

The Almighty Dominance kidnapped 231[839 words]

Jericho Kane froze in place for a heartbeat, then burst into harsh laughter.

"You've got a lot of nerve talking to me like that," he growled.

Alex just smiled and flipped a small platinum badge through the aft

Jericho snatched it, then felt his pulse spike the moment he recognized the symbol: the Kignswell, the secret task force working directly under the new King.

"The Hunting Dogs of the King."

"Mind your tongue," Alex said, stepping forward with a confidence that matched Jericho's icy arrogance.

"The King has had enough of you. You think Vermont is yours just because your father-in-law was the old king? It's time to return the state to its rightful ruler."

Jericho bared his teeth.

"Never. The people voted for me to govern this place-nobody's gonna change that!"

"You? You're just another fool who thinks he's the hero. All I have to do is end you here and now. Nobody will even know."

Alex's easy grin didn't waver.

"Kill me? You really think you can pull that off?"

"You're a pup," Jericho shot back.

"Just because you have some internal energy, you think you're untouchable? I was mastering it before you were even born!"

He inhaled sharply, channeling his power, and unleashed a fierce energy blast.

"How dare you show off your tricks in front of a real expert? Die!"

It tore the night apart, sizzling toward Alex, who raised a hand to block.

The collision thundered across the rooftop.

Alex skidded back a dozen feet, boots scraping deep lines into the concrete. Jericho snorted.

"Pathetic. I expected a real challenge, not someone who can't handle a single hit."

He closed in, voice dripping contempt.

"Now, you know who I am, so let's cut to the chase. Kneel and beg. Maybe I'll spare your life."

Despite Jericho's bravado, a dread coiled in his gut.

He knew the truth about the Kingswell.

They were the King's dogs.

And if you dared to hit the dog or kill the dog...

The master would come knocking.

Alex rolled his shoulders, looking entirely calm.

"I took your best shot. Fair's fair-you should take mine."

He launched forward, fist swinging hard enough that Jericho scrambled to defend.

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Their impact exploded like a cannon blast.

Jericho's eyes went wide the instant Alex's punch connected.

The force hurled him clean off his feet. He slammed into the rooftop's edge, coughing blood,

Bones in his forearms cracked. He could barely keep upright; his organs felt like they'd been rattled by a wrecking ball.

Compared to Alex's raw strength, Jericho's energy and skills were laughably weak.

"Mr. Kane! This man's dangerous-run for your life!" Vetala screamed, voice shaking

He knew he couldn't match Alex in strength, but he couldn't leave Jericho behind.

Raising his wooden staff, he struck the ground.

A chilling voice echoed in the night. "Curse that man!" Vetala shouted.

A dark figure began to rise, swirling in the shadows.

But before Vetala could finish his spell, Alex had already flown straight toward him.

"Don't play black magic in front of me!" Alex yelled. "We hate that the most."

Alex's hand lit up, glowing bright.

Vetala's face turned ghost-white in shock.

"You... you're the Chosen One!"

Alex's fist connected-Vetala flew ten meters back, slamming into the ground.

He crumpled, unconscious, the dark power shattering like glass.

Jericho Kane staggered to his feet. He shoved two forbidden pills into his mouth and ripped open his shirt.

He tore open his shirt. "You want a real fight?" he spat, eyes wild.

"Then face me at my strongest."

His muscles bulged, wounds sealing as if by sorcery.

Alex chuckled. "You think doping up will save you?"

Jericho narrowed his eyes, as his flesh hardened like rock.

"Haven't run into a show-off like you in some time."

He was already a fearsome brawler, but fueled by the pills, his power tripled.

For him, that was worth any consequences later.

Jericho laughed, low and dangerous.

Flexing, he dug his heels into the ground and shot forward like an arrow, aiming to crush Alex with his full force-his stone-hard body ready to smash anything in its

way.

But Alex clenched his fist tight, muscles coiling with power.

The two collided-fist against body.

BOOM!

The impact echoed like thunder, loud enough to shatter the windows below.

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Alex launched his next strike, and Jericho's massive frame slammed into the floor,

the impact echoing with another deafening
crash.

The entire building shook as if a meteor had crashed into it.

Before he could recover, Alex stepped forward, reached down, and grabbed
Jericho by the neck, lifting him off the ground.

Jericho hung in the air, helpless, like a puppet with its strings cut.

Then Alex launched a brutal, whiplike kick into his gut.

CRACK!

Jericho Kane's body shot out of the helipad level, smashing through the open
space, and fell-tumbling from the tenth floor of the hospital.

He was flying.

The world slowed. The moon stared back at him from the sky.

He had no idea what just happened.

Then-

THUD!

His body crashed into the ground below.

Seconds later, Alex landed, stepping on Jericho's neck.

"Give up the governor's seat," Alex said coldly, "or I press down and send you to your maker."

Never in his wildest dreams had Jericho Kane imagined he'd be restrained by
Alex with just a few moves.

It had all happened too fast.

He didn't even have a chance to fight back.

His mind reeled. (1

How could Alex, alone, defeat a powerful martial artist like him?

This was insane.

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Chapter 232

Jericho's breath rasped as Alex's boot ground into his neck.

His checks flamed with humiliation, and his eyes flared with rage and panic.

In all his years clawing his way up-from Vancouver's back alleys to Vermont's glitzy political stage-Jericho had believed himself untouchable.

But now he lay in the dirt like a trampled dog, struggling for every breath under some unstoppable force of a man barely in his

twenties.

He spat dirt from his mouth.

"Let me go..." It came out as a pathetic wheeze, his voice cracking with desperation.

His pilot had been filming everything, eager to broadcast Jericho's triumph to certain smug relatives who'd been hoping to witness him punishing Alex.

Instead, they watched live as Jericho's nose hit the ground and Alex's foot pressed into him, forcing him to choke on his own

shame.

The Vermont families, once bowing to every word Jericho uttered, now stared in horror at his defeat.

They couldn't hear the words exchanged, but they saw enough: Jericho Kane, flattened and forced to kiss the concrete.

Panic spread, and suddenly they rushed to contact Kelly Kingston, throwing their support behind a new governor.

Alex's voice was calm, but each syllable ripped at Jericho's pride.

"Surrender the governorship. Do it willingly, and you and your family get to keep your wealth. You'll stay in business. That's my offer."

Jericho's throat constricted. "And if I refuse?"

Alex pressed down, making Jericho's bones scream.

"I kill you here. Then I'll find your whole family. You won't have a dime left to your name."

He eased up only enough to let Jericho gasp.

"The king has already shown you mercy, even after you schemed to rebel. You think you're so mighty?"

A bolt of terror shot through Jericho. His neck felt on the verge of snapping.

"Fine," he coughed. "I'll step down. Just... let me keep my fortune."

Alex lifted his boot. "That's the deal. Don't make me come back for you."

Jericho, ribs aching and bones nearly broken, tried to prop himself up. His voice was weak, ragged.

"Who the hell are you?"

"It doesn't matter," Alex said, turning on his heel.

Jericho's fury exploded in a raw, ugly snarl.

"You... you're nothing but the king's attack dog."

He shouted into the darkness, watching his own ambition dissolve into dust.

