

The Almighty Dominance - kidnapped 201[878 words]

Chapter 201

Acker of moonlight glanced off Alex's eyes as he loomed over Raymond, whose entire body quaked in terror. One arm dangled uselessly, shattered by Alex's impossible strength.

Cold sweat rolled down Raymond's temples, the pain shooting through his bones in relentless waves.

He couldn't wrap his mind around it.

How had this young man crippled him so swiftly-so effortlessly? With a flick?

"W-who are you?" Raymond choked out, voice raw with panic.

All his life, he'd amassed power and influence, yet here he was, reduced to a groveling mess by a single young man's might.

Alex's expression was ice-cold. "You know who I am, Raymond. Stop pretending otherwise."

Every nerve in Raymond's body screamed in agony.

He tried scrambling backward like a wounded animal, breath heaving.

"I-I don't need the miracle pills formula. Just let me go!"

"I offered you a chance," Alex said evenly, his voice hollow. "You spat on it. Now, there's no going back."

Raymond opened his mouth to plead again, but Alex's hand moved in another devastating flick-

CRACK!

Raymond screamed as his other shoulder caved under that terrible force.

Bones splintered, muscle tore, and he collapsed onto the gravel, vision swimming from the shock.

Alex gazed down at him with calm disgust. "You've done enough evil to merit worse. But I'll let you live- provided you pay for everything you've taken from others."

"I-I'll do anything," Raymond stammered, tears pooling in his eyes. "Please..."

Alex snapped his fingers, and from the shadows, a figure from Kingswell appeared-his eyes cold and focused.

"Take him," Alex commanded. "Strip every cent from his accounts, every last piece of property he owns. If he resists-end him."

"Yes, sir." The Kingswell man nodded sharply, then seized Raymond's collar.

Raymond whimpered as he was dragged away like worthless luggage.

No sooner had they taken two steps than a biting voice sliced through the tense air:

"Stop right there! What do you think you're doing?"

Henry Dupont strode into the courtyard, six of female bodyguards flanking him. Shadows etched his face, accentuating the anger twitching in his jaw.

He had watched long enough from the sidelines, hoping Raymond would handle matters himself.

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But now Raymond lay ruined.

You can't just take him," Henry said, addressing the Kingswell man. "Not without my permission."

The Kingswell man cast him a bored glance. "This doesn't concern you. Walk away."

He resumed dragging Raymond toward the gates.

Henry's mouth curved in a derisive grin. "Afraid I have to insist. Release him."

With that, six of Henry's bodyguards-lithe and deadly-fanned out around Alex and the Kingswell operative, forming an unyielding ring.

Their eyes glinted with lethal intent.

Alex studied Henry with mild curiosity. "You work for this man?"

"Work for him?" Henry spat. "He's just another dog on my leash. He and I have...

business. So step aside while you still have the choice."

Alex's face remained unreadable. "And if I say no?"

Henry laughed coldly. "Do you know who my father is? I could have you and your entire family wiped off the map."

He flicked his gaze to his bodyguards. "Break his legs."

They darted in, arms and legs coiling in practiced strikes aimed at crippling Alex.

But before a single blow connected, all six slammed to their knees as if an invisible titan had dropped onto their shoulders.

Shock etched onto each face.

They struggled to breathe, pinned down by an overwhelming pressure they couldn't fathom.

Henry's eyes widened. "You... you dare use trickery on my people?!"

The night glinted across his fist as he swung at Alex's head.

He moved fast-faster than most men his size should.

But Alex merely stepped aside and snatched Henry's punch in midair.

A simple twist of the wrist-

CRACK!

Henry's scream tore through the courtyard. His arm popped out of its socket.

The pain obliterated any semblance of composure he'd tried to maintain.

His mouth hung open, still forming a howl when Alex's palm crashed across his jaw.

The blow sent spit and blood flying; four teeth rattled onto the ground.

Henry collapsed to his knees, face twisted in agony.

"Look who's really on their knees," Alex said quietly, letting Henry's limp arm drop. Chapter 201

Henry's eyes flared with humiliated rage. "Kill him! Kill him now!" he croaked, but none of his guards could move, still crushed under Alex's unseen force.

"Alex's tone grew razor-sharp. "Scream at me again, and you'll join Raymond in the afterlife,"

"You-you bastard!" Henry spat, blood coloring his lips. "Do you have any idea who I am? I'm Henry Dupont, heir of the Chicago Lords! If you harm me-"

"I don't care," Alex cut in, unblinking.

Henry's bravado wavered. "M-my father is one of the five lords of Chicago! You have no idea what they can do. They have armies, influence"

He paused, spotting a flicker of uncertainty in Alex's eyes.

Beside him, Raymond mustered the last of his strength to speak up.

"Kid, don't do this," Raymond rasped. "You have no clue who you're crossing. The Chicago Lords could crush Vancouver. Hell, not even Jericho Kane would dare provoke them."

Henry, emboldened, managed a shaky grin. "Listen to him. The Chicago Lords own everything from the highways to the politicians. One snap of their fingers- people vanish."""

A flicker of recognition seemed to darken Alex's gaze.

Then he chuckled-a low, mirthless sound.

"You think that scares me?" he asked, his voice dangerously calm. "I could kill all

of you right now, and no one would ever know."

Henry felt something cold slice through his gut. A thread of real fear slid down his spine, rooting him in place. It dawned on him-Alex wasn't posturing.

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Henry stood tall, even though his knees were practically quivering under Alex's gaze.

Pride wouldn't let him back down. After all, if he caved now he'd never live it down.

"Kill me? Seriously, pal? What, you think you're some hotshot assassin?" Henry spat, his chest heaving.

"Let me tell you something: You so much as graze me the wrong way, and your body's gonna be nothing but confetti."

Alex cocked an eyebrow, then smacked Henry in the back of the head hard enough to make him stagger.

The force felt like a semi-truck plowing through Henry's skull.

"Confetti, huh?" Alex sneered, stepping closer.

"I just about rattled your brain, and guess what? I'm still breathing. Look, you threatened my family, so everything's fair game now. Ready to die? I can make that happen-no problem."

Henry stumbled, heart pounding.

He could practically taste death in the air, and it was nothing like his empty bluster.

Dropping to his knees, he swallowed his shame as if it were a knife scraping down his throat.

"P-please," he stammered, bowing so low that his forehead scraped the pavement.

"I messed up, okay? I butted in where I shouldn't have. Raymond-do whatever the hell you want with him. I won't interfere."

On the inside, Henry was burning.

This was a humiliation so foul it made his
eyes water.

No way was he letting it slide. His thirst for revenge was turning into an obsession, but for now, he'd eat the dirt.

He'd be back.

Alex eyed him with a mix of disgust and boredom.

breathing

"Fine," he muttered. "Killing you here would be a waste of time. I don't need a horde of Chicago Lo down my neck. It's just disgusting, finding a pack of filthy dogs in front of your house just because you kicked the dirty puppy."

"Go on, crawl back under whatever rock you came from."

Alex released his aura, and in an instant, six bodyguards releasing from the weight that pushing them-they bolted to Henry's side and hauled their battered young master into a gleaming black limousine.

Yet, Henry didn't forget to slap each of the six bodyguards, shouting, "How can you all be so useless!" before stepping into the black limousine as it began to

move.

