

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 512[959 words]

Sofina summoned Eve through her bracelet, then turned to Alex, concern flickering in her eyes.

"Are you sure Eve can actually pilot a mobile suit?"

Alex smiled faintly. "Sofina, let's put it this way. Eve's lifelong dream-as a humble service AI-has always been to drive a mobile suit in front of a massive crowd. She wants to feel big. Powerful. Why not let her climb into that cockpit and be happy for once?"

Using a Phantom mobile suit to indulge a cleaning robot.

The idea grew more ridiculous by the second.

Tobias found it absurd—but as long as Alex was willing to throw away eight million dollars, he was more than happy to play along. He grinned broadly.

"Then please," he said mockingly, "enjoy your slow walk around the stadium."

Moments later, Eve descended from the sky, her small, egg-shaped body gliding smoothly.

"Miss Sofina," she asked politely, "what can I do for you?"

"Alex needs your help," Sofina said.

"Eve," Alex said, stepping forward. "This is Tobias. He built an excellent mobile suit called the Phantom. We want you to pilot it in the AI mobile suit competition."

His voice sharpened slightly. "And if you can win first place, your mistress, Sofina, will be very happy."

Eve turned and looked directly at Sofina.

"Miss Sofina," she asked seriously, "would you be happy if I win first place?"

Sofina was caught off guard, but she nodded gently.

"Yes. I'd be happy if you win. But even if you don't, that's fine. Just enjoy yourself."

Eve let out a soft, confident sneer.

"Losing with outdated AI technology would be an insult to my pride." She turned toward Tobias.

Tobias scoffed.

"So, you're a cleaning program."

Eve rotated toward him.

"And you are a man who already accepted defeat."

The room went still.

"You-Tobias. Enough talking. Let the professional do the job."

She turned cold and precise.

"Show me your mobile suit. I will take first place and make my mistress happy."

A brief pause.

"And I will do it cleanly."

Tobias stared at the egg-sized cleaning robot in disbelief. In that moment, he became certain this would be the easiest eight million dollars he had ever made.

"Follow me," Tobias said, leading Eve out of the room.

Sofina watched them leave, worry tightening her chest.

"Will Eve really be okay?"

"She's going to enjoy every second of it," Alex said with a laugh.

He turned and walked to a quiet corner, lifting his bracelet communicator to contact Marlana.

"I want Eden Group to bet everything on the Phantom mobile suit in the second competition."

Countess Marlana paused for half a second, then asked calmly, "How much do you want me to put in? You do realize this is a bet on a losing game, right?"

"Eve will be driving the Phantom," Alex replied.

The Countess laughed softly, a sharp, predatory sound.

"Then we go all in. I'll open the betting market across all of Winchester—and all of Prussia. I'll drag every fool with money into this pit."

Her eyes gleamed.

"We bet everything on the mobile suit driven by Eve. Anyone who stands against it —we take every last dollar they put down."

"That's exactly the point," Alex said with a smile.

He ended the call and walked back to Sofina's side.

She grabbed his arm immediately, her voice low and tight with worry.

"Alex, are you sure about this? Will Eve really be okay? This is dangerous."

"For who?" Alex asked calmly.

"For Eve."

Alex laughed.

"You should be worried about her competitors."

Meanwhile, inside the hangar, Tobias scoffed as Eve hovered closer to the Phantom.

"Just so we're clear," he said dryly, "this mobile suit is worth more than your entire operating budget."

Eve tilted slightly. "Understood."

"And it's designed for war."

"Understood."

"And if you damage it—"

"I will not," Eve interrupted politely. "I will improve it."

Tobias laughed nervously. "Improve it how?"

Eve paused. "By removing inefficiencies."

"...Like what?"

She turned her gaze back to him. "You."

Before Tobias could answer, the stadium lights dimmed. The massive central screen flared to life.

The commentator's voice thundered across the arena.

"We've just received shocking news," he announced excitedly. "A betting house has stepped forward—not just for Winchester, but for all of Prussia. They're challenging common sense itself!"

The screen flashed with Eden Group's emblem.

"Eden Group has officially opened full betting on the second competition!" the commentator continued.

"They are backing the Phantom mobile suit, manufactured by Bluthelm, to take first place!"

A pause. Then-

"And here's the insane part: if any participant wins other than the Phantom, the payout will be one hundred times!"

The entire reunion class went dead silent.

"What?" someone whispered.

Sofina stared at the screen, stunned.

"Eden Group is allowing anyone to bet," she murmured, "with a hundred-times

payout...? They believe Eve and the Phantom will win?"

At that moment, Tobias returned from the hangar after seating Eve in the Phantom's driver's seat and completing the connection.

The words hit him like a hammer.

"They're betting on the Phantom?" he blurted out, horrified. "Even I-the creator- don't believe in it!"

Ten minutes before the second competition began, Eden Group detonated the largest betting advertisement campaign in recorded history.

Hundreds of millions were burned in a matter of minutes.

Every social media platform was hijacked at once. City screens, skyborne drones, massive holograms-Eden Group's branding

swallowed the skyline and crushed

every competing signal.

"PHANTOM — ALL IN."

"SECOND COMPETITION: TOTAL DOMINANCE."

"BET NOW. HUNDRED-TIMES PAYOUT IF PHANTOM FALLS."

The message roared across Winchester and all of Prussia, impossible to escape,
impossible to ignore.

This wasn't advertising.

It was a declaration of war.

Inside the stadium, the battlefield transformed. The terrain shifted violently steel structures rose, mines deployed, and one hundred combat dummies. dropped into the arena from above.

The rules were simple and brutal.

Ten mobile suits would enter the battlefield.

One hundred targets.

One hundred mines.

Free-for-all combat.

The suit with the highest score would win.

Ten mobile suits lined up at the starting zone, towering and lethal.

The signal fired.

The second competition began.

And the Phantom mobile suit moved.

What it did next froze the entire stadium—and sent shockwaves across all of
Prussia.

"Wait-what the hell?"

"Is that even legal?"

"Is this allowed?!"

The same question echoed everywhere.

No one had an answer.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 513[1,425 words]

No one in the stadium could believe what they were seeing. This had never happened before.

What the Phantom was doing threatened to change the tournament forever.

As the match began.

Instead of charging forward like the other competitors-rushing to shoot targets and collect points—the Phantom moved sideways.

It struck first.

With a brutal kick, it smashed into the blue mobile suit on its right. Metal snapped. Both legs were destroyed in one blow, leaving the suit helpless and frozen in place.

In the same motion, the Phantom twisted left. It seized the yellow mobile suit by the arms and swung it like a weapon.

The force was savage.

The yellow suit flew across the arena and slammed straight into the red mobile suit, destroying both in a violent collision.

The crowd gasped.

In just a few seconds, three competitors were already immobilized. Only seven mobile suits remained-including the Phantom.

“Impossible,” the commentator shouted, voice cracking. “Destroying or immobilizing competitors gives zero points! Why would the Phantom waste time attacking instead of chasing targets?”

"Is that even legal?" the second commentator asked sharply.

"Yes," the first replied, stunned. "It's legal-but pointless. It gives nothing. In all my years, competitors only attack others when they feel threatened. This-this is different."

"So something big is happening here," the second commentator said, struggling to contain his excitement.

"Maybe the Phantom's AI is targeting the wrong objective. It's supposed to maximize points by shooting dummy targets. Either the AI is malfunctioning, or its idiot owner ordered it to attack other competitors. If that's the case, this is a truly stupid AI."

Everyone could see it clearly.

While the other six mobile suits surged toward the targets, the Phantom moved in a different direction.

It didn't chase points.

It hunted the other competitors.

The Phantom locked onto the nearest mobile suit—the one painted green.

The green suit sensed danger and spun around, launching a counterattack from above, trying to catch the Phantom off guard.

Eve smiled inside the cockpit.

"You really think that cheap shot will work on me?"

The Phantom launched upward and seized the green suit by the arm. Using the momentum, it vaulted higher and snapped both legs into a brutal cross-lock around the suit's arm. Metal screamed as one arm tore loose under the crushing force.

Before the green unit could react, the Phantom ripped off the remaining arm. Its fist slammed into the exposed joint—once, twice—until the last limb detached and fell away.

The green mobile suit was finished. Completely disabled.

The arena fell silent.

"No!" Tobias shouted. "Alex, you have to stop Eve. The other companies will come after us for repair costs!"

"Then you'll just pay them," Alex said, smiling.

"We're already bankrupt," Tobias snapped. "Where do you think we'll get the money?"

"You'll have eight million," Alex replied calmly. "So why not relax and enjoy it?"

"Damn it, Alex." Tobias shook his head, completely lost. "You should tell Eve to focus on the dummy targets. That's how you win this competition."

Alex laughed, low and confident. "With your Phantom's cheap tin body and outdated weapons, it would finish dead last that way. Trust Eve. She's unbeatable."

Everyone could see it now. While every other competitor focused on shooting targets and avoiding mines, the Phantom was actively hunting competitors.

The tournament's AI systems were never designed for this.

The other mobile suits were programmed to prioritize targets, not combat. Attacking competitors will earn no points, it fell outside their logic unless it was pure self-defense.

Only Eve was thinking beyond the rules.

And only Eve was turning the battlefield into a slaughterhouse.

That decision made the Phantom the center of the battlefield. Every remaining competitor turned toward it.

"Impossible!" one of the opposing technicians snapped, his face red with rage. "This isn't supposed to be allowed. We're here to hit targets, not tear apart other mobile suits!"

The Phantom advanced anyway-slow, deliberate, confident.

The gray mobile suit opened fire. Its laser gun screamed, scorching the ground around the Phantom, blasting concrete and metal into the air.

But the Phantom moved like a dancer on ice.

It glided. It twisted. Every step was fluid, precise, almost beautiful. The laser shots missed by inches, carving destruction into empty space.

Then the Phantom closed the distance.

One brutal strike smashed into the gray suit's head. The sensor unit exploded. In

the same motion, the Phantom ripped the laser gun free and tore the combat knife from its grip.

The truth was obvious now.

The Phantom had entered the match nearly unarmed.

Its production house was poor. Its built-in weapons were outdated, secondhand junk.

Inside the cockpit, Eve's voice was calm and cold.

"I'd rather die than use Bluthelm's cheap trash. That's why I hunt the ones with real weapons."

With the laser gun in its hand, the Phantom changed.

It was like wings had unfolded from its frame.

It began firing at the competition targets-but the moment another mobile suit entered its range, the Phantom didn't hesitate.

It turned the gun on them.

The Phantom had become a true anomaly.

It exploited every opening, every fraction of a second when the other competitors were locked into shooting targets.

That tiny delay—the moment of vulnerability—was all the Phantom needed. One shot. One kill.

The stadium erupted in fury.

"That's cowardly!"

"How can an AI driver be this cunning?!"

"Damn it—that's a filthy tactic!"

But anger didn't stop bullets.

One by one, mobile suits fell.

In a matter of moments, out of ten competitors, only two remained.

That had never happened before.

The final opponent stood tall across the arena—a machine forged by Eisenwall itself.

Its name was Alpha.

Ragnar laughed loudly, making sure everyone in the room heard him.

"This is perfect!" he said with a wide grin. "If Alpha crushes the Phantom here, I win outright. Let's see what that cheating pile of scrap can really do."

Everyone knew the history. Alpha was the champion-year after year, always the winner The Phantom had spent decades scraping the bottom of the rankings, forever stuck in last place.
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Alpha sold for twenty million dollars, the most expensive mobile suit in all of Prussia.

The Phantom sold for four hundred thousand.

Almost fifty times the difference in price.

Ten times the power.

Or so everyone believed.

Down in the arena, Alpha stood face to face with the Phantom.

The commentator spoke quickly, trying to steady the crowd with logic. "We've run Alpha-versus-Phantom simulations hundreds of times. The result The Phantom doesn't win even once. No matter how skilled it is it cannot defeat Alpha in a one-on-one fight. Alpha's frame is larger, its armor is thicker and Fits: defensive rating is the highest in the tournament."

The second commentator cut in with certainty. "Now, I believe Alpha has been given a direct engagement command. No sucker punches. No ambushes. No tricks in a straight fight, Alpha wins this one hundred percent."

"It's like a civilian car crashing head-on into a tank wrapped in solid iron," he added.

"There's no hope here. None."

The entire stadium held its breath.

Then the Phantom stepped forward.

Slow. Calm. Unafraid.

It stopped in front of Alpha and spoke through the external channel.

"Hey, big bastard," the Phantom said casually. "Since I can't beat you in a fight, how

about you kneel right here? Let me shoot all the dummy targets and take the win." For a split second, there was silence.