He'd spent decades building his power.

Now, all he had left was defeat-his allies fleeing and the governorship lost in a single, brutal night.

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His chest throbbed with rage and despair.

If only he'd never aimed so high...

if only he'd reined in his spiteful daughter...

if only he'd never dared rebel against the king...

Now it was too late.

Meanwhile, just an hour earlier, chaos had broken out at the hospital.

"Miss Lancaster, bad news!" Megan burst into the ward, panting, hair plastered to his brow. "Something awful is happening!"

Florence Lancaster jolted awake.

She stared, startled. Nearby relatives, who'd been dozing in the comers, glared at Megan's intrusion.

"Why are you so frantic? What's going on?" Florence's voice quivered.

Megan sucked in a breath.

"It's the Kanes. Jericho Kane is using every contact, every supplier in Vermont to attack us. Half of Vancouver's businesses have cut ties with the Lancaster Group-our deals are being canceled left and right."

Gasps and curses filled the ward. Florence's heart pounded. "Are you sure?" Megan nodded, grim.

"I'd never joke about this. Our stock prices are plunging by the minute. If this keeps up, we'll be bankrupt by tomorrow."

Panic erupted among the Lancaster relatives.

"What did we ever do to the Kanes?!"

"Why are they targeting us?"

"Jericho's daughter already hit our Sophia, and now he wants to destroy everything we've built?"

They knew Jericho's reach was vast.

One nod from him could shatter families and businesses alike.

-a testament to the recent

Florence turned to Clara, who was sleeping on the side with fresh bandages on her abdomen-violence.

"Clara, did we offend the Kanes somehow? What caused this nightmare?"

Clara hesitated, choosing her words carefully.

"It's... Alex. He showed up at Jericho's party and beat up Bella Kane. Now they're out for revenge."

She kept quiet about her own hidden part in the scheme.

Florence's face darkened.

"That useless bastard Alex again. We cut ties with him, but apparently that's not enough for Jericho." She spat in fury.

"He should suffer for what he did! Why are we the ones suffering?" one of the relatives hissed.

"I'm sick of paying for his mistakes!" another snarled.

But the shouting gave way to hopeless silence. Sophia was still unconscious, their

best negotiator out of commission.

None of them had the clout to meet Jericho face-to-face.

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Just then, Charles Kingston stepped into the ward.

Florence rushed over, grabbing his sleeve. "Charles, thank goodness! You have to

save us. The Lancaster family is on the edge."

Charles glanced around at the frightened faces.

"Tell me everything," he said gently.

Florence's words tumbled out: "Alex picked a fight, beat Jericho's daughter. Now

the Kanes want to ruin us. You have connections to Jericho-please, talk to him. Ask him to spare us."

Her voice quavered. "If he wants Alex's blood, I'll hand that idiot over in chains. Just protect us, please."

The desperation in her eyes cut through the room.

Others chimed in, ragged with fear. "Yes! We'll tie Alex up ourselves if we have to!"

Charles nodded slowly.

"I'll do what I can," he said, though a faint smile tugged at the corners of his lips.

All he had to do was whisper a word to his sister-and she'd unleash hell for Alex, launching a full-blown war against Jericho

Kane.

Everything was already dancing in the palm of his hand.

Today's Bonus Offer

GET IT NOW

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GET IT NOW

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Charles shot Mrs. Lancaster a conflicted look.

"Mrs. Lancaster," he began quietly.

"The Best I can do is give you my sister Jessica's number. Please explain everything to her."

"She'll sort out Kane's problem first, and in the meantime, I'll see what I can do to help your company,"

Florence scoffed, venom in her eyes.

"Sure, hand me the damn number. This entire disaster? It's Alex's fault-who else? That worthless stray had nothing until Jessica propped him up like a charity case."

"Now he thinks he's untouchable, cocky enough to lay hands on Bella Kane?" She sneered, voice rising with every word.

"Jessica should be the one groveling to the Kanes. She couldn't leash her precious mutt, and now he's ripped everything apart."

She snapped her fingers with icy finality. "Give me the number. I'll spell it out for her-exactly what her filthy little boytoy has done."

At the Kingston estate, Jasmine lounged by the window, watching the private helicopter lift off into the midnight sky. Inside, Kelly was on her way to Vermont-

new title, new power.

Governor of Vermont.

Jasmine's lips curved into a soft, proud smile. Blood didn't matter-Kelly was her sister in every way that counted.

They'd fought, risen, and built everything side by side.

But just as the rotor blades disappeared into the dark, Jasmine's phone lit up on the marble table beside her.

She picked up. "Yes?"

Florence Lancaster's voice crackled on the other end.

"Jasmine Kingston, your gigolo Alex hit Bella Kane. Now the Kane family's coming after us Lancasters because Bella is throwing a fit. How about you leash your boytoy before you ruin us all?"

"Especially after Bella went after my daughter Sophia. All this chaos started because of your man!"

Jasmine's voice was ice-cold.

"Last I recall, your precious Sophia was caught red-handed stealing Bella Kane's bracelet in front of everyone. Alex stepped in to handle the situation."

"Maybe you should be grateful he got involved at all, instead of whining about vengeance. Your daughter's a thief, Florence, and we both know it."

Florence sputtered, hardly able to believe what she was hearing. "What the hell did you just say?"

Jasmine gave a harsh laugh.

"Your Little sister Clara planted Bella's bracelet in Sophia's handbag and triggered this entire disaster. You Lancasters love pointing fingers, but I have a security recording that proves who really set this up."

Clara lunged at Florence's phone in fury, screaming, "Don't you dare accuse me of that! You're just trying! wiggle out of responsibility for that sleaze you keep around! Who do you think you are? You're nothing but a conniving

Jasmine's voice remained cutting.

p!"

"I can upload the CCTV footage any time I want. Should I go ahead and send it to everyone in Vancouver? Because I'm done

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listening to your nonsense."

Clara's face paled. "You bitch! Jericho Kane's gunning for Alex right now. If you won't help us, then he's as good as dead. Don't say we didn't warn you. He'll be gone by tonight."

Jasmine let out a slow, mocking laugh.

"Then I'll let the Kanes tear the Lancasters apart first. Or maybe I'll speed things up myself. Keep it up and see how fast you lot collapse."

Rattled, Clara ended the call and spun to face her family.

"She's not going to lift a finger for us. Charles, you're our only hope!"

Florence nodded, panic shining in her eyes.

"Charles, if you can get us through this, we'll owe you everything. You're still interested in Sophia, aren't you? We can arrange the marriage as soon as she regains consciousness."

Charles frowned. "I'm... not sure that's appropriate. Let's talk about it again when Sophia's feeling better."

Florence waved him off. "What's the problem? You two like each other. It's only a matter of time. Once our family survives this crisis, you should make it official."

Charles forced a small smile. "I'll do what I can." Inside, though, he felt a thrill.

He knew Jasmine would help Alex fight back against the Kanes.

And if both sides destroyed each other, well... it would only benefit him.

Late that night, Jericho Kane's helicopter touched down at his mansion. He limped inside, pale, rage twisting his features.

Once in his study, he gulped down wine straight from the bottle.

