

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 501[1,299 words]

Previously, Ragnar slammed the accelerator the moment the start signal flashed.

The VÖXEN Gen-6 roared like a beast unleashed.

This machine could break 1,000 km/h without hesitation, while Alex's first-generation VÖXEN struggled at 500 km/h on its best day.

Ragnar knew the math.

Start fast.

Hit hard.

Build a gap Alex could never cross.

And he didn't just want to win—he wanted to bury Alex in humiliation.

He launched straight to 200 km/h, then climbed past 800 km/h, carving through the track with ruthless precision.

By the time he completed five out of ten laps, he glanced at his speedometer-857 km/h and rising.

"There's no damn way that bastard with a 500-km/h coffin can keep up with me," Ragnar snarled. "Even if his junk explodes, he still won't touch my speed."

But on the way into lap six-

A black blur shot past him so violently it felt like the air had been ripped open. Ragnar's eyes went wide.

It was Alex's VÖXEN.

That ancient machine wasn't supposed to even breathe in the same league as him. Yet Alex blasted forward like a phantom and vanished into the next corner.

"What the hell-NO. No, that's impossible!" Ragnar barked, looking down at his gauge.

888 km/h.

At that speed, no first-gen VÖXEN could pass him. It defied physics, engineering, and common sense.

Then Alex's car shot past him again, this time even closer, the shockwave slamming into Ragnar's hood so hard his entire vehicle shuddered.

Each pass sent a violent gust that rattled the Gen-6 like tin in a storm.

"Impossible..." Ragnar whispered, breath unstable, hands trembling around the steering wheel.

And he wasn't the only one shaken.

The spectators stared in stunned silence. Minutes ago, they were certain Alex was doomed—yet now, during lap five, Alex not only caught up... he was overtaking Ragnar like he'd been waiting for the right moment to strike.

Then, suddenly, Alex's car didn't just overtake—

It took off, leaving Ragnar so far behind that the chase felt like a bad joke.

Up in the commentator's booth, panic erupted.

"We-uh-let's check the stats! Look at the screen, folks!" the stadium commentator shouted, shoving the data feed onto the giant monitors.

The entire arena gasped as the numbers lit up.

"The first-generation VÖXEN jumped from a lazy 20 km/h to 200 km/h in an instant," the commentator shouted, his voice breaking with shock.

"But now my God—look at this! It's blasting past 2,000 km/h... and the speed is still climbing! Four thousand kilometers per hour—no signs of slowing at all! This is insane!"

Below, Alex's car became a streak looping the stadium, tearing the air apart.

The sound wasn't an engine—it was a sonic blade, breaking wind barriers, shaking every seat, every ribcage, every inch of steel.

Ragnar watched helplessly as the shadow of Alex's VÖXEN flashed ahead again—

A humiliation deeper than any defeat he had ever tasted.

Some people screamed from pure adrenaline at the speed on the track.

But those who had bet on the VÖXEN Gen-6 couldn't fully celebrate.

Something felt wrong.

When the Gen-6 finished lap six...

Alex's first-generation VÖXEN had already crossed the same lap.

And Alex's speed kept rising.

Faster. Faster. Unstoppable.

By the time Ragnar reached lap seven, Alex's car was already blasting through the finish line, completing all ten laps.

Alex had won.

A humiliating, overwhelming, landslide victory.

The entire stadium exploded the moment the ancient first-gen VÖXEN shot across the finish line.

The Eden Group even fired celebratory fireworks into the air as Alex rolled to a stop. Ragnar saw Alex waiting calmly at the finish line... and his knees nearly buckled. What was happening?!

What the hell was going on?!

Since when could a Gen-1 obliterate a Gen-6 like this?

No. It couldn't be real.

It had to be cheating.

That bastard must have modified his car.

Ragnar glided to a halt beside Alex's vehicle.

He jumped out, face red, voice cracking with fury.

"You bastard! How dare you cheat!"

"I didn't," Alex replied, calm as stone.

"Impossible!" Ragnar shouted. "A first-generation VÖXEN cannot reach four thousand kilometers per hour! You modified that car-illegal modification! The VÖXEN Corporation will bury you for this!"

Sofina and Renata bit their lips hard.

They knew the Gen-1 was modified.

If this came out... it meant cheating.

It meant losing everything.

But Alex only shrugged.

"I told you I never modified the car. Just accept your loss."

"Never!" Ragnar spat. "I already called the VÖXEN authentication drone. Once it finishes the inspection, you'll pay up-you'll give me your arms and Sofina!"

His threat echoed through the stadium speakers, broadcast to every corner. The crowd reacted instantly.

People who had bet on Ragnar lifted their fists, shouting:

"That car is illegal! Ragnar is the winner! We want our money back!"

Then, with a mechanical hum, a drone-android descended into the stadium-sleek metal frame, glowing optics, stamped with the VÖXEN corporate logo.

"I have received a request to perform an official authentication on the VÖXEN First Generation vehicle," the drone announced in a clear, professional tone.

"Registered owners: Alex and Sofina. Do both parties consent to a full inspection?" Sofina turned to Alex, horror in her eyes.

If the drone found the modifications-they were finished.

But before she could speak, Alex stepped forward and answered:

"Consent granted."

"You're dead," Ragnar laughed, breath shaking with rage.

Renata leaned close to Sofina, whispering urgently. "I told you-modifying a VÖXEN is illegal. People go to prison for that. Your husband could be locked up en years."

FindNovel.net

Sofina's heartbeat crashed against her ribs. Panic swallowed her voice.

"Renata..... you have to help me!"

The VÖXEN authentication drone floated toward Alex's car.

Its scanners hummed as blue light swept across every inch of the vehicle-sides, hood, undercarriage.

Sofina rushed to Alex's side, panic tightening her voice.

"Why did you agree? The drone will expose everything!"

Alex gave her a calm, steady smile.

"Let it. Everything's under control."

She grabbed his arm, fingers trembling.

"You're not invincible, Alex. They'll take your life for this."

Alex didn't answer right away. His eyes drifted past her toward Ragnar.

"He's the one who's scared," Alex said quietly as he pulled Sofina into his arms, holding her close to steady her shaking. That's why he's yellin so damn loud."

The VÖXEN authentication drone opened the front and rear hoods, mechanically precise, checking every part of the engine.

After completing the full scan-

Only then did it speak.

"This VÖXEN unit is confirmed original. No modifications detected."

"What?!"

Gasps erupted across the stadium. Ragnar staggered back. The crowd froze in disbelief.

"Impossible!" Ragnar shouted. "You didn't even check it right! This is a first- generation VÖXEN—there's no way it reaches thousands of kilometers per hour!"

The crowd booed the drone, angry and confused.

The VÖXEN android responded, voice steady and professional.

"Your assumption is incorrect. This vehicle is not a VÖXEN First Generation. This is the VÖXEN SERAPHINE It possesses a built- camouflage feature that disguises it as other VÖXEN models."

And right before the entire stadium, the camouflage began to dissolve.

Panels shifted.

Lights reconfigured.

Frames expanded and locked into place.

The dull-looking first-gen shell peeled away like smoke—

Revealing the most legendary, most expensive vehicle in Prussia:

The VÖXEN SERAPHINE.

Only ten existed in the entire empire.

The stadium erupted into pure chaos-cheers, screams, shock.

For most people, this was their first time seeing one in real life.

The ultra-rich hid these cars in private vaults.

No one showed them in public.

No one raced them.

Until Alex.

Renata's jaw dropped. Her voice trembled.

"I knew it... It's the real Seraphine."

She stared at Alex, stunned.

The man seemed to have endless secrets-layers she couldn't begin to measure.

Sofina stood frozen.

Had Alex really bought a ten-million-dollar car and never said a word?

Alex turned to Ragnar, eyes cold and steady.

"I think it's time for you to hand over your arms... and your heart."

"No!" Ragnar barked. "You cheated! You hid your damn car so you could trap me into the bet. You're a fraud!"

He couldn't accept it.

Even his father—a duke—would hesitate to buy a VÖXEN Seraphine.

And this man, this Alex, drove it like it was nothing.

"You're the one who asked me to race," Alex replied with a calm, cutting smile. "I

didn't cheat you. You tried to cheat me."

He touched his bracelet.

A document appeared on three dimension.

"And according to the bet you signed," Alex said, "you have ten minutes to hand over your arms... and your heart."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 502[1,291 words]

Ragnar roared, his voice shaking with fury.

"Damn it, Alex! You screwed me over with that VÖXEN Seraphine—using camouflage to make it look like a first-generation model! That's cheating. This round is void!"

Alex Saint-Claire didn't flinch. He only smirked. "Really? You want to crawl back on your own words now?"

He tapped his bracelet, linking it to the stadium's massive screen. The contract appeared in sharp detail for everyone to read.

"This man-Ragnar Eisenwall, heir of Duke Eisenwall-says he doesn't want to pay his bet," Alex announced, projecting his voice across the arena. "People of Winchester, what do you think?"