Then Ragnar, every Eisenwall technician, and the entire stadium burst into laughter.

"Do you think Alpha is stupid?" Ragnar sneered loudly. "Alpha, smash that cheap tin

can. Show everyone who the real king is!"

"Alpha, crush it!" the technicians roared.

The crowd joined in, voices swelling with bloodthirsty excitement. "Destroy that cheap mobile suit!"

“Alpha! Alpha! Alpha!” the people chanted, the name shaking the stadium.

Alpha moved.

Its massive frame surged forward, pistons roaring, armor plates grinding. The stadium erupted in screams as people braced for impact.

And then-

Alpha knelt.

Right there. In front of everyone.

Its massive body dropped to one knee, servos locking, command protocols frozen.

The stadium went dead silent.

The Phantom walked past Alpha without even looking at it.

It raised its weapon and began firing.

One dummy target fell. Then another. And another. Clean shots. Perfect timing.

Every point went to the Phantom.

Ragnar's voice shook as he leaned over the railing. "Alpha, what are you doing? Stand up!"

The commentator whispered, horrified, “This... this contradicts every simulation.”

"Didn't you say it was impossible for the Phantom to win?" the other commentator asked, stunned. "But we just watched it win a direct engagement with Alpha." "Completely impossible," the first commentator replied stiffly. "Alpha doesn't lose fair fights."

"Then how did this happen?" the other pressed.

The first commentator swallowed.

"...Apparently, it loses conversations."

The line sounded ridiculous.

And yet, it was true.

Inside the cockpit, Eve smiled.

"You're big," she said softly. "But your security wall is paper-thin. And your mind behind it is even thinner."

Shock rippled through the stands.

People felt sick.

The champion of every year. Eisenwall's Alpha. Kneeling in front of a cheap forty- thousand-dollar machine.

It felt like betrayal.

Not just a loss.

A humiliation burned into steel, witnessed by thousands, and impossible to erase.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 514[914 words]

"The winner of the second competition final," the commentator announced, his voice ringing through the arena, "Phantom, from the Bluthelm Company!"

The stadium erupted-not in cheers, but in rage.

"Boooo!"

The sound crashed like a wave, loud and merciless. Thousands of voices joined as one, drowning the air with hatred.

Inside the reunion room, every head turned at the same time.

All eyes locked onto Tobias.

"How could you build something this cunning?"

"This is illegal. It has to be."

"You cheated."

His classmates shouted over one another, anger sharp in their voices. Accusations flew like knives.

But Tobias barely heard them.

He was staring at Alex. And Sofina.

His throat tightened. His head buzzed.

"Explain this," Tobias demanded.

Alex blinked, putting a hand to his chest as if truly shocked.

"Explain what?" he said lightly. "That I let a cleaning-service robot pilot your Phantom and it still won the competition?"

Tobias felt a headache slam into him, sudden and brutal.

Before he could respond, an egg-shaped robot glided smoothly across the floor and stopped in front of Sofina.

"Miss Sofina!" the Eve said brightly. "Did you see that? I won first place!"

Sofina knelt and wrapped her arms around the small machine. "I saw, Eve," she said warmly. "I'm so proud of you."

Tobias stood frozen.

He didn't know what he was supposed to feel.

Pride because his Phantom had taken first place?

Or despair-because admitting that meant admitting Bluthelm couldn't win without a cleaning-service robot at the controls.

"Tobias," Alex said calmly. "Care to step outside? Private conversation."

Tobias looked up, a flicker of hope in his eyes. "Are you here to give me the eight million dollars?"

Alex laughed. "Nope. Phantom ranked first. That means you get nothing." The hope vanished.

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"But," Alex continued, smiling, "someone wants to meet you. Someone with so much money you'll never need to work another day in your life. Your only problem will be deciding how to waste it."

Before Tobias could ask anything, Alex grabbed his arm and pulled him into the hallway.

They passed through a restricted corridor, then another secured door. Alex stopped

in front of a quiet room and shoved Tobias inside.

"My boss wants to talk to you," Alex said simply.

The door closed behind him.

Alex didn't follow. His footsteps faded away.

Ragnar's communicator buzzed.

He answered and his father's voice detonated through the line.

"You bastard," Duke Eisenwall snarled. "You've disgraced the Eisenwall name. How could Alpha kneel before that tiny Bluthelm toy?"

His voice cut like a blade. "Did you betray us? Did you sell Alpha to Bluthelm?"

"No!" Ragnar shouted, panic breaking through his anger. "Believe me—I don't know how this happened!"

"Listen carefully," his father said, cold and merciless. "If Alpha does not win this year, I will seriously reconsider your position as my heir."

Ragnar stiffened. Sweat broke across his back.

"Father," he said quickly, forcing his voice steady, "Alpha already won the first competition. If it wins the third, Eisenwall still takes the tournament. I swear it will win. Please believe me"

There was a long, icy pause.

"You'd better be right," his father said.

The call ended.

Ragnar stood there, shaking with rage. He kicked the table hard. It skidded across the floor with a violent crash.

"Where the fuck did Tobias go?" he screamed.

Meanwhile, Tobias took in the room—elegant, pristine, and suffocatingly silent.

Only one woman sat inside.

Countess Marlana von Adler.

"Welcome, Tobias Bluthelm," the Countess said smoothly. "I apologize for having my people bring you here in secret."

"Countess Marlana..." Tobias froze. His mind went blank. He never imagined someone of her rank would ever meet him face to face.

"I'll be direct," Marlena said calmly. "Sell your Bluthelm Mobile Suit Company to Eden Group."

"What?" Tobias blurted out.

"You know Bluthelm can't survive without funding," Marlena continued, her tone cold and precise. "So this is our offer."

She opened a three-dimensional bracelet document. The holographic contract unfolded in the air between them. She slid it toward him. "Please. Review it."

Tobias took it with his bracelet and shaking hands.

As his eyes scanned the numbers, his breath caught.

"A... a billion dollars?" he asked, disbelief flooding his voice.

It made no sense.

At best, Bluthelm might someday be worth four hundred million. Even that was optimistic. Eisenwall had already made it clear-they were only willing to buy the entire company for forty million, and that was before brutal cuts and devaluation.

And now Eden Group was offering one billion.

"Yes," Marlena said evenly. "And you will remain CEO. Outsiders don't need to understand the internal structure. Bluthelm will still be

Bluthelm. Operations continue

without disruption. What do you think?"

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Tobias swallowed hard. His heart was pounding. "Can you give me time to think?"

"Fair," Marlena replied. "But not much." She checked the time. "The third competition starts in one hour. This offer expires before it begins."

Tobias stood up abruptly and rushed out of the room, pulling out his phone as he walked. He needed to call his mother. Now.

Moments later, Alex entered the room and faced Marlena.

"Boss," Marlena said, lowering her voice. "Are you sure you want to buy Bluthelm?"

"It's extremely overpriced."

Alex didn't hesitate. "We can't start a mobile suit company from scratch. The king will never approve the license."

He looked at the holographic contract, eyes sharp.

"The only way Eden Group enters mobile suit production," Alex continued, "is through Bluthelm's existing permit. That permission is priceless."

Alex looked outside, his gaze distant and sharp.

He knew Estoria well. He knew its people. He knew its governess had already made up their mind-war with Prussia was no longer a question of if, only when.

If Estoria obtained this mobile suit technology, the balance of power would shift. The odds of winning that war would skyrocket.

"How much did we make from the second betting round?" Alex asked calmly.

Marlena's smile brightened.

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Marlena's eyes widened slightly. "We spent five hundred million dollars on advertising alone," she said.

"But the return was massive. With almost all of Prussia participating, we made no less than twenty billion this round."

Alex smiled faintly. "So after subtracting advertising costs and the Bluthelm acquisition, we're still deep in profit."

"Exactly," Marlena confirmed. "What about the third competition? If we open betting again with Phantom, we could earn several more billion."

Alex shook his head. "Phantom doesn't have a driver."

"But you do, sir," Marlena said carefully. "If you pilot it yourself, that would be a guaranteed win."

Alex chuckled. "Tempting. But no. It stops here."

He straightened, his tone turning cold and final. "We don't need trouble with Eisenwall. That's bad for business. Let Phantom lose. Bluthelm and Eden Group need to lie low for a while. That fits us perfectly."

"As you wish, sir," Marlana said, bowing her head as Alex turned and walked out.

When Alex returned to the class reunion hall, chaos greeted him.

Tables were overturned. Glass lay shattered across the floor.

Tobias was down.

He lay sprawled on the ground, blood streaking his face.

"Don't you dare feel proud about that cheating stunt earlier!" Ragnar roared.

He grabbed Tobias by the collar and hurled him into another table. Wood cracked on impact.

"You think winning the second competition makes you somebody?" Ragnar shouted, contempt dripping from every word.

He drove his fist into Tobias's face. "Make sure Phantom doesn't enter the third competition. Keep it down. Keep it quiet."

Ragnar kicked him hard. "When this tournament is over, you're selling Bluthelm to me. I'll tear Phantom apart right in front of you, with everyone watching."

"I will never sell it to you," Tobias said, spitting blood onto the floor.

Ragnar leaned in close, slapping Tobias's cheeks hard. "You don't want to sell? Then wake up. You still owe me twenty million. Pay it today—or refuse—and I'll make sure your entire family ends up six feet underground."

Tobias was a low-ranking noble—a disgraced count one step away from losing his title. Standing before the son of Duke Eisenwall, he didn't dare fight back, even as humiliation crushed him.

He could only bleed.

"Third competition," Ragnar roared. "If Phantom dare to appear, I swear I will kill you. Do you hear me?"

For Ragnar Eisenwall, victory was not optional. Eisenwall had to win the annual mobile suit tournament. Especially this year.

His family had placed the responsibility directly on his shoulders.

For three straight decades, Eisenwall had dominated the competition. That legacy could not break under his watch.

If Phantom won the third competition, Bluthelm would take the overall title.

And Ragnar?

His father would hang him upside down-figuratively, or worse.

Ragnar grabbed Tobias by the collar, breath hot with panic. "You heard me!?"

Tobias stared at him, blood sliding down his jaw. "You sound scared."

"I'm scared of you?" Ragnar snarled. He grabbed a bottle of wine. "Why don't you just die here!" He swung it straight at Tobias's head.

That was enough.

Alex had seen all he needed. He released his aura.

Before the bottle could connect, an invisible force slammed into Ragnar.

He felt it instantly-like a colossal predator fixing its gaze on his life.

Pure, animal terror crushed him.

He screamed, lost control of his body, and collapsed hard onto the floor. His pants darkened as fear overwhelmed him.

The room froze.

No one spoke. No one moved.

Tobias didn't look back.

He bolted out of the reunion hall, heart pounding, and ran straight for Marlana's room.

He slammed his fist against the door.

Marlena opened it, her expression calm and unreadable. "You're bleeding," she said.

Tobias wiped his face with the back of his hand. "Yes," he replied flatly.

"I've been beaten, threatened, and nearly killed in the last ten minutes."

"And?" Marlana asked coolly, stepping aside to let him in.

"A deal," Tobias said. "I want to make a deal with you."

Marlena laughed, slow and delighted. "A deal?"

She looked him up and down, taking in the blood, the bruises, the barely contained rage. "You show up half-beaten, clearly not thinking straight, and now you want to sign a contract?"

She smiled wider. "That's my favorite kind of client."

Tobias met her eyes without flinching.

"My father is dead," he said coldly. "Congratulations to me. I'm now the head of the Bluthelm family. And that means Bluthelm Company is entirely under my control."

He drew a slow breath. "I'll sell Bluthelm to Eden Group. Exactly as written. I keep twenty percent."

Marlena nodded once. "That clause is already in the contract."

"I'm adding two conditions," Tobias said, his voice tightening. "First, you protect my family from Eisenwall. Second, Phantom must win the third competition. I want Ragnar and the Eisenwall pride crushed. I'm tired of being looked down on. I want to see him broken."

Marlena lifted an eyebrow. "The first is easy. We can shield your family with lawyers, media pressure, and influence. Even the king would think twice before touching you."

Her expression hardened. "The

second is not. You don't have a driver. Finding a top-tier pilot this close to the match is nearly impossible. Skilled drivers aren't something you can simply buy—especially one who already knows how to handle Phantom."

"I don't care," Tobias said flatly. "Isn't Eden Group known for making the impossible possible? If you want Bluthelm, Phantom wins the third competition. You make it happen or tell me now if you don't it."

Marlena smiled slowly. "Then you came to the right place."

She tapped her bracelet, and a new holographic document unfolded between them. "Let's sign the deal."

She scrolled through the clauses. "I've added your conditions—your family will be protected. And if Phantom takes first place, you sell Bluthelm to Eden Group."