His mind churned with thoughts of revenge.

So many allies in Vermont had deserted him, and Kelly Kingston was taking over the local government offices, drawing the most powerful families to her side.

He had planned to use Charles to undermine the Kingstons in Vancouver, but now he was the one losing everything.

He stared at the walls with hollow eyes.

"Alex is the root of all this trouble," he muttered. "I'll kill him, and then I'll burn the rest to the ground."

Vetala, his body still broken, forced himself into the study. He bowed weakly.

"Sir Kane, I've tried everything. I can't neutralize the poison Alex used on Bella.

He says Bella needs to apologize to Sophia Lancaster if she wants the antidote."

Jericho's fury exploded.

He grabbed a heavy ashtray and hurled it at Vetala's head, causing blood to stream down the man's face.

Jericho's eyes shone with murderous intent.

"That bastard dares threaten me," he snarled. "He'll pay with his life. He assaulted Bella, and now he wants the Kanes to crawl to him? Unbelievable!"

Vetala trembled. "He also warned that if anything happens to the Lancasters, he'll destroy our businesses too. We're already losing power-"

Jericho slumped into his chair, his expression aging a decade in a single moment.

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"Fine. Send Bella to apologize Call off the assault on the Lancasters. Return everything we took."

Vetala bowed. "Yes, sir."

Fifteen minutes later, Charles strolled out of the hospital's restroom, before he could wash his hands only to be rushed by the entire family.

They practically swarmed him, beaming with gratitude.

"Charles Kingston, thank you! Our attackers suddenly backed off and even offered us compensation. You really saved us!" Florence clasped his hands. "Charles, we'll make sure Sophia marries you. We owe you our family's future!"

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"Sir Kane, It's urgent!"

The study rooms door burst open, the doctor breathless, panic painting his face.

"Ms. Kane's condition has worsened drastically!"

Bella had been transferred to her private suite in the Kane mansion, outfitted with state-of-the-art medical equipment and attended by Vermont's top specialists.

Jericho rose like a thunderclap, knocking his chair back.

"What the hell are you saying? She's in danger? That's impossible He lunged, grabbing the doctor by the collar.

"She's... we believe she's been poisoned. The dosage, it-it was ant to act slower, two days or three days at least."

"But her body was too frail. The toxin's spreading faster than we imagined. You'll understand once you see her, sir," the doctor stammered, his voice trembling.

Jericho's voice dropped to a growl, thick with menace. "Take me to her. Now." He stormed behind the doctor through sterile corridors and the stench of antiseptic.

When he entered the room, his breath caught.

Bella lay beneath the pale light, her face contorted in pain, her skin ghostly white.

Every breath looked like war against death itself.

"Bella!" Jericho fell to his knees beside her bed, his voice cracking "How are you feeling, baby girl?"

"Dad..." her voice was a feather on the wind.

"I'm dying. It hurts. I don't want to die. Please... please, Father... help me..."

Jericho's heart splintered. Her trembling fingers gripped his hand like a lifeline to the living.

He turned, rage surging in his chest.

"Explain this, now!" he snapped at the doctor. "How did it get this bad?"

"Sir... her immune system is barely holding together. The poison's tearing through her like wildfire. Without the antidote, she won't make it through the next twelve hours."

Vetala stepped forward.

"Sir, there's only one path left. We send her to Sophia. Let her apologize. Beg if she has to. We need that antidote."

Pride be damned.

Jericho, the unbreakable Kane, finally broke.

Tears streamed down his weathered face.

"Fine," he whispered. "Get the helicopter ready. She's going. If Alex doesn't give her that antidote... I swear to God, I'll burn him and everything he holds dear."

"Yes, Sir." Vetala nodded, already barking orders. He grabbed a phone, dialed fast, then handed it over.

"Who is this?" came the voice on the other end.

"Jericho Kane," he said, his tone like frozen steel.

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"I'm sending Bella. She'll apologize to Sophia. You'd better have the antidote ready."

A pause. Then Alex replied, cool as ice.

"Fine. I'll be waiting."

The call ended with a click that sounded like judgment.

Jericho's hand shook, the phone nearly shattering in his grip.

Who did that boy think he was? To speak to him-him-like an equal.

Like he held power over the Kane legacy.

His name. His power. Dragged through the mud.

The fall was too steep. Too fast.

And the vultures were already circling.

By dawn, the Kane Mansion stood quiet under a moonless sky.

The private helicopter sliced through the bitter wind, carrying Bella toward Vancouver.

Bella moaned, her pain echoing inside the cold, humming medical chopper. Meanwhile, in Vermont, a new day broke over a new rule.

Kelly Kingston stood on the balcony of the governor's office, arms folded, her eyes gleaming with satisfaction.

Inside the luxury ward in Vancouver, Sophia was already awake.

Her bandaged hands rested gently on her lap.

Her complexion, once pallid, was returning to a soft glow-the miracle pills from Alex were working.

When Alex walked in, he was met by icy silence.

The Lancaster family had gathered. Tension crackled like lightning.

"There he is. The bastard," Jack spat.

Florence shot to her feet, fury burning her eyes.

→

"You've ruined us! You arrogant brat! The Kanes blacklisted the Lancasters because of you! You show up here like nothing happened? Are you proud that we're staring down ruin?"

The others glared, their silence a choir of contempt.

Even Sophia's gaze was heavy, conflicted.

She knew he had done it for her. But his misguided protection had dragged her whole family to hell's doorstep.

Abraham tried to calm the storm. "Let's not forget, Alex acted on impulse. But his heart-he did it for Sophia. We've already survived the worst of it, haven't we?"

Florence snapped around.

"Survived? Because of Charles Kingston, not him. Alex started this fire, and someone else had to put it out. And what, y the Kanes won't retaliate again?"

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"I've already handled the Kanes," Alex said evenly.

Florence's eyes blazed.

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"You? Don't make me laugh. You think you can fix anything with that cocky mouth of yours? You get put Sophia and Lancaster groups in dangerous, Clara stabbed —what's next, Alex? You want us all six feet under just so you can feel heroic?" She slapped him-hard. The sound cracked like a whip.

"Enough!" Abraham roared, grabbing her wrist.

"This isn't the time to devour each other. We need unity now, not more chaos!"

"Oh, shut it, old man!" Florence shouted, pointing at Alex.

"He stumbles in, burns the world down, and expects everyone else to sweep up the ashes! We're drowning because of him!"

"That's right!" Jack joined in.

"If it weren't for Alex and his endless disasters, the Lancaster name wouldn't be worth dirt today!"

No one disagreed. Not even Sophia.

"Hell why don't we just hogtie him, toss him at Bella Kane's feet, and pray she

don't spit in our faces? Maybe then those vultures'll back off!" Jack bellowed, his face red with rage. 1

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Chapter 235

"Everyone, hold it right there," Sophia barked, her voice slicing through the bedlam like a whip.

She'd already heard Florence's frantic version and everyone else's about how Alex had wrecked everything and how Charles was supposed to swoop in and save the day.

She didn't want to listen to another second of it, but shutting her ears was impossible.

Still, she needed to hear Alex's side of the story.