He thrust his head out the window, his eyes wild, his body trembling with fury. "You're dead, you hear me? I'll make sure of it!"

But the car sped off before Alex could respond. He just shrugged, stuffing his hands into his jacket pockets.

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"What a joke," Alex mumbled. "I've met brats in preschool with more backbone."

Ramond's face looking pale and miserable, realizing he'd just lost every last lifeline.

If he had known where that chase for easy money would lead, he might've thought twice.

The Lancaster Mansion

Sophia's return, by taxi no less, threw her family into a frenzy.

"Sophia!" Florence shrieked, nearly tripping over the doorframe. "Oh, thank goodness you're alright! We've been tearing our hair out!"

"Sis, did those cops rough you up? Did they lock you in some filthy cell?" Jack chimed in, his voice dripping with exaggerated concern.

They crowded around her like she'd come back from the grave.

In truth, they had spent a small fortune trying to bail her out-neither bribes nor connections had yielded any results.

Seeing Sophia walk in of her own accord, with the very credit card they'd loaded up to free her, was downright baffling.

"Mother, Jack... I'm fine, really." Sophia forced a smile, though her nerves were still raw from the ordeal.

Florence's face hardened. "This is all Alex's fault, isn't it? That lowlife drags you into trouble every time he shows his face."

Jack threw his hands up in theatrical disgust. "Can't believe you got sucked into his mess again, Sis. You've gotta cut ties before he makes us his personal scapegoat."

Sophia sighed. "You've got it wrong," she said, voice subdued but firm. "He was framed. He never committed any crime."

Florence and Jack practically rolled their eyes in unison.

"Sure he was," Florence snapped. "If he was so squeaky clean, why'd the authorities pounce on him in the first place?"

Jack smirked. "Exactly. You don't see them picking up random saints off the street for a little friendly chat."

Sophia saw no point in arguing. They wouldn't budge.

"If you ask me," Florence chimed in, her tone turning sticky-sweet, "Charles is a better match for you. The minute he heard you were in trouble, he ran around pulling strings to save you. Now that's what I call a real man."

Sophia suppressed a shudder at the mention of Charles's name. The living room felt suddenly colder.

"That's right, Sis," Jack said enthusiastically. "If it wasn't for Charles, you'd be rotting in a cell. You owe him big time."

"Charles?" Sophia asked, genuinely puzzled. "He helped?"

"Who else? He's a Kingston," Jack continued. "Probably got his old man, Sir Alfred, to yank some levers behind the scenes. Bam-your cell door swung open." Sophia's thoughts spun as she tried connecting the dots.

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She remembered Kelly and even Jasmine pitching in, but maybe that was all thanks to Charles making calls behind the curtains.

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Sophia, you need to be grateful," Florence prodded, eyes gleaming with expectation.

"Show Charles you appreciate what he did. Why not call him up, ask him out for a day on the town?"

Sophia forced another wobbly smile. "I'll think about it."

But her mind couldn't keep from drifting to someone else entirely.

Meanwhile, Alex got a call from Ruth, asking him to check out the orphanage rebuild in what used to be the Vancouver slum-a stretch of broken-down buildings now nicknamed the Heart Harmony Area.

Walking through the dusty streets, Alex noticed the subtle improvements.

Construction crews hammered away 24/7.

Once desperate locals now had jobs and a glimmer of hope.

The raw smell of fresh cement mingled with ancient, crumbling brick.

He felt an odd attachment to this place, like leaving would be the same as turning his back on Ruth and Josephine.

He couldn't leave until they were safe and comfortable-until that old debt in his heart was settled.

And then there was Sophia, an enigma that kept gnawing at him whenever he let his guard down.

Wanting a place to refine his elixirs-and to offer some help to those who needed it most-Alex dialed his personal concierge.

"Master Alex? How can I assist you?" Julia's voice sounded crisp and ready.

"I'm going to open a clinic near the orphanage. Somewhere small, but close."

"There's an old medical building a block over. It's been abandoned for years. If you'd like, we can renovate it immediately."

Alex felt a spark of satisfaction. "Do it," he said simply.

A Few Days Later, round-the-clock workers got the clinic up and running with astonishing speed

By the time Alex showed up to inspect it on opening day, the building looked brand new.

He hadn't invited anyone to celebrate the occasion, preferring a quiet, functional start. But someone else had different ideas.

Leaning against the front door was Jasmine, arms folded over her chest, one eyebrow arched in playful disapproval.

"You really know how to bruise a girl's ego," she said dryly "Opening your own clinic and not a peep to your friend?"

Alex exhaled a heavy sigh. "I'm sorry. It's just... not exactly a grand gala event."

"Mmm-hmm." Jasmine tapped her foot. "So, how're you making it up to me?" "I'll buy you dinner?" Alex offered uncertainly, almost wincing.

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“That's cute,” she replied, rolling her eyes. “But also tragically predictable.”

Al shrugged, genuinely at a loss. "Okay, so what do you want?"

She said nothing. Instead, she pressed her lips together in a silent command,

then pointed to those same lips- rosy, pouty, and waiting.

The air around them suddenly felt charged.

Alex could practically feel his pulse thumping in his ears. Jasmine just tilted her

head, daring him to make a move.

And in that heady moment, the world around them seemed to hold its breath- uncertain whether Alex would cross that invisible line or let the tension snap right

then and there.

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Chapter 203

Alex stood in the dimly lit alley, arms stiff at his sides, completely paralyzed by Jasmine's audacious invitation.

She stood inches from him, eyes squeezed shut, lips pursed like she was about to deliver the world's most exasperated kiss.

"Are you kidding me right now?" he blurted, heart hammering. "What's wrong with your mouth? Need me to check or something?"

Jasmine cracked an eye open, her mouth twisting into a smirk that sparkled with wicked amusement.

"I'm letting you kiss me, genius," she muttered. "Don't tell me you're too thickheaded to figure that out."

Alex's jaw dropped.

He was sure he looked like a landed fish gasping for air.

"You're messing with me," he rasped, eyes darting away. "This can't be good." Jasmine rolled her eyes so hard he half expected to hear a clicking sound. "It's not my fault you're clueless. I'm practically giving it away here."

"Look," Jasmine hissed, leaning in closer, to Alex "I'm doing this once. And if you don't take it now, then consider that your final chance gone-forever."

Nearby, a scruffy homeless man snickered, wagging a dirt-caked finger at Alex. "Hey, buddy! If you're too much of a spineless wimp to take that kiss, I'll step right in. Ain't every day a woman like that offers to swap spit."

Alex whipped around, face ablaze. "Shut your mouth, old man. Unless you want me to test out how far I can throw someone."

The homeless man threw his hands up, cackling. "Oh, big words from the doc who's too petrified to lock lips with a pretty lady."

"Do you have a death wish?" Alex hissed back, voice shaking with poorly concealed nerves. "Or are you just bored out of your mind?"

The homeless man barked another laugh.

"This is better than TV. By the way, Doc, I'm still waiting on that free medical treatment you promised. Can we speed up the smooch so you can patch me up? I've been waiting here all day!"

"What's your problem?" Alex growled.

"Hunger, obviously." The man's stomach rumbled on cue, and he grinned shamelessly.

Jasmine tossed him a box of bread, not even looking his way. "Here. Brand new, so don't complain."