The reaction was instant. Jeers erupted from every corner of the stadium, rolling like thunder.

Some people in the crowd-desperate to protect their bets on Ragnar—shouted for the race to be voided so they could get their money back. But their voices were instantly swallowed by the roaring stadium.

Most of the audience agreed: the document was valid. Ragnar had asked for the race.

Ragnar had lost. Ragnar had to pay.

"One needs courage to win and courage to lose!" someone shouted.

"You dare to play but don't dare to lose? What are you—a child who only accepts victory and screams 'void' when you fail?"

"I didn't know Duke Eisenwall raised such an ungentlemanly son!"

"Shameless!"

Each insult slammed into Ragnar like a stone. He knew the Eisenwall family reputation was taking a hit—tens of thousands of eyes were watching him crumble.

But accepting loss meant losing his car, arm and his heart. That was a price he would never pay. Not for anyone.

"No—I'm not backing down!" Ragnar snapped, voice cracking slightly.

"This is about principle! I refuse to be cheated. If you didn't cheat, I'd pay you-hell,

I'd give you my head, not just my arms. Ask anyone who knows me!"

He puffed up his chest, trying to look righteous, trying to look like the victim.

"You cheated!" he barked. "I'm not going to be the idiot who lets himself played!"

The stadium exploded into louder jeers, a tidal wave of contempt.

Everyone could see it clearly now-

Ragnar Eisenwall, the mighty duke's son, was nothing more than a sore loser who didn't have the spine to honor the bet he demanded.

Renata shot Ragnar a look full of contempt. "Ragnar, you're breaking your promise. You disgusting, spineless idiot."

Countess Marlena stepped forward.

"Ragnar Eisenwell," she said, each syllable sharp and unforgiving, "you are a damn coward. Everyone here heard you begged for this race, you demanded the bet be made official, and you signed the document with your own hand. Eden Group is the official registrar for this match. Do you think we'll stay silent while you disgrace the entire system?"

She moved closer, her gaze burning straight through him.

"I will plaster your face across every newspaper and every holo-screen in the country. 'The Duke of Eisenwall's Son-The Biggest Coward of the Year.' Imagine that headline. Imagine the impact on your family's oh-so-precious reputation." She didn't blink.

"Or should I file a formal report with the jurisdiction? Do you think the government will let you run after you signed your name in ink?"

Ragnar's face turned pale. The CEO of Eden Group looked ready to turn a spark into a wildfire-and burn him with it.

"Well, I suggest you go ahead and do it," Renata said, smiling with pure satisfaction at Ragnar's misfortune. "Let the whole Prussian Empire finally see the truth behind all those grand Eisenwall advertisements-strength, honor, responsibility. What a joke. Turns out the great Duke's son is just a coward who can't stand by a single damn word he says."

A few classmates who'd always despised Ragnar stepped forward, their voices dripping with venom, eager to sink their teeth deeper into his humiliation. "Well, now we finally see his true face!"

"He's nothing but a double-standard dog. If Alex had lost, Ragnar would've skinned him alive. But now that he's the loser, he's whining like a child."

"Pathetic. Absolutely pathetic."

"He talked big, bet big, and lost big."

Ragnar's face shifted between green and red, twisted with humiliation.

Truth was, he had bought this VÖXEN 6-series barely a month ago.

He'd paid over four million dollars for the damn car-and the bet demanded his arm and his heart. No way he would hand all of that over to someone he considered beneath him.

"You cheated," Ragnar snapped. "I'll see you in court."

"Perfect," Countess Marlena replied with a slow, amused smile.

"Then we'll see your family name dragged all over social media and every newspaper. You'll be the joke of the year. And your father, who has spent decades defending his dignity, will watch you tear it apart in one afternoon. His enemies will feast on this."

"I don't care," Ragnar muttered stubbornly.

But then his bracelet chimed-loud, sharp, urgent.

He glanced at the caller ID and froze. Cold sweat slid down his spine.

He tapped the bracelet. "Father."

The Duke's voice boomed through the line, furious and controlled.

"What you're doing is being watched by the entire country. People are already discussing the Eisenwall dignity you're dragging through the mud. Whatever you bet -you will give. Uphold the family name."

"But Father....." Ragnar's voice faltered. He had always feared this man more than anyone. "My arm... my heart..."

"Even if it costs your life," the Duke snapped, every word cold as forged steel, "you will not stain the Eisenwall name. You give them what you bet—or I'll take it from you with my own hand."

Ragnar's stomach twisted hard. His father wasn't just a patriot-he was a general, a man who lived and breathed honor. If Ragnar refused to pay the bet, the Eisenwall reputations their dominance their influence-would be shredded under the national spotlight.

And worse... his father would kill him without hesitation.

He had ten brothers waiting like vultures to take his position. If he defied the Duke,

he wouldn't just lose the bet-he'd lose his status, his future, and his life.

He would be the real loser.

"Fine," Ragnar finally choked out. "The VÖXEN 6 is yours."

"Good. You are truly an Eisenwall," Alex said calmly. "Now... what about your arm and your heart?"

"I'll pay with money," Ragnar snapped.

"Great. So you did read the contract well." Alex nodded. "For the arm, I'll take half a million. For the heart, one million."

"Bullshit!" Ragnar exploded. "On the real market, an arm costs ten thousand dollars, and a healthy heart is fifty thousand! Don't treat me like an idiot!"

Alex's smirk sharpened. "Wonderful. Since you know the prices so damn well, why not hand over your arm and buy yourself a new one afterward? Prussia's healthcare will reattach it for free. Think of it as a smart financial move-you'll save a fortune." "You—!" Ragnar roared, trembling with rage. "How dare you talk to me like that!" "Dare what?" Alex asked, unbothered. "I'm following the rules. According to the contract, I get to choose whether your payment is accepted in money. If I refuse your offer, you give me the real thing. Arm and heart."

Ragnar's face flushed crimson. "One hundred thousand for the arm. Half a million for the heart. That's my final offer."

"Well," Alex said, "I'm asking one

million for your arm and two million for your heart. Plenty of people would buy them-especially your father's enemies. Imagine their heidsoms labeled with: The Arma and Heart of Ragnar Eisenwall.' They'd pay very, very well?"

"How dare you raise the price!?" Ragnar shouted, voice cracking with humiliation.

"The price of your arm is now two million," Alex replied, smiling. "And your heart? Four million."

"Two million for an arm?! That's extortion!"

Alex smiled, unbothered. "Extortion? Ragnar, please. I'm giving you a friend discount."

Ragnar blinked, confused. "A... discount?!"

"Of course." Alex's tone was amused, almost playful. "If you weren't an Eisenwall, I'd charge triple. Your rich enemies would kill for the chance to own a piece of you."

Ragnar scoffed. "Enemies? I don't have enemies!"

Alex let out a short, sharp laugh. "Are you sure? Because from where I'm standing, you're working really hard to grow the list."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 503[916 words]

Alex smiled at Ragnar. "I have to admit. You're really working hard to piss me off. Congratulations. The price just went up-three million for your arm. And your heart?"

He shrugged. "Five million. If you want to bargain, complain, or throw a tantrum, go ahead. I'll keep raising the price until I walk away with your real arm and your real heart."

"Alex," Sofina called. "What are you even going to do with the money and the car if Ragnar pays?"

"Well," Alex said, eyes softening when they met hers, "I'll give them to you, of course."

She bit her lip, worry tightening her voice. "If you're really okay with that... Ragnar's my classmate, my friend. I'm not taking anything from him."

"Sure," Alex said with a small smile. He already knew what she would do. Sofina couldn't hurt anyone-not if she could avoid it.

She'd return the money and the car the moment she had the chance. That was just who she was. And for Alex, the amount itself was nothing-pocket change.

He didn't need Ragnar's money. He never did.

Finally, Alex turned back to Ragnar. "My wife says you two are friends. So if you're really that broke so broke you can't scrape together eight million-I, a gentlemen and very rich man, am willing to look down on you with pity.:

"Admit you're poor, and I'll erase the entire bet. No payment. No debt. And you get to keep your car."

Ragnar exhaled in pure relief. That was it—his arm, his heart, his money, his precious car—all saved.

Eight million dollars wasn't just a lot of money—it was his entire savings.

If all he had to do was admit he was poor to save everything he owned, then hell yes, he'd do it.

Easy. Effortless. No hesitation.

His father might die of shame, might bankrupt the whole family for the sake of honor, but Ragnar?

Ragnar wasn't built like that.

He bent with the wind.

But the crowd wasn't quiet.

Whispers surged around him.

"Damn... Alex is such a gentleman. A rich guy refusing all that money? That's class."

"Meanwhile Ragnar—what a jerk. A broke coward. Alex tried to flex with the cash, but turns out Ragnar doesn't even have any!"

"Yes! Alex is backing off because Ragnar's a poor loser!"

Ragnar froze as the words hit him like slapped echoes, each one louder than the last.