She tapped the document again. "To make that happen, Phantom will be transferred to us immediately. Our driver needs time to synchronize with it before the match."

"Who is the driver?" Tobias asked.

Her eyes locked onto his. "You will not know who the driver is. Ever."

"A nameless pilot?" Tobias frowned.

Marlena nodded. "The best ones rarely wanted to be known."

Tobias whispered, "Even I wouldn't know who saved me?"

Her answer was gentle. "Or who damned you."

In the world of mobile suits, elite pilots were rarer than weapons-grade alloys. Even

if Eden Group succeed to recruit famous drivers- there were less than thirty minutes left before the competition.

Every mobile suit had its own control logic. Its own response curve. Its own instincts. Switching drivers at the last minute was almost impossible.

No sane pilot would accept these conditions.

Tobias knew that.

But the image of Ragnar's arrogant face-of the way he mocked him, humiliated

him, treated him like dirt—burned hotter than reason. The need for revenge

drowned out every warning in his mind.

He wanted to win.

"Deal," Tobias said. "I'll deliver Phantom wherever you want."

Marlena studied him. "You understand what you're giving up."

Tobias signed the contract anyway.

"I'm done running." He turned and walked away without looking back. "I don't need forever. I just need once. Once in my fucking lifetime—I will not bow or kneel ever again."

Marlena watched him go, amused. "You're lucky you ended up in the right hands," she said lightly. "Otherwise, you would've wasted your damn life for nothing."

Minutes later, Alex entered the room.

Marlena explained everything—quick, precise, no wasted words.

"So, boss," Marlena concluded, "the only way to acquire Bluthelm is to win the competition."

She paused, already calculating the next move. "The final round is scheduled as a one-on-one duel to decide first, second, and third place. But if Phantom enters and Eden Group launches another wave of betting and advertising-the organizers may change the rules."

"Change how?" Alex asked.

Her eyes narrowed. "Duke Eisenwall has controlled this tournament for decades.

He's a power player, and he'll use any excuse to make sure Alpha wins. Quality checks. Safety concerns. He can justify anything."

She leaned forward. "They can turn it into a free-for-all under the pretense of fairness. But the truth is simple. If Phantom wins this tournament, it takes first place. So Phantom has to be eliminated first-for Alpha to secure the winning position."

Alex finally spoke. "What's the probability they'll change the third competition into Phantom versus all nine of them?"

"One hundred percent," Marlana replied without hesitation.

Then she smiled—sharp, predatory. "But the greatest risk brings the greatest profit. I can launch a one-billion-dollar advertising blitz within the next twenty-five minutes. And if we still win under those conditions, Eden Group won't just be rich."

Her smile widened. "We'll be obscenely rich. I'm talking top ten wealth in all of Prussia."

Alex said nothing.

This was the crossroads.

Push Eden Group into direct conflict with Prussia's Duke.

Or play it safe.

A long breath left his chest.

"Soon I'll be facing an entire country," Alex said quietly. "Why would I be afraid of one duke?"

He lifted his gaze, steady and cold. "I'll drive the Phantom."

Marlena studied him. "What are your odds against nine of them?"

Alex met her gaze without blinking. "Just prep the suit. If they want a free-for-all..."

A faint smile touched his lips. "...then I'll show them what fear looks like."

Marlena said nothing, already calculating. In her mind, the advertising budget doubled then tripled.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 516[1,198 words]

The advertisement detonated across Prussia like an explosion. In just few minutes, the entire nation fell into hysteria. Streets, bars, offices-every conversation circled

back to one name.

Phantom.

The news and official advertisements spread rapidly across Prusia: Eden Group formally reopened the betting market—once again—on Phantom.

This time, they didn't just challenge the system. They insulted it.

Eden Group publicly accepted a bet that Phantom would take first place in the third competition.

If Phantom lost, Eden Group would pay one thousand times the wager.

One thousand times.

Nothing like this had ever happened.

It meant that a fool who placed ten dollars would walk away with ten thousand if Phantom lost. A number so absurd it felt unreal. A promise so outrageous it shattered reason.

People of every age flooded the online betting tables. Old men chasing one last win. Young workers risking their savings. Students, executives—no one held back. Greed smothered every trace of caution.

For Duke Eisenwall, it felt like a slap across the face.

Eden Group wasn't just confident. They were mocking him-looking down on his product, looking down on his Alpha.

It was a public declaration, screaming to the world that his Alpha was worth nothing in front of Phantom.

Openly. Without restraint.

He slammed his fist onto the table.

"How dare that newborn business group look down on me," he roared. "I want to see them destroy themselves. Set up a meeting. Now. With the other companies."

Moments later, his secretary connected a secure video call. Screens lit up one by one, revealing representatives from rival mobile suit manufacturers.

Eisenwall didn't waste time.

"Listen carefully," the duke commanded, his voice cold and absolute. "I will force the third competition into a free-for-all. No rules protecting anyone. In return, I want every one of your drivers to target that bluthem's tin can."

He leaned forward, eyes burning.

"We destroy that trash first. Only after Phantom is scrap do we fight each other. Agreed?"

One company representative smiled slowly.

"A thousand-times payout," he said. "I was already placing ten million of my own money. Ten billion in return from Eden Group. Why wouldn't I agree? This is an easy win."

Another executive burst out laughing.

"Ten million?" he scoffed. "I'm putting in one hundred million. A hundred billion is waiting for me."

A third voice cut in, cautious but eager.

"Are you sure Eden Group can actually pay when they lose?"

Someone answered immediately.

"They have countless businesses. And if they can't pay-then we take their empire piece by piece."

Duke Eisenwall's lips curled into a cruel smile.

"I don't want a single mistake," he said sharply. "Every weapon you have every

heavy round, every illegal enhancement—I want it all aimed at that tin can. If all of you load your suits to maximum firepower, it will be impossible for Phantom to survive."

The response was immediate.

"No problem," one company replied. "We're not refusing a thousand-times return." Laughter echoed through the call.

To them, Phantom was already dead.

"Good," Duke Eisenwall said coldly. "Proceed."

Then the tournament officials went live.

Their broadcast cut through every channel.

"Our objective is to determine the strongest mobile suit among the ten finest units ever produced," the official announced in a firm, ceremonial tone. "Since one mobile suit has chosen to act with arrogance-believing it can defeat all others-we are therefore obligated to bring this competition to its highest possible standard."

A pause. Deliberate. Heavy.

The official lifted his chin.

"The third competition will be a free-for-all. Ten mobile suits. One arena. No alliances. No protection. The battle continues until only one remains standing." Prussia erupted.

Cheers thundered through the cities. Laughter. Applause. Mockery.

Everyone understood what it meant-nine mobile suits against a single Phantom.

A machine that had sat at the bottom of the rankings for decades.

To the public, this wasn't a competition.

It was guaranteed money.

The commentator spoke quickly, barely containing his excitement.

"Do you realize what this means? Phantom will face nine mobile suits at once. This will never become a one-on-one fight-it will be a nine-on-one execution."

The second commentator laughed openly.

"I'm curious whether Eden Group will still dare to keep their bet after this."

Countess Marlana had already seen this coming.

The moment the announcement ended, Eden Group's next advertisement flooded every screen in Prusia.

It was short. Sharp. Merciless.

"Phantom fears nothing-not even nine mobile suits. Instead, it will teach them all what fear truly is."

The message was unmistakable.

Eden Group was declaring war on the entire nation.

The rage was immediate. Real. Explosive.

Deep inside a concealed hangar, Alex sat within the Phantom's cockpit. The machine stood silent, restrained by clamps, waiting.

A screen flickered to life.

Marlena's face appeared, eyes burning with excitement.

"Boss, look at the betting numbers," she said quickly. "The money placed on Phantom losing."

Alex glanced at the figures.

He froze.

Seven hundred billion.

For the first time in a long while, even he felt the weight of the number.

"Boss," Marlena said, barely

containing herself, "that's seven

..

hundred billion. If you win, you won't

just be rich. You'll be the richest man

in all of Prusia."

She laughed softly, breathless.

Marlena hesitated, then spoke softly. "Boss... if you lose, Eden Group is finished.

Everything we built is gone."

"Can you guarantee victory?" she asked. "I'll do anything. Anything you ask. If you win this fight, I will—"

Alex cut the screen and drew a slow, steady breath.

This wasn't how he wanted to fight.

But for Estoria, there was no choice.

He had to take the blue tin can all the way through.

The hangar trembled as a broadcast echoed from every speaker.

"All competitors, report to the stadium immediately. The match will begin in five minutes."

The massive hangar doors groaned open. Light flooded in. One by one, the mobile suits advanced into the arena.

Nine machines were already in position.

Nine pilots.

One shared mission.

Destroy Phantom.

The commentator's voice crackled with excitement.

"We're down to one minute before the tournament begins, but Phantom-the so-called arrogant mobile-suit-still hasn't entered the arena Do you think the driver finally got scared and ran?"

The second commentator snorted.

"We don't know yet. But honestly, I'm praying he doesn't show up. If Phantom fails to appear, it's an automatic loss."

"Twenty seconds remaining."

The crowd leaned forward, eyes locked on the arena gate.

"Ten seconds."

"Do you think it ran away?" someone asked eagerly.

"I really hope so," another replied. "I bet a thousand dollars. That turns into a million if it doesn't show."

People began counting aloud.

"Nine. Eight."

The counting grew louder. Wilder.

"Seven. Six."

At three seconds remaining-

Phantom stepped into the arena.

The crowd erupted.

Jeers. Boos. Groans. Fury.

Everyone had been praying the Phantom's pilot would run. Three more seconds and Phantom would have lost by default.

Instead, that brazen pilot still dared to walk forward, and the sight of it sent a wave of rage through the stands.

Alpha's pilot opened a secure channel to the others.

"When the countdown ends and the fight starts," he said coldly, "I want everything you've got fired at that tin can. No hesitation."

"Yes," the others answered in unison.

"Ready," Alpha's pilot barked.

They were already imagining the victory. A fast kill. Easy money.

The commentator's voice rose.

"We're just seconds from the start-and all nine mobile suits are fully armed. Guns, rockets, lasers everything is locked onto Phantom. In moments, this fight will be over."

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The countdown hit zero.

A sharp tone rang out.

"Start!"

But instead of nine mobile suits opening fire-

All nine machines dropped to one knee.

They knelt before Phantom.

The arena fell into stunned silence.

Inside the cockpit, Alex looked down at them and smiled.

"If the king has entered," he said calmly, voice echoing across the arena,

"how dare you not kneel."

'When the true ruler appears,

all others know their place.'

Authority needs no announcement—only presence.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 517[1,508 words]

Minutes before the third round began, the Reunion Class hall vibrated with tension.

Tobias stood his ground as Belinda stormed toward him.

She slammed a finger into his chest, hard enough to jolt him back.

"Tobias, you useless piece of shit," she screamed, fury cutting every word. "Listen carefully. You will make damn sure your Phantom does not win this round. Do you understand me?"

"The Phantom has to win the final round," Tobias said fearlessly.

Her hand cracked across his face.

"How dare you disobey me?" Belinda snapped. "I am your fiancée. Don't forget-I lent you fifty thousand dollars when you were drowning in debt. My father will never forgive this. You will regret crossing me, so shut up and do exactly what I say."

Tobias said nothing.

A man like him had learned long ago that arguing only made things worse. He stood there in silence, as he always did, letting others speak over him.

Belinda circled him like a queen inspecting a prisoner. "Do you know how powerful my family is?"

Tobias nodded slowly. "I memorized it. You made sure I did."

She smiled, slow and cruel. "Good. Then you know what happens when you embarrass us."

Her voice dropped, sharp and icy.

"Here's what you'll do," Belinda continued. "You will make sure Phantom loses. I've already put two hundred thousand dollars on the bet. My father put in fifty million."

She leaned closer, eyes burning.

"If you let Phantom win, I'll divorce you and force you to repay every cent you owe. Hell, I'll kill you myself."

"Enough," Tobias said at last, his spine finally straightening. "Say whatever you want. The Phantom will win the third round."

He lifted his eyes and met hers.

"And our engagement is over," he said coldly. "Starting now."

"How dare you reject me?" Belinda screamed.

She raised her hand again, ready to slap him.

Tobias closed his eyes.

The slap never came.

When he opened them, ten men in black suits had appeared out of nowhere, forming a tight circle around him.

One of them caught Belinda's wrist in midair.

The man turned to Tobias and spoke calmly.

"Sir, tell me how you want us to handle this woman. I can break every bone in her body in seconds."

Tobias froze. "Who... who are you?"