The man caught it with a dramatic swoop and sniffed the contents with glee.

"Ah, that's the stuff! Thanks, gorgeous. But c'mon now, keep pestering that coward-he might keel over any second from sheer embarrassment."

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"Beat it!" Alex snapped, raising a fist as though daring him to say one more word.

Tha homeless man shuffled off, singing under his breath, He's gonna break soooooon... oh, I can see him crackin'

Reluctantly, Alex's eyes flicked back to Jasmine-who stood there, lips perked like a mocking invitation.

A fresh wave of panic washed over him; he could almost hear his heartbeat echo through the alley.

She was mesmerizing.

Her skin glowed under the flickering streetlight, and those cherry-red lips threatened to unravel every shred of composure he had.

"All right, you insufferable show-off," Jasmine finally sighed, hands on her hips..

"We done with the theatrics? Because I've got actual problems to discuss. I'm not just here to toy with you. Well, maybe a little."

She winked and, without waiting for a response, grabbed him by the wrist. "Come on, let's get out of this dump. My flowers are drying out, and we have business to handle."

She dragged him toward his new clinic, the car horns and hollers of passing pedestrians fading in the background.

Jasmine kicked the door open and breezed inside like she owned the place, depositing a bucket of fresh flowers into a pot by the wall.

"Tea?" Alex managed, still trying to steady his breathing.

"Sure," she said curtly, eyes fixed on him. He handed her a cup, his fingers trembling.

She noticed, and a small, devilish grin tugged at her lips.

"So, here's why I'm really here. Charles is screwing up big time-worse than ever. He poached almost the entire workforce from Kingston Pharmaceuticals. There's talk he's teaming up with Jericho Kane down in Vermont. They stole our precious long-life research, and I'm basically in crisis mode here."

"That's not good," Alex replied lamely. He cleared his throat, trying to summon his professional voice. "Uh, do you... need me to do something?"

She nodded, a glint of desperation shining in her eyes. 1

"I need your help, and I need it yesterday. You're the best doctor I know, so... become our h
ary chief physician. In name, at least. Just until I can bring in someone else. But as soon as I find a permanent replacement, you're off the hook if you don't want
it."

Alex mulled it over, the weight of it pressing on his chest. "You think I'd be good at that? I mean, I just opened this clinic..."

Jasmine bit her lip, and for the briefest moment, she looked almost vulnerable.

"If you don't help me, Jericho's gonna steamroll Kingston Pharmaceuticals and take control of Vancouver. Everything is on the line."

He let out a frustrated sigh, running a hand through his hair. The tension in the room was thicker than day-old grease. Finally, he nodded. "Fine. I'll try. But no guarantees. This might be way over my head."

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Her face split into a dazzling smile. "Thank you! Seriously, Alex, I owe you one. Now let's get moving, You're coming with me-there's a whole stack of paperwork waiting at my place. And I can show you exactly what's going on, how you can help, and maybe... maybe I'll even let you finally earn that kiss."

She grabbed him by the corner of his shirt and dragged him but the clinic door, her confidence making Alex's head spin.

Outside, the homeless man reappeared, bread crumbs dusting his chin.

He shot Alex a mocking salute. "Have fun, Romeo! Don't forget to close your eyes
and pucker up, or she might never let you hear the end of it!"

Alex glared daggers, but he couldn't help the embarrassed flush rising to his cheeks.

Jasmine snorted, yanked him into her car, and they sped off into the electric glow of the city.

He looked at Jasmine and thought about how different she was from Sophia.

"How is it that some people can hear you speak a thousand words and still not understand you, while others can understand you without you even saying a word?"

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Ay hour later, Alex and Jasmine strolled through the grand double doors of Kingston Mansion as if it were a casual "Sunday jaunt.

At the center of the lavish sitting room sat Charles, flanked by Jessica (Jasmine's mother) and an elegant old man with a posture so rigid it might crack.

The old man's eyes roved over everything with quiet calculation.

Jasmine's heartbeat thudded in her ears, but she managed a cold smile. "Mother, you summoned me. Spill."

Jessica's expression was as frosty as the marble floors beneath them. "I want no family drama right now-only professionalism. Can you do that, Jasmine?"

Jasmine turned to Charles and raised an eyebrow. "I assume you have some brilliance to share, big brother?"

Charles steepled his fingers in theatrical calm, but his tone snapped like a whip.

"Let's skip the niceties. You and I both own shares of Kingston Pharmaceuticals, but the bulk belongs to Mother's side of the family. They've appointed me to evaluate your... performance." His smugness dripped from each word like venom.

Jasmine scoffed, tossing her hair back. "Sure. since you can't rise to the top on your own, you're taking my companies down one by one. How original."

Jessica cleared her throat, eyes narrowing with disapproval. "Jasmine, watch your mouth."

"That's me being polite," Jasmine retorted. "Let's cut to the chase. What do you want?"

Charles spread his arms wide in an ostentatious show of concern. "Oh, many things. But first, let's address Lydia's death." He paused, letting the words hang in the air like a noose.

"I'm here to find out why you killed her."

Jasmine's eyes flashed with fury. "And you actually have the nerve to ask? Lydia tried to murder me, Charles./ Would you prefer I sent her a fruit basket?"

He offered a mocking shrug. "Families lie. Witnesses vanish. I'm not here as your dear brother anymore. I represent our mother's family, and they demand answers. If that's inconvenient for you... tough."

Cold anger pulsed in Jasmine's veins.

She hated how slick he'd become-slippery as a rattlesnake, striking when you least expected.

"I see you've really gotten a taste for poison, Charles," she said, her voice husky with contempt.

"Oh, I've been devouring it whole," he agreed smoothly.

Then, turning to the old man, he added, "And while we're digging up corpses, let's also discuss the rumor about Jericho Kane poaching our employees. A chunk of our workforce-and the top-secret skincare research-just up

and vanished. Care to explain, dear sister? Word on the street is they ran because they couldn't stand your leadership."

Jasmine's jaw clenched, refusing to take the bait.

Charles pressed on, clearly enjoying the friction.

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"Kingston Pharmaceuticals' pride and joy, SkinDew Essence, was supposed to conquer the market," he explained, leaning back like a man reading from a teleprompter.

The family's furious at this colossal failure. Hence, our special guest today-Mr. Fleming."

He gestured to the old man, whose eyes gleamed like a hawk's. "Mr. Fleming here

is a top-tier researcher. From now on, he's the chief physician of Kingston Pharmaceuticals."

Jasmine slipped her arm through Alex's. "How thoughtful, Charles. But I've already found our new chief physician."

Charles's mask of cool fell for a split second. "What? You can't just"

She smirked. "I can and I have. Mr. Fleming, or whoever hes, won't be needed."

Charles let out a sharp, mocking laugh. "You still believe you're in control here? Dear sister, I've warned you before this is what the stakeholders demand, and I'll remind you once more."

"You're already engaged, or have you conveniently forgotten? If you insist on flaunting this lowlife, you'll disgrace us all."

Jasmine snorted. "Engaged? Don't make me laugh. I never agreed to that farce. If you're so keen on the Koch family, marry them yourself."

Jessica leaped to her feet, her fury coiling through every rigid muscle.

"Enough! The arrangement is set. End of story. And you-"she pointed a trembling finger at Alex, "-why are you here?"