"What's going on, Alex? Caffe to enlighten the rest of us?" Sophia gave him a single, razor sharp chance to defend himself.

"Bella was acting like an unruly brat, so I put her in her place," Alex responded without a hint of remorse.

"Did you lay a hand on her?" Sophia frowned, her eyes narrowing in disbelief.

"I only slapped her once," Alex shrugged. "After that, the other guests joined in with their own slaps

"You all heard that, right? He laid hands on her first, so he started this entire mess! It's his fault the Lancasters got banned!" Florence shouted, her anger flaring like wildfire.

"I say we snatch him up right now and hand him to the Kanes. Let them do whatever they please to appease their wrath!"

A flurry of murmurs rippled through the crowd, and it was disturbingly clear that most of them sided with the idea of abducting Alex.

"You're too reckless for your own good, Alex! Do you even realize who Ms. Kane is? What makes you think you're fit to challenge her? Do you have any idea the nightmare you've unleashed?" Sophia scolded, her voice etched with exasperation.

It was as if she had conveniently forgotten that she herself had smashed a bottle over Bella's head just earlier.

Even recalling it sent shivers down her spine, since the Lancaster Group was now on the brink of bankruptcy because of that incident.

"So you wanted me to sit on my hands while you were beaten and humiliated?" Alex's sneer could have frozen steel.

"Stop twisting my words! I'm telling you to weigh the fallout before you swing!" Sophia fired back.

"Thousands of workers depend on Lancaster staying afloat. If we go under, their families starve!"

"Listen, Alex. You're ex-military-life isn't solved with a fist. Change that caveman mindset before you become a muscle-bound savage."

"I don't keep score on details," Alex growled. "Cross the people I love, and I'll repay you in blood."

"Pah!" Florence spat in disgust.

"Is that what you call love? You nearly got Sophia killed. That ain't love-it's your own selfish pride!"

"You all see it now! He's as pigheaded as they come! We have no choice but to offer him up to the Kanes," Jack urged, signaling two younger Lancasters to seize Alex.

They grasped Alex by the shoulders in perfect sync, their faces grim with determination.

"You best not fight back," Jack growled, stepping closer. "Because if you do, you're only making it worse for yourself."

Alex's eyes narrowed, ready to explode, when another cousin burst in, white as a sheet.

"Bad news-Kanes just landed a monster helicopter on the lawn. They've brought an army to slaughter us all!"

"What?!" The entire room erupted in a shocked chorus, fear crackling in the air like thunder.

They had thought being banned was punishment enough, yet none had foreseen the Kanes would come down on them with

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such merciless force.

Now the Kanes were practically at their doorstep, closing in like a pack of wolves, leaving no room to escape.

"It's over! It's really over! We're nothing but sitting ducks now!"

"How on earth did it come to this? Can't the Kanes show us even a shred of mercy?"

Panic gripped the crowd, and they bolted upright as if their chairs had caught fire.

A handful tried to bolt from the ward in a mad scramble, abandoning the rest without a second thought.

Others, seeing those first cowards attempt an escape, tried following, but within seconds, they all came rushing back. "They're everywhere-there's no way out! We need a plan, or they're going to tear us apart!"

"All of this is that cursed fool's doing! It's his fault we're facing this nightmare!"

"Exactly! The Kanes only want Alex. Hand him over, and maybe they'll spare the rest of us!"

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In an instant, every furious eye locked onto Alex, their stares slicing into him like a thousand heated blades.

In their panicked minds, sacrificing Alex was the quickest path to salvation.

They rushed in to force him into submission, attempting to clamp him in cuffs, but no matter how many tried, Alex refused to bend, standing firm like an unyielding statue of iron.

His strength was as unmovable as solid steel, leaving the young Lancasters looking like clumsy fools around him.

Their feeble attempts only made them appear all the more pathetic, each one stumbling off him as though they'd hit a brick wall.

Then, in the midst of the chaos, a formidable group from the Kane family swept through the doorway, boldly announcing their presence.

At the sight of them, a few Lancasters darted to the corners in sheer terror.

Leading the pack was Vetala, pushing Bella's hospital bed ahead, flanked by Kane family representatives and a handful of grim-faced bodyguards.

Each one wore a menacing glare, enough to make some of the younger Lancasters nearly wet themselves on the spot.

Bella herself appeared frail, eyes fluttering in a half-conscious state.

Both arms and legs were strapped in casts, her face grotesquely bruised and swollen, warped beyond recognition.

Anyone who didn't know her well would struggle to believe this battered soul was once the haughty young heiress.

"M-Ms. Kane?" someone gasped, their voice quivering with shock

If they thought Sophia's injuries had been severe, Bella's wounds were ten times worse, a horrifying testament to the merciless beating she'd received.

The Lancasters collectively reeled at the sight of this nearly broken and disfigured Bella.

They knew she'd been roughed up, but not to the point where her face puffed like a pig's head, shocking even the hardest among them.

Had they not witnessed it firsthand, none would have believed that the Kane family's notoriously pampered princess could end up in such a pitiful state.

Still, they couldn't help but wonder if Alex had gone entirely too far.

Judging by Bella's tragic condition, it seemed the Lancasters were doomed for certain

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One of Sophia's uncles wasted no time dropping to his knees and begging.

"We are the Lancaster family-we want nothing to do with that bastard Alex!" one of the uncles bellowed, voice cracking with desperation.

"Sophia Lancaster cut ties with him long ago, she divorced that lunatic! He's no kin of ours! If blood is what you want, take his we'll help you slit his damn throat if that's what it takes. Just spareus. We're innocent!"

Others hastily followed suit, prostrating themselves in the same humiliating plea.

Vetala's lip curled-were they serious? They'd come to apologize, yet the hosts knelt first?

Were they playing some twisted game?

Did he need to command Kanes bodyguards to kneel as well?

Chapter 236

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Chapter 236

What in blazes?" The entire Kane entourage sucked in their breath as one, shock rippling through the hall.

Vetala had drilled it into them on the ride over- no snarling, no threats, not a single cursed gesture toward the Lancasters, because those smug devils held Bella Kane's only antidote.

Not a soul among them dared flash even a hint of hostility at a Lancaster.

Yet, braced to meet Lancaster arrogance head on, they instead found the proud clan already on their knees-a twist no prophecy had whispered.

"Kid, you've clearly got your wires crossed," Vetala muttered, his brows knitting in raw confusion.

He'd pictured every nightmare under the sun, but this scene had never once marched through his calculations.

"Ignore their circus," Alex rasped, too rattled to elaborate.

"Get Bella Kane in front of Sophia-now."

Alerted by Bella's summons, Sophia had propped herself upright in her hospital bed-her wounds mended enough for her to sit or stand without trouble.

Meanwhile Vetala spared the Lancasters not a single glance.

He shoved the bed's backrest upright, steadying Bella as she screamed through the agony.

Bella locked eyes with Sophia. "I can neither stand nor kneel-so they will kneel in my stead."

Instantly every Kane bodyguard dropped, foreheads almost scraping Sophia's shoes.

"I apologize for the harm I wrought upon you," Bella declared, her voice frosty, her regal aura unbroken despite the pain.

