Confess, not confess-doesn't make a damn bit of difference. That clueless little runt'll talk soon enough. They all break under pressure in the end."

Viper rubbed a hand over his mouth, "You sure? If I were you, I'd handle him quick. Things can get... unpredictable."

Bernard slammed his meaty fist on the desk, the thud echoing off the walls.

"You telling me how to run my station? My station. My rules. I call the shots here, and don't you dare forget it."

Viper raised both palms in surrender.

"Easy, Mr. Bernard, easy. I know you're the king around these parts. I just fear the Kid has someone big in his corner. Powerful folks poking their noses in your business can turn everything upside down."

Bernard let out a barking laugh that did nothing to soften his glare.

"They can line up and kiss my boots, for all I care. I've seen plenty of folks claiming they'd take me down- haven't seen a single hero yet. You ever see a hero, Viper?"

Before the Viper could respond, a squad leader burst through the door, nearly cracking the wood with his knuckles.

"What's so urgent you gotta break my damn door?" Bernard growled, cigar clenched between yellowed teeth.

"Sir, the Lancaster family wants Sophia Lancaster's bail set at two million," the officer reported, swallowing hard.

Bernard made a noise somewhere between a bull snort and a laugh.

"Two million? Is that a joke? Raymond's offering ten, and I'm not in the habit of trading gold bars for pocket change. Tell 'em to shove it unless they come back with something better."

"Yes, sir." The officer retreated, but moments later returned, face pale. He hovered at the threshold like he'd rather be anywhere else.

Bernard's gaze darkened. "The hell do you want now?"

"Sir," the man began carefully, "we just got a call from Ms. Jasmine Kingston. She says we nabbed the wrong guy. She demands Alex be released immediately."

Bernard froze, mid-puff. His sneer vanished, replaced by a flicker of genuine alarm.

For a long moment, he said nothing.

Then he turned his gaze to Viper, beads of sweat glistening on his brow.

"You incompetent buffoon. You left out the part about Jasmine Kingston being involved? She's a certified nightmare. That woman's a walking nuke-money, power, the works. Christ, you trying to blow me up?"

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Viper threw his arms wide, eyes bulging in denial. "Don't pin this on me! I had no clue she'd waltz into this. I swear."

Bernard's hand shook around his cigar, but he managed to regain some composure.

"We'll deal with it. If she's sniffing around, I'll deny we ever booked the Kid. See if that hushes her up."

He barked at the squad leader to deliver his lie-tell Jasmine they had no Alex in custody.

But the second the guy left, Bernard's phone started shrieking.

He glanced at the caller ID. "Alfred Kingston," he muttered voice tight with unease.

"Goddammit. Looks like the entire Kingston clan's coming for my throat tonight."

He jammed the phone to his ear. "Mr. Alfred! Long time, no talk. You still out in L.A.? Everything good-

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"Cut the formalities, Bernard," Alfred hissed. "I'm only calling for one reason. Did you arrest a young man named Alex?"

Bernard forced a laugh that came out strangled. "Alex? No, why would I- Are you sure my men even picked up the right person?"

"Don't screw around, you bloated blowhard. Release him immediately, or I swear, I'll cut you off for good. Your name will be trash in every circle that matters."

Bernard's free hand clenched into a fist, nails digging into his palm. But he forced his tone to stay breezy.

"Misunderstanding, that's all! If some incompetent rookie happened to nab a random kid, I'll sort it out, no problem."

Alfred's voice crackled with fury. "I'm warning you: if a single hair on his head is harmed, I'll see to it you and your entire miserable bloodline end up rotting in some ditch."

Then came the dial tone.

Bernard stared at his phone, heart slamming against his rib cage.

He slammed it down on the desk. "Dammit! I've got Jasmine and Alfred Kingston breathing down my neck, all for that stupid Kid. Didn't you say he was a nobody, Viper? You worthless piece of trash!"

Viper cringed, sweat pooling at his temples. "There was no hint- I swear, no one mentioned anything about the Kingstons!"

Bernard let loose a string of curses. "I should wring your scrawny neck for this. Call Raymond, your boss. Now. If he wants me to keep this Kid on ice, he can pay me triple. Otherwise, I'll throw him under the bus and wash my hands clean."

Viper scrambled for his phone, face bone-white. After a tense minute, he nodded. "He's in. Tripled the price."

Bernard exhaled, tension momentarily lifting.

"Ha! Now that's more like it. Money talks, especially that kind of money. I'll make the Kid sing whatever Raymond wants, then I'll let him slink away in one piece- assuming nobody meddles with me again."

Viper opened a black duffel and showed off the thick stacks of cash.