Jasmine, ignoring her mother, tightened her grip on Alex's arm. "Father left me this mansion, and I'll invite whoever I want. Also, Alex is the best candidate for chief physician. Period."

Charles exchanged a scandalized look with Jessica, then zeroed in on Alex like a vulture.

"Are you kidding me, Jasmine?" he barked, his voice slicing through the room like broken glass. "This clown? This back-alley miracle worker you dragged in like some charity case?"

He scoffed, leaning in, eyes gleaming with venom. "Sure, I'll give him this-he stitched you back together, big deal. That doesn't make him a goddamn scientist."

He jabbed a finger toward Alex with theatrical disgust.

"This guy has no degree, no papers, no published research hell, he probably doesn't even know how to spell pharmacokinetics. And this is who you want leading our research department?"

A cruel smirk curled across his face as he turned his gaze to Alex.

"Tell me, Alex-do you feel important now?" he sneered.

"Leeching off Jasmine's success like a tick fattened on someone else's blood? Crawling into her favor, hoping to ride her coattails to fame and relevance? How pathetic. No title, no pedigree, no credibility-just a stray dog sniffing around the banquet table, hoping for scraps."

His voice turned colder, more cutting. "You should be thanking her, really. Without Jasmine, you're nothing but a glorified street medic playing dress-up in a clinic no one even respects. And now you think you're suddenly chief material? You're a joke."

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He sat back with a derisive chuckle, lips curled in contempt "Tell me, doc-how does it feel to wear someone else's crown when you haven't earned a single jewel in it?"

Alex stood rigid, not rising to the insults.

Charles continued, teeth bared in a wolfish grin. "So silent, doc? Cat got your tongue, or maybe you're just too stupid to speak?"

Alex's eyes narrowed. "I didn't realize you asked me a question."

Charles's laughter was more scorn than humor. "You're pathetic. All right, I'll phrase it loud and clear-did you kill Lydia?"

Alex didn't waver. "Yes, but she-"

Charles slammed his hand on the table, cutting him off with a thunderous crack that echoed off the mansion's vaulted ceilings.

"Perfect. You admit it. Makes my job a hell of a lot easier. Lydia was a pillar of this family, and you're going to atone for that."

From beneath the table, Charles yanked out a small urn.

He slammed it onto the polished wood with a force that set the teacups rattling.

A hush swallowed the room. The tension was so thick, every breath felt like a chokehold.

"Her ashes," Charles growled, his eyes burning into Alex. "Bow your head and apologize-to her, to this family, to everyone you've disgraced. And cut your arms to show your regret."

Alex's face went taut. "What the hell-"

"Don't act clueless," Charles spat, shoving the urn forward. "You snuffed out a life, and I won't let Lydia's death be dismissed like some trivial footnote. Show some damn remorse-with your arms."

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Charles made it painfully clear he was out for blood this time, determined to humiliate Alex in front of the entire "Kingston family.

He leaned back in his chair, sneering as though he owned the room.

"So, genius," Alex drawled sarcastically.

"You're telling me this Lydia-the one who tried to murder Jasmine and backstab Jasmine Kingstons-is the same woman you wanted me to just let walk free? Are you off your meds, or do you have a permanent vacancy sign dangling in that empty head of yours?"

Charles's face twitched, eyes glinting with dangerous rage,

"How dare you question me? Even if she's a traitor, Lydia was one of ours. Who gave you the right to kill her?"

"The Kingstons handle Kingston business, not some no-name punk like you! Ever think of choosing your battles correctly before butting into our family affairs?"

Alex scoffed, a sharp laugh slicing through the tense air.

"Oh, sure. I help clear out a scumbag who tried to assassinate your own flesh and blood, and instead of thanks, I get scolded. You Kingstons sure know how to roll out the red carpet of gratitude."

Charles's lip curled in disgust. "I don't have the patience to keep yapping. You want to make amends for offing Lydia? Then bow down and apologize to her... right now."

Alex raised an eyebrow, half-grinning. "Or what?"

Charles slammed his fist against the table, rattling teacups until one shattered at his feet.

"Or I'll pulverize your legs until you're crawling on the floor like a worm."

"Oh, how original," Alex deadpanned, eyes cold. "Let's see you try."

Charles lunged up in fury, face flushed. "Don't push me, jackass!"

Before he could charge, Jasmine stormed in, hair whipping around like a war banner.

Her voice was raw with rage. "Charles Kingston, you touch one hair on his head, and I'll make sure you never walk straight again!"

Charles froze, astonished that his usually poised sister had unleashed her fury so openly.

"Are you really turning against your own brother for this worthless boy toy?"

Jasmine's chest heaved with anger. "He saved my life, Charles. You so much as graze him, I'll end you myself. Yes, end you-consider this your final warning, you twisted creep."

Charles's scowl deepened, taking on an ugly shape.

"You're bluffing," he snapped, voice brittle with forced confidence-but the crack in his tone gave him away.

The words came out sharp, but his eyes betrayed him-wide, watchful, haunted by the creeping fear. just maybe... she wasn't bluffing at all.

It maybe...

"But fine. Let's put Lydia's case aside for a damn minute whatever. I still refuse to watch you elect this poser as

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chief physician when he's got zero qualifications."

Jasmine's voice dripped with ice. "His skills are more than enough. It's not your call to make."

Charles snorted. "Oh, but it is. This is about the family's business. You stand in the way, and don't blame me when I drag you in front of the board."

Jasmine crossed her arms defiantly. "Go ahead, see if I care

Suddenly, Jessica-who had been quietly observing-stepped forward.

"Let's not forget Skin Dew Essence's research document leak. We need a chief who can handle that catastrophe. Frankly, Alex is too green. Mr. Fleming would be a safer bet."

"Safer?" Jasmine shot back. "I've seen Alex's medical prowess up close, and he's far from incompetent."

Charles, catching the whiff of an opening, spread his hands in faux innocence. "Well then, how about a little contest? Let the best man's skills do the talking."

Jasmine's stomach twisted; she smelled a setup.

'When the snare is laid within your own house, even the lion must tread cautiously.'

Sure enough, Mr. Fleming, a sly grin creeping up his lips, chimed in. "Hmm, a typical medical duel is so dull, wouldn't you agree? Why not spice things up with a test of microbiology?"

Alex cocked his head, unimpressed. "I'm listening."

Mr. Fleming's eyes gleamed with a dark excitement.

"Simple," he said smoothly. "We each gather a bacterial culture on the spot, swap

samples, and ingest them. The first person to create an effective antidote and cure themselves wins. If you lose... well, you risk becoming a cripple

or dying a gruesome death."

Jasmine's eyes widened in horror.

"That's insane! You're basically throwing your life away if something goes sideways."

Mr. Fleming laughed-cold, confident, utterly unfazed.

"High stakes, high reward. Unless, of course, someone's too scared to play with the big boys."

Charles stepped forward then, his words laced with venom.

"Your call, boy toy. Either forfeit now-give up the chief position, bow down, and apologize to Lydia's ashes... oh, and hand over an arm as compensation—"

Alex's eyes flashed with dangerous amusement.

"We're talking about guzzling down some nasty bacteria, right? That's child's play. I'm all in. On one condition

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He paused, letting the tension coil tight in the room.

"Charles here has to drink my bacteria sample... and this old man can try to save his sorry ass."