The crowd's vicious comments struck Ragnar like stones. Faces twisted with disgust.

People were looking down on him—laughing, booing, calling him a fraud. The entire stadium roared with humiliation.

Then his bracelet buzzed.

His father.

Ragnar's stomach dropped. He didn't even need to answer. He already knew the message: Pay. Or face something far worse.

Ragnar clenched his teeth so hard it hurt. He straightened his back, forced his voice to rise above the crowd.

"Who the hell says I'm a poor loser?" he snarled. "Eight million dollars is pocket change for me. And my car? I can buy the newest model tomorrow. I have twenty cars sitting in my garage. I'll honor my bet-right here, right now-in front of all of you!"

A faint, knowing smirk tugged at the corner of Alex's lips.

Ragnar was spiraling now, pride shredding the last pieces of his sanity. "Alex, take out your connection. I'll transfer it."

"Oh, come on," Alex said, still smiling, infuriatingly calm. "If you don't have money, don't force it. My wife already said no to pitying poor people."

"You bastard," Ragnar snapped. "I'm a very rich man! Do you think paying you this little will make me poor? It won't even make a dent in my money!"

Inside, Ragnar was dying.

That money was everything he had.

His entire savings.

But pride came first. Pride always came first.

He bit down on his lip until it bled, pulled up the payment screen with trembling fingers, and transferred the full amount-money and the digital key of his VÖXEN-straight into Alex's bracelet.

A sharp beep confirmed the transaction.

The stadium fell silent for a split second.

Then Alex clapped once, casually, like announcing a circus act. "Wonderful. Ragnar Eisenwall truly a gentleman A man who dares to bet and dares to pay. Let's give him applause."

He clapped alone.

Then Renata joined him-slow, deliberate, a small mocking smile curling at her lips.

A few others followed, offering thin, hollow claps that landed like blades.

And soon the entire stadium was clapping for Ragnar.

Ragnar's face burned bright red. He knew exactly what kind of applause this was.

Not respect.

Not admiration.

Mockery.

But the damage was done.

And Ragnar could feel it—like the whole stadium had already carved the word fool onto his forehead.

Still, he forced himself to act unfazed. He cleared his throat, trying to steady his shaking voice.

"That's just a small thing," he said stiffly. "A bet is a bet. I'm honoring it. Eisenwalls keep their promises. We take responsibility."

The guys who had encouraged him earlier rushed to salvage the moment.

"Yeah! You all better stop looking down on Ragnar! He's loaded! Eight million dollars

is nothing! A VÖXEN is nothing to him!"

"Yes! For him, VÖXEN Gen 6 is just a casual cheap car!" one shouted. "He can buy ten of those without

blinking You're looking at the real young master here!"

"Yes, yes," another agreed—then all of them went silent at the same time.

They knew Ragnar's personality too well. Push him a little too far and he'd explode again.

So they stopped talking, dropped the topic completely, and urged everyone to head into the rented reunion room.

Meanwhile, Sofina and Renata stopped Alex in the hallway.

Sofina spoke first, her eyes sharp. "Care to explain what just happened? That first-generation VÖXEN suddenly turned out to be a VÖXEN Seraphine."

She folded her arms, voice tightening. "What secret are you hiding from us?"

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 504[1,003 words]

"Oh—yes, the VÖXEN Seraphine hiding under first-generation camouflage," Alex said with a bright, almost playful smile. "I called the previous owner to clear up the mystery."

"And...?" Renata leaned closer.

"Turns out," Alex said, trying not to laugh, "the man was obsessed with the VÖXEN Seraphine. Absolute dream car. But his wife hated the idea-said it was a waste of money, that he should buy her gold or jewelry instead of some overpriced machine." "But he wanted it so badly that he bought it behind her back. He knew she'd explode if she found out how much he spent. So he activated the camouflage mode and disguised it as a first-generation VÖXEN. His wife never suspected a thing."

"And...?" Sofina pushed.

"One day they got into a huge fight. His wife, furious, sold the 'first-generation VÖXEN' for a dirt-cheap price. And I happened to be the one who bought it for eighty thousand."

"Damn," Renata muttered. "You're insanely lucky."

"Alex," Sofina said, worried, "this VÖXEN Seraphine is worth ten million dollars. We have to return it to him."

"I tried," Alex replied casually. "But he told me to keep it. His wife is still angry. If she finds out he bought the real Seraphine, he might actually die. So I'm helping him by holding onto the car."

Sofina stared at him, speechless.

Alex shrugged lightly. "Can we just say, 'Thank you, True Source, for this blessed stroke of luck'?"

"True Source?" Renata lifted a brow.

"Well-the Almighty up there, the Creator who created all of us," Alex explained.

Renata burst into laughter. "You're hilarious. We appeared from a random cosmic big bang. No one created us. Humans are the top species—there's no creator watching us."

Sofina looked at Alex, her voice soft. "You're a romantic. I'll ask you more about that later."

"Oh please, stop with all that imagination," Renata groaned. "Sofina, just keep the VÖXEN Seraphine. If you don't want it, give it to me instead. Or sell it to me—I'll pay eighty thousand dollars. You'll still make a profit."

Sofina's eyes went wide. "No. It's Alex's car."

She grabbed Renata's arm, steering her forward. "Now come on—we're here for the reunion."

Alex looked at Renata, then at Sofina, and the two women walked inside.

He let out a quiet sigh.

These people didn't believe in the True Source, the Creator, the Almighty—anything beyond themselves.

To them, faith was foolish, childish, nothing more than worshipping illusions born from human imagination.

This was Prussia: you were your own god, your own origin, your own destiny.

The world didn't come from anyone—it "just appeared."

Alex walked to his car, grabbed the gift box he had prepared for the reunion, and thought to himself, Maybe one day... I'll be the first spiritual leader this place has

ever seen.

Inside the hall, several banquet tables were already arranged.

Floating 3D banners shimmered above the small stage, celebrating the class reunion.

According to tradition, everyone placed a gift on the long table—those gifts would be auctioned later, and the money used to fund the next reunion.

Renata walked up and set down her gift box.

Sofina followed, placing a small box on the table.

Then she turned to Alex.

"Thanks for preparing the gifts for the reunion."

"What?" Alex froze.

The real gift he had prepared for reunion class was still in his hand.

"Which gift?"

"You said there was a gift in the car," Sofina said, confused. "So I took the one on the dashboard."

"Oh, we miscommunicated," Alex

replied, panic, rising as he realized

she had taken the ring meant for

her. "The one on the dashboard is

er

especially for you. The reunion gift is in the back of the car this one in my hand is the actual reunion gift."

Sofina's eyes widened. "Oh no-I put the wrong one on the table."

She grabbed the box from Alex's hand and hurried back toward the gift table to retrieve the gift she'd mistakenly put down earlier.

But before she could reach it, Belinda-one of the reunion staff and the classmate who had despised Sofina since university-stepped in.

"What do you think you're doing?" Belinda demanded, stepping in front of her. "You can't take back a gift once it's on the table. It has to go through the auction."

"It was a mistake," Sofina said quickly. "The gift I placed here was from my husband

to me. This one is the real reunion gift. I just need to switch them."

Belinda folded her arms, savoring the moment.

"Sorry. Once a gift is on the table, it can only be retrieved during the auction. So if you want it back, make sure you bring enough money to buy it."

"Belinda, please," Sofina begged quietly.

"No."

Belinda flicked her hand dismissively and smirked.

"Make sure you participate in the auction like everyone else if you want to win your own gift back, okay?"

Then she snatched the box right out of Sofina's hands.

"You said this was for the class reunion, so I'll help you put it on the table myself." "What?" Sofina stared at her, shocked, unable to believe what had just happened.

"Belinda, please. That gift wasn't for the reunion. Give it back."

"Oh, I knew. I heard you. It was for you. How sweet." Belinda's smile curdled into something sharp. "But you put it on the table. And once it was there, it belonged to all of us. Including the."

Sofina's cheeks burned with anger. "I didn't think you'd ever stoop this low."

"Really?" Belinda said, her voice dripping venom. "You, of all people, should know exactly how low I can go."

Sofina whispered, "Belinda..... we're adults now. Why are you still doing this?"

Belinda leaned in, her breath cold, her words soft as poison. "Because no matter how many years pass, it's still fun watching you beg."

Then she flashed a wide, satisfied smile.

The greatest demons don't roar; they smile.

"Sofina," Alex called gently. "Is there a problem?"

"Alex..." Sofina turned toward him, shaken. "She doesn't want to return the gift."

"Don't worry," Alex said, his voice low but steady. "I'll make sure we get that gift back. At any cost."

"Are you sure?" Belinda asked, her tone cold and mocking. "Because I'm going to make sure Ragnar knows about it—and that you never get it back. Not unless you're ready to pay a very high price."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 505[1,016 words]

After all the gifts were collected, the class reunion truly began.

People spread across the hall, greeting one another, exchanging stories about their lives, their failures, their victories. Some spoke with genuine nostalgia.