Chapter 195

"This million's yours, boss. The rest when the Kid coughs up the formula he is hiding."

Beard's eyes glittered with greed.

"Yeah... I'll make sure the Kid squeals. Once we've squeezed out everything he's

got, I can toss him back to the Kingstons-everyone will be happy."

But fate, ever the sadistic puppeteer, decided Bernard's celebration would be short-lived.

Ten minutes. That's all he got.

One moment, he was grinning like a devil, thumbing through his blood money, basking in his petty victory. The next?

Agony.

A steel grip wrenched his jaw open with bone-snapping force, shoving wads of crumpled bills past his teeth. The same money he'd sold his soul for was now choking him, stuffing his throat with greed's rotten currency. Curses and muffled screams gurgled from his lips, drowned by the suffocating weight of his own betrayal. His eyes bulged, darting wildly, searching for salvation.

But salvation wasn't coming.

Because in that moment-gasping, gagging, choking on his own dirty deal- Bernard finally understood.

He'd fucked with the wrong man.

"There is no calamity greater than lavish desires. There is no greater guilt than discontentment. And there is no greater disaster than greed."

The Almighty Dominance - kidnapped 196[1,068 words]

Chapter 196

Ten Minutes Earlier

Alex and Sophia sat side by side in the dimly lit interrogation room, their wrists and ankles cuffed with heavy chains bolted to the floor.

Sophia's breathing grew ragged.

She hated how the gloom pricked at her brain with worst-case scenarios.

"Alex," she said quietly, her voice trembling, "do you honestly think we'll get out of here alive?"

Alex didn't move at first.

His gaze stayed locked on the metal door. "We will," he finally muttered. "We're walking out of this place in one piece. I guarantee it."

A humorless laugh escaped Sophia's lips.

"Easy for you to say. You haven't had nightmares about this creep, Mr. Bernard. His record in the station is as dirty as it gets."

She swallowed hard, her next words barely above a whisper. "And with Sir Raymond pulling the strings, it's like they have the entire city in their pocket. We don't stand a chance."

Alex turned to face her then-really turned, with a look that pinned her in place. "Sophia, have you ever trusted me? Even for one second?"

She opened her mouth but only managed a croak. The thought stuck in her throat like a jagged rock.

Before she could get another word out, the metal door groaned open.

Mr. Bernard stomped inside with a posse of four burly men behind him, each wearing that bored, dangerous sneer only seasoned criminals wore.

A battered duffel bag hit the metal table with a dull thud, its zipper snapping open to reveal thick wads of cash.

Bernard shot them a rotten grin, displaying crooked, yellowing teeth.

"Listen up, kiddies. This is one million dollars in unmarked bills." He kicked the bag closer.

"All you gotta do is hand over what Sir Raymond wants. Then you can walk out with your little girlfriend here."

"Or-" his eyes flicked to the men behind him with a sadistic gleam "-you keep being difficult. I let these fine gentlemen have their fun with your lady. Spoiler alert: you'll still end up giving us what we want, only you'll be a lot more traumatized afterward."

Sophia's stomach lurched.

She leaned toward Alex, her voice desperate. "Come on, Alex, just give them whatever Sir Raymond's after. Please. This is insane."

"This is not how I do things." Alex let out a slow breath, eyes darkening. He turned

to her and whispered, "Sophia, close your eyes and keep them shut no matter what happens. Trust me on this."

She bit her lip, clearly terrified.

1/3

Chapter 196

But something about the quiet force in his voice made her d. She closed her eyes, eyelashes fluttering as she fought not to peek.

"Bernard scoffed. "Aw, isn't that sweet? A heroic little stand off. Too bad your time's up, kid. Make your decision."

"I have made my decision," Alex said, calm as a gun barrel. "I'm not giving him a single thing." Bernard's face morphed from smug to furious in a heartbeat.

"You dumb piece of gutter trash. You think you've got a choice here?" He jerked a thumb at the gang of men.

"These guys are the nastiest scum we've got rotting in the cells. They'd love nothing more than to rip off that pretty little dress your girlfriend's wearing. And you? You' be chained up, forced to watch."

One of the men, a skinhead with a grotesque scar running across his cheek, licked his lips.

"I've been starved of a woman for too damn long, boss. Might not be gentle, but I'll make sure the show is good."

Bernård nodded, vindictive glee carving wrinkles into his face. "You hear that, kid? Time to learn your place in the world. A damn nobody."

Alex's voice dropped low, a lethal edge slicing through every word. "If you so much as touch her, you'll be begging for a quick death."