The room plunged into stunned silence.

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Chapter 205

Charles's face flushed crimson, fists clenching in rage, but curling at the edges of his mouth.

You wanted to see me squirm, Charles?" Alex said, voice

"Congratulations-you just volunteered to be my personal accept?"

Chapter 206

Chapter 206

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Chapter 206

Charles slammed his palms on the gleaming marble table so hard that everyone in the room flinched.

He fixed Alex with a scornful glare, lips twisted into a sneer that practically reeked of condescension.

"Cut the crap!" he thundered, his tone rolling through the air like distant thunder.

"Don't you dare compare your lowly peasant life to mine. Seriously, take a good look at yourself in the mirror-if you can stand the sight."

Alex leaned back against his chair, crossing his arms with the kind of ease that only comes from complete self-confidence.

"You always this full of hot air, Charles? If you're too much of a coward to accept my challenge, just get on your knees, admit you're a spineless poser, and apologize with one of your arms. Maybe I'll find it in my heart to forgive your sorry behind."

Charles's face went red as a brick, anger roaring inside him.

"You" he sputtered, seething so hard he could barely spit the words out.

For a moment, he seemed torn.

As the wealthy heir to the Kingston fortune, there was no upside to risking his life against some "filthy nobody."

But he sure as hell couldn't back down without losing every last shred of dignity.

Just then, Mr. Fleming-an older man wearing gold-rimmed glasses that screamed 'professional lab rat'- stepped in, voice calm but firm.

"Rest assured, Mr. Kingston. My skill in concocting bacterial cultures is unmatched in Vancouver. Whatever vile brew this peon produces, I can promise it won't harm you.

Charles narrowed his eyes. "You're that confident?"

Mr. Fleming puffed out his chest, pride oozing from every pore. "I've spent years perfecting my craft. No one in this city can match my formula."

Charles let a harsh laugh tear from his throat.

"Perfect. Sounds like we have ourselves a deal. Alex, if it's my life you want on the table, then it's all in! But I'll make damn sure you regret ever crossing me."

At one corner stood Jasmine-watching with wide, worried eyes-and at another corner, Jessica, sporting a half-smirk, clearly entertained by the idea that Alex might end up permanently out of her hair if he lost.

Within minutes, Alex and Mr. Fleming had each dispatched their subordinates to gather supplies: strange powders, murky liquids, and containers that looked like something out of a twisted horror film.

Jasmine edged closer to Alex, her voice a hushed whisper.

"Are you absolutely sure about this? These things are dangerous and you know Charles would love thing more than to see you brought to your knees."

Alex flashed a devil-may-care grin. "Don't sweat it. Trust me, I've had nightmares scarier than anything these clowns can cook up.""

1/3

Chapter 206

Charles, hovering nearby, jeered loudly, "Less talk, more mixing, jerk! Unless you're ready to run off like a little pup with your tail between your legs."

Alex rolled his eyes. "Keep your shirt on, Charles. Wouldn't want you passing out from all that self-righteous rage before we begin."

Mr. Fleming was already moving his hands in a blur, mixing this chemical with that, swirling the beaker so fast that onlookers felt their heads spin.

The results soon filled a small vial with a thick, pitch-black liquid that reeked like decaying meat.

When it hit the table with a dull thud, it seemed to suck the light out of the air.

Charles smirked and shoved the vial toward Alex with a triumphant sneer. "Here you go, jerk. Care to prove you're not just all bark?"

Jasmine went pale at the sight. "Alex, don't do this," she whispered urgently. "It's obviously dangerous-deadly poison. There's no way anyone who drinks that is going to come out alive."

But Alex, never one to shy away from theatrics, snatched the vial and tipped it back in a single gulp.

The liquid slid down his throat, and the entire room seemed to freeze in place.

Charles's smug grin faltered, confusion spreading across his features like a storm cloud.

"Well?" Jasmine blurted. "How-how do you feel?"

With a shrug, Alex clicked his tongue against his teeth. "Bitter aftertaste. Kinda like cheap coffee gone stale. But I've had worse."

Charles barked out a laugh to hide the tremor of unease creeping down his spine.

"Stop acting tough, you arrogant piece of trash. If you're moments from dropping dead, we'll be sure to bury you with the rest of the gutter scum."

Mr. Fleming adjusted his glasses, studying Alex closely. "You're telling me you don't feel any pain? Any burning in your stomach? Numbness in your limbs?"

"Please," Alex said, rolling his eyes again. "Your 'deadly' concoction is child's play. I'd almost think you tossed in some vitamins, it's so tame. Is this your big, fearsome *Bacillus anthracis* brew? Because I'll be real with you: if that's anthrax, you completely botched the formula."

Fleming's jaw slackened. "How-how did you know it was *Bacillus anthracis*? You must have peeked at me while I was mixing-there's no other explanation!"

Charles slammed his fists on the table again, rattling plates and glasses. "You sneaky bastard! If you cheated, I swear I'll-"

"Cheated?" Alex's laugh was low and mocking.

"I didn't need to. Anyone who actually understands lethal bacteria can spot the mistakes in your process from a mile away. Next time you want to kill somebody, try not to screw up the recipe."

Charles's fury was at a fever pitch. "You watch your mouth, you worthless cockroach! Mr. Fleming the most talented bacteriologist in this entire city-no, the entire country!"

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"Well," Alex shot back, "either you hired a hack or he's past his prime, because that sludge did nothing but leave

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a bad taste in my mouth. Don't you think it's time you gave

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hapter 207

Chapter 207

Hold on a damn second," Mr. Fleming snarled, his eyes bulging with disbelief.

"Are you honestly expecting me to swallow the idea that a there human can diagnose a bacterial culture just by tasting it?"

"This is complete nonsense! You must be cheating, you filthy brat. There's no way you'd know my culture is *Bacillus anthracis* unless you peeked at my notes!"

Alex merely rolled his eyes, looking bored.

"Peek? Right. Because the smell alone wasn't a dead giveaway. Let me spell it out for you, Professor Genius-I could practically sniff out your half-baked anthrax the second you brought it in."

"And the fact you tried to pass this off like some big deal? You're not even professional enough to mutate it properly. It's so basic, even a bored middle- schooler could've whipped this up in science class."

Mr. Fleming's pride stung like a hornet's sting.

The smugness in Alex's voice was grating, and it took everything for him not to let his anger bubble over.

But when Alex listed every single ingredient of Fleming's formula-down to the last droplet-and rattled off each step in the creation process, the old scientist couldn't hide his shock.

"H-how the hell..." Mr. Fleming's voice trembled. "You... you deduced all that just by smelling it?"

"Huh," Alex scoffed, "I guess you didn't realize a nose could be more accurate than your entire underachieving lab crew. It's gonna be another century before you figure that one out."

Unable to retort, Mr. Fleming stood there fuming, sweat beading on his forehead.

Meanwhile, Charles Kingston lurked on the sidelines, arms folded.

He looked from Fleming to Alex and back again, a growing sense of worry needling at him.

Alex had literally tasted anthrax and was still standing-minutes had passed, and he was moving around the room and heading to the restroom like nothing had happened.

"What's going on?" Charles muttered under his breath. "There's no sign he's even remotely sick. That's... not possible, right?"

Mr. Fleming took a steadying breath, trying to mask his own unease.