Others smiled while quietly calculating profit, scanning the room for connections to exploit—like multi-level marketers, insurance agents, and investment salesmen hunting for their next target.

Every conversation carried tension beneath the laughter.

Then the announcement dropped.

The Winchester Stadium officially revealed this year's Mobile Suit Tournament.

A ripple of excitement swept through the room.

From the VIP area reserved for the reunion, the entire stadium lay open before them —vast, gleaming, alive with light. At the center stood the machines themselves.

Mobile suits.

War machines built for human pilots. Three to five meters tall. Capable of flight, space travel, and combat in nearly any environment.

To most people, they were simply giant robots. To those who understood power, they were dominance given form.

Some premium models could even transform into spacecraft.

Only a handful of entities in Prussia were allowed to build them—barely ten companies from selected noble houses held official military licenses.

Every year, those ten showcased their newest innovations in the tournament. Speed. Design. Efficiency. Battery endurance. And finally, raw combat capability.

One name surfaced immediately.

Tobias Bluthelm.

He was their classmate.

Everyone knew the story. Two centuries ago, House Bluthelm had been a giant in mobile suit manufacturing. A legend.

But that glory belonged to history books. For the past forty years, the Bluthelm entry had ranked dead last in the tournament.

Their company stood on the edge of bankruptcy.

"Tobias!" Ragnar shouted, loud enough to draw attention. "I heard you designed your own mobile suit this year. What's it called again? Trash?"

Tobias—short, thin, with the look of a lifelong engineer—met Ragnar's gaze. His jaw tightened.

"It's called Phantom."

Ragnar laughed. "Phantom. How poetic. Invisible. Unseen. Built on a bankrupt

budget." He sneered. "Are you sure it can even move? Or fly? Or did you forget to install the engine?"

A few people chuckled.

Tobias clenched his fists. "Ragnar Eisenwall," he said sharply, "if your company hadn't sabotaged our contracts and stolen clients through underhanded tactics, my family wouldn't be standing on the brink of collapse."

Ragnar's smile widened, cold and arrogant. "Oh? So now you want to cry?" He spread his hands.

"Eisenwall is Prussia's number one military manufacturer. Weapons. Spaceships. Mobile suits. We make everything. And in this industry, anything is fair-crushing you, owning you, or erasing you."

He leaned closer, voice dripping with mock generosity. "I already offered to buy your company. One hundred million. That's a generous price for scrap metal and a dying name. You should be thanking me."

"You-" Tobias snapped, fury burning through his voice.

"Oh, right," Ragnar said, feigning thoughtfulness. "That was last year's offer. One hundred million."

He grinned viciously. "Now it's fifty million. And after you lose this tournament-dead last again—I'll buy what's left of your company for twenty million."

Ragnar lowers his voice. "You know what happens if you lose this year, Tobias."

He smiles thinly. "Your house disappears. Officially."

Tobias swallows. His hands tremble. "I know."

Ragnar watches closely. "Then why aren't you afraid?"

Tobias closes his eyes for a moment. When he opens them, they're hollow-but steady.

"Because I already buried my family."

Ragnar stiffens.

"I buried them when your lawyers circled us like vultures. When my mother sold her wedding ring to pay salaces. When my father died in a workshop instead of a hospital."

Ragnar scoffed, but a flicker of unease flashed in his eyes. "You're just blaming the world for your own weakness."

Tobias shook his head slowly. "No. I'm thanking it."

Ragnar frowned. "For what?"

"For teaching me that mercy is optional."

Ragnar exploded into harsh, cruel laughter. "Mercy is for the strong. Weak people like you exist only to be stepped on."

Tobias's eyes burned with fury, but he said nothing.

The Phantom stood silent in the stadium below.

Then the tournament began.

The first test was flight speed and endurance. Ten mobile suits launched into the air, racing through the entire stadium for fifty full laps.

Engines roared. Thrusters flared. The crowd leaned forward in anticipation.

For the first hundred meters, the Phantom flew smoothly.

Then it stopped.

Its engine cut out without warning. The machine froze midair, lost balance, and dropped from ten meters high.

It slammed into the ground with a thunderous crash. Metal screamed. Sparks exploded. The stadium gasped.

The commentator laughed openly.

"Let's take a look at Bluthelm's new model, proudly named Phantom. Supposedly designed to save a company already on the brink of bankruptcy."

His tone turned mocking. "But it seems they won't be making it this year either."

As the Phantom lay broken, the center section suddenly opened. The pilot climbed out, shaking with rage.

"Damn this piece of garbage!" he

shouted as he climbed out and

stormed away from the Phantom.“ should never have signed a contract to pilot this shit. I'm done. I'm not touching this thing ever again."

“Well,” the commentator continued smoothly, "this Phantom suit appears to be truly defective-or perhaps someone successfully

sabotaged a company with a

questionable safety standards Either way, that's fatal for a military manufacturer."

FindNovel.net

He paused. “Whatever the cause, this may be the final year we ever see Bluthelm compete."

Ragnar laughed so hard he nearly doubled over.

“See?” he sneered. "This is your 'best model'? Your pride and hope? It can't even stay airborne for a hundred meters."

Tobias's face went completely pale.

His hand trembled as he touched his bracelet, linking directly to the Phantom's systems on the tournament network.

His eyes hardened. Screens exploded into existence before him as he forced open every circuit.

Diagnostics. Security layers. Control code.

He had tested the Phantom countless times. It had performed flawlessly. It should have shattered tournament records.

But overnight, at Winchester, something had gone terribly wrong.

This wasn't a malfunction.

Someone had tampered with it.

More than twenty holographic screens filled the air in front of Tobias-lines of code, security protocols, encrypted systems laid bare.

And the truth was waiting inside them.

Most people stared at what Tobias was doing, but none of them understood it. The cascading symbols and code meant nothing to them-alien language, meaningless noise.

Alex understood every line.

To be honest, Eden Group had already tried to build mobile suits of their own. But the Prussian Empire had never granted them a license.

So the work continued in the shadows, hidden, unofficial, dangerous.

Looking at Tobias's blueprint-level access and exposed systems, Alex leaned closer and whispered, almost admiringly, "Beautiful."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 506[1,128 words]

Tobias was fighting the system. He searched through every circuit, every logic chain, every safety layer. Minutes passed. His brow was soaked in sweat.

Everything was perfect.

Every system reported normal. Every parameter was within optimal range.

And yet the machine had fallen out of the sky.

Ragnar laughed again, sharp and cruel. "Face it, Tobias. You won't finish a mobile suit this year either. Same failure. Same ending."

Alex spoke casually, as if changing the subject. "Sofina, have you heard about the fake driver case in Eden Group? You should be careful about things like that."

"What?" Sofina turned to him, confused.

"A driver once pretended to work for Eden Group," Alex continued calmly.

"He turned out to be a competitor's spy. Once inside the vehicle, he installed a virus that triggered a controlled malfunction. I heard it nearly caused a fatal accident and was meant to sabotage one of Eden Group's most important clients."

"Alright," Sofina nodded, still unsure why Alex brought it up.

But Tobias froze.

His eyes snapped to a different subsystem. The driver authorization software.

He dug in fast.

And there it was.

Unauthorized code. Hidden commands. A false failure protocol uploaded through driver access-designed to make the mobile suit pretend to malfunction.

"Damn it!" Tobias hissed.

The driver had sabotaged the Phantom from the inside.

His hands moved with precision now. No hesitation.

He revoked the driver's authority instantly, wiped the infected layer, and activated full AI control. He rerouted command to the autonomous combat core and issued a single directive:

Finish the lap.

On the stadium screen, the Phantom shuddered.

Then its systems roared back to life.

Thrusters ignited. Stabilizers locked in. The mobile suit surged upward and shot forward, accelerating hard-faster than before, faster than anyone expected.

It was already too late.

The Phantom had lost too much time. There was no catching the other mobile suits. Everyone understood what that meant-last place.

"Ragnar," Tobias turned slowly, "you paid someone to sit inside my machine and stab it from the inside."

Ragnar chuckled, unimpressed. "Careful, boy. That's a serious accusation coming from someone whose useless mobile suit just fell out of the sky."

"My suit didn't fall," Tobias said quietly. "It was betrayed."

Ragnar shrugged. "That's business."

His smile twisted. "Betrayed or not, you lost because you can't manage your own people. Blame your stupidity. Blame your weakness. You're a loser with no money and blind loyalty. Too many holes. Too easy to exploit."

Tobias understood the truth of it. In war, every weakness would be exposed, and every opening would be exploited. Life in Prussia was about winning by any means necessary. Betrayal only happened to those foolish enough to leave themselves vulnerable.

Still, even with the Phantom finishing last, it wasn't a complete loss. For the first time in years, Bluthelm had completed a full lap without collapsing.

That alone felt like survival.

After nearly an hour of competition, the first stage of the three-stage tournament came to an end.

Then Belinda stood up.