Sophia reeled, her mind skidding beyond belief.

"What the-?!" Jack, Florence, and the rest gaped as Kane representatives bowed before Sophia.

Eyes widened to saucers; disbelief hung thick in the air.

Who could have imagined the almighty Kanes bending a knee to them-ever?

Had these titans ever shown humility?

Had the world flipped?

Were they delirious with fever?

"What in God's name is this? Weren't the Kanes here for blood? Why are they groveling?"

"Are the Kanes playing some twisted reverse-psych game on us?"

"Stinks to high heaven-bet this is just another layer of their scheme!"

The longer the Lancasters watched the kneeling Kanes, the less triumphant and the more terrified they felt.

A few Lancaster knees buckled outright; the spectacle simply overloaded their

nerves.

A titan kneeling to them-such madness wouldn't dare appear even in their wildest dreams.

"I am Vetala, representative of the Kane family. We humbly ask for your forgiveness, Ms. Lancaster," Vetala said solemnly.

"The Kanes wronged you last night. We're here so the young lady can apologize face-to-face, Bella cannot kneel or speak clearly, so I lend her my voice."

1/3

Chapter 236

With that, Vetala sank to the floor, sincerity etched into every bowel inch.

Our deepest apologies, Ms. Lancaster!" the Kane delegates thundered, dropping as one, reputation be damned.

The twist left the Lancasters thunderstruck this was no illusion, the Kanes were genuinely begging forgiveness. But one blistering question remained-why?

"W-why are you doing this? What's happening, Mr. Vetala?" Sophia stammered, springing from the bed despite her jitters. They'd come for vengeance-so why were they bowing before her

"The Kanes aren't blind to fault," Vetala murmured, head still bowed. "We own our sins and pray for your pardon, Ms. Lancaster.

"Mr. Vetala, please-this must be a misunderstanding!" Florence babbled, plastering on a shaky smile. "We're relieved just to let the matter die; we've no wish to accuse the Kane family of anything."

"She's right-stand up, Mr. Vetala!" the other Lancasters echoed, still reeling.

To the Lancasters, the Kanes' willingness to drop the feud was blessing enough; they'd never dream of forcing an apology from such giants.

"Until you accept our apology, we'll stay on our knees until the stars burn out, Ms. Lancaster," Vetala vowed, stubborn as bedrock.

He has no choice-if he doesn't, Bella won't get the antidote.

"Please, Mr. Vetala, rise-let's pretend this never happened," Sophia blurted, words tumbling in disarray.

Bella had been the aggressor, yet she bore wounds far graver than Sophia's.

Sophia would mend in days, but Bella might not crawl out of that bed for half a month at least.

That irony-Bella, heir to the notoriously bull-headed Kanes, coming to apologize- had stolen Sophia's tongue.

"Thank you for your grace, Ms. Lancaster!" Vetala beamed, bowing deeply, then waved the Kane party to their feet.

"Wonderful-a simple misunderstanding," Florence exhaled, relief flooding her voice.

She hadn't a clue what cosmic dice had rolled, but they had escaped this crisis unscathed.

"Totally-nothing boosts profits like a little peace and quiet!" Jack laughed, though a chill of dread crawled down his back.

Just as calm seemed restored, Alex drawled, "I heard Bella apologize-tell me, does that sound like true contrition to you?"

Alex's eyes drilled into Bella's.

His stare pierced through Bella's facade, ripping her straight back to that night-the night he turned her world into a waking nightmare.

Her poise cracked like glass under pressure.

With her entire body howling in agony, Bella dragged herself off the bed.

Pain be damned-fear had drowned whatever pride she had left.

She clutched Sophia's hand and dropped to her knees.

"Please... please forgive me... please."

The plea jolted Sophia to the core.

2/3

Chapter 236

This was the same woman who once crushed her like an ant beneath a boot.

Now that iron fisted tyrant knelt, shaking, begging for mercy as though her own ghosts had her by the throat

The instant Bella's knees hit the tile, the room detonated voices cracked, chairs scraped, panic ricocheted off the walls.

Kane delegates shot each other grim looks, worry gouging trenches across their brows.

The Lancasters stood petrified, as if lightning had welded their shoes to the floor.

Had that lunatic really forced Bella Kane to grovel?

The Kanes had just buried the hatchet- again. 3

thanks to Charles Kingston's quiet miracle-and now this idiot Alex was ripping it free

If Bella's fury reignited, Kingston's diplomacy would evaporate and they'd all be corpses by sunset.

Starting the brawl that wrecked Bella was reckless enough; making her beg after her clan surrendered was pure suicide.

His nerve bordered on suicidal brilliance.

"Alex! Did a mule kick your brains loose? If you can't spit out something sane,

shut the hell up!" Florence barked, terror sharpening every syllable.

"Miss Bella, please-stand up. Don't waste a breath on that clown

1

The Almighty Dominance - kidnapped 237[1,009 words]

Chapter 237

"You miserable punk, so eager to meet your maker- then do it on your own and quit dragging us down with you."

Sophia's uncle snarled, rage pumping through his veins, ready to swing at Alex without a second thought.

"You've got some nerve, Alex. The Kanes spared you out of sheer pity, and you still spew this crap? Are you that desperate to get yourself killed?"

Jack spat, contempt twisting his features.

They all saw Alex as an unhinged loudmouth.

Everyone had just settled their differences, so why the hell was he kicking the hornet's nest again?

If he riled the Kanes, who would bear the brunt when they struck back?

Charles might bail them out once, but if Alex shattered that fragile truce, nobody would come to the rescue the next time.

They wanted nothing more than to bury Alex six feet under.

"Is it wrong to demand an apology from someone who attacked you? Am I out of line? Either way, can't you see she's already kneeling like she's been practicing for it?"

Alex said, his tone flat yet dripping with scorn.

Bella broke into sobs at the tension in the air.

"Shut your damn mouth, Alex! You're stirring up trouble and putting our heads on the chopping block!" Florence shouted, jumping to her feet, raw fear fueling her outburst.

"Alex, please, cut it out," Sophia begged through trembling lips, cold sweat dripping down her spine.

She had never expected the man in front of her to fling such incendiary words when they were already on thin ice.

"Fine, I'll stay quiet. It's all on you now."

Alex shrugged off their panic and stepped aside.

But unseen by everyone else, he flicked a tiny bottle to Vetala's hand a quick, silent movement.

Vetala nearly jolted in surprise, thinking it was a hidden weapon, but froze when he realized it held an antidote.

He glanced back at Alex, who subtly shook his head, telling him to conceal the gesture from the Lancasters.

"Miss Bella Kane, please get to your feet. He's lost his mind, I swear. Don't waste your time on that lunatic," Florence pleaded, desperate to keep Bella's anger at bay.

"Yes, absolutely! He's completely lost it," Jack chimed in, grinning obsequiously. "He's not even tied to the Lancasters anymore."

After a brief exchange between Vetala and Bella, color returned to Bella's face, and with help, she stood up.

"I'm... sorry. This is all my fault," she whispered, her voice barely holding together.

Then, without another word, they wheeled Bella out of the room-surrounded by guards and the ever-watchful Vetala.

Silence fell like a guillotine.