"We're security," one of them whispered, careful not to draw attention. "Sent by Eden Group to protect you. The Countess asked you to check your bank account. The transfer has already gone through."

Another man stepped forward and placed a heavy suitcase into Tobias's hands.

"Inside is two million dollars in cash," he said quietly. "Use it however you like."

Tobias stared at the suitcase.

Then he looked at Belinda.

"She slapped me once," Tobias said after a pause. "So slap her once for me. Just once."

"Sure," the man gripping Belinda's wrist said.

He raised his hand, tensing every muscle in his arm, pouring all his strength into the strike and slapped her once, hard, with everything he had.

The sound cracked through the room.

It wasn't light. It was brutal.

Belinda was thrown to the floor. Two of her teeth skidded across the tiles. Blood poured from her mouth.

"How dare you!" she screamed, tears streaming down her face from pain and shock.

Tobias calmly placed the suitcase on the table and snapped it open.

Stacks of cash filled the case.

The room erupted in gasps. Whistles. Shocked murmurs.

Tobias picked up a bundle of bills. Each stack was ten thousand dollars. He grabbed five stacks and tossed them onto Belinda's body.

"That's fifty thousand," he said coldly. "The money I owed you."

He picked up another five stacks and threw them beside the first.

"And another fifty thousand. Interest included. Exactly as promised." Belinda stared at the money, shaking.

"We're done," Tobias said. "No debts. No engagement. No connection."

He closed the suitcase and turned to leave, surrounded immediately by his bodyguards.

Belinda tried to rush forward, rage twisting her face, but the guards blocked her without hesitation.

"Do you really think your trash Phantom can win against Alpha and the other companies?" she screamed. "You're dreaming!"

She laughed hysterically.

"I'll take you hundred thousand and bet it all against your Phantom. When it gets destroyed, I'll win a hundred million. You pathetic bastard!"

Tobias stopped and looked back at her.

"As your former classmate," he said calmly, "I advise you to stop betting. Phantom will win. You'll lose everything."

"Phantom will win?" Belinda burst into laughter as she pushed herself up. "If Phantom wins, I'll eat shit right in front of you."

Tobias smiled.

"Fine," he said evenly. "Everyone here, remember this moment. When Phantom wins, make sure she eats it."

He paused, eyes cold.

"I'll donate one hundred thousand dollars to anyone willing to stay and witness it until the end."

Tobias walked out with his heart pounding.

He had always been timid. Careful. The kind of man who swallowed anger and stepped aside.

But not today.

He was done running. Done bending. For the first time in his life, he wanted to be the one who forced change.

As he reached the exit, Ragnar stepped into his path.

"Tobias," Ragnar said coldly, "I gave you a way out. I was generous. And you chose the hardest road." His lips curled. "Do you really think your Phantom can survive? The other nine mobile suits will hunt it down. They'll tear it apart in front of everyone."

Tobias didn't slow his steps.

"We don't know yet, Ragnar," he said without turning back. "Until the third round ends, no one knows what will happen."

"Keep dreaming!" Ragnar roared. "Remember this—when you lose, your entire family will belong to me!"

Tobias kept walking.

Outside, Eden Group security was already in position. A fast spacecraft waited with engines humming, sleek and ready.

"Where are we going?" Tobias asked as he boarded.

"Somewhere safe," the lead security officer replied, voice calm and professional.

"Far from danger. Your family has already been extracted. You'll reunite at the secure location."

"Is this really necessary?" Tobias asked quietly.

"When Phantom wins the third competition," the officer said evenly, "you won't survive the backlash. Only a corporation as large as Eden Group can handle what comes after."

Tobias opened the screen and looked back at the stadium feed.

"So Eden Group believes Phantom can win?" he asked.

On the screen, Phantom entered the arena in the final seconds. The crowd roared.

The match began.

Nine mobile suits raised their weapons.

Phantom moved forward.

Alone. Calm. Unarmed.

The commentator laughed loudly.

"Did I see that right?" the

commentator scoffed. "Phantom is

entering the arena without

weapons. Are they already

bankrupt? Gant eveni

equipment?"

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The second commentator shook his head, lips curling in disdain.

"No. Phantom's weapons are outdated. They can't pierce the thick armor of the other mobile suits. Sout decided to stroll into the park empty-handed instead."

Both of them burst into laughter.

On the screen, Phantom kept walking forward.

Without fear.

Then the start signal shot into the sky.

The other mobile suits locked their weapons, fingers hovering over the triggers, ready to fire at the slightest command.

And then-

To everyone's shock, every other mobile suit dropped to its knees before the Phantom.

The drivers felt it at the same time.

A crushing killing intent.

An invisible force slammed down
them, heavy and absolute, like the
gn

weight of the sky it pressed into their chests crushed their thoughts, stripped away courage. .net

Some drivers passed out instantly.

Others lost control, urine soaking their suits, mouths hanging open as saliva spilled out uncontrollably.

Alpha's driver gasped, voice tearing apart inside the cockpit.

"I—I can't move. My body won't listen to me."

His co-pilot screamed over comms, "It's just a machine! It's just Phantom!"

The driver's teeth chattered violently. "No... it's looking at me."

Systems blared warnings. His hands slipped off the controls.

"I've fought wars," he sobbed. "I've killed men."

Phantom stepped closer.

Slow. Silent. Absolute.

The driver dropped fully to his knees.

"This isn't combat," he whispered, shame breaking him. "This is judgment."

Something terrifying was looking down at him.

Something far above.

All he could do was tremble.

It was like a small chicken facing an alpha wolf. No fight. No resistance. Only fear.

Phantom stepped forward.

Calm. Unhurried.

It reached Alpha and took its weapon with a single smooth motion. Then Phantom

turned, lifting that same weapon and aiming it at the kneeling mobile suit.

The trigger clicked.

A laser burst out.

The kneeling mobile suit was destroyed instantly.

Then another.

And another.

One by one. They didn't move.

They didn't fight.

They only knelt and were executed.

"Am I... am I seeing this wrong?" the commentator shouted, voice shaking. "Are the other mobile suits just waiting to be executed?!"

The second commentator screamed, voice cracking.

"Why aren't they fighting back?! MOVE!"

A spectator hurled a bottle at the screen.

"You cowards! You took our money!"

Another shouted, veins bulging, "This is rigged! Eden Group is cheating!"

The stadium shook with rage.

"Fight back, you bastards!"

"Go fight that tin can!"

But Phantom didn't stop.

It kept firing.

Cold. Methodical. Merciless.

One execution after another.

Nine entered.

Four were already gone.

Online, the outrage exploded.

"What are these companies doing?!"

"Are they working together to steal our money?!"

"Fight, damn it!"

"You're all paid by Eden Group!"

The entire Prussian nation boiled with rage.

It had never hated anyone this much.

High above, Countess Marlena laughed until her voice cracked, delight pouring out of her.

"Damn it! Damn it!" the other company owners screamed. "My money-my fucking

money! I put everything into that bet!"

They smashed whatever was within reach, fists and rage flying, cursing one another as their machines were destroyed one by one.

They stared at Phantom like it was death itself.

An angel of execution.

Finally, only Alpha remained.

Its driver knelt on the battlefield, shaking uncontrollably.

Phantom raised the weapon.

And placed the barrel against Alpha's head.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 518[1,400 words]

"No-no!" the commentator screamed. His voice cracked over the broadcast.

"Please, don't shoot Alpha! I put my family's emergency savings on this bet. Please don't do it!"

Across the stadium, and across Prussia, people were drenched in sweat.

"Please don't shoot Alpha."

"Please let Alpha win."

"Please..."

For a single, desperate heartbeat, the entire nation prayed for a miracle.

Then Phantom pulled the trigger.

The weapon flashed.

Alpha's mobile suit vanished in a violent burst of light and twisted steel.

What remained crashed to the arena floor, burning and broken, while the pilot was sealed inside the emergency escape system and violently ejected clear of the wreckage.

In that instant, all of Prussia understood the truth-miracles were not coming for them.

Phantom released the weapon. It clattered uselessly onto the arena floor.

Without haste, without pride, Phantom turned and walked back the way it had entered—slow, calm, untouched by the chaos behind it.

It was as if he had stepped into the stadium not to battle, but to pass judgment-and then depart.

No struggle followed. No clash of equals. He did not lower himself to wrestle in the same mud as the rest.

This was not combat.

It was authority.

The cold, absolute dignity of a high noble.

The silent, crushing dignity of a king.

The stadium detonated.

Alarms blared. Screens flared to life as the automated announcement rolled across every display.

"Phantom of Bluthelm is declared the winner of the third round."

The words struck like a hammer.

Phantom had become the first overall winner of the 576th Annual Mobile Suit Competition.

"Nooooo!"

The scream rose from the stands in a single, unified howl.

The crowd broke apart. People overturned seats, hurled bottles, smashed anything within reach.

Online feeds flooded with rage and despair. Lifelong savings-gone in a single pull of a trigger. Betting tables wiped clean.

All of Prussia realized, at once, that their money was lost.

Countess Marlene did not scream.

She smiled thinly.

She felt the tide rising the lawsuits, the accusations, the desperate attempts to void the betting.

Calmly, she lifted her communicator and placed a call to the Prussian Legal Association.

"I want every available lawyer in Prussia," she said coolly. "All of them. The pay will

be exceptional. Your task is simple—build a wall. Anyone who tries to invalidate this betting gets stopped."

She ended the call without waiting for confirmation.

Even if she paid every lawyer in Prussia for an entire year, it would cost no more than ten billion dollars. To secure seven hundred billion in winnings, it was nothing.

A bargain.

As reports of alleged cheating flooded government channels, thousands of lawyers were already moving—armed with airtight logic, procedural precision, and raw financial hunger—ready to defend that money to the last clause and comma. While the nation burned, Alex slipped out of Phantom unnoticed.

No cameras caught him.

No one followed.

He left the arena quietly and returned to the class reunion, moving through the noise and chaos as if it no longer touched him.

He was going to see Sofina.

"Alex, the arena is on fire," Sofina said the moment she spotted him, her voice tight with urgency.

"I noticed."

"People are screaming."

"Yes."

"The markets are crashing."

"...That too."

Sofina stopped in front of him and stared, genuinely shaken. "How are you still this calm?"

Alex straightened his coat, smoothing an invisible crease.

"Because when something burns this loudly," he said quietly, "it means someone just took an enormous amount of money from them."

He met her eyes.

"A very, very, very large amount."

Danielle, one of Sofina classmates, rose slowly from her seat and fixed her gaze on Belinda. A slow, poisonous smile curled across her lips.

"So, Belinda," she said lightly, almost sweet. "About the shit. How would you like it prepared? Do you want to chew it raw, or should I ask the chef to cook it spicy for you?"

Belinda felt her vision go black.

For a second, she honestly thought she might die right there.

Damn it.

How did everything go so wrong?

She never imagined Phantom would win the third competition. Not once. And now-

her money was gone. Worse, her father's money was gone too.

She had already given her word to Tobias-to eat shit if Phantom won.

Now what was she supposed to do?

Was she really expected to do it?

No.

That was impossible. Absolutely impossible.

"What does this have to do with you, Danielle?" Belinda snapped, her voice sharp and panicked. "I only promised Tobias!"

Danielle laughed, a soft, cruel sound.

"Oh, but Tobias promised me one hundred thousand dollars just to watch you eat it." She leaned
urry up

forward slithty, "So tury

Belinda. For once in your life try having some integrity."

Belinda's legs nearly gave out.

If she did this, she would be finished.

The crowd immediately piled on.

"Hey, Belinda," someone shouted. "You said it yourself. You lose, you eat it. What—are you breaking your promise now?"

"That's right!" another voice chimed in. "We're all waiting for the freak show!"

"Heh." A man forced his way through the crowd, lifting a tightly sealed glass bottle. Inside churned a thick, reeking brown sludge, still steaming against the glass.

"Fresh," he sneered. "Still warm-straight out of my own ass." He slammed the bottle down onto the table.

People leaned back instinctively, faces twisted in disgust, yet their eyes stayed locked on it.

Someone slapped the table hard. "Hey, Belinda, start already! Eat it. I want my cut of that hundred thousand dollars."

Belinda's face flushed an ugly mix of red and sickly green. Her voice came out weak, almost pleading.

"We're all friends," she said. "Do you really have to humiliate me when I'm already at the bottom?"

"Friends?" Renata laughed, unimpressed. "You started this. They're just asking you to keep your word. Why do you suddenly sound so bitter?"

She tilted her head, eyes sharp.

"I remember you always preaching about promises. About integrity. Or was that only when it suited you?"

Belinda lowered her head.

She knew there was no escaping this time.