"Tobias," she said sharply, "you're part of the reunion staff. You'll handle the auction this time with me. Let's open the gifts one by one, estimate their value, and if anyone wants them, we start the bidding."

She reached for the first box.

"Let's start with this one."

Belinda opened it quickly. Inside lay an old scroll. Her face twisted in disappointment.

"What is this?" she scoffed. "Who brings a piece of paper this old?"

Someone from the reunion spoke up. "Can't you see it? It's a painting."

"Duh." Belinda clicked her tongue. She unrolled the scroll and glanced at it, then laughed coldly.

"What the hell is this? Some rotten old painting? I bet it's worth one or two hundred dollars at most."

Tobias stepped forward. "Not everything can be measured by money. What matters is sincerity. The goodwill behind the gift."

"Oh, spare me your holy nonsense," Belinda snapped. "I'm warning you-stop associating with classmates like this. They've got the nerve to bring a cheap little drawing that wouldn't even cover their meal at this event."

Belinda squinted at the artwork. "Is this supposed to be abstract?"

"No," the classmate said quickly. "It's symbolic."

"Symbolic of what?"

He hesitated. "History. Heritage."

Belinda laughed. "Ah. That explains why it looks like something history already tried to forget."

She lifted her chin coldly. "Now tell me who brought this before I check the security cameras."

One of the classmates raised his hand awkwardly. "Uh... that's mine. You know what people say. It's an antique. It could be very valuable. It's been passed down from my ancestors."

Belinda laughed outright. "Oh, please. Do you think your ancestor's underwear is an antique too?"

She waved the scroll dismissively. "Next time, bring something actually expensive instead of this trash."

"Oh, what an asshole you are," the man shot back. "We're not obligated to give expensive gifts."

"Exactly," Belinda snapped without hesitation. "People like you are the reason this reunion keeps running at a deficit. Have some shame."

"He came with good intentions," another classmate shot back. "What's wrong with that? Can't you show a little kindness for him even coming here?"

"For what?" Belinda fired back. "For making the reunion lose money?" She scoffed.

"And kindness? Please. I don't exist to make you happy."

Tobias's expression darkened. His patience finally broke.

"Belinda, are you really that much of a snob?"

Belinda spun on him, furious.

"Tobias Bluthelm, how dare you say

that?" Her voice sharpened like a blade. "Me? A snob? If I were really a snob, why would

would be engaged to

you, a pauper?" She sneered.

"Don't forget—I'm your fiancée. I'm the one trying to hold up your company while Bluthelm crawls toward bankruptcy."

Tobias froze. His mouth opened, then closed. Embarrassment burned across his face. He had no words.

"Fine," Belinda said coldly. "Who even wants this ugly painting anyway? Let's start

at one hundred dollars."

The bidding began.

Slow. Painfully slow.

One hundred. One-fifty. Two hundred. The price crawled upward like a dying snail, finally stalling around four hundred dollars.

Alex leaned slightly toward Sofina and bowed his head. "You should bid on the painting."

"Why?" Sofina whispered back.

"I've seen that painter's name before," Alex said calmly. "At the Paradise Hotel. The founder there obsessively. That painting should be worth at least twenty thousand."

ects antique works

"What?" Sofina's eyes widened in shock.

"Bid," Alex said. "Then sell it to Paradise Hotel. I promise they'll pay you well."

Sofina raised her hand. "Five hundred dollars."

Belinda shot her a scornful look. "Do you even have that kind of money? Why don't

you use it to pay your electricity bill instead of buying junk?"

Renata frowned sharply. "Do you have to be a bully to everyone?"

"Again," Belinda snapped. "I didn't grow up to please people. I speak the truth—

honestly."

She lifted her chin. "If people can't handle truth these days, then damn it, this world deserves to rot under fake people like you."

"Fake people?" Renata snapped, fury flashing in her eyes.

"What?" Belinda shot back.

"Your heart is a fragile jade cup—one harsh word and it shatters?" Her lips curled

into a cruel smile. "I'd happily break it and grind the pieces under my heel while laughing."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 507[1,485 words]

Ragnar's eyes snapped to Belinda. His voice dropped low, sharp as a blade.

"Tell me the truth. Did you set this up with that dirty bastard just to scam me?"

Belinda's face drained of color. "No-no. I didn't know. I swear."

"Oh, come on," Alex said lazily. "You promised me ten percent of whatever price I managed to squeeze out of Ragnar. Now he's on the hook for a hundred thousand. That means you owe me ten thousand, as agreed."

"Shut up," Belinda snapped. "I don't even know you."

She knew Alex was deliberately trying to drive a wedge between her and Ragnar.

She was only a baron's daughter. If Ragnar struck her, she had no power to fight back. All she could do was swallow the fear-and the pain.

Ragnar stepped closer, his shadow swallowing her. His gaze bored into her face. "Then tell me," he said coldly, "who do you think should pay for that ring?"

Belinda swallowed hard. "R-Ragnar... according to the rules, the bidder has to pay."

His hand flashed.

Slap.

Pain tore across her cheek. Her ears rang.

"Say it again," Ragnar said, his voice flat, daring her to repeat it.

"I—I mean," she stammered, her voice trembling, "the winner of the ring is the last person who placed the bid."

Slap.

Harder.

Ragnar leaned in. "Are you saying I have to pay for the ring?"

"No-no," Belinda blurted out in panic. She knew the truth. She also knew that if she

held on to her principles, Ragnar would destroy her without hesitation.

Ragnar's voice dropped to a whisper, more terrifying than a shout.

"Belinda, if you don't make this clear," he said slowly, "I promise you your entire family will be crushed by my hand."

Belinda panicked. Her belief shattered under fear.

"I mean—the last bid I heard was Alex. He said ninety thousand. He should pay."

"No!" Alex shouted instantly. "Not me. I'm not paying ninety thousand for a ring worth one thousand. Ask Ragnar—he was the last bidder. Everyone heard it."

"Alex," Ragnar said, smiling thinly. "That ring was meant for Sofina. Feelings matter. Even if you buy another one, the first meaning is already gone. So pay the ninety thousand."

Alex laughed, sharp and cruel.

"Everyone knows you wanted the ring. You were willing to throw one hundred thousand at a one-thousand-dollar fake."

His eyes cut into Ragnar, sharp and merciless. "I've taken plenty of money from you —millions. Don't mistake this for me not having the money to pay." His voice hardened.

"But paying ninety thousand for trash worth a thousand? That's something only a loser does. And I'm not the loser here. I'm not the idiot."

He leaned forward slightly.

"You idiot. You made the final bid—one hundred thousand dollars. You'd better pay it." His eyes narrowed. "And don't forget, I still get my ten percent cut from it." Ragnar's face drained of color.

He had the money—but paying it would brand him forever.

A fool with too much pride.

A duke's son humiliated in front of everyone.

"Alex, you made the last bid," Belinda shouted. "So take your ring and pay ninety thousand dollars."

Her bracelet lit up instantly. An invoice formed in midair and shot straight to Alex.

"No!"

Alex's voice cut through the room. "You can't do that to me."

"Yes, I can," Belinda snapped. "So you'd better pay."

The air in the hall tightened. Every breath felt heavy.

Then a calm voice broke through the tension.

"Fine. I'll pay for the ring."

All eyes turned at once.

Sofina.

"Sofina," Alex said quickly, alarmed. "Please don't. Don't pay ninety thousand for a ring worth one thousand. That is stupid."

Sofina shook her head gently. "It's okay, Alex. Even if the ring itself is cheap- even if people call me an idiot—the feeling behind you giving me that ring matters more than money."

She tapped her bracelet and looked straight at Belinda.

"I've transferred ninety thousand dollars to your account. The transaction is complete."

Belinda checked her balance. A slow, satisfied smile spread across her face. She wrapped the ring back into its box and handed it to Sofina.

"Thank you very much. Here's your ring."

Ragnar burst out laughing. "You put your ring on the table, let it get auctioned for ninety thousand, and then paid for it yourself?"

He shook his head. "Damn. That's stupid."

People around the room laughed along with him. Classmates or not, it didn't stop them from thinking the same thing.

Sofina was foolish.

Alex ignored them.

He took the ring from the box, held Sofina's hand, and slowly slid it onto her finger.

"I'm sorry," he said quietly. "I made you pay ninety thousand for this ring."

"It's okay," Sofina replied softly. "This was my mistake too."

Alex let out a slow breath. "That ring was once worn by the last Princess of Xia, before she fled to Prussia. Its true value is fifty million dollars. That was the real price to acquire it."

Laughter exploded across the hall.

Ragnar laughed the loudest. "Sure, sure. Maybe the real one is worth fifty million."

He sneered. "But didn't you say that replica is only worth one thousand? Who are you trying to fool?"

The laughter sharpened-mocking, cruel, relentless.

"Alex," Sofina said softly, looking

straight at him. "It's okay. I don't care

about the price or the value only care that you were willing to give me this ring."