Florence and the others froze, their faces contorted in shock.

Had the pampered princess of the Kane family-the ruthless queen of Vancouver, the psychopath who crushed anyone she didn't like-just apologized, again? 1

1/3

Chapter 237

Nobody could wrap their heads around it.

She not only forgave their offenses but also lowered herself to apologize in person, fresh off getting beat down

It defied all logic.

"What the hell's in the Kanes' water today? Since when do they gravel?" someone whispered.

"Pinched myself twice-still not dreaming," another muttered.

"Maybe Ms. Kane had a genuine epiphany?" a third offered.

"Bullshit. Don't paint halos on devils," came the reply.

The chatter spiraled, a hive of buzzing disbelief.

"Everyone, this has Charles Kingston's fingerprints all over it," Clara declared.

"I get it now! Charles, you pulled every string, didn't you?" Florence probed, eyes shining.

"Right! How did we forget our secret weapon?" Jack blurted, finally catching up. "No wonder the Kanes ate crow-Charles was the puppet master," he crowed. "Who else could strong-arm a dynasty but Mr. Kingston?" another agreed. Stars practically glittered in every Lancaster gaze.

So the apology was nothing but Charles twisting arms in the shadows. Exactly.

Had to be.

Charles watched it all, hatred fermenting.

He'd bet on Jessica and Jericho Kane tearing each other apart, planning to sucker-punch whoever crawled out alive and seize

Vancouver.

He hadn't counted on Jasmine Kingston beating Jericho and locking Vermont under Kelly Kingston's banner.

That orphan, dragged in by his father and grafted onto the family tree.

Charles, firstborn, was meant to rule Vancouver

or at least carve out a state of his own.

Yet the outsider sister stole the Kingston name and claimed Vermont.

Life's scales never tipped his way.

Every move these people made felt like a blade against him.

If Jasmine conquered Vermont, she should have traded it to him, the elder

brother, in exchange for the Vancouver throne she'd hijacked.

Instead they plotted to exile him.

Darkness pooled in Charles's heart.

"Drop the act, Charles-we all saw your handiwork. Without you, Ms. Kane would've left us in ashes," Florenc washing her face.

aid, relief

"Absolutely! You steered us through the storm and dazzled the family. You're our savior," Jack gushed. "Thank you, Mr. Kingston! You saved every last one of us!" the Lancasters chorused, hands thrust out in gratitude.

2/3

Chapter 237

"Uh- "Charles nodded, eager to claim the credit, certain Alex understood but unwilling to spare him an ounce of praise.

"Don't be modest, Charles. Without you we'd be rubble," Jack kept piling it on. "Truly, it was nothing," Charles replied, flashing a polished grin at begged for applause.

"You lucked out, Alex! I thought you'd be roadkill by now. Quit standing there-bow to Charles and thank him!" Florence barked, her glare slicing toward Alex.

"Bow to him? For what?" Alex drawled, disdain curling at the edge of his lips.

With a shadow overtaking his face, Charles spoke coldly, voice laced with venom, "Let's not waste another second on that ungrateful bastard, Mrs. Lancaster. What matters now is the promise you swore that once I cleaned up this mess Alex caused, the Kane, you'd give me Sophia's hand in marriage. I upheld my end. Now, I expect you to honor yours."

Mrs. Lancaster's eyes lit up as she quickly nodded with enthusiasm her voice sickeningly sweet, "Of course, Charles, of course! A promise is a promise."

But across the room, Alex and Sophia stood frozen-staring in stunned disbelief, the world spinning too fast to catch.

They couldn't even process what they'd just heard.

Yet Charles coldly smiled.

"You call me broken? I was whole once. Gentle. True. I followed the rules.

Then they gave everything I bled for to someone untouched by pain.

That's when I learned: goodness buys nothing.

So I stopped waiting. Stopped pleading.

I became the monster they feared-because monsters don't ask."

The Almighty Dominance - kidnapped 238[924 words]

Chapter 238

"Mom, what the hell's going on?"

Sophia asked, her voice shaky as she looked at Florence with wide uncertain eyes.

Florence edged closer and perched on the bed, fixing Sophia with a wary gaze.

"Listen, Sophia. Bella Kane attacked you, remember? Then the Kares sent their goons to tear down our companies. Charles promised to help us out of this mess, but only if I agreed to let him marry you."

"Mom-" Sophia began.

"Sophia, hush," Florence said with a pointed smile.

"We're talking about Charles Kingston here, the top dog in Vancouver, practically royalty. You couldn't snag a better husband if you tried. You're divorced now, and sooner or later, you'll have to marry again. I want grandkids, and I want them from the best stock."

"Mom..." Sophia tried to speak, but Florence cut her off.

"I already gave Charles my word. Your uncles are all in on it. Every single one of them wants you to marry Charles to cement an alliance between the Lancaster and Kingston families."

"The Lancaster Group board approved it-Megan says the shareholders are salivating over a Lancaster-Kingston merger. The stock will explode the moment you put on his ring."

A sharp headache throbbed through Sophia's skull.

She couldn't recall the moment everything got this complicated.

"Sophia, you don't have to agree," Alex said flatly. "Charles didn't solve anything with the Kanes."

"Oh, Alex," Jay snapped, stepping in front of him.

"If Charles didn't do it, who else could? Don't forget, you owe him a damn apology on your knees. You started this chaos by beating people up, and Charles saved your skin. You'd be a corpse by now if not for him."

"That's right," Florence chimed in. "You'd have been six feet under a hundred times over if Charles hadn't stepped in."

"You're giving Charles way too much credit," Alex replied with an icy stare. "He's not half as powerful as you people think."

It astonished him how they twisted the facts to paint Charles as some kind of hero, propping him up without the slightest clue of what really happened—and Charles just stood there, lapping up the praise like a smug vulture.

Worse yet, he wanted to lay claim to Sophia.

Alex vowed never to let that happen.

"Hah! You think you're more capable than Charles?" someone taunted. "Go look in the mirror and see the loser staring back at you!"

"Exactly! You're a walking disaster, nothing but trouble," another spat.

"How can you be so vile?" another Lancaster snarled.

"Charles saved your miserable hide, and this is how you repay him—talking crap behind his back?"

The Lancasters hurled insults at Alex, convinced he was the worst kind of ingrate for biting the hand that sav

"Seriously, Alex. Would it kill you to just say thank you?" Sophia snapped, her voice sharp with disbelief. "If it weren't for Charles, you'd be six feet under."

Chapter 238

To her, a little gratitude was the least someone could offer after having their life saved.

But Alex? Still clinging to that brittle pride of his, as if dignity mattered more than survival. Foolish pride—empty, fragile, and utterly misplaced.

"I'd thank him if he'd actually done something," Alex said, his tone unyielding.

"But not only did he fail to help, he's the one who triggered this madness in the first place."

Sophia's brow furrowed. "What are you talking about?"

"I dug up the facts. Charles and Bella are engaged. Bella targeted you because she was jealous—thought you were fooling around with Charles behind her back. That's what started it all. Charles is the real cause, from the beginning."

"Bullshit!" Florence shot up from the bed in outrage.