She swallowed her anger, forced it down, and spoke in a small, careful voice. "I'm sorry. I was impulsive. I lost control."

She took a breath. "This was a promise I made to Tobias. Everyone... I'm sorry. I hope you can forgive me."

Her fingers clenched.

"And please don't go after Tobias for the one hundred thousand dollars," she added quickly. "I'll pay it myself. I'll cover the entire amount out of my own pocket for all of you."

The room went quiet.

Everyone stared at her in disbelief.

Was this really Belinda?

The arrogant, sharp-tongued, notoriously stingy Belinda?

The woman who treated money like her own flesh—now willingly pulling out a hundred thousand dollars for others. No one could remember single time she had ever let her wallet bleed. She was the undisputed queen of stinginess.

But Belinda had no choice.

What else could she do?

If she didn't give in, she would be forced to eat the filth sitting on the table.

That was unthinkable.

Impossible.

If she broke her promise outright, the crowd would turn savage. They had countless ways to humiliate her, to tear her apart piece by piece.

Humility—humiliation was the only path left.

And it worked.

Someone finally broke the silence.

"Damn," he said, voice thick with disbelief. "Getting arrogant Belinda to open her own wallet is harder than pulling teeth."

He let out a short, mocking laugh

and gestured toward the table. "And really are we going to push it that far? Forcing someone to eat that?" He shook his head. "Enough. Let it

end here."

"Yeah, he's right," another person agreed. "Forget the disgusting stuff. Let's continue the class reunion. There's plenty we can still enjoy."

Belinda exhaled quietly, relief washing over her face.

Then she lifted her gaze and looked straight at Sofina.

"The ring on your hand," Belinda said, her voice turning icy again. "Keep it for now.

The lawyers will come for it soon. So take good care of it... while you still can."

Alex studied her.

A minute ago she'd been begging, head bowed, voice trembling-yet the moment

the pressure lifted, the claws came right back out. The apology was a mask. The greed underneath never even blinked.

He exhaled through his nose, almost amused.

"Fine," he said softly, a faint smile cutting across his face. "If that's how you want to play it."

He didn't argue. Didn't raise his voice. He simply lifted his phone and sent a message to Marlana.

"Do we have a deputy general manager with the last name von Yorck? His daughter is Belinda von Yorck."

The reply came back almost instantly.

"Yes. Hermann von Yorck. What's the matter, Founder? Any instructions?"

Alex's smile didn't move, but his eyes turned cold.

"I want a full investigation," he typed. "Audit everything. Track every transaction.

Find out how much he's stolen from us."

A pause.

Then he sent the next line, like a blade sliding free.

"Recover every cent. Lock down the accounts. Freeze what needs freezing."

And then the last message-short, final, merciless.

"Once it's clean, fire him. Immediately."

"Understood," Marlana replied. "On it."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 519[1,281 words]

Ragnar was shaking with rage when he realized Phantom was winning.

That single fact crushed everything.

It meant he had failed his father's command. It meant he had disgraced the Eisenwall name.

And worse-it meant he would never be chosen as the heir of House Eisenwall.

"Fucking hell," Ragnar snarled. "This is all because of that bastard Tobias."

He stormed out of the private reunion lounge, his steps heavy, his chest burning with humiliation and fury.

Outside, several others were pouring out of nearby rooms as well. Faces twisted. Voices raised. Everyone had lost their bets.

The air was thick with bitterness, anger, and despair. No one here was in a good mood.

Ragnar slammed straight into two men.

"Watch where you're going!" one of them snapped.

Ragnar turned slowly.

Without a single word, he threw his fist.

The punch landed hard.

He was the future duke-a direct descendant of Duke Eisenwall's blood.

In a world steeped in noble arrogance, Prussian law granted high nobles the right to discipline lower nobles and commoners alike. Power was written into blood, and status was permission.

To Ragnar Eisenwall, that meant freedom.

Freedom to strike.

Freedom to dominate.

Because in this hierarchy, almost no one stood above him.

Aside from the royal family, he believed he could hit anyone he wanted-without consequence.

The two men staggered back. One of them raised his fist, ready to strike back.

Ragnar roared, "I am the son of Duke Eisenwall! Who the hell do you think you are, daring to touch me?!"

The door behind them burst open.

Ten more men stepped out.

Their expressions were cold. Their eyes sharp. None of them looked friendly.

The one in front had a long scar cutting across his face. He looked Ragnar up and down and smiled.

"You're the duke's son, huh?" the scarred man said calmly.

"Yes!" Ragnar shouted, his voice shaking with fury.

"Then you must be rich," the man replied, his smile widening. "Funny thing is—I just lost a lot of money today."

He tilted his head slightly.

"Beat him."

The ten men didn't hesitate.

Fists came down like rain.

"Wait!" Ragnar screamed, panic finally breaking through his arrogance. "If you touch me, all of you will be executed! You're attacking a noble!"

The scarred man laughed.

"So what?" he said casually. "If I were afraid of the law, I wouldn't be working underground."

Back inside the reunion hall, Belinda sat stiffly in her seat, her mind racing.

Her pride was shattered. Her reputation was in ruins. She was desperately thinking

of a way to reclaim her dignity when sudden shouting erupted near the main door of the private room.

The noise cut through the hall like a blade.

Everyone turned toward the door.

It flew open.

A group of men stormed inside, their expressions vicious and unrestrained. Tattoos covered their arms, necks, and faces. Knives glinted in their hands. One of them even held a gun loosely at his side.

They weren't guests.

They weren't here to eat.

Between them, dragged brutally across the floor, was Ragnar.

His clothes were torn. His face was swollen and bloodied. His once-proud expression was gone, replaced by shock, pain, and disbelief.

The room fell dead silent.

The sight was horrifying—especially for Belinda and the other women.

The man with the long scar across his face clearly led the group. He stepped forward, boots heavy against the floor, and slowly swept his gaze across the hall. Then he raised his hand and pointed at everyone, a cruel grin spreading across his lips.

"One of your friends attacked us," he said coldly. "Two of my brothers are badly injured. Treatment will cost one million dollars for each of them." His smile sharpened. "Since he can't pay, you people will cover what he owes."

Belinda felt the blood rush out of her face.

She forced a stiff, bitter smile and stood her ground. "We... we don't have that kind

of money," she said, her voice trembling despite her effort to stay calm. "You should leave now, before we call security."

Scarface laughed softly.

"Security?" he mocked. "Look

around. The entire stadium is in

chaos. The security robots are overwhelmed. No one's coming for you. He tilted his head. "Why don't you just hand over two million doftars nicely, and we'll let all of you walk out alive?"

Then his voice dropped, sharp and dangerous.

"And it just so happens I lost a lot of money today. I'm in a very bad mood." His eyes locked onto Belinda's wrist. "So don't force me to take your bracelet—or make you transfer the money right now."

The whole room sucked in a shaky breath.

Two million dollars.

They glanced around in panic. There were at least twelve men. Every one of them was armed knives, guns, metal batons. This wasn't something they could fight or escape from.

This was daylight robbery.

"I'll give you one minute to decide," the scar-faced leader said calmly.

Suddenly, Belinda's eyes flickered.

An idea struck her.

This was her chance.

She stood up straight and raised her chin. "Who's your boss?" she demanded.

Scarface's grin twisted. "Who do you think you are?" he snapped. "Why would I tell you that? Just gather the money."

Belinda sneered, forcing confidence into her voice. "Let me tell you something. My father has connections with both law enforcement and the underworld in Winchester." She took out her phone. "I can call the underworld boss right now."

Scarface's smile faltered.

For the first time, hesitation crossed his face.

He studied her carefully, eyes narrowing. "You know my boss?"

"Of course!" Belinda shouted, chin high, voice dripping with arrogance. "My father knows everyone. Get out now if you don't want real trouble. I'll let go of what you did to Ragnar and our friends-but strongly suggest you leave this place immediately."

Scarface's brow twitched. His patience was thinning.

"Fine," he said coldly. "If you can call my boss-Count Oskar Winterhagen and make him order us to leave I walk away His lips curled into a cruel smile. "But if you can't, the price doubles. Fourmillion dollars or I take each of your limb."

Ragnar's face was already a mess of blood and swelling. He looked up at Belinda, eyes full of fear, his voice breaking. "Belinda... please. Help me. Please." Belinda gave him a faint, confident smile. "Relax," she said lightly. "I'll have my people contact your boss right now."

Belinda's father, as the general manager, sometimes had to navigate dealings with underworld figures when overseeing large-scale projects.

In those situations, Eden Group's head of security handled the connections and ensured things didn't spiral out of control.

So whenever thugs interfered with their projects—through extortion, threats, or manufactured chaos—one call was enough.

The head of security would contact the underworld leadership, and the problem would disappear without noise.

Belinda knew that because she occasionally supported her father.

That had always worked.

Always.

Belinda touched her bracelet phone, straightened her posture, and dialed a familiar number. Her voice returned to its usual arrogance.

"Head of security, Eden Group," she said coldly. "My friend and I are hosting a private gathering. A group of thugs forced their way in and caused trouble. Call their boss, Oskar, and tell him to pull them out. Now."

"Belinda von Yorck?" There was a brief pause. Then a calm, emotionless voice answered, "Sorry. I can't help you."

Belinda froze. Then she snapped.

"Do you even know who my father is?" she shouted, fury blazing. "How dare you refuse him!"

"Your father?" the man replied coolly. "Yes. I know exactly who he is. He's busy cleaning up his own mess right now."

His voice hardened. "And if things go the way they should, you and your father will both be in prison for a very long time."

"What?" Belinda gasped.

The line went dead.

Her mind went blank.

This had never happened before. Never. The head of security always listened to her father. Always obeyed. Why had he shut her down so mercilessly now?

What Belinda didn't know was this-

Her father was already under investigation.

Eden Group's internal disciplinary division had begun digging into him. Deeply. Thoroughly.

And at this very moment, he was far too busy wiping his own mess to save anyone else.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 520[1,406 words]

Belinda froze when the head of Eden Group security shut her down so abruptly. For a split second, her mind went blank.

Annoyance surged through her chest, sharp and burning. She wanted to scream. But her friends were still watching every pair of eyes fixed on her. She clenched her teeth, swallowed her anger, and forced herself to stay upright.

She made a call again.

This time, she dialed the vice general manager-the man who had always hovered at her father's side like a shadow.

Her father's right hand.

She remembered it clearly.

This man was always timid in front of her father-head lowered, spine bent, nodding nonstop, agreeing to everything without a single objection.

The call connected.

"Hello, Mr. Jacob," Belinda said at once, her voice tight but confident. "It's me, Belinda von Yorck. I'm having a problem here—"

"I'm sorry," the man cut in coldly. "I don't know you."

Belinda stiffened.

"What?" Her voice wavered for half a second, then turned sharp. "Mr. Jacob, don't play games with me. My father helped your family get into the Eden Group. He even gave you a million dollars. I handed that money to you myself. How dare you say you don't know me?"

There was a short pause.

Then the man let out a disgusted snort.

"Belinda von Yorck," he sneered, "don't you know? Your father has already been fired. He's under investigation by Eden Group."

Belinda's eyes widened.

"Fired?" she shouted. "Investigated? When?!"

"Half an hour ago."

Her breath caught.

Before she could say anything else, the man added sharply, "I don't know you. I never received any money from you. You'd better shut your mouth."

The line went dead.

Belinda stood there, stunned.

Across from her, the scar-faced thug watched her expression closely. His lips twitched. A slow, mocking smile spread across his face.

"What's wrong?" he said lazily. "Couldn't find anyone to call my boss?"

Belinda opened her mouth—

Smack.

The slap came without warning.

His hand crashed across her face with brutal force. Her head snapped sideways. She staggered backward, losing her balance, crashing into tables and chairs as they toppled to the floor.

It was the second slap she had taken that day.

Gasps erupted around the room. Faces turned pale. No one moved. No one dared to step forward.

Scarface stood there calmly, watching her fall.

Belinda clutched her cheek, her face twisted with hatred and humiliation.

"How dare you slap me!" she screamed.

Scarface tilted his head.

"I slapped you, so what?"

He laughed softly, a sick, wicked sound. Then he drove his boot into her face.

Belinda collapsed to the floor. Before she could even scream, he jumped on her.

Hands grabbed her clothes, tearing fabric apart. Fists came down again and again. Blunt. Ruthless. Merciless.

Belinda's screams filled the room-sharp, broken, desperate.

No one helped her.

No one moved.

Blood soon covered her face. Her eyes swelled shut. Her features puffed up until she barely looked human.

The scene was grotesque.

Terrifying.

And no one dared to stop it.

Belinda broke down completely.

She screamed through blood and tears, her voice cracking. "Please! Please! I'm sorry! I'm begging you, stop!"