Bernard let out a bark of laughter. "Listen to you. All bark, no bite, you worthless

The metal cuffs around Alex's wrists and ankles gave a sudden, earsplitting snap, interrupting Bernard mid-

insult.

In a heartbeat, Alex stood tall, the torn-off chains clattering onto the floor like broken shackles of a ghost.

Bernard's jaw dropped. "What the-?! How-?!"

The gang of criminals froze, their predatory grin evaporating.

Even the scarred man backed away, his hands raised in a meek surrender. "Look, dude, we only did this 'cause the pig told us to, alright? We're outta this. No beef with you."

Bernard's eyes flickered between Alex and his petrified lackeys. Panic settled over him like a thick fog. "Don't just stand there, you halfwits-stop him!"

But the criminals only shuffled back, wide-eyed.

They'd seen enough during their stints in lockup to know this was suicide territory.

No paycheck (or promise of release) was worth tangling with a man who could shred reinforced cuffs bare-handed.

Bernard spun, trying to bolt for the door.

"Help! Guards! Anyone-!" His shriek ended in a sputter when one of the men grabbed him by the back of his collar and hurled him straight at Alex.

"He's yours," the man muttered, eyes darting anywhere but Alex. "Do whatever you want. We didn't sign up for this freak show."

Bernard's body smacked against Alex's chest. In one fluid movement, Alex twisted

his torso and delivered a punishing kick to Bernard's gut.

2/3

Chapter 196

The man's shrill squeal was pure terror as he tumbled across the floor and smashed into the table.

Birks spilled out of the duffel bag, fluttering like confetti.

Coughing and choking, Bernard sprawled on all fours.

Alex marched toward him, scooping up a fat wad of cash along the way.

"Shut up!"

Without warning, he crammed the roll of bills into Bernard's mouth, shutting up the frantic squeals.

"You crooked bastard," Alex growled, voice filled with cold fury. "Abusing your badge for personal gain. Threatening an innocent woman. Bribery. Intimidation." Each accusation hit like a punch to Bernard's pride as Alex towered over him.

Bernard spat out the money in a slobbery mess. "You- you can't do this!" he howled, his face beet-red with rage and humiliation.

"You're in a damn police station! You go too far, and you'll be hunted down like a rabid dog!"

A humorless grin tugged at Alex's lips. "Is that so? Let's test that theory.'

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He grabbed another roll of cash, shoved it back in Bernard's mouth, and brought

his foot down viciously on the man's arm.

The bone snapped with a sickening crunch, echoing around the small room. Bernard's muffled scream rattled the walls, tears streaming from his bloodshot eyes.

"Alex! Stop!" Sophia's voice rang out, breaking through the chaos. She'd finally opened her eyes, and the sheer horror on her face said it all. "Enough! If we hurt him any worse, they'll charge us with assaulting an officer-or worse!"

Today's Bonus Offer

The Almighty Dominance - kidnapped 197[1,073 words]

Chapter 197

Mr Bernard glowered at Alex, jabbing a thick finger into his chest.

"Kid, your woman here's the only one with a damn brain. Listen to her while you still can. Confess, turn yourself in- and maybe, just maybe, you'll live long enough to see the sun rise again. Otherwise, I'll make sure you're hunted down like a

rabid dog.

His voice shook with anger, cheeks flushing as he spat out every syllable.

"I'm a cop, boy. I've got the entire force in my back pocket. Face me if you want, but you're playing with fire!"

Alex locked eyes with him, silent. Then, in one swift move, he drove his boot into Bernard's gut. The impact sent the man lurching.

"You're not worthy to wear that badge."

Bernard's gag echoed around the small interrogation room

He lurched forward, retching violently, his half-digested dinner splashing onto the concrete.

As if that weren't enough, the sour stench of urine followed Bernard's face flamed, tears mixing with sweat.

"You-You piece of shit!" he sputtered between wheezing coughs and another wave of vomit.

Sophia's voice trembled with fear.

"Alex, have you completely lost your mind? You realize what you've done, right? If Bernard dies- hell, if he even has a broken bone-everyone in this room becomes

an accessory. The entire country will be gunning for you!"

A flicker of concern flashed in Alex's eyes, but it vanished as quickly as it appeared. His tone was cold,

emotionless.

"He'd never let us walk out of here anyway. We might as well finish him off." Sophia nearly choked on her own terror.

"It's not too late! Alex, please-stop! There's another way. We can't fix anything if you kill him!"

Bernard, hunched and heaving, managed to let out a low, venomous chuckle. "Listen to your woman, asshole. One wrong move and I'll personally make sure you, your family, and anyone you've ever said hello to suffers."

Hunched on the floor, Bernard stealthily slid a trembling finger across his smartwatch, initiating a silent alarm.