She paused, her voice steady. "And if

you say this ring is real and worth fifty million, then to me, it's worth that much. No matter what, wiff never sell it. Not at any price."

Laughter crashes over them again.

Sharp. Endless.

Ragnar shakes his head. "Look at her face. She actually believes it."

Belinda wipes a tear from laughing too hard. "That's not love. That's delusion."

Sofina doesn't flinch. Her hand stays raised, her eyes fixed on the ring.

"I don't need proof," she says quietly. "I need him."

'Love believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.'

Ragnar scoffs. "That's what poor people say when they have nothing of value. All

they can do is invent empty dreams to survive their miserable lives."

Alex finally looks up. His gaze is gentle-yet unshakably steady.

"Happiness is still happiness," he says calmly. "With money or without it. With dreams or without them."

A faint smile touches his lips. "Funny thing I've noticed."

The laughter in the room falters.

"People who mock belief usually do it because no one ever believed in them. And

people who laugh at sincerity do so because they've never had anything real to

lose."

Ragnar sneers. "You think faith can change reality? You think dreams can create anything?"

Alex smiles, faint but certain. "No. Faith doesn't create reality—it reveals it. And dreams are what keep people standing when everything else is taken away."

He picked up the antique painting Sofina had bought for five hundred dollars and gently pressed it against the ring.

"I heard the original ring of Princess Xia also functioned as an interspace storage ring."

Belinda burst out laughing. "Yeah, sure. An interspace storage ring." She sneered openly.

"Do you even know how rare those are in all of Prussia? Fewer than a hundred people own one. And you think your one-thousand-dollar fake has that ability?" The room exploded with laughter.

"Oh wow," someone mocked. "The Eden Group cleaning service handing out original royal artifacts."

Sofina glanced at Alex. "Don't listen to them. I like that kind of dream. It's romantic."

Alex smiled faintly. "Then would you like to pretend it's real and say "

He lowered his voice playfully. "Storage ring. Collect the painting.""

"Why not?" Sofina said softly, smiling at him. She loved him. And to her, Alex's feelings mattered more than anything else.

"Storage ring, collect the painting," she said gently, playing along without hesitation.

Whether the ring was real or fake didn't matter to her. If Alex believed in it then she would believe in it too. Even the smallest dream was worth protecting if it came from him.

She would treasure the ring as her most precious possession.

Because no matter how small the dream was, cheering for Alex—and guarding his feelings was what mattered most to her.

Alex saw it clearly—the absolute trust in her eyes.

Pure. Unquestioning.

The crowd laughed harder at their childish fantasy.

Ragnar scoffed. "That's the dream of poor people. Rich people buy reality. Poor people like you can only dream about it."

Then—

Silence.

Renata spoke first. "The painting is gone."

Silence.

Renata's voice trembles. "I'm not joking. The painting... it's gone."

Belinda snaps, spinning around. "Stop playing along. This isn't funny."

She rushes to the table, throws the box open. Empty.

Her smile dies.

"No," she whispers. "That's impossible."

Ragnar steps forward sharply. "Check again."

Belinda's hands shake as she scans the table, the floor, the walls.

"It was here. I swear it was here."

The room fills with confused murmurs.

Sofina looks down at the ring, breath hitching.

"Alex..."

Alex didn't even turn. His eyes never left Sofina. A faint smile curved his lips.

"The painting isn't gone," he said calmly. "It's being stored inside your ring."

Sofina froze. Her eyes widened, shock flooding her face. She stared at Alex, barely breathing.

"How...?"

"I told you," Alex said, smiling now, clearly enjoying the moment. "It's the real ring. Worth fifty million dollars."

Ragnar and Belinda stiffened. Their minds scrambled to catch up. Around them, the room fell into stunned silence as everyone processed the same terrifying thought— Had they just let a fifty-million-dollar ring slip away for ninety thousand?

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 508[1,311 words]

"There's no way that cheap replica ring is a real interspace storage ring," Belinda said coldly.

If it were truly legendary, she would have bought it herself. She would never have let it slip into someone else's hands.

"You used a trick," she pressed on. "You hid the painting and made it look like it disappeared." Her eyes hardened. "Just admit it."

"Denial," Alex sneered. "The first refuge of people who can't handle the truth. Believe whatever helps you sleep."

Belinda snapped, her patience gone. "Enough games. Where did you hide the painting?"

Alex lifted a finger and pointed calmly at Sofina's ring.

"Believe it or not, it's inside."

Sofina's fingers tightened around the ring.

"Inside...?" she whispered, afraid to believe it was really worth fifty million dollars.

Alex's smile slowly deepened. "Yes."

Ragnar burst into a loud, forced laugh. "You expect us to believe a poor man's fantasy? Very funny."

"Whatever," Alex said coldly. "I don't need to prove anything to you—except that you're blind."

"Then show me!" Ragnar shouted, his voice sharp with challenge. "Take the painting out of the storage ring. Now. Show me it's real."

"Alex..." Sofina hesitated.

Alex tightened his grip on her hand.

"Trust me. No tricks. It's an interspace storage ring. Just touch the ring and say, release the painting."

Sofina nodded. She touched the ring and whispered, "Release the painting."

The air rippled.

Light bent.

Thud.

The antique painting dropped onto the table—whole, flawless, untouched.

Silence exploded.

Someone stumbled back.

Another gasped.

“Damn, it is real interspace storage ring!”

Belinda's face drained of all color. “That's... impossible.”

Ragnar whispered, hollow, "Fifty million..."

Alex tilted his head slightly.

"You laughed at dreams. Turns out you were laughing at reality."

Ragnar's hands shook. "You said... you said it was fake."

Alex nodded, calm as stone. “I said the replica was worth one thousand."

He glanced at Sofina.

"I never said hers was."

Belinda's knees buckled. "We sold it for ninety thousand..."

Alex smiled-gentle, precise, deadly.

"No. You returned it for ninety thousand."

Ragnar staggered back, his face gray.

A duke's son.

Outbid. Outsmarted.

"That ring is invalid. You have to return it to me," Belinda blurted out desperately. "You can't buy a fifty-million-dollar ring with ninety thousand."

The entire room stared at Belinda as if she had just claimed she had three heads and six arms.

"Even a three-year-old understands buying and selling," Renata said with a tired sigh. "And you? You're beyond saving."

"Shut up. This transaction isn't valid," Belinda snapped. "I want the ring returned."

Everyone could see it clearly now-Belinda was starting to lose control.

"Excuse me."

A woman's voice cut cleanly through the tension.

The room froze. Every head turned.

"Countess Marlana," Sofina said in surprise. "What brings you here?"

Marlena smiled lightly. "I wanted to meet you. I heard you acquired a painting the Eden Group founder is quite fond of."

Sofina hesitated, confused. Alex touched her shoulder and leaned in, whispering calmly, "I told the Countess about the painting. Why don't you show it to her?"

"Oh... yes." Sofina handed the antique painting to Marlana.

Marlena unrolled it at once. Her eyes lit up with unmistakable awe.

"Perfect," Marlana said, delighted. "I've been searching for this piece for a long time." She looked up. "I'll offer ten million dollars for it. What do you think?"

"What?!"

Belinda's voice burst out before she could stop herself.

The entire room erupted in shock.

A painting that sold at auction for five hundred dollars-now suddenly worth ten million. It sounded insane.

"Wait!" Belinda rushed forward. "Countess, how about you conduct the transaction with me instead?"

Marlena turned to her, puzzled. "And who are you?"

"Countess Marlana, I'm Belinda von Yorck," Belinda said quickly. "We met at Eden Group's year-end banquet last year. Do you remember?"

"Hm..." Marlana frowned slightly, searching her memory.

"My father is Hermann von Yorck," Belinda added hurriedly. "Deputy general

manager of the purchasing department at Eden Group!"

"Oh." Marlana's expression cleared. "Baron Hermann von Yorck. Yes, I remember."

"Yes, I am his daughter," Belinda said eagerly.

Marlena nodded once, then looked back at the painting.

"And what about this painting?"

"This painting was a gift from one of our classmates for the class reunion," Belinda said quickly.

"If you want to buy it, Countess, it makes more sense to buy it from us. That way, the money can go to the reunion fund—where it belongs."

"So it doesn't belong to Sofina?" Marlena asked, still unsure.

"It belongs to Sofina," Renata cut in sharply. "She bought it legally through the auction. Ownership is already clear."

"Renata," Belinda snapped, turning on her, "we are all classmates. Everything here comes from our class. How can Sofina take all the profit for herself? The money should be shared. That's only fair."

"Yes," several people echoed at once.

Countess Marlana raised a hand, stopping them. Her expression cooled.

"It seems I've come at the wrong time," she said calmly. "If the ownership of this painting is still disputed, I'll wait until it's settled."

With that, she turned and walked out, shaking her head.

Belinda's eyes darkened.

She had never liked Sofina. And she would never allow Sofina to profit from this. If herself couldn't have it, then no one would.