"Don't you dare malign Charles! He's a decent man, nothing like what you're describing."

"That's right!" Jack barked. "You must be seething with jealousy. Probably doctored all kinds of evidence to tear him down since he's better than you in every way."

"Oh, Alex," several Lancasters chorused with contempt.

"Who knew you'd stoop so low?"

"Why do you always have to stir up trouble?" Sophia snapped.

"Can't you act like an adult for once? Is it really that hard to just say thank you?"

Alex frowned. Saying thank you wasn't the problem-but admitting Charles had helped?

That would mean accepting Sophia had to marry him.

"Never," he whispered.

To Sophia, it looked like classic Alex-his jealousy twisting into yet another act of reckless sabotage.

"If you don't believe me, ask Clara," Alex said, jerking his chin in her direction.

"She saw everything last night-and she's the reason Bella came after you in the first place."

All eyes landed on Clara, who froze in alarm, speech hitching in her throat.

"Tell us what you saw, Clara. No holding back," Florence demanded, arms crossed tightly.

"Yeah, spill it," the Lancasters echoed. "We'll prove this bastard is full of lies."

Clara swallowed nervously. She looked like a deer in headlights, but Alex's calm tone prodded her on.

"You know what really happened, Clara. Time to let everyone else know."

Sophia cut in, frowning. "Enough already, Alex. Stop embarrassing yourself."

"There's no need to be scared, Clara," Florence added, suddenly playing the role of protective aunt.

"Whatever you say, I'll stand behind you."

Finally, Clara steadied her nerves and spoke with forced resolve. "Last night, Bella threatened to kill me. She only spared my life on one condition-that I slip her

golden bracelet into Sophia's bag"

"What?" Sophia asked, puzzled.

Clara continued, voice quivering.

2/3

Chapter 238

"I had no choice. She made it clear she hates Jasmine Kingston and wants to kill Alex-her boy toy. She knew going after Sophia was the surest way to lure Alex out."

"What?" Alex said, reeling from the revelation.

Charles, in the background, traded a knowing look with Clara, a slow, satisfied smile creeping across his face.

"It's all Alex's fault that Bella ever laid a hand on Sophia," someone concluded, as

if that sealed the blame.

Chapter 239

The Almighty Dominance - kidnapped 239[898 words]

Chapter 239

The Instant Clara ended her tale, Alex went rigid, rooted to the floor.

He hadn't expected her to flip the entire narrative in front of everyone and leave him hanging like a thief caught red-handed. "Did you all hear that?" Florence screeched, her voice slicing through the ballroom chatter.

"There it is-the naked truth! Let's see you wriggle out of this one Alex!"

"Ungrateful doesn't even begin to cover it," she piled on.

"You twist kindness into poison and spit it back at the people who saved you. Utterly shameless."

The Lancasters hissed and spat, recoiling as if he carried a plague.

Their eyes drilled holes in him, seething with contempt.

Tears streaked down Clara's cheeks. "I'm sorry, everyone. I didn't want to end up dead at Bella's hands, so I hid the bracelet in Sophia's bag. I did it to survive- because Bella's real target is Alex. I'm sorry."

Florence swooped in, wrapping an arm around Clara. "Don't worry, dear. We understand. This all started because of Alex. Sophia will forgive you."

The evidence felt ironclad; Alex could argue until sunrise and still drown in their verdict.

Jack stepped forward, finger stabbing the air.

"After everything you've pulled, don't you think it's time you apologized to Clara, to Sophia-hell, to everyone here?"

Alex shook his head. "I didn't make a mistake. And if I ever do, I clean it up myself."

Sophia let out a weary sigh.

Disappointment etched her face. She'd tossed him lifelines all night, and he kept cutting them with the same blunt

stubbornness.

It was almost as if he craved the noose.

"You clean your mess?" Jack scoffed, savoring the spectacle.

"You disgusting fraud. Charles put this whole rescue together, and you dare lie to his face in front of us all?"

"Charles, you know exactly what's going on," Alex snapped, then pinned Clara with a hard stare.

"And you-I still don't understand why you're lying."

"Stop spewing garbage! I never lie," Clara shrieked.

"Bella Kane went after you. Because of that, I was forced to slip the bracelet into Sophia's bag, and Bella hit her. You struck Bella back, and now the Lancasters are in her crosshairs. If Charles Kingston hadn't stepped in, Bella would've crushed your pathetic life!".

"You should be on your knees thanking Charles for saving your sorry hide," she continued, voice trembling with fury. "He could've let you rot, but he protected you. How can you be this stubborn when you've got nothing to be proud of?"

"Alex! Your smear campaign failed, and now you're threatening people?" Florence roared.

"Do you really think we're afraid of you?",

"Yes," the other uncle growled, voice like gravel dragging through a coffin. "You think our eyes can't see the damn difference between good and evil? You're rotting on the wrong side, Alex."

Chapter 239

He stepped closer, eyes glinting with something vile, something edatory.

*

It's pathetic how hard it is for you to just admit it. You're a fucking stain-useless, crawling filth. A lowborn insect who never should've stood among us."

"Stop this madness, Alex! Quit humillating yourself!" Sophia pleaded, hoping he'd finally see the train wreck he was engineering.

Alex knew this room was never his arena. No matter what he did, ey would never grant him a sliver of goodwill. It simply wasn't his stage.

"Since none of you will believe me, pretend I never spoke. I'm leaving." He turned on his heel, unwilling to waste another

breath.

He'd never begged for rewards or applause, but their venom still sung.

"Hold it right there," Charles barked, voice smug and booming.

Alex stopped in his tracks, fists clenched tight. "What now?" he muttered without turning.

Charles sauntered up beside him, smug and reeking of malice.

He leaned in, his voice a venomous whisper, "Just wanted to say thanks. Once Sophia's mine, I'll send you the full video-every filthy second of me fucking her."

Alex's gaze went glacial-cold, silent, lethal.

Charles gave a dark chuckle. "And after that? I'll sell her. Like the bitch in heat she is. Let the world have its turn."

That was it.

"Enough," Alex growled, shoving him without hesitation.

Charles, ever the actor, hurled himself backward with theatrical flair, as if struck by a battering ram.

He crashed into the hospital table with a bone-snapping crunch. Glass shattered, blood streaked his arms, and screams broke through the stunned silence.

The entire room froze.

"You-actually hit him?" Florence shrieked. "In front of us?"

2

"Animal! He's an animal!"

"Charles saved your life and you maul him? You're lower than a dog!"

The crowd unleashed every curse they owned. Touching Charles had torn away the last curtain of civility.

"Have you lost your mind, Alex?" Sophia snapped, kneeling beside Charles. "Why are you attacking people?"

He'd turned humiliation into violence-unforgivable.

"I barely pushed him. He flew on his own," Alex growled.

"He only spoke to you. Why repay words with fists?" Sophia's glare could freeze steel.

"So I've committed humanity's greatest sin now?" Alex sneered.

"You're twisting this on purpose. Apologize to Charles-right now" Sophia demanded.

"What if I don't?" Alex's voice dropped, flat and dangerous.

"Then I'll make you." Sophia's hand cracked across his cheek.

Chapter 239

The slap echoed like a gunshot.