Suddenly, the door burst open, and officers in full tactical gear poured into the cramped space, guns raised and ready.

Bernard's thugs-big men with big mouths-instantly folded, dropping to their knees in the corners to avoid catching stray bullets.

The room fell into a suffocating silence. Blood streaked the floor. The pungent odor of vomit and urine hung in the air like a toxic cloud.

A vice officer rushed in, voice cracking with alarm.

"Mr. Bernard-sir! What the hell happened?"

1/3

Chapter 197

Bernard glared up at Alex, lip curled in hatred.

"Shoot that bastard if he so much as breathes. Let him go, and I'll feed your badge to the shredder myself."

An officer stepped forward, gun aimed at Alex's head.

"You've got five seconds to let go of Mr. Bernard if you wanna keep living, kid!"

But Alex's eyes were ice-cold, flicking from one officer to the next.

"You all know this sack of garbage is corrupt to the core, and you're still cleaning up his mess?" He gave a humorless laugh. "That makes you just as rotten."

Without warning, Alex's boot slammed into Bernard's ribs, sending the cop flying into his fellow officers.

They toppled like dominoes, curses and shouts echoing around the room. Sophia was speechless, hands shaking so hard.

She knew Alex was a trained soldier, but going toe-to-toe with an entire station? This was suicide.

"Alex, please," she begged, voice cracking. "Bernard is untouchable. He's in charge of half the city's interrogation rooms. You can't just... crush him like a cockroach!"

Bernard spat out a tooth, rage twisting his features into something feral.

"Kill him. Now!" he howled, blood smearing his chin. "I want him in so many pieces we'll need a damn vacuum to clean up!"

One of Bernard's henchmen barked to the officers,

"You heard him. Guns out, let's drop this psycho!"

Weapons clicked off safety, muzzles raised, and the tension ignited like a powder keg.

"Stand the hell down!"

Every head snapped toward the doorway. The voice boomed with lethal authority. Bernard, half-collapsed on the floor, spat blood.

"Who the fuck dares to bark orders in my station?" he roared, face contorted with unbridled fury.

A group of men in sleek suits stormed in, armed to the teeth.

Their expressions were dead-calm, the kind of calm you see in people who've walked through hell and torched it behind them.

Bernard snarled, his voice shredded with pain and anger.

"Who the hell are you? You can't just waltz into my interrogation room. You want a riot?"

His fingers twitched, itching to tear Alex limb from limb.

Anyone who stood in his way would be next. But the suited men had already leveled their weapons at the officers, jaws set, fingers ghosting over triggers.

A beautiful woman stepped forward. Kelly. Her voice was low, controlled, but the threat in it was unmistakable.

2/3

Chapter 107

"When I say 'stop,' you fucking stop. Unless you're all ready to get dropped right here, right now."

The officers exchanged nervous glances.

Few had ever stared down the business end of a gun especially not one wielded

by people with eyes like sharks.

The murders eyes.

Bernard's voice rasped, his fury unquenched.

"Tell me who you are before I make you regret breathing in my station!" "We're here for Alex. Let him go, or I'll personally carve that scowl off your face." Bernard coughed, blood speckling the floor.

"You think I'm letting a wanted criminal waltz out of here? The law's on my side."

He spat the word 'law' like a curse, but they all knew it wasn't about justice. Bernard's pride lay in pieces, and he wanted Alex's head on a platter.

Kelly offered a dark chuckle that didn't come close to his eyes.

"So the only way out is through your corpse, huh?" Kelly's voice was almost casual, like they were discussing the

weather.

She gave a lazy flick of his hand, and his men stepped forward, pressing cold steel against the skulls of Bernard and the trembling officers, the click of safeties echoing like a death sentence.

"Fine by me. Hell, we can stack your whole crooked department right here if you want. No hard feelings - just cleaning up trash."

She smiled, the kind of smile that sent chills slithering down spines.

Kelly took a slow step forward, towering over Bernard's crumpled form, voice dropping to a low growl that reeked of finality:

"Go ahead, Bernard. Give me just one good reason - one bonfire with you and your rats screaming inside it."

not to turn this shithole precinct into a fucking

Bernard's mouth opened, but all that came out was a thin, broken wheeze late, that the devil had come to collect.

the sound of a man realizing, far too

"When the law becomes a tool of the corrupt, only the lawless can deliver justice."

The Almighty Dominance - kidnapped

198[916 words]

One of the younger cops, barely out of the academy, threw his rifle to the ground and stumbled backward.

"Please-I don't want any part of this! I'm just a rookie, damn it! I don't even understand what's going on-don't lump me in with that psycho!"