"Calm yourself, Mr. Kingston. The kid's playing tough, but anthrax will rip him apart soon enough. No one shrugs it off without an antidote. Trust me-he'll be crawling and begging any moment."

Charles exhaled slowly, relieved by the man's confidence. All right. Good. Then let's just get this over with."

Right on cue, Alex strode back into the room, a small bottle in his hand.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, folks," he drawled, holding up a container of foul-smelling, yellowish liquid that let off visible steam.

"I just finished making my own culture. Thought we could compare notes."

Charles recoiled at the stench. "What the hell is in that? Ugh, it smells like rotting garbage dipped in old socks."

Alex shrugged with practiced indifference.

Maybe it's not a five-star bouquet, but I can assure you the flavor profile's... unforgettable. Now, you don't have "to drink it, of course."

Asly smirk curved his lips. "But you did say you wanted a fair competition, so you're not... chickening out, right, Mr. Kingston?"

Jasmine, who had been watching from the corner, leaned in with a sweet but scathing smile. "Surely the great Charles Kingston isn't going to back out over a little stink, is he?"

Charles sucked in a sharp breath and looked over at Mr. Fleming, "Well?" he hissed, eyes darting nervously.

Mr. Fleming placed a hand on Charles's shoulder, as though bestowing some grand benediction.

"Relax, Mr. Kingston. I happen to have a universal bacterial antidote that'll work within five minutes. Let the little upstart have his fun."

Straightening himself, Charles snatched the bottle and pinched his nose.

"You want drama?" he snapped, voice dripping with disdain. "You got it." Then, in one swift move, he chugged the contents.

Almost instantly, Charles gagged, a bitter, rancid taste clawing at his throat.

His eyes watered uncontrollably, and he half-choked, ready to spew the mess across the floor.

"Uh-uh," Alex said, wagging a finger. "Swallow every last drop, buddy. Wouldn't want you cheating, now, would we? Well, you can puke it out-but that'll mean you lose."

Charles glared at him, cheeks flushing. With monumental effort, he forced the putrid liquid down.

The aftertaste felt like molten slime coating the back of his teeth.

Spluttering, Charles managed to choke out, "W-what the hell is this revolting concoction? It tastes like you scooped it off the bottom of a dumpster!"

"Oh, nothing much," Alex replied, brushing imaginary dust off his sleeve. "Just a little golden juice and golden cake."

Fleming's eyes widened at that, and Jessica raised an eyebrow from across the room.

Charles blinked in confusion, still trying to compose himself. "Golden... what? Don't get cryptic with me-what does that mean?"

In a tone so casual it verged on flippant, Alex explained, "Oh, just your run-of-the-mill 'fecal fluid.' In other words, you just swallowed human excrement, Charles. Fresh from the source, as they say."

The color drained from Charles's face so fast it was almost comical.

He retched, turning away, but there was no escaping it now!

The foul brew was already down his throat, latching onto his insides.

"I think," Jasmine said with an air of mock sympathy, "my big brother just found

out what 'eat shit' really means, in a most literal sense. Didn't see that on any fancy restaurant menu, did you, Charles?"

"Damn

you, Alex!" Charles roared, incensed. "You tricked me into-"

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Chapter 207.

"Tricked you?" Alex interrupted with a sarcastic laugh.

We

were told to make a bacterial culture, remember? I used the ingredients of my choice. I didn't force you to drink it... you did that all on your own. But hey, if the shoe fits."

He leaned in. "Seems like a perfect match for all the crap that comes out of your mouth on a daily basis."

Charles's hands shook. He wanted to lunge at Alex, to throttle that smug grin off his face. "When my anthrax kicks in, you'll be on your knees, you hear me? You'll beg for mercy!"

Alex offered a nonchalant shrug. "We'll see which bacteria does its job first. You might want to have your precious Mr. Fleming look into my recipe, though, just in case he needs to whip up a miracle cure."

"Now!" Charles practically screamed. "Give me that universal antidote you promised, Mr. Fleming!"

"Of course, Mr. Kingston, of course. Let me check the bacteria he created first," Fleming said, shooting a poisonous glare at Alex before turning his attention to Charles.

He lifted the bottle that still contained Alex's putrid mixture, brought it close to his nose, and took a quick sniff.

His expression soured.

Wanting to confirm his suspicions, he dipped a finger into the dregs, and for a second, thought he might not need to taste it.

But Charles was already looking at him-and if looks could kill-he said coldly, "If you don't damn taste it, I will kill you."

In Vancouver, who dared to refuse the Kingstons? It was the same as signing a death warrant.

He finally gave in and had a taste of the mix-golden juice and cake.

A single bead of sweat rolled down Fleming's temple.

His face went whiter than a corpse.

"What's wrong?" Charles demanded, terror gnawing at him.

Fleming's voice emerged in a ragged whisper, "Neisseria meningitidis... The lethal kind. The poor bastard who ingests it can die within six to twenty-four hours. My god... how in the hell did this kid craft such a deadly strain so easily?"

Charles's world spun. 1

He teetered on his feet, chest tightening in panic as the horrifying reality sank in.

And across the room, Alex stood watching them both with a razor-sharp smile.

Checkmate.

The Almighty Dominance - kidnapped 208[777 words]

Chapter 208

Chapter 208

"Neisseria meningitidis."

"What the hell is that, a spell from Harry Potter?" Charles snapped, his voice already tinged with panic.

Mr. Fleming adjusted his glasses with that smug little twitch of his lips.

"It's a bacteria, Charles. A nasty little bastard that sets your brain and spine on fire. Meningitis. Blood infection. Seizures. Hallucinations. You name it—it's a party in your skull."

"Oh, delightful," Charles groaned, clutching his neck. "My brain feels like it's being skewered by hot forks already."

"Classic early symptoms: fever, neck stiffness, nausea, photophobia, altered mental state..." Fleming rattled it off like he was reading a damn shopping list, but there was a flicker of fear underneath his calm

Alex sipped his tea, legs crossed like he was watching a comedy show. "Wow. Bravo, Professor Pathogen. Remind me to nominate you for a Nobel Prize in stating the obvious"

Fleming shot him a glare, but Alex didn't even flinch. "But it's funny, isn't it? So close, yet you still misdiagnosed your own death trap. Again."

Charles grunted, "Will you both stop pissing at each other like dogs? I'm the one dying here!"

He doubled over, grimacing. "Shit! It's getting worse!"

"I'm working on it," Fleming said, rushing to his little lab setup like a frazzled meth cook.

"Work faster!" Charles screamed, sweat pouring down his face, his skin pale like milk left out in the sun. "It's like a goddamn drill is burrowing into my skull!"

Meanwhile, Alex... still calm. Still sipping tea. Not a single twitch of discomfort. "Wait-why aren't you affected?" Charles snapped, blinking through the pain.

"I ate the bacteria," Alex said flatly, setting his teacup down.

"Digested it. Neutralized it. Like a goddamn apex predator."

"What?! You didn't even do anything!"

"I don't need to do anything when I'm five steps ahead." He leaned forward with a slow, wicked smile.

"Maybe focus on your own pathetic situation. You've got maybe two hours left before that bacteria starts tearing through your brain like a blender. After that, bleeding from every hole in your face. Eyes. Nose. Mouth. Maybe even your ass if you're lucky."