The moment the Countess left, the atmosphere turned thick and awkward.

"Sofina," Belinda said, her tone sharp and accusing.

"Why are you being so selfish? Are you really willing to destroy our class friendship over money? You should give the painting—and the ring—to the class."

Renata frowned, her voice cold. "She won the auction fair and square. Why should she give up something she bought legally? Everyone earns their own money and bears their risks. Or are you trying to steal it?"

She paused, then added coldly, "Are you really that desperate for money now? That poor?"

"Me? Poor?" Belinda laughed loudly. "I'm doing this for everyone's benefit. I wasn't fighting for myself, I was protecting everyone."

Renata laughed once, sharp and humorless.

"You protected nothing but your ego."

Belinda's smile hardened. "So now I'm the villain for thinking about the class? Let me make this clear. If she keeps it, she betrays every one of us." "Yes," someone eager to please her echoed, speaking in a syrupy, flattering tone.

"Renata, don't you know? Belinda doesn't need money. Her father earns several million a year as a deputy general manager at Eden Group. Her family is incredibly wealthy."

Belinda laughed, clearly pleased with herself.

"That's just his salary," she said lightly. "My father has real authority in the purchasing department. And plenty of side income."

Her smile sharpened. "You all know Eden Group runs countless projects, right? For each one, my dad earns at least ten to twenty million."

A man sitting across from her leaned forward eagerly. "Belinda, I've been trying to get into Eden Group

for years I've sent my résumé s many times and never heard back. Could you talk to your father? Maybe he could put in an internal recommendation?"

Belinda nodded, relaxed and confident.

"Sure. Send me your résumé. I'll mention it to my dad. If any of you want to work with Eden Group, my father can make it easy."

"Thank you, Belinda!" others said quickly.

"We want a project with Eden Group too. Can your father connect us? We're willing

to pay whatever it takes," another added.

"Sure," Belinda laughed. "Just contact me."

Alex frowned slightly.

He hadn't expected Belinda's father to hold that level of power inside Eden Group.

That was... interesting.

Very interesting.

He decided then-he'd message Marlana later and have Belinda's father removed.

Belinda wasn't finished. She turned to Renata with a smile that wasn't kind.

"Renata, I heard you've been trying to get closer to Eden Group too. I could ask my father to arrange something for you." Her eyes flicked toward Sofina.

"But only if you teach your arrogant friend to stop acting like a bitch and share the profit with everyone here."

Renata opened her mouth to argue.

Sofina stopped her.

"This ring was a gift from Alex to me," Sofina said calmly. "You have no right to take what already belongs to me." She paused, then looked straight at Belinda.

"As for the painting, I bought it legally at this auction," Sofina said calmly. "But I'm willing to sell it back to you. Ninety thousand. What do you think?"

A ten-million-dollar painting.

For ninety thousand. Belinda—and everyone else in the room-instantly believed it was the greatest bargain they would ever see.

"Deal," Belinda said without a second of hesitation.

"Sell it to me. Now."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 509[1,291 words]

"Transfer the money first," Sofina said, calm but firm.

She wanted the cash back-the money she had used to buy the ring-so at least she wouldn't take a financial hit on top of everything else.

"Fine," Belinda sneered. "It's only ninety thousand. Do you really think I wouldn't pay such pocket change?"

"No money, no item," Sofina replied flatly, tightening her grip on the ancient painting.

Belinda sent the transfer through her bracelet without hesitation and snatched the painting the moment it cleared.

A wide smile spread across her face. In her mind, the profit was already counted— millions of dollars sitting right in her hands.

"Now," Belinda said, lifting her chin, her eyes sharp and demanding, "about the ring. Hand it back to me. Right now."

Sofina looked at her sharply. Her eyes were cold. "If you want that ring, you'd better line up a team of lawyers."

Belinda smiled, slow and smug. "Then wait for the call. My father is more than happy to use Eden Group's legal team. You know their reputation. The best of the best."

Her voice hardened. "You'll be facing them. Believe me I will win that ring."

Sofian shook his head, exhausted. He didn't even bother to respond.

A classmate finally spoke, hesitant. "Belinda... if your father is that powerful in Eden Group, and you already control so many resources, why doesn't he just get you into Eden Group directly? I heard the pay there is really good."

Belinda scoffed, pure contempt on her face.

"What the hell do you know?" she snapped. "If I joined Eden Group, who would run the company we set up to connect with Eden Group's purchasing department? Me staying outside, my father staying inside—that's the perfect setup. That's how real money is made."

"I..... I still don't get it," one of the classmates admitted.

Belinda smirked, clearly savoring the moment. "I own a company that supplies materials to Eden Group. Through my father, I secure the contracts. The materials come from other suppliers, but

they pass through my company's name before reaching Eden Group. I just add a few percent to the price-no work, no risk. Every cent of that profit flows straight to me."

"Damn," someone blurted out. "You must be making a fortune."

Belinda snorted. "It's nothing worth mentioning. Maybe a few million a month."

Then she turned her gaze toward Alex, her smile turning fake and sharp.

"Alex," she said sweetly, her voice coated in sugar and threat, "give me the ring back."

"Give it back?" Alex replied without hesitation, his voice cold and razor-sharp. "How could you even think it was yours in the first place? Don't you feel any shame? It belongs to Sofina—and it always will."

"Where did you get that ring?" Belinda demanded. "Did you steal it?"

All eyes turned toward Alex, curiosity and suspicion flashing across their faces.

"You don't need to know," Alex said evenly. "You can report it to the police if you want. See if you find anything illegal."

His gaze was steady, unbothered. "All you'll get is public embarrassment."

Belinda sneered. "So confident now, huh?" Her lips curled. "I heard you work as a gardener at Eden Group. Is that right?"

"You don't need to know," Alex replied calmly.

Without waiting for his answer, Belinda tapped her bracelet and made a call.

When the connection went through, she switched it to loudspeaker-making sure everyone in the room could hear every word.

"Dad," Belinda said sharply into her bracelet, her voice dripping with outrage, "there's a lowly gardener from Eden Group. He and his wife cheated us out of a reunion auction item and refuse to give it back. He basically stole what belongs to me. Can you have him fired from Eden Group?"

"How dare he steal from you?" her father's voice thundered through the bracelet. "What's his name?"

"Alexander Saint-Claire," Belinda sneered.

"Then tell him this," her father said coldly. "He's fired. And he is never to set foot in Eden Group again."

"Thank you, Dad," Belinda said sweetly. "And I'll need to borrow a few lawyers to reclaim the item, same as always."

"Of course," her father replied without hesitation. "Use them however you like."

Alex shook his head slowly. Another parasite, openly abusing Eden Group's power for personal gain-without shame, without fear.

"Well, loser," Belinda laughed loudly, eyes sharp with cruelty.

"You're unemployed now," she mocked. "What are you going to do from today onward? Don't tell me you plan to live off Sofina, doing housework like a parasite, huh?"

Laughter burst around the table.

Alex only shrugged, his expression calm, almost lazy.

"Well," he said evenly, "thanks for freeing me from a boring job. Now all I get to do is laundry, cooking, driving my wife to work and picking her up, giving her massages every day and loving her."

A faint smile crossed his lips. "Honestly? That's a great job. It'll make me happy. I'm going to enjoy it. You're doing me a huge favor."

Belinda nearly lost control.

How dare this shameless bastard sound so proud? So casual? So unapologetic?

She swallowed her fury, teeth grinding, and spat out, "Alex, I never knew you were such a happy leech!"

"So?" Alex replied calmly, a faint smile tugging at his lips. "I didn't steal. I didn't rob anyone. I

contribute by doing housework. Make my wife happy. Why shouldn't I be happy? Remember, happy wife is happy life."

The laughter died instantly.

The room fell into stunned silence.

They had never seen someone so brazen. So openly shameless.

And what made it worse-what twisted the knife-was that they were jealous.

Sofina Scheinwald was stunning. Elegant. Untouchable. A woman many of them could only dream of.

To live off someone like her was a fantasy they could never reach.

And she was an official partner of Eden Group-listed by major magazines as one of the most powerful women in Winchester.

The jealousy burned. Thick. Bitter. Suffocating.

Ragnar stepped forward, glaring at Alex.

"Hey, loser. Don't you have any pride at all?"

Alex laughed openly.

"I'm proud of it. What's wrong with being a live-in husband if it means being with a woman like Sofina Scheinwald?"

His eyes were sharp, mocking.

"That's a win in my book. As far as I

remember, you're the one stuck with

a woman carrying five different STDs and she's nowhere near as beautiful as Sofina."

He tilted his head slightly. "You're the real loser here."

Ragnar nearly choked, his face flushing as if he'd been punched in the throat.

"Ragnar," Belinda cut in coldly. "There's no point wasting words on a stupid loser. It's a waste of time. Let's continue the auction."

She turned away at once and

clapped her hands, snapping back

into control. One by one, she opened the gifts and began the auction her voice ringing clearly through the room.