His voice trembled as he backed away from the carnage.

Like a dam finally bursting, other officers followed suit, hands in the air, weapons clattering to the floor. No one wanted a ticket straight to hell alongside Bernard.

Bernard's eyes darted around, his bravado wobbling.

"So, that's it? You're all turning on me?" He sneered, but his lip quivered. "You idiots really don't understand the consequences of defying the police, do you?"

Kelly cocked her head, a lazy smirk twisting her lips.

"Oh, that's cute-you think you still have any authority here?" She rolled her eyes. "Go ahead, throw your weight around. We're shaking in our boots, right?"

She stepped right into Bernard's face and slapped him hard, the crack echoing.

"Little man with a shiny badge. That all you got?"

Bernard's face went red hot, shock and fury colliding.

"You... slapped me? Have you lost your damn mind?! I'm a police inspector!"

Kelly let out a laugh that held no humor whatsoever.

"An inspector? Jesus, who gave you that job-Satan on a sick day? I've seen mall cops with more honor."

She tore her pistol free of its holster, pressing the barrel to Bernard's forehead. "Shut your mouth, or I'll put a bullet through that thick skull of yours. You're lucky we're on the same side of the law-technically. I'm giving you a countdown. Three seconds to let Alex walk. If you don't, I'll redecorate this station with your brain matter."

Bernard's voice cracked.

"I-I'm the inspector!"

Kelly began the slow, deadly count.

"Three... two..."

Bernard's knees practically buckled.

"Are you crazy?! Touch me, and the media'll crucify you! You'll have the entire country breathing down your necks!"

"...One."

The gunshot boomed.

A.45 slug tore right through Bernard's forehead, and he went down like a ton of bricks-eyes wide, mouth still

1/3

Chapter 198

open in mid-plea.

The rank sinell of gunpowder mixed with the metallic tang of blood, seizing the room in suffocating silence. For a moment, every officer stood frozen, like the air itself bad died.

Their almighty inspector lay there, a gaping hole in his head, badge worthless as a cardboard shield.

Kelly glanced at the lifeless body and snapped her gaze to the crowd of stunned officers.

"Who's in charge here now?"

A trembling man in uniform, the Sub-Inspector, swallowed hard and took a step forward.

"I-I am."

Kelly dragged him to a corner.

She flashed a special badge, the emblem of Kingswell blazing under the flickering fluorescent lights. The Sub-Inspector felt his heart lurch painfully in his chest, like it was trying to escape his ribcage. He had heard rumors-just whispers, really- about Kingswell, the king's personal creation.

A unit so secret, so lethal, even generals feared them.

Compared to Kingswell, police inspectors were nothing. Insects under a boot.

Kelly leaned in, her voice low and cold, each word slicing into his nerves like a scalpel.

"Do you even understand who Alex is? Kingswell operative. And you tossed him into a piss-soaked holding cell like some street junkie."

She took a slow step forward, her gaze pinning him like a butterfly under glass.

"That might be the single dumbest thing you've ever done. So tell me what exactly are you planning to do about it?"

Sweat poured down the Sub-Inspector's face, soaking the collar of his uniform. His throat bobbed painfully as he swallowed.

"I-I swear, ma'am-I didn't know! If I'd known-God, I'd never Kingswell agent!"

take him! I wouldn't dare touch a

Kelly's smile was razor-sharp and colder than the gun at her hip.

"Good. Because you know what happens if a single word about us leaves your mouth, right?"

The Sub-Inspector nodded so fast it looked like his neck might snap.

"Y-yes! Of course! I'll take this to my grave-no one will hear a whisper from me!" His voice shook like glass an earthquake.

"Smart boy." Kelly raised her hand, giving her team a subtle gesture.

"We're done here. Move out."

They vanished as quickly as they'd come, slipping away like ghosts.

2/3

Chapter 198

The officers left behind stared at one another in dazed horror, as if waking from a nightmare.

The Sub-Inspector hunched over Bernard's corpse, then kicked the lifeless body.

"Damn bastard... you've disgraced this whole station. Somebody get a mop and throw his rotting carcass where it belongs. And dig into every one of his crooked deals-I want it all exposed!"

His voice broke through the stunned silence. There was no going back now.

He stormed over to the holding cells, fumbling with his ring of keys.

Hands trembling, he unlocked Sophia's chains.

"I-I'm sorry. We all got dragged into that lunatic's mess. Please, Miss Sophia, Sir Alex... forgive us."

His arms flailed as he thrust a bulging bag of money and a small card toward

Alex.

"Take it," he blurted, eyes desperate. "Think of it as compensation for... for everything. The wrongful arrest, the intimidation, all of it."