"Sorry?" Scarface snorted, his voice dripping with contempt. "What's your apology worth?" He leaned in, eyes savage. "After the way you treated me like dirt, like I was beneath you, you think I can survive in the underworld if I don't beat the one who dared humiliate me half to death?"

His lips curled into a cruel grin. "Everyone here needs to see what happens when someone decides to mess with me."

"I—I have money, a million dollar." Belinda sobbed. "I have it right now. Please, just take it and leave me alone."

"Great," Scarface laughed harshly. "You should've said that earlier."

Belinda reached for her bracelet, fingers shaking as she tried to access her bank account.

Then she froze.

Her face drained of color.

Her account was frozen.

Under investigation.

Scarface noticed instantly. His face twisted with fury, turning red with rage. "So you were playing me?" he roared. "You dared to lie to me?!"

He spun around and shouted at his men, "Damn it! Go! Beat her ass!"

The thugs rushed forward like animals.

Fists slammed into Belinda. Boots crashed into her ribs. Someone smashed her legs with an iron bat.

The sound was sickening.

People screamed. Some turned away, covering their eyes. It was too brutal to watch.

While Belinda lay writhing on the floor, Scarface turned toward her classmates. His voice cut through the chaos.

"Since your friend was so damn arrogant," he sneered, "the price just doubled. Four million now."

Everyone froze.

"That's impossible!" someone shouted in panic. "We don't have that kind of money!"

Scarface frowned, then waved his hand impatiently. "Fine. If you can't come up with it, I'll take everything you have right now." He pointed at them. Line up. Show me your bracelets Open your bank accounts I want it all." sŵnovels

Then he paused.

"And if you don't want to cooperate—"

He pulled out a knife.

The blade flashed under the lights. Sharp. Bright. Deadly.

Screams broke out. Several women cried out in terror.

"Now line up!" Scarface yelled.

Shaking, people began to form a line.

Scarface moved slowly down it.

When he was about to reach Sofina, a calm voice cut through the fear.

"Wait a minute."

Scarface turned sharply, already furious. "Who the fuck wants to die this time?"

His eyes landed on Alex.

At first, he frowned, confused.

Then his face changed completely.

Recognition hit him like a hammer.

This man.

He knew him.

This was the man who had stormed his former boss's headquarters, slaughtered everyone inside, and left him with the scar carved into his face.

Alex stepped forward and pulled Sofina to his side, placing her directly in front of

Scarface.

"This woman," Alex said evenly, his voice cold and steady, "I believe you know her. Her name is Sofina Scheinwald."

He tightened his grip on her hand.

"My wife."

Scarface's face drained of color.

The knife slipped from his hand and clattered onto the floor. In the next second, he dropped to his knees with a heavy thud.

Before anyone could even react, he began slapping himself-hard, again and again-his voice breaking as he

cried out,

Mrs Sofina. Im sorry I'm so sorry! I didn't know you were here! I truly didn't know!"

The sudden reversal stunned everyone.

One of the thugs whispered hoarsely, watching Scarface kneel.

"Boss... you're really apologizing?"

Scarface slapped himself again. "Shut up."

The thug swallowed. "She doesn't look scary."

Scarface hissed, teeth clenched, "Neither does a guillotine until it drops."

Sofina froze, startled. "You... know me?"

Scarface nodded violently, sweat pouring down his face. "Yes! Mrs. Scheinwald. Of course I know you. Your reputation speaks for itself. It's—it's an honor to meet you."

The words sounded unreal.

An honor?

Sofina Scheinwald?

The room went dead silent.

A classmate leaned toward another, voice shaking.

"Did he just say it's an honor to meet her?"

The other nodded stiffly. "Yeah."

"That guy beat Ragnar son of Duke half to death."

"Then imagine what he thinks she could do."

They both fell silent. "Right. Honor makes sense now."

No one could process what they were hearing. It felt surreal-almost absurd.

Alex's voice cut through the shock, calm but sharp. "Since you know who Sofina is," he said, "don't you think it's time to let her classmates go?"

Scarface didn't hesitate. He spun around, bowing repeatedly to everyone in the room. "Of course! Since you're all friends of Mrs. Scheinwald, there will be no charges. Not a single cent."

The room erupted in stunned gasps.

The same thugs who had humiliated Ragnar and beaten Belinda without mercy were now backing down-without conditions.

Who was Sofina Scheinwald?

In that moment, the answer was clear.

She was their savior.

People rushed toward Sofina, gripping her hands, voices trembling with gratitude.

"Sofina... thank you. Thank you so much."

Sofina stood there, confused and overwhelmed. She had never had any dealings with the underworld. None at all.

She could only smile softly. "You're welcome. I just... helped a friend." Scarface glanced at Ragnar and Belinda, still unconscious on the floor, bodies

battered and bloodied. His voice lowered, uneasy. "Mr. Scheinwald... I'm sorry for beating your friends."

Before Sofina could respond, Alex spoke without hesitation. "It's fine. They're not my wife's friends. They even threatened her. Send them to the hospital and don't let this incident disrupt the party here."

Scarface nodded immediately. "Understood." He bowed again. "Mrs. Scheinwald, please enjoy the rest of the party. Excuse us."

He barked orders to his men. They lifted Ragnar and Belinda, dragged them out swiftly, and disappeared through the door.

Silence returned.

All eyes turned to Sofina—full of awe, admiration, and disbelief. People crowded around her, praising her, thanking her, clinging to her presence.

Only Renata stayed back.

She wasn't looking at Sofina.

She was staring at Alex.

Her brows knit slightly as a single thought crossed her mind.

Who the hell are you, Alex?

Sofina walked up to Alex, her voice low and confused. "Alex... what's going on?"

Alex gave a faint, calm smile. "Well," he said quietly, "someone finally understands how terrifying a wife can be."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 521[1,535 words]

When the class reunion finally ended, Renata walked straight up to Alex and Sofina.

"So," she said lightly, "how are we getting back?"

"By car, of course," Sofina replied, confused. "Why?"

Renata grinned. "Come on. Your husband has a VÖXEN Seraphine and a VÖXEN sixth generation. You'll obviously follow him home. So why not let me use the

VÖXEN Seraphine?"

Sofina glanced at Alex.

"No. The Seraphine is out of the question," Alex said firmly. "She can use the sixth generation, but the Seraphine is a hard no."

Renata let out a resigned sigh. "Fine. The sixth generation, then."

Alex shrugged, completely at ease. "You're Sofina's best friend. If she's okay with it, so am I."

"Then it's settled," Sofina said.

Renata rushed forward, grabbed Sofina's face, and kissed her on the lips. What started as a quick peck turned into a deep, lingering kiss.

Alex could only scratch his head.

Back in Estoria, this would have been unthinkable. Here, among Prussians, it was normal-friends kissing, male or female, without shame or meaning beyond affection.

He wasn't used to their culture, but he wasn't about to make it awkward.

A moment later, Renata headed for the VÖXEN sixth generation and drove off to pick someone up.

"Who's that?" Alex asked casually, just to have something to talk about as they drove home.

Sofina exhaled softly. "Matthias von Sturmfels. Our university senior. He and Renata were lovers. But her father despises him."

"Why?" Alex asked.

"The usual," Sofina said. "Renata is a duke's daughter. Matthias is only the second son of a count. But Renata truly loves him. He's kind. And loyal."

"Loyal?" Alex echoed.

"It means he swore he would never sleep with another woman except her," Sofina said. "People call it outdated. I call it romantic."

Alex nodded. In Prussia, marriage placed no limits on desire. People slept with whomever they wanted, even after marriage, and multiple spouses were normal. Loyalty, as Sofina defined it, felt foreign-conservative, rigid, and outdated.

"Part of the reason Renata came here," Sofina continued, "was to be closer to him. I really hope they're doing well. She's already given him so much."

"Given him what?" Alex asked.

"Basically everything," Sofina said quietly. "Including her savings. All of it. She poured everything she had into helping him open an automotive workshop. I heard it's struggling, but he's working hard—and Renata is supporting him with everything she has. They're still trying to get approval from Duke Winter."

They finally reached the house. The moment they stepped out of the car, they ran straight into Sofina's parents.

Felicia screamed the instant she saw the vehicle. "Sofina! Where did this VÖXEN come from?!"

Albert Bauer-Sofina Scheinwald's stepfather-froze, then his eyes lit up like a child's. He circled the car once, awe written all over his face.

"Wow. A VÖXEN," he said slowly, savoring the word. "Sofina, is this your new car? You've become quite the big spender."

Sofina reacted immediately. "Mom. Step Dad. I didn't buy it. It's Alex's."

"Alex?" Albert frowned and turned sharply toward Alex. "Where did you get the money for this car? You used Sofina's money, didn't you?"

Alex raised both hands, irritated. "I work at Eden Group, remember? I'm not unemployed like you."

Albert snorted in contempt. He grabbed Felicia by the arm and dragged her around the car, inspecting every line and curve. His tone turned ugly.

"You live under our roof. We pay for your food. And now you buy a VÖXEN without even knowing how to flatter us?" Felicia sneered. "You ungrateful bastard."

Sofina stepped between them. "Mom, don't talk like that. It's just a second-hand, first-generation VÖXEN. The cheapest model."

Albert laughed, but jealousy bled through every word. "Huh. He buys a VÖXEN and thinks he deserves it? There are much cheaper cars for someone like him to show off with."

Felicia crossed her arms. "Listen carefully. I don't even own a car yet. At my age, I deserve to enjoy life more. If I wait any longer, it'll be too late."

Then she leaned forward, her tone turning openly demanding. "Why don't we do this? Give the car to me as a gift. I'll use it. You married my daughter, but you've never given me anything."

The truth was simple.

Felicia was furious.

She had carried the king's seed-but only as a carrier. It was a legal term used for people like her.

In Prussia, a carrier-also called oneayda-was a woman who bore the noble's child without ever becoming their wife or concubine.

They were bound by oath to lifelong

silence, forced to keep everything

secret for the kingdom, their

existence stripped down to

something functional and

vel

degrading often described as nothing more than temporarily carrying a noble's sperm.

They received only minimal payment, and once the child was born, They were quietly discarded and erased from political and social relevance and support.

The child, however, was officially acknowledged and financially supported by the state.

In essence, oneayda meant being used, paid, and forgotten, a legal mechanism designed to protect noble bloodlines while ensuring the woman who bore them gained no power, no status, no recognition, and no money after the process was done.

They were simply thrown away, contacted only if their silence or advice was ever needed again. And the payment for that service-Felicia had nearly cried when she received it. She had never known a man as stingy as the king.

Yes, the king paid her while she was pregnant with Sofina. After Sofina was born, the royal government took over, covering the child's living expenses directly.

The money went to Sofina—not Felicia—until Sofina was old enough to choose her own path, just like the other daughters born of royal blood.

Some of those children chased their own dreams and erased their fathers from their lives. Others followed the paths laid out for them, stepping into nobility and walking in their real father's footsteps.

People like Felicia were already long forgotten.

In the end, she was nobody.

Sofina pressed her lips together and looked at Alex. "Alex... what do you think?"

Alex had more money than most people could imagine. He was, quite literally, the richest man in Prussia.

One car or a thousand made no difference to him. Still, the VÖXEN Seraphine was far too much for Felicia.

"Hm," he said gently, turning to Felicia. "Mother-in-law, this is a first-generation. VÖXEN. It's the cheapest model completely outdated. People even call it the worst, most obsolete version of the series. I'm worried they might laugh at you if they see you driving it."

Felicia's face darkened. "Why?" she snapped. "You don't want to give it to us, do you?"

Alex waved his hands quickly. "No,

no—of course not. That's not what I

met

mean. I just can't let my mother-in-law drive something so low-end. How about this? Let Sofina keep this car, and I'll buy you a second-generation VOXEN instead. It's a full class above the first generation. Much better for your status. Doesn't that sound right?"

Felicia frowned again, this time with interest. "You still have money to buy a second- generation model?"

"Yes," Alex replied calmly. "I only paid very cheap for this one. I still have funds left. Don't worry. I'll go to the showroom tomorrow morning."

Wide, glowing smiles spread across the in-laws' faces the moment Alex said he would buy them a better car tomorrow.

What Albert Bauer didn't realize was that he had just missed his chance at the VÖXEN Seraphine.

Later that night, after they returned to their room, Sofina couldn't hide her unease.

"Alex I'm sorry about my mother. Do you really still have enough money to buy another car? I have some savings. Take it tomorrow."

Alex waved his hands at once. "No. I don't need your money. I still have enough.

And I'm not buying a brand-new one just a second-hand VÖXEN, second generation."