"You son of a-" Charles couldn't finish. He screamed, clawing at his temples.

"I've got the antidote!" Fleming came sprinting back like a mad scientist, holding a glowing white vial like it was the Holy Grail.

Charles grabbed it and downed it like whiskey.

For a moment-silence. Then-vomit. Yellow fluid splattered the floor.

"What the hell, Kingston?! You just puked the antidote!"

1/3

Chapter 208

"I didn't mean to!" Charles cried. "I feel like I'm falling through a blender!"

"You've eaten the real shit and you can't stomach a little serum?!"

"Just give me another dose!" Charles barked, rage flashing in his eyes. Another antidote. Another desperate swallow.

"Still hurts," Charles hissed, gripping the table so hard his knuckles went white. "Feels like my brain's trying to crawl out of my ears."

"That's impossible..." Fleming muttered. "The formula's solid. Even the artificial intelligence signed off on it- wait... unless..."

"Unless you screwed it up," Charles growled.

"No, no, no... wait... this isn't *Neisseria meningitidis*..." Fleming's eyes widened in horror.

"You dumb bastard!" Charles roared. "What the hell did I just drink then-lemon- scented toilet cleaner?!"

Fleming spun on Alex. "What the hell did you put in that bacteria?"

Alex smiled darkly. "Wrong question. The question is-can you cure it? Because if not, you better start planning Mr. Kingston's funeral."

Fleming's hands trembled. "You played dirty."

"Oh, now you're crying about morals?" Alex sneered. "We have a game, remember?"

Fleming's jaw clenched. "Alright. Fine. Let's settle this. Give me your antidote, I'll give you mine. A truce. A tie."

Alex leaned in, smirking like a demon. "I don't do ties."

Fleming stiffened. "Then what do you want?"

Alex pointed at Charles, "According to what you said to me earlier, I want the same back from you. I want you to kneel down before me and give me one of your arms. After that, I'll give you the antidote."

"YOU BASTARD!" Charles exploded.

"Language," Alex mocked. "You're already halfway dead, might as well die with manners."

Fleming snapped, "You've got the bacteria in your system too! Don't think you'll survive this either!"

"Maybe," Alex said, calmly standing. "But let's bet on who hits the coffin first."

"You arrogant-

Alex turned and whispered something to Jasmine by the door. Then walked out. Calm. Unbothered.

"HEY! WHERE THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?! Charles screamed.

"I'm going home to watch a movie," Alex said without looking back. "This show's over."

"Alex!!" Charles's voice cracked like shattered glass.

Jessica rushed in, grabbing Charles as he collapsed again.

And for the first time in a long, long while...

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Chapter 208

Charles was gripped by the fear of death once more.

He had played with Alex a few times, but now it seemed Alex was playing with his life.

Would he really die this time?

Meanwhile, Alex genuinely wondered-"

"Maybe it's better if Charles just dies. Now. And forever."

The Almighty Dominance - kidnapped 209[1,179 words]

Chapter 209

Jessica slammed her hand down on the polished oak table, Her voice echoing through the wide foyer.

"Enough of this!" She glared at Alex, her eyes wild with desperation.

"Hand over the antidote, Alex! We'll count this as our loss, but I won't let Charles die. Not like this."

Alex paused only for a split second, hatred etched into every rigid line of his jaw.

Then he turned away without a word and strode out the grand entrance, his boots pounding hard against the marble floor.

The echo lingered, mocking Jessica's plea.

Jessica's heart sank. She could see it clearly: Alex had no intention of saving Charles.

Charles clutched his side, trembling as unbearable pain crawled through his veins.

Sweat poured down his temples, his face a mask of pure agony.

"I'm sorry!" he shouted, his voice shaking as he fought to stay upright. "Please... just give me the antidote, I swear I won't ever cross your path again!"

His pride-once unshakeable-had shattered under the threat of death.

It took everything in him to spit those words out, to humble himself before someone he'd always treated as beneath him.

But Alex was long gone.

Jasmine stood still, her posture poised, her gaze a bladed edge slicing the thick tension.

Alex just whispered to her,

"In a world that devours the soft-hearted, kindness becomes a liability, and mercy a fatal flaw."

Jessica's eyes snapped to her.

"Jasmine," she yelled, "Give your brother the antidote-now."

Jasmine folded her arms, her sigh carrying a lifetime's worth of frustration.

"Must you always defend Charles, Mother? Even now, when he's the one trying to destroy me?"

Jessica's restraint frayed. "Stop it!" she hissed, turning on her daughter. "He is your brother!"

"Mother," Jasmine demanded, "if you had to choose between me or Charles, who would you save?"

Jessica's voice trembled as she tried to keep control.

"There's no choice to make. You are both my children. I refuse to lose either of you."

A sad, bitter laugh escaped Jasmine's lips. "Funny how you say that, yet every time Charles waves a knife my way, you stay silent. The moment he's the one in trouble, you rush to his side like I'm not even here."

Charles watched them, his face ashen, his breath jagged. "Jasmine," he croaked, "I-I never meant to actually kill you. I only wanted to scare you off."

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Chapter 209

Jasmine turned to him, eyes unyielding. "Spare me the pathetic lies. I might be a 'mere woman' in your eyes, but I'm not stupid."

Jessica cleared her throat, trying to summon authority she barely felt

"Jasmine, what... what do you want?" she asked. It came out quieter than she intended, almost pleading.

Jasmine's voice dropped, cold as steel. "I'll give him one last chance. But if he ever tries to hurt me again, if I even sense danger from him, I'll go for kill. No more family ties, no more mercy."

Charles clutched his head, the bacteria pounding inside his skull. His voice shook with rage and pain. "You... you're threatening me?"

She spun the small glass vial in her hand-the antidote that Alex had secretly slipped her on his way out. Threatening you? Don't flatter yourself. I'm simply returning the favor."

Jessica's voice cracked through the tension, raw and trembling.

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"Jasmine, that's enough. Give Charles the antidote. Now. If he dies, can you live with that on your conscience?"

"If his conscience can bear the thought of murdering me, then mine can just as easily bear the price of returning the favor." Jasmine's lip curled.

"Enough!" Jessica stopped it.

"He started this war-he lost, so he kneels. That's the cost of picking a fight you couldn't finish. Next time, I won't waste mercy. And you," she snapped, turning to her mother with fire in her eyes, "you should've stood between us before Charles tried to put me in a grave. But you didn't. So don't stand there now, pretending you've earned the right to preach morality."

Jessica bristled. "He is your brother," she hissed.

"Not anymore," Jasmine said quietly. "Not after he tried to kill me. Charles started this; now he's on the receiving end, and you're howling in outrage. Tell me, Mother, do you even have a shred of dignity left?"

"You-!" Jessica growled, her composure cracking.

She wanted to tower over her daughter, to use authority to crush this insolence, but she knew the power Jasmine held was all too real-and protected by Alfred, Jessica's husband.

"Answer me," Jessica insisted, forcing a steadiness into her tone that she didn't feel. "Will you give me that antidote, or won't you?"

Jasmine held her gaze, unblinking. "Only if Charles kneels and apologizes. Publicly, sincerely. No half-baked nonsense."

Charles's eyes flashed with fury.

In a single violent shudder, he sank to his knees.