Alex barely had time to process the apology, or the hefty bribe he was suddenly holding, before he and Sophia were ushered out into the stale corridor.

In his hands, he cradled medicine box along with the money.

Viper, the scumbag who'd framed Alex, was immediately slapped in cuffs.

The Sub-Inspector gave Alex a pointed look.

"Sir, this bastard faked all the evidence that brought you here. I'll see he rots in jail for a decade. Or..." He lowered his voice, eyes flickering with a dangerous gleam.

"We can just off him now. Report says: Viper had a 'tussle' with Bernard-both ended up dead. Easy."

Alex's face was like stone.

"Fine by me. One less cockroach."

Today's Bonus Offer

GET IT NOW

The Almighty Dominance - kidnapped 199[1,055 words]

Chapter 199

The Sub-Inspector sighed, like a man too tired to care anymore.

He raised his sidearm.

Viper shrieked, voice cracking in terror. "No, no, no! I made mistake but you can't just kill me! There's a procedure-a trial! I want my lawyer! There's still law in this country, right?!"

Alex glanced over his shoulder, voice cold.

"Relax, Viper. You won't be alone. Your boss Raymond's next in line."

The door clicked shut behind them as a single gunshot shattered Viper's last plea.

Sophia half-turned, just in time to catch a glimpse of Viper's body hitting the concrete in a lifeless heap.

They stepped outside, the faint evening light hitting their faces like a cruel reminder this was real.

Across the street stood Jasmine, flanked by her own bodyguards.

Her expression flickered with worry before twisting into a scowl the moment she spotted Alex's hand clutching Sophia's.

She stalked over in her designer heels, posture rigid, eyes brimming with rage.

"Well, well," she snapped, crossing her arms.

"Look who's having a grand old time. You disappear, make me chase all over town, visiting every police station- and when I finally find you, you're getting cozy with another woman?"

Alex blinked, genuinely surprised.

"Jasmine, it's not what it looks like. I-"

She cut him off, voice dripping with sarcasm.

"Don't feed me that bullshit. I spent the whole night digging you out of trouble. Meanwhile, you're hand in hand with another woman. I must be the biggest fool on earth to care!"

Sophia tried to speak, but her words tangled in her throat.

Alex looked from Jasmine to Sophia, and back again. "She was arrested because of me. I-I had to help her..."

Jasmine arched a brow. "Then why are you practically glued together?"

Only now did Alex notice he was still gripping Sophia's hand. Both of them jolted apart like they'd touched a live wire, cheeks flushing in unison.

Jasmine gave an exasperated scoff.

"Unbelievable. I thought you were a good guy, but apparently, you collect women like trading cards. Congratulations, Alex-you've officially disappointed me."

With that, she spun on her heel, hair whipping behind her, ready to vanish into the night.

Alex took a half step to follow, hesitated, then cast a quick glance at Sophia. "Are you... are you okay if I—"

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Chapter 199

Sophia's lips were pressed tight. She looked away, her tones frosty as a winter wind. "G chase your princess. Don't pretend you need my permission."

Alex swallowed hard, then muttered, "Take a cab home," before dashing after Jasmine.

Sophia stood there, arms crossed, seething at her own words.

She wanted him to stay, to prove she mattered more than that spoiled brat, but he'd run off without a second thought.

Tears of anger and frustration burned at the corner of Sophia's eyes as she watched Alex disappear down the

street.

The entire day felt like a nightmare-blood, gunshots, twisted loyalties, and now this heart-wrenching mess. Tears blurred her vision; she felt humiliated, unwanted, and downright furious.

Outside on the sidewalk, Alex caught up to Jasmine.

"Jasmine, wait! Please-hear me out."

She turned on him, face pinched.

"You've got ten seconds before I smash your phone and leave you in the gutter."

"It was complicated," Alex began, panting.

"Sophia got arrested because of me. There was a shootout... I had to protect her, keep her safe. That's it. There's nothing else between us-nothing real."

Jasmine narrowed her eyes.

"You swear it?"

"I swear."

For a moment, she stared him down like a hawk sizing up a rat.

Then, so suddenly it almost gave Alex whiplash, Jasmine's lips twitched into a sweet, dazzling smile.

"Fine. Consider yourself forgiven on account of your oh-so-heartfelt explanation." Alex blinked. Her mood swing was sharper than a switchblade, and he couldn't help feeling like she'd just reeled him in with a well-practiced act.

From the distance, Sophia stood rooted, arms clamped around herself, glaring at Jasmine's triumphant smirk.

The meaning was crystal clear: I won.