Sofina looked down, guilt heavy in her voice. "I'm really sorry. I didn't know my mom would act like that..."

Alex smiled calmly. "What are you saying? Your parents are my parents too. We're family. I'm happy to give them gifts once in a while."

Sofina Scheinwald looked up at him and smiled warmly. "Thank you, Alex."

Then her eyes fell to the ring on her finger. Her expression shifted. "And this ring," she said softly. "It's too expensive. I can't accept it."

"Sofina," Alex said gently, "that ring is a family heirloom. My family told me that when I take a wife, she must wear it. I didn't buy it. Please. Just keep it."

Sofina stared at him, deep and searching. "Sometimes," she whispered, "I wonder...

do you really love me?"

Alex blinked. "Why would you think that?"

Her face turned red. "Because everything feels too perfect. Like it's not real. Like I'm

just standing inside a miracle that doesn't belong to me."

Alex pulled her close. "If it didn't belong to you, it wouldn't feel this fragile."

She trembled. "I'm afraid it will disappear."

He replied gently, "Then we'll learn how to hold it longer."

"Alex," Sofina whispered as their lips met. Heat surged between them, fierce and sudden, like a miracle pulling two souls toward heaven and beyond.

In that moment, Alex and Sofina were completely lost—man and woman searching for meaning, for closeness, for life itself, bound together by desire and quiet wonder.

From the corner of the room, Eve was watching.

Far away in Estoria, Eve's mother-Bella—stood alone, motionless, staring at the projection Eve had cast into the air. On the screen, two bodies lay naked on a bed, exposed, unguarded, completely unaware they were being seen.

Bella didn't look away.

She didn't blink.

Her voice was calm. Flat. Final.

"War," she said. "I want war with Prussia."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 522[1,557 words]

The next morning, Sofina woke early and got ready for work.

Alex was already in the kitchen. Breakfast had been carefully packed into a food box, prepared for her to take to the office. He wiped his hands, walked over, placed the food box against her palm—and then set the car key gently on top of it.

"Drive to the office today," he said calmly. "And from now on. Always."

Sofina hesitated. She looked down at the key, then back at him. "It's your car. Are you sure I can use it?"

"I didn't buy it for me," Alex said. "If you're not driving it, the car loses its meaning."

Sofina paused, then nodded. She took the key, leaned forward, and kissed him softly on the lips. Her eyes lingered on his face, warm and romantic. "Thank you." Pauline, still eating breakfast, squinted at the car keys in Sofina's hand.

"So let me get this straight," she said. "You wake up, make breakfast, hand over a car like it's candy, and act mysterious about it?"

Alex nodded calmly. "That's correct."

Pauline crossed her arms. "Are you some kind of secret billionaire?"

"No."

"A criminal mastermind?"

"No."

"A cult leader with really good manners?"

Alex paused. "Still no."

Pauline scoffed. "Then what are you?"

Alex met her gaze. "Someone who hates walking."

Pauline stared at him for two full seconds, then turned to Sofina.

"Cool. So if he ever hands you a spaceship, we're moving."

"Maybe," Sofina laughed.

"Sis," Pauline added casually, "can you drive me to school?"

"Sure," Sofina replied casually. "It's on the way."

Pauline turned and walked off. Just before closing the door, she glanced back at Alex.

Their eyes met for half a second. His face-calm, handsome, unreadable-caught her completely off guard. Heat rushed to her cheeks.

"You're ugly!" she snapped, flustered, and slammed the door shut.

"Whatever," Alex said flatly. "I wasn't born to make you happy."

Another door opened.

Felicia stepped out of her bedroom, hands on her hips. "Alex Saint-Claire," she said, narrowing her eyes, "you didn't forget about buying me a car today, did you?"

"Of course not!" Alex answered instantly. "I'll go right now. Just wait at home. I'll drive it back myself."

Felicia's face lit up. She grinned from ear to ear. "Good. A VÖXEN, sixth generation. You promised it yourself. Don't come back with the wrong car."

Alex laughed, amused. "I still remember the VÖXEN second generation. If you want the sixth, you'll need me to save for another ten years."

Felicia's smile vanished.

She slammed the door.

Alex didn't react. He walked downstairs, pulled out his bicycle, and rode toward the largest auto shop in all of Winchester.

The moment he arrived and parked his bike, heads snapped in his direction.

Inside the Arcturus showroom, the sales staff recognized him instantly.

"Holy shit," one of them whispered. "That's the bicycle guy. The one who bought the VÖXEN Seraphine."

"Damn it," another hissed through clenched teeth. "I heard last time he was about to buy the top-spec Arcturus A8. This time, I'm not letting him walk away."

"Move!"

In a flash, a crowd of Arcturus salesmen rushed out-but they were a step too late. Other car salespeople had already surrounded Alex, afraid of losing their shot.

Alex stood there, calm and silent, as the entire showroom fought to claim him.

"Sir! Please take a look at our newest top-spec Arcturus A8!"

"Sir! Our latest model just launched-stronger engine, better performance than the A8!"

Alex raised an eyebrow, mildly amused. "Really? Is it that good?"

Before anyone else could answer, the VÖXEN sales team burst out from their booth like a pack released from a leash.

"They're all lying!" one of them shouted. "None of the cars here can compare to VÖXEN!"

They rushed to Alex's side and bowed deeply. "Sir, they're deceiving you. VÖXEN is the finest car in all of Prussia."

Several VÖXEN salespeople instantly formed a human wall, physically blocking the other sales teams. Their manager snapped coldly, eyes sharp with hostility.

"All of you—especially you Arcturus losers-what do you think you're doing?" he barked.

"Trying to steal our customer? Can't you see he doesn't even want to hear you talk? Get out of his way. Now. If any of you block him again, I'll call the security."

The Arcturus salespeople clenched their jaws. So did the others. But none dared argue. One by one, they sighed in frustration and walked away, shoulders slumped, hope crushed.

The moment the area cleared, the VÖXEN showroom manager stepped forward personally.

"Good morning, Mr. Saint-Claire. Please, sir-this way. We'll provide our highest level of service."

The manager gestured respectfully toward his office.

Once inside, he closed the door and asked professionally, "Are you here to purchase another vehicle today?"

Alex nodded. "Do you have VÖXEN Seraphine?"

The manager froze. His eyes widened. "You... just bought one."

"Yes," Alex said calmly. "But my wife fell in love with it. And honestly, so did I— especially the camouflage mode."

His lips curved slightly. "That feature alone is worth admiring."

The manager took a careful breath before replying. "Sir, the VÖXEN Seraphine is a limited edition. Only ten units were ever produced. The one you purchased was the last."

Alex let out a quiet sigh. "That's unfortunate."

"But," the manager said, lowering his voice, leaning closer, "there is another car. A truly extreme limited edition. Only one has ever been created in all of Prussia."

Alex looked at him. "Go on."

The manager whispered, reverent. "It was commissioned for the late King of Prussia himself. Ten years were spent creating that single masterpiece. But before it could be delivered, the King died suddenly. The new king has no interest in cars. So it has remained with

us-untouched."

Alex's eyes narrowed. "Is it good?"

The manager gave a faint, confident smile. "It's the finest piece of Prussian technology ever built. Designed to royal specifications—at least ten times superior to the VÖXEN Seraphine."

His voice lowered, calm and precise. "The Seraphine was never meant to be the peak. It was developed by copying this car—simplified, limited, and made for the public. What stands here is the original."

"It's more advanced than anything on the market," the manager said

evenly Nang level self-repair

systems. A miniature nuclear power source Reinforcement far beyond standard limits. In practical terms-unbreakable."

An unbreakable car.

Alex didn't hesitate. "I want it. That car suits me perfectly."

The manager's heart nearly leapt out of his chest.

He was ecstatic.

Headquarters had ordered the car sold long ago, but its terrifying price had driven everyone away. No one dared even ask.

No one-until Alex Saint-Claire walked in on a bicycle and said he wanted it.

The manager swallowed hard. "Sire... the price was three hundred million dollars."

Alex waved a hand. "I made the payment."

Just like that.

The manager's hands trembled. "Immediately?"

Alex glanced up, mildly bored. "Was there a reason to wait?"

He spoke like the number meant nothing-because it didn't. At this moment, Alex

Saint-Claire was the richest man in all of Prussia.

The manager forced a breath. "Most men hesitate. Even kings."

Alex's voice stayed flat. "Kings worry about legacy. I worry about efficiency."

"Thank you very much, sir. This car truly found its owner." The manager was almost

trembling with joy. Yesterday, a VÖXEN Seraphine.

Today, a one-of-a-kind royal masterpiece. In his entire career, he had never met a customer this decisive-or this generous.

"Sir," the manager continued professionally, "delivery will take some time. This vehicle is usually transported in complete secrecy and hidden from public view due to its privilege. Would you like yourname announced publicly, or kept confidential?"

"No," Alex said flatly. "Keep it secret."

The manager smiled, deeply satisfied.

"Oh-right," Alex added casually. "I almost forgot. Do you still have a VÖXEN

second generation? Second-hand is fine. I just want to give it to someone. It's not important."

"A VÖXEN second generation?" The manager's face split into a wide grin. "Sir, I'll give it to you for free—as a bonus for purchasing the special car."

Alex laughed. "That's generous. No one refuses a free car."

The manager nodded eagerly. "Please wait a few minutes, sir. The second

generation model is outdated, so it's kept in storage. My staff will retrieve it immediately."

Alex sat in the manager's office. The glass walls were one-way-he could see out,

but no one outside could see in.

That was when he noticed someone familiar.

Matthias von Sturmfels.

Renata's boyfriend.

The same Matthias, Sofina once described as conservative and loyal.

Alex's eyes narrowed.

A barely dressed woman—so exposed it made you wonder why she bothered

wearing clothes at all-clung to Matthias's arm, pressing close. Her voice was soft and intimate.

Too intimate. She laughed lightly, fingers brushing his sleeve, calling him "dear" as if

it came naturally.

Alex frowned.

Is this bastard cheating on Renata?

Renata had given everything to that man. Her trust. Her future. Even her savings.

Sofina had said they were working hard together, trying to build something real- something worthy of Renata's father's approval.

But what Alex saw now didn't look like hard work.

It looked like betrayal.

The woman tilted her head, lips curved in a teasing smile, eyes full of desire. "I

heard your little money-printing girl drives a VÖXEN sixth generation," she purred. "I want one too."

Matthias laughed easily, without shame. "Don't worry," he said. "She left more than enough money. You can buy a new car."

Alex's gaze turned cold.

So this was the man Renata trusted.

The manager returned, cheerful. "Sir, the second-generation car will be—"

Alex raised a hand. "Wait."

The manager froze.

Alex's gaze stayed locked on Matthias. "Do you know that man?"

The manager followed his eyes. "Ah... Mr. von Sturmfels. Respectable background.

Devoted, they say."

Alex's jaw tightened. "They always say that."

The woman laughed again, fingers sliding along Matthias's sleeve.

Alex's voice dropped, cold and precise. "He just spent a woman's future like pocket change."

The manager stiffened. "Sir...?"

Alex stood. "Some cars are indestructible," he said calmly. "Some people aren't."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 523[1,462 words]

Alex stood there and realized it again—he had no obligation to help Renata. They weren't that close. Her personal matters were none of his business.

But she was his wife's best friend.

That was the only reason he decided to act.

Not to intervene. Not to confront.

Just to record everything.

His fingers brushed the bracelet on his wrist. A faint vibration answered him as the recorder activated, silently locking onto Matthias and the woman beside him.

The woman grinned and pinched Matthias's cheek hard, possessive and sharp.

"You're my man," she said, her voice sweet but jealous. "So why are you still sticking with her? I don't allow other women to touch what's mine."

Matthias laughed softly and leaned closer, his tone slick and coaxing.

"Relax, Jess. That woman's cold as a corpse-so conservative she wouldn't even let me touch her before marriage. She's a duke's daughter. Filthy rich. And she bankrolls me without question."

He lowered his voice, intimate and false.

"I haven't touched her since we got together. My body is yours. Only yours. Always. I'm exclusive to you." He smiled. "But you know we need her money. That stupid woman is useful."

Jess nodded, satisfied. "You're right. She's a duke's daughter. Of course she's loaded. Squeeze a few more million out of her, and we can live happily ever after- without her."

Matthias laughed, crude and careless.

"I'm already sick of her. I planned to dump her the moment her money came through to open the auto shop. But who knew that idiot had enough cash to keep pouring money into me for a whole year-fantasizing about turning me into the owner of the biggest auto shop, building a name so her father would finally accept us. So yeah. I stayed."

His eyes gleamed with contempt.

"Once every last cent is gone, I'll ditch her. Kick her out of our lives like trash."