Alex touched the burning welt, eyes dead calm.

Misunderstanding and contempt he could stomach, but his ex-wife striking him to defend another man—that cut deeper than any blade.

Gave everything for love,

She returned nothing but hate.
Did all one could to earn her trust-
but all that came was doubt.
Reached for warmth; she spat venom.
Enough is enough.
If one stays, will only bleed, 1
and she'll only watch.
This was never a journey-
just a dead end.
Breaking to pieces,
but a man is strong.
Hide it, no matter how much it kills.
Time to move-
with whatever's left.

The Almighty Dominance - kidnapped 240[1,099 words]

Chapter 240

*Alex, why? Why are you so hell-bent on being this stubborn? Can you just apologize?"

Sophia demanded, her voice trembling as disappointment flooded her eyes.

She couldn't fathom how that once boastful man had sunk so low raising his hand against Bella, locking himself behind narrow-minded walls, brimming with

jealousy, and repaying kindness with cruelty,

Just an apology-how hard can it be?

Sophia yearned for that slap to jolt him awake.

"Sink into the darkness, Alex. Taste the agony that I've endured!" Charles whispered, almost lovingly, as his eyes drank in the chaos with sickening delight.

There was a twisted satisfaction blooming in his chest-a vile warmth-watching them unravel, watching their faces twist in pain.

Misery was his playground.

And seeing others drown in it? That was the only thing that made him feel alive.

He'd had to bleed a little to make his act convincing, but seeing Sophia strike Alex made triumph coil in his chest.

"That was a masterpiece of a slap! He deserves every bit of it. Go on, throw in a few more for good measure!" Florence chimed in, eyes gleaming with vengeful zeal.

"Right! If nobody sets him straight, he'll turn into a complete beast!" Jack hollered, his tone dripping with mockery.

"Someone has to straighten him out, right?"

"Why stop at one slap when he's obviously begging for more?"

Alex exhaled, the soft sound cutting through their taunts like a final, heavy sigh.

It would be the first and the last time this ever happened.

"That slap," Alex said softly, his voice barely holding together, "was for every mistake I made... every debt of gratitude I could never repay. From now on... there's nothing left between us."

Then he turned and walked away.

"We're done."

There was no fury, no lament-just a silent, final severing of the ties that once bound them.

He refused to speak another word, refused to waste another ounce of breath. It was simply goodbye.

"Huh?" Sophia breathed, stunned at the sight of his cold stare and defeated silhouette.

She felt something precious slip through her grasp, and a sudden ache bloomed in her chest.

"Get the hell out, you pathetic loser," Jack yelled. "You should've disappeared a long time ago!"

A few in the crowd even clapped-cheering as if Alex's exit was some kind of victory, celebrating his abser

"Knock, knock."

The unexpected sound at the hospital door drew everyone's attention.

Mr. Vetala, who had left earlier, now stepped inside again.

'ike it was a relief.

Chapter 240

"Miss Sophia, Miss Bella asked me to return and smooth over the bad blood

between the Kane family and you," he said.

She specifically requested me to bring Miss Sophia a gift of apology."

"Agift?" The group exchanged wary looks.

Mr. Vetala produced a gleaming golden bracelet.

"Miss Sophia, this is the bracelet Miss Bella instructed Clara to place in your bag-

an act sparked by Bella's jealousy because you appeared here with Mr. Charles Kingston on her banquet."

"Miss Bella has now broken off her engagement to Charles for you"

"What?" Sophia blurted. "Didn't Bella tell Clara to plant that bracelet on me to incite Alex's anger?"

Mr. Vetala's brow furrowed. "No, this had nothing to do with Master Alex."

"Bella lost control the moment she saw you enter with Charles. He was her fiancé-can you imagine?"

"It was like a slap to her face in front of the entire world, media and all. And when she found out he'd already given you a necklace? That was the breaking point. That's when everything snapped."

Clara turned ghost-white. Charles looked like death had tapped him on the shoulder.

In that instant, everyone realized-the entire mess started with Charles.

Vetala's eyes swept the room. "Now, where is Mr. Alex?"

"Why are you even wasting your time on that nobody?" Florence scoffed, throwing him a contemptuous glance.

"Regardless," Vetala said, "please make sure Mr. Alex hears this Miss Bella has given Miss Sophia the bracelets as a gift and an apology. She hopes this puts an end to any lingering hostility between them."

"You've got to be kidding," Jack muttered, her face twisted in disbelief. 1 "Why are you talking like Alex matters? He's just a useless bottom-feeder."

"Useless?" Vetala let out a sharp, mocking laugh. "That so-called loser handled everything none of you could accomplish-not even if you were given a hundred years."

"You're joking, Mr. Vetala," Florence insisted, her voice rising. "You're telling me he fixed all this?"

"I'm not here for jokes," Vetala replied flatly.

"Mr. Alex met personally with Jericho Kane. Thanks to him, the ban on the Lancaster family has officially been lifted."

"What?"

A shocked gasp rippled through the crowd. Their disbelief was thick in the air.

They hadn't misheard: the person who had rescued the Lancasters and forced the Kanes into a public apology was Alex-the man they'd mocked and regarded as worthless.

How could this be?

"Y-you must be kidding," Florence stammered, eyes wide. "Are you telling us Alex was the one who rescued us?"

"Who else would it be?" Mr. Vetala asked, his tone razor-sharp.

"No, that can't be right! It was Charles Kingston who helped us. How could it be

that piece of trash Alex? his head so wildly he seemed unhinged.

'Charles Kingston?" Mr. Vetala sneered.

k shouted, shaking

"He's just the instigator who provoked Bella to target Miss Sophia. If not for Alex's request for mercy, the Kanes would have demanded Charles's head by now."

2/3

Chapter 240

"He should be crawling on his knees before Alex for sparing his pathetic life. Otherwise, I'd have seen to his immediate ruin myself."

He then eyed Charles with cold disdain, walked up to him, and slapped him hard across the face.

"You hear that, Charles Kingston? You'd better kneel to Mister Alex."

All eyes snapped to Charles, whose cheeks flared a furious red. Yet he could only stay silent.

The hush that followed was deafening, and his silence served as proof that Mr. Vetala was telling the truth.

"How did it all come to this?" Sophia murmured, her voice cracking with dawning horror.

Alex had saved her and her family-he even saved Charles's life from the Kanes. Yet she'd forced him to apologize to Charles.

Her heart thundered in her chest.

Without another word, she sprinted out of the room, chasing the direction Alex had taken.

Mr. Vetala watched her sudden departure with surprise, while Florence and Jack stood there, stunned.

Charles's eyes glimmered with a dangerous malice as he slunk away, muttering, "Just you wait. Next time, I won't miss." When Sophia reached the gate, she spotted Alex about to climb into a waiting taxi.

She sprinted forward, grasping at his sleeve with shaking fingers.

"Alex! Please, wait," she gasped, voice raw. "I misunderstood you. I was reckless-

I never realized all that you've done for us, or how much you've shouldered alone."

"Why wouldn't you tell us you were the one who saved everyone? Why stay silent when you're the real savior?" Sophia's lips trembled, her face twisted in grief.