Jasmine looped her arm through Alex's.

"Let's go. I'll drive you home."

He shook his head. "I can't. Not yet. There's someone I need to meet."

"Who?" Jasmine demanded.

"The bastard who got me into this mess."

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Chapter 199

Later that night, a sleek, high-walled mansion loomed under the moonlight.

Expensive cars crowded the circular driveway like a parade of polished predators.

Inside, Raymond paced in a lavish sitting room, every step echoing across the marble floors.

Opposite him, sprawled on an imported leather sofa, was Henry Dupont, a young man dressed in head-to-toe luxury.

Six female bodyguards flanked him—each stunning, each armed with sleek, curved blades, and each carrying herself like she could slice a person in half before breakfast.

Henry took a leisurely sip of his red wine.

"So, Raymond, you yank me out here from Chicago with talk of miracles and fortunes. Now, explain why I'm not sipping margaritas in my penthouse instead."

Raymond forced a stiff grin. "Mr. Dupont, trust me, you won't regret hearing this. I've tested a new formula personally—a 'miracle pill.' It saved my life when I was on the brink of death from internal injuries. This stuff can heal almost anything, accelerate martial-arts training, you name it."

"Mm-hmm." Henry snapped his fingers. One of his bodyguards handed him a cigar, lighting it for him. He blew a Jazy smoke ring. "That's a big claim. Where's this wonder pill? I don't do imaginary deals."

Raymond coughed, sweat beading on his brow.

"Unfortunately, I'm... temporarily out. But one of my men's retrieving the prescription as we speak. It won't be long, I swear."

Henry's eyes gleamed with sudden menace.

"Is this your idea of a joke? You drag me away from my city, away from my comfortable life, for vaporware? You'd better pray that pill is real, or your coffin's going to be on sale this week."

Raymond's nerves rattled, but he managed a shaky smile.

"I promise you—this deal is genuine. Once we secure the recipe, I'll begin production immediately. The Chicago Lord guild will get the first exclusive batch. You'll have the global market eating out of your palm, Mr. Dupont." Henry flicked ash onto Raymond's pristine floor, clearly enjoying the other man's discomfort.

"That's better. If you keep your word, I might mention you favorably to my father. If he's in a generous mood, he'll see what your cooperation might earn you. If not..." He shrugged.

"We'll see just how 'miraculous' that pill really is—maybe it'll heal you after my bodyguards run you through." Raymond's forced grin widened.

"Thank you, Mr. Dupont. I swear I won't let you down."

But beneath his polished exterior, Raymond seethed. He knew the stakes. The Chicago Lord guild held power is politics, the military, and the corporate world.

3/3

The Almighty Dominance - kidnapped 200[1,254 words]

Henry Dupont's voice cut through the room like the crack of a whip.

"Raymond, don't get ahead of yourself. If you want my father's backing, there are two conditions. First, provide the miracle pill in a steady supply. Second, prove your loyalty beyond a shadow of doubt. Understood?"

Raymond nodded, swallowing his annoyance. "I understand, Mr. Dupont."

He needed the support of Chicago's Dupont family- one of the five ruling powers operating under the Chicago Lords banner-to solidify his position.

If the Kingstons destroyed themselves in Vancouver, the Duponts might just help him take it over.

Before either man could speak again, a crash and frantic yells erupted from the garden.

"What's going on?" Raymond snapped, eyes narrowing.

A bodyguard stumbled into the room, his face ashen. "Boss someone's broken in!" Raymond rose from his chair in a surge of rage. "Who is it? How many?"

"We couldn't get a good look. It's too dark... but he's alone, the guard stammered. "We tried to stop him, but he's too powerful!"

Raymond's jaw tightened. "You're telling me one man waltzed in and took out my entire security detail?" "He walked alone, and yet the earth itself seemed to bow beneath his steps."

A hint of panic flickered in the guard's eyes.

"He's knocking all the securities down like they're nothing..."

"It must be some kind of hidden weapon!" Raymond said.

"Boss, we couldn't even get close! You need to run-now!" the guard urged, his voice laced with panic.

Raymond's face darkened with fury.

Without hesitation, he struck the guard with a brutal slap, the force so intense that teeth flew from his mouth, blood spilling down his chin as he staggered back.

"You bastard! How dare you tell me to run while I have fifty guards defending my mansion!" Raymond bellowed, his voice thundering with defiance.

Henry Dupont leaned back in his chair, expression unreadable.

Raymond's humiliation was obvious, and it delighted him.

"Do you require my help?" Henry asked lazily, tapping his fingers on the table.

"It's just a minor nuisance," Raymond grated out. "Mr. Dupont, please wait here. I'll handle this."

In the mansion's courtyard, Raymond's remaining guards circled a lone figure- Alex.

He stood casually, hands at his sides, wearing nothing but jeans and a simple shirt.

Yet body after body lay crumpled around him, as though they'd been hammered to the ground by some invisible

force.

Chapter 200

Henry Dupont's voice cut through the room like the crack of a whip.

"Raymond, don't get ahead of yourself. If you want my father's backing, there are two conditions. First, provide the miracle pill in a steady supply. Second, prove your loyalty beyond a shadow of doubt. Understood?"

Raymond nodded, swallowing his annoyance. "I understand, Mr. Dupont."

He needed the support of Chicago's Dupont family- one of the five ruling powers operating under the Chicago Lords banner-to solidify his position.

If the Kingstons destroyed themselves in Vancouver, the Duponts might just help him take it over.

Before either man could speak again, a crash and frantic yells erupted from the garden.

"What's going on?" Raymond snapped, eyes narrowing.

A bodyguard stumbled into the room, his face ashen. "Boss-someone's broken in!"

Raymond rose from his chair in a surge of rage. "Who is it? How many?"

"We couldn't get a good look. It's too dark... but he's alone," the guard

stammered. "We tried to stop him, but- he's too powerful!"

Raymond's jaw tightened. "You're telling me one man waltzed in and took out my entire security detail?"

"He walked alone, and yet the earth itself seemed to bow beneath his steps.

A hint of panic flickered in the guard's eyes.

"He's knocking all the securities down like they're nothing.."

"It must be some kind of hidden weapon!" Raymond said.

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Chapter 200

Each guard who rushed forward ended up on his knees, skull striking the pavement in a pitiful bow.

They never even saw him move.

"Raymond!" Alex's voice boomed across the courtyard. "Get out here!"

Raymond stormed out of the mansion, ready to unleash his anger at whomever dared to challenge him.

But he froze mid-step when he saw who it was.

"Alex? How... You were arrested!" he spluttered. "There's no way you just strolled out of the interrogation room. Are you coming here to give me your pills formula?"

Alex's eyes burned with a cold, wrathful light.

"Enjoy framing me?" he asked quietly.

Realization dawned on Raymond's face.

He chuckled darkly, feigning nonchalance.

"So you figured it out. Fine, I framed you. You left me no choice, Alex. If you'd cooperated earlier, I wouldn't have had to resort to such underhanded measures.'

He stepped forward, arms spread in a mocking gesture.

Alex's voice cut through the tension.

"Now, I'll give you one chance: cripple yourself and leave Vancouver forever. If you do, I won't destroy you." Raymond's eyes bulged for an instant-then he burst out laughing.

"You must be insane. I'm the master of this mansion, and you're the intruder. I could kill you right now, and no one would bat an eye. But... if you hand over the recipe for that miracle pill, maybe I'll spare your life."

Alex shook his head slowly. "It's you who's in over your head."

Raymond tightened his grip on the gun.

"Last time, you caught me off guard. But I'm prepared now Let's see how smug you are once I've shown you the skill I've perfected for decades."

Alex didn't budge. He walked forward-a single, casual step.

Suddenly, Raymond felt his entire body compress under a crushing, invisible force.

His vision blurred, heart hammering in his chest. All the strength and speed he'd relied upon for decades vanished like smoke in a storm.

Terror crawled up his spine. He tried to raise his gun but his arms felt leaden.

Slowly, as if an enormous weight pinned him, his knees buckled.

"What... what is this?" Raymond gasped, voice barely above a whisper.

A flick of Alex's fingers brushed Raymond's shoulder.

Boom!

Chapter 200

It was like being slammed by a speeding truck.

Ramond was blasted backward, landing in a twisted spraw on the gravel.

His shoulder throbbed with such agony, he nearly blacked out.

Gritting his teeth, he struggled upright-only to find his arm hanging limp, bone shattered to pulp.

Pain coursed through his veins, tearing a ragged cry from his throat.

His prized gun lay discarded at his feet, useless.

The lifelong combat training he'd boasted of just moments go had been distnissed

like a child's game.

Breathing in ragged gasps, Raymond stared at Alex with disbelieving horror.

How was this possible? He had never felt such raw, crushing power-like an avalanche he had no hope of stopping.

Suddenly, fear gripped his heart.

He had spent years amassing his wealth, yet a single act of greed had put everything at risk.

Facing this young man, he realized that everything-his fortune, his power, even

his life-was about to be stripped away.

Regret came knocking, too late to turn back.

"The heavens are slow to punish, but when they do, no man can escape.

"1

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Today's Bonus Offer