Jess burst into laughter. "She believes every dollar she gives you is for buying cars to resell. She still doesn't know you never opened an auto shop-just a parking lot. And she actually thinks all those cars belong to you."

Matthias smirked. "She has no clue. I cooked the books. Messed with the accounts. She still thinks the shop is doing great, that we have a future together."

Jess slid a hand to her waist, laughing seductively.

"You really are good at this," she said. "A real talent for making money."

She pressed her chest against Matthias's arm, slow and deliberate, like a cat

rubbing against a pillar. Her voice softened into a purr.

"Matthias... buy me the VÖXEN sixth generation now. Ever since I saw that stupid woman driving one, I can't stop thinking about having one for myself."

Matthias lifted his chin and smiled, smug and assured.

"Later, baby. Come back to my place first. We'll go a few rounds of good sex." His eyes flicked over her body. "If I'm satisfied, then yeah-tomorrow, I'll buy you your dream car."

Jess squealed with delight. "Really? You swear? You'll buy me the VÖXEN sixth generation tomorrow?"

"When have I ever lied to you?" Matthias grinned. "That woman is here in Winchester. She's just dumping money on me like rain. I'm loaded, babe. But first— you make me happy with all the holes you have."

Jess tapped his chest playfully, eyes glittering. "You bad dog. Don't worry. By the

time we get to your place, you'll be floating in heaven."

Laughing together, they turned and walked out of the VÖXEN showroom.

Alex watched them go, then shook his head. Without hesitation, he sent the recorded video to Sofina.

At least now, she would finally see what a "good man"-her best friend's partner- really looked like behind closed doors.

He thought that would be the end of it.

It wasn't.

His bracelet vibrated with an incoming call.

Not Sofina.

Renata.

"Hello," Alex answered.

"Alex," Renata snapped, her voice edged with fury. "I don't know what you think you're doing-sending that video to Sofina and having her pass it to me. Matthias would never do something like that to me."

"Alright," Alex replied flatly, already regretting sticking his nose into something that wasn't his business.

"I'm telling you right now," Renata continued coldly, "I have zero interest in you. So stop trying to destroy my relationship with Matthias. Our love is pure."

"What?" Alex frowned. He genuinely didn't understand what she was talking about. "Don't pretend," Renata said. "I know exactly what you're thinking. I'm beautiful. I'm

a duke's daughter. You think you can get my attention."

Her tone turned mocking. "You think if Matthias breaks up with me, I'll run to you? Keep dreaming."

Alex was stunned. "Wow."

"Now tell me," Renata demanded, "that AI fake video-you generated it, didn't you?"

"Well, I should apologize to you," Alex said calmly. "First, I have no interest in you. Second, that video is real. Goodbye."

He didn't wait for Renata to respond. He ended the call.

Alex Saint-Claire shook his head, a bitter smile tugging at his lips.

That woman didn't even realize she was being played.

Blinded. Completely blinded by love.

The manager of the VÖXEN showroom had been standing quietly nearby, waiting with professional patience. He stepped forward and spoke carefully.

"Sir, I'm very sorry. The VÖXEN

second generation has already been sold, so we can't provide it. However," he continued smoothly "we do have one VOXEN fourth

generation left in our self you're willing to accept it, we'd like to offer it to you-free of charge."

Alex raised an eyebrow. "You really do offer excellent service, don't you? In that case, I'll accept it. Thank you."

The manager's face lit up. "The pleasure is ours, sir."

Alex drove the car home.

On the way, his bracelet kept vibrating. Felicia called again and again, asking when he would be back, reminding him not to forget about the VÖXEN second generation.

When Alex arrived, he immediately noticed his in-laws waiting outside the gate.

The moment they saw the VÖXEN roll in, excitement and nervous anticipation lit up their faces.

Felicia hurried over, circling the car several times, her eyes glowing. She let out a satisfied sigh.

"Wow... I thought you were buying the second generation. But this one has a four hère. That's clearly the fourth generation, right? I heard it still costs over a million dollars."

"Really?" Alex asked honestly. He had no idea what the exact price was.

Albert frowned and asked, "How did you get the money to buy this car?"

Alex answered casually, whatever came to mind. "I paid the down payment. I'll just pay it off monthly-for the next hundred years."

"Great!" Felicia said, completely unconcerned about how long he'd be paying. She beamed.

"It's such a beautiful car. Truly beautiful. Wow... I never dared to imagine I'd ever ride in a VÖXEN in my lifetime."

Felicia was radiant. The way she looked at Alex softened, her eyes warmer, kinder than before.

She jumped into the driver's seat and took the car for a spin around the neighborhood. When she returned, she stepped out reluctantly, still smiling. "It's a wonderful car. So smooth. So comfortable," she said, patting the door.

"But I don't understand half the functions." She looked at Alex. "In an hour, I need to pick up Pauline, and then have an appointment to check, something at the black market. Help me out. Teach me how to drive this thing properly."

Alex almost said he had work. Then he remembered he didn't.

Belinda's father had already fired him. And honestly, he didn't feel like going back anyway. The mention of the black market caught his interest.

"Alright," he said.

For the next hour, Alex drove the car while patiently explaining the controls, one feature at a time, teaching Felicia how to handle the VÖXEN Fourth Generation. Soon, the car stopped in front of Pauline's high school.

Felicia called out to her daughter proudly, right in front of a group of students.

The moment Pauline saw the car, her face lit up. Her friends froze, staring.

"Wow. That car is insane," one of them whispered.

Pauline climbed in, glowing with excitement.

"Mom! You got a new car?" Her eyes widened. "A VÖXEN fourth generation?!"

"Mom," she breathed, "this car could buy a house."

Felicia smiled smugly. "Your brother-in-law gave it to me."

Pauline turned slowly and stared at Alex, studying him. "Alex... you bought my mom a car?"

"I had to give her something," Alex said calmly, eyes on the road. "I married her daughter."

"And you just gave Sofina a car this morning."

"She's my wife."

Pauline stretched lazily. "Buy me one too."

Alex replied without hesitation. "Never."

She laughed. "Cold."

"I'm honest," he said.

Pauline tilted her head. "I heard what you and Sofina were doing last night."

Alex's hands tightened on the wheel.

"If I buy you a car," she continued lightly, "I can make love with you."

Felicia snapped, "Pauline."

Pauline shrugged. "What? I'm joking. I'm still a virgin."

Then she smiled-slow, sharp, unreadable.

"Unless I'm not."

Silence swallowed the car.

"And you know my door is never locked," Pauline added with a soft giggle. "You also know the price."

Alex let out a long breath.

'This country tests my sanity every single day.'

Pauline smiled.

"When the seed of desire is planted, it never rests—
it grows in silence until it becomes fate."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 524[1,452 words]

"Today you're coming with me," Felicia said to Pauline. "You're going to learn how money is really made. Using your body only works if you're smart enough not to let some man hand you a sexually transmitted disease—a death sentence wrapped in pleasure."

Pauline turned her head.

"Alex, do you have any sexually transmitted diseases?"

"Yes," Alex replied without hesitation. "I carry ten of the rarest and deadliest ones. So stay as far away from me as possible."

Pauline didn't even blink. She reached into her bag and pulled out a compact device -sleek, metallic, shaped like a scanner gun. She pointed it straight at Alex's chest.

The device beeped once. A small screen flashed.

"Mom," Pauline said calmly, "Alex doesn't have any sexually transmitted diseases. Out of two hundred and fifty known infections, he has none. He's completely clean- perfectly healthy. That's extremely rare."

Alex frowned.

Felicia's eyes narrowed. "How do you even have something like that?"

"Everyone in my class has one," Pauline replied. "We're adults now. Girls check before choosing their first partner. I'm not throwing away my first time on nothing. That would be pathetic. I want to be at the top of my class."

She slid the scanner back into her bag, completely unfazed.

"So far," she went on, "the most attractive offer is Alex. One car for a first sexual experience. That's not a bad deal."

"I'm sorry," Alex said instantly. "That's a hell-no."

"You'll change your mind," Pauline said, confidence dripping from every word. "My friends say no man ever refuses when a beautiful woman with a perfect body stands naked in front of him and decides to be a slut."

Alex had nothing to say. Not a single word.

Pauline leaned closer, smiling.

"Alex, I'm the purest girl in my school. And if you're willing to offer one car per first time, I can line up beautiful women for you. Same price for each." She laughed softly. "Sounds like a great offer, doesn't it?"

Alex thought of the irony. She was offering sexual transactions to the richest man in all of Prussia—a man who could buy cars the way others bought coffee, without blinking, without leaving a dent in his fortune.

He needed to get as far away from this woman as possible.

She wasn't just trouble.

She was the devil.

Pauline smiled sweetly. "Come on, Alex. You're rejecting a once-in-a-generation opportunity."

Alex raised an eyebrow. "Is that what they're calling extortion now?"

"It's not extortion if both sides profit."

Alex sighed again, unable to understand this woman.

"Relax, Alex," Pauline said. "You look tense."

"Tense?" Alex scoffed. "I'm sitting between a woman who smells like gunpowder and

a girl who negotiates virginity like a stock option."

"That's called confidence," Pauline replied.

"No," Felicia corrected her. "That's called youth."

Alex sighed. 'Great. I am about to be killed by either ambition or hormones. Still deciding which one's faster.'

But this was Prussia.

A country of ruthless technology and cold logic. So advanced that people no longer wanted children. The population was collapsing. Babies were already being grown in laboratories to keep the nation alive.

Here, once the law decided you were old enough-old enough to bear a child-sex became a matter of free will.

And morality had long since been left behind.

But the population kept falling anyway, even with the government pushing incentives and pouring money into newborn programs.

They were too smart-dangerously smart. They understood one brutal truth: sex did not equal children. They took the pleasure and abandoned the consequence.

If the government was hoping accidental sex would lead to pregnancies, it clearly wasn't working at all.

Felicia leaned forward and urged Alex, impatience in her voice.

"Hurry up. Drive to the black market. There's a new batch of rare item from Xia and Estoria. I want to check it."

Alex glanced at her through the mirror.

"Are you sure you even have the money to buy anything there? I heard those sellers all have black hearts. Ninety nine percent of what they sell is fake."

Felicia laughed loudly.

"What do you know about black market?" she said, waving a hand. "I have a talent for finding the one percent that's real. I buy low, sell high. My appraisal skills are top- notch."

"Are you sure?" Alex asked again.

He could already see the truth. Felicia had no real appraisal skills-only reckless dreams of getting rich overnight. Sophia had told him how Felicia loved roaming the black market, obsessed with the fantasy of discovering a priceless antique for pocket change. But over the past few years, all she had gained were lies, scams, and quiet humiliation.

Felicia scowled at Alex's doubt. She snorted in contempt.

"Stop talking nonsense. Just drive."

"We're here," Alex said.

He looked out at the outskirts of Winchester. Once, the place had been dead—a town abandoned after the mines shut down. Empty factories. Crumbling buildings. A graveyard of concrete and rust.

This was where bad people gathered. Where stolen goods, war plunder, and illegally exported items were traded in the open. Where dirty money changed hands without shame.

The government knew this place existed. They had tried again and again to wipe it out. Raids. Arrests. Crackdowns. Every time one group vanished, another rose from the shadows to replace it.

Eventually, the Prussian government gave up pretending. They created a secret organization—unknown to the public—to control the black market from the inside. No one in Prussia was stupid. After a few years, it became an open secret.

A general of Prussia was secretly running the entire black market operation.

As the black market grew

notorious-and strangely fashionable the tourism department stepped in. They spent heavily on, renovations and image Control. It was no longer just an

illegal marketplace.

It became a tourist attraction-officially outlawed, publicly denied, and quietly

accepted by everyone.

The moment they stepped into the

black market, Pauline's eyes

widened. This was her first time

here and it showed. The noise the crowd, the chaos-it all hit her at once.

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Felicia folded her arms, her eyes gleaming as she stared across the black market.

"You feel it?" she said. "Opportunity."

Alex glanced at the sellers-faces burning with greed, desperate to force anything onto people who didn't need it.

"I feel scams."

"You always lack vision," Felicia snapped.

"No," Alex replied. "I just recognize places where people lose money and pretend it was an education."

"That's why you'll never be rich," Felicia sneered, then walked ahead without hesitation, her steps confident, as if she had memorized every alley and corner long ago.

As they passed through the narrow street, voices rose from every direction. "Beautiful ladies! Take a look at this!" a seller shouted, waving an item in the air. "Worth ten thousand dollars outside. Here? Just one hundred."

Pauline slowed, her gaze pulled toward the object like a magnet.

Felicia didn't even stop. She cut in coldly, "If