"Thank you, Felix, for your six-hundred-dollar bid!"

"Thank you, Helena, for the useless wall clock. Honestly, who even uses these anymore?"

"Thank you, Ola Rivers, for the so-called beautiful but completely unknown vase!"

"And thank you, Karl, for your gift-worth a grand total of two hundred dollars!" She scoffed. "Why did you even bother showing up?"

She rolled her eyes and muttered, "Damn, most of you are assholes."

Then Belinda paused. Her gaze landed on one final item.

"I remember this one," she said slowly. "This was Sofina's gift."

Instantly, every pair of eyes locked onto it.

Belinda picked it up and examined it. Inside the box lay a single green stone, about the size of a chicken egg. Nothing fancy. Nothing dazzling.

"Well?" Belinda sneered. "Who wants to bid on this?" Her lips curled. "Let's start at one thousand dollars."

"Ten thousand," Alex said calmly, raising his hand.

The room jolted.

"Twenty thousand," Renata added immediately.

The classmates stared at the stone again, their minds racing. Painting. Ring. What if this was another treasure worth millions?

"Thirty thousand," Ragnar barked, lifting his hand.

Belinda bit her lip and jumped in herself. "Forty thousand."

The numbers climbed, slowly but steadily-fifty thousand, sixty, eighty-until they finally hit one hundred thousand dollars.

And then-

Alex smirked.

Because only he knew the truth.

That green stone was nothing special at all.

Just an ordinary rock he had picked up off the street.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 510[1,246 words]

Renata glanced at Alex

"Since we're friends," she said, "don't you think it's time you tell me what you actually put on the table?"

Alex leaned back. "What do you want it to be?"

"Something valuable," Renata replied without hesitation. "A real diamond. Or anything worth millions."

Alex rolled his eyes. "You think making a million dollars is that easy?"

He shrugged. "That stone? It's just a colorful rock I found on the street and thought looked interesting. Well-not exactly the street, but close enough. I picked it up from an antique street peddle for 50 buck."

Belinda froze. She was the one who had bought the stone for a hundred thousand dollars.

"What?" she snapped. "Fifty dollars? A colorful stone?" Her voice turned sharp and ugly. "Don't you dare joke with me."

Alex looked genuinely surprised. "What? Is it wrong to gift a colorful stone? Didn't you say the spirit of this class reunion auction was that people should give what they love, and everyone bids the most they can?"

"What is useless may yet be the most useful, depending on how the mind perceives it." Alex smiled.

"I see a beautiful fifty-dollar stone. You saw something worth a hundred thousand." His gaze was steady, unflinching. "My colorful stone added a hundred thousand dollars to the reunion fund. Don't you think that's a huge success?"

Belinda's face flushed—this time, a deep, furious red. She was the fool who had paid for it.

Renata burst out laughing. "Looks like you've met your natural enemy, Belinda. You'll never beat Alex."

"Give me my money back!" Belinda screamed.

"What's wrong with you?" Alex shot back coldly. "You didn't give that money to me. You put it into the class reunion fund." His eyes sharpened. "If you want it back, go take it from there."

He paused, then added with a cruel smile,

"Oh-right. I forgot. You'll have to ask everyone here first." His gaze swept across the crowd. "And see if they're willing to agree."

Alex ignored her completely.

Suddenly, sirens blared throughout the entire stadium, cutting through the chaos.

"To all participants," a mechanical voice announced, calm and authoritative. "The second competition will begin shortly. This round will test mobile suit AI performance in a simulated battlefield war zone. Please prepare. The event will start in twenty minutes."

The entire class exploded into motion.

"Come on!" someone shouted. "Let's start betting. Who do you think will come out first?"

The crowd surged away, already forgetting Belinda.

Everyone deliberately looked away and pretended not to hear her.

No one was stupid enough to let Belinda take a hundred thousand dollars out of the class reunion fund. That kind of money could keep them partying for a very long time.

Belinda glared at Alex, her eyes blazing with hatred.

"This isn't over," she hissed, then turned and walked away.

She still had bets to place.

If she wanted to win, she would have to calculate every possible outcome.

Renata folded her arms. "Be honest with me, Alex. Are you actually rich, or do you just enjoy confusing people?"

Alex tilted his head. "Why would I confuse people on purpose?"

"Because you walk like someone who owns a country," she said, her voice sharp and amused, "but you dress like you lost a very ugly bet at a gas station at three in the morning."

"That's called strategic camouflage," Alex replied calmly.

Renata squinted. "Camouflage from what?"

"Expectations," he said. "If people think I'm broke, they only try to rob me once."

Renata blinked. "And if they think you're rich?"

Alex smiled. "They never stop trying."

Not far away, Tobias sat alone. No one approached him.

"Are you rich?" Renata asked bluntly.

"I work for Eden Group, remember?" he replied bitterly. "Three thousand dollars a month—and I just got fired."

Alex left Renata and walked over, stopping beside Tobias.

"Hey," he said. "You're not joining the competition?"

Tobias looked up, startled.

"Oh-Alex. Right."

He let out a tired breath.

"Bluthelm has been too focused on refining the mobile suit itself. There wasn't any time left to upgrade the AI driving system."

"This competition tests how well an AI can handle extreme conditions," Tobias said grimly.

"Multiple obstacles. Combat terrain.

Mission-style operations in hostile environments." He exhaled. "We're still running the old AI—the same one that placed last in the previous tournament. Honestly, I don't see how we can win this year."

Alex nodded, already running calculations in his head. "So... no AI upgrade?"

Tobias rubbed his temples. "Bluthelm said the hardware mattered more."

Alex nodded slowly. "Ah. The classic mistake."

"What mistake?" Tobias asked.

"Building a perfect body and giving it a mediocre brain," Alex said flatly. "That's how you end up with professional athletes who fall for pyramid schemes."

Tobias let out a long sigh. "So you're saying we're doomed?"

Alex clapped a hand on his shoulder. "No. Just... creatively limited."

Tobias stared at him. "That's your optimistic version?"

Alex smiled. "My pessimistic version involves fire."

His eyes glinted. "Want me to burn down the whole stadium so no one notices your Phantom losing the second competition?"

Tobias looked at Alex, half-amused, half-exhausted.

"You really do have unlimited creativity."

Alex's smile didn't fade.

"How about this. I just got eight million dollars from Ragnar. Let's make a bet."

Tobias's eyes snapped up. "What kind of bet?"

"You let me use your Phantom mobile suit," Alex said. "I'll install Sofina's AI into it and enter the competition."

His voice stayed steady. "If your Phantom loses, you walk away with eight million dollars. But if it takes first place-number one overall you get nothing."

Tobias stared at Alex as if he were looking at a complete idiot.

"Are you serious?" he said bluntly. "My Phantom is guaranteed to lose. You're basically throwing money away."

"We can draft a legally binding contract if you want," Alex replied without hesitation. "This is eight million dollars we're talking about."

"Deal!" Tobias shot to his feet and grabbed Alex's hand, shaking it hard. Desperation burned in his eyes. Eight million dollars could change his entire life— no, it could change the fate of the entire Bluthelm company. "Great," Alex said with a smile. He immediately pulled Tobias along toward Sofina.

Sofina watched the two men walk toward her and lifted an eyebrow.

"Wow," she said coolly. "I never thought you two would end up as friends."

"Not there yet," Alex replied flatly. "We're only here to ask for your help if you're willing."

Sofina's gaze shifted to Tobias. "Help with what?"

For some reason, Tobias's face turned bright red. Sofina was stunning, and standing in front of her made him look painfully awkward, almost fragile.

Alex cut in. "Can he borrow Eve for a few minutes?"

"Eve?" Sofina frowned. "For what?"

"To pilot the Phantom mobile suit in the competition," Alex said.

Sofina blinked. "Eve? Are you serious?" She tilted her head. "Can she even do that?"

"She's an exceptional AI," Alex said firmly.

"But isn't she just a housekeeping AI?" Sofina asked. "She's good at cleaning houses."

Tobias nearly choked. His eyes widened in disbelief.

"You're telling me," he said hoarsely, "that you want to put a cleaning-service robot AI into my Phantom mobile suit?"

His voice rose in panic.

"That thing is built for warfare-for

targeting, evasion, live combat

at Alex like

scenarios!" Hestare you want to

he'd lost his mind. And you want to use a cleaning robot to fight in a military-grade competition?"

"Do you want the eight million or not?" Alex asked, his tone flat and unforgiving.

"Yes!" Tobias's eyes lit up instantly.

Greed erased every trace of doubt. "Please go ahead. Not just a clearing-service robot. You can even install a toaster AI if you want won't say a word."

Alex watched him carefully.

"Wow, you sold your pride fast."

Tobias laughed, sharp and hollow.

"Pride never paid my debts."

Coming in dead last had become Bluthelm's trademark. Nothing surprised him anymore.

"Perfect," Alex said. "Call Eve. She'll be here in three minutes. That's more than enough time to integrate her with your Phantom."