The impact of bone on marble echoed around them. He gritted his teeth, trying to contain the spiral of nausea and pounding in his head.

He aimed a cold, deathly glare at Jasmine.

"Are you prepared for the consequences, sister?" he spat, voice low and venomous. "Because when I stand back up, you'll regret this day."

2/3

Chapter 209

Jasmine regarded him with terrifying calm. "Do it, then. Look at the floor and beg.

Or die on your feet. Your choice,"

"Charles trembled, every nerve in his body screaming in protest.

Pride warred with survival inside him.

After a moment's hesitation, he bowed his head-whether from the raging poison

or the agony of humility, neither Jessica nor Jasmine could be sure.

"Just give him the antidote, Jasmine!" Jessica snapped, her patience shattered. "He's on his knees. Enough is enough."

Jasmine flicked a glance at Charles, taking in the sweat beading on his brow, the tremor in his limbs.

Then, finally, with deliberate slowness, she knelt down and held out the vial.

"If you ever try to kill me again," she whispered, her voice etched with quiet savagery, "I'll make you beg me to finish the job. And I won't be so generous next time."

Charles didn't speak. He clenched the vial in shaking fingers, eyes locked on Jasmine's with pure hatred.

One swallow could save him-yet the taste of humiliation would linger far longer.

The moment he coughed down the antidote, the tension shattered. Jessica collapsed against the wall, relief and rage warring in her eyes.

Jasmine rose to her feet, ignoring her mother's glare.

Without another glance, she turned and stalked away, leaving Charles kneeling, chest heaving, and Jessica torn between two children who had turned into bitter enemies under her own roof.

She hated seeing her son humbled like this, but she also saw a side of Jasmine that chilled her blood.

It was in the unyielding hardness of her daughter's eyes-eyes that had once sparkled with innocence.

Maybe she didn't mean to. But somewhere along the way... she created something else.

A daughter hardened by silence, by betrayal, by being left to fight alone.

She made another kind of monster-one that could kill without hesitation, without remorse... without even realizing it.

Because Jasmine didn't fight for revenge anymore-she fought because it's the only way not to be devoured. And if Charles dared to pull her strings again... the backlash wouldn't just be brutal.

It would be unforgivable. Unstoppable. Unsurvivable.

Jessica never noticed when her daughter stopped crying and started sharpening knives.

Now... she was starting to see it.

Too late.

"Today's Jasmine was not made of softness, but of steel-forged in silence and scorched by injustice. And it was razor sharp.'

Chapter 210

Chapter 210

The Almighty Dominance - kidnapped 210[827 words]

Chapter 210

Jasmine swept out of the mansion's towering entrance, heart pounding as she spotted Alex waiting by the ornate gates.

Without a word, she wrapped her arms around him, pressing her face against his chest.

"Just... let me stay like this," she whispered shakily. "I need it more than I can say."

Alex held her close, voice gentle. "You're doing better than you think."

Tears pricked at Jasmine's eyes.

"Why, Alex? Why is this happening to us? Why can't we just laugh like we used to, back when everything was simple? Why does it have to be this vicious fight?"

He sighed, resting his chin against her hair. "You know the answer-you have to protect yourself."

Her words trembled with bitterness. "I hate what I've turned into, but there's no other way."

Hours later, the two found themselves by the rolling surf at the beach.

Moonlight glittered on dark waves.

Alex breathed in the salty air, trying to calm Jasmine's anxious spirit.

Then both their smartwatches buzzed.

"A message from Charles," Alex muttered, scanning the screen. He read the text in a dry, mocking tone:

"I won't forget the humiliation you threw in my face today, Alex! You'd better pray you never cross my path again!"

Alex shook his head in exasperation.

"The bastard still hasn't learned a thing." He glanced at Jasmine. "You get one too?"

Jasmine checked hers. Her expression darkened as she read:

"Jasmine, you'd better fix the Skin Dew Essence crisis fast. Otherwise, don't blame me if I drag you in front of the board!"

They locked eyes. A slow sigh escaped them both.

"He's just as stubborn as ever," Alex muttered. Then he gave Jasmine a questioning look. "So... what exactly is Skin Dew Essence?"

Jasmine's shoulders tensed. "It's the crown jewel of Kingston Pharmaceuticals-an absolute game-changer for my family's plans. Everything was going so smoothly until one of our own turned traitor. I'm almost certain it's Charles."

"He bribed our key people to jump ship to Jericho Kane's company. They stole our research and left us scrambling. Our main project-Skin Dew Essence-is practically in their hands now."

A cold rage flickered in her eyes.

"They not only swiped top employees but ran off with our research documents.

And the patent... They've somehow transferred it to Jericho. We'd have to start from zero. The medical expo is next month. We're not

remotely ready."

The tension felt as thick as the scent of ocean brine.

Alex kept his gaze steady on her. "So if either you or Jericho perfects SkinDew Essence first, will rule the market?"

She nodded, swallowing hard. "Exactly. Kingston Pharmacy and Kane Pharmacy own most of the market here."

"Whichever product wins at the next big fair gets it all. But how can we compete if everything's been stolen? Our top scientists, our data, our head start... it's gone. We're stuck."

Alex rubbed his chin, thinking. "I'm not an expert in modern research, but I came across an ancient formula with very similar effects to Skin Dew. It's called Emerald Elixir."

Jasmine's eyes glinted, desperate hope shining through. "Emerald Elixir? And you think it matches SkinDew?"

He nodded slowly. "From what I've read, it helps prolong life and retain youth. It's not something average doctors talk about-this is ancient, nearly forgotten knowledge."

Jasmine grabbed his arm. "That's perfect. If there's even a slim chance, let's do it. Tell me what you need. I'll get it all."

Alex scribbled down a short list of ingredients on a notepad.

Jasmine skimmed the list. "They're mostly standard. The only tricky one is Verdantheart Root. I'll have Kelly help you secure it."

"Kelly?" Alex asked, arching a brow.

"Yeah," Jasmine replied, already dialing the number. "Any problem with that?"

"No," Alex said neutrally, waiting as she made the call.

Moments later, Kelly's voice crackled through. "I've checked all possible vendors at the medicine market. We might find it in a place called King of Herbal."

"Great," Jasmine said, ending the call. "Take Alex with you tomorrow. I need to handle some things here."

The next day

Kelly parked outside King of Herbal, a bustling shop with the air thick from dried roots and exotic plants. They hurried inside, weaving through shelves stacked high with ingredients.

Frazzled staff dashed in every direction, trying to keep up with the crowd. "Where's your boss?" Kelly demanded, scanning the place. We have an appointment."

A harried employee waved her off. "He's in the back, serving a VIP. We're swamped. You'll have to wait."

Kelly didn't bother waiting. She nodded for Alex to follow and marched straight into the shop's inner section, where rare and costly herbs were kept under tight watch.

Halfway through the room, Kelly froze in shock. A store clerk was handing over a small wooden box to another customer-and inside it was the unmistakable glow of Verdantheart Root.

"Stop!" she barked, voice slicing through the clamor.

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Alex turned to see who she was confronting-and felt his stomach twist.

Across from them stood Sophia, Florence and Jack

The very people he'd hoped never to lay eyes on again.

He let out a weary breath, resignation flickering in his gaze

No matter how hard he tried to dodge them, fate kept dragging these toxic figures

back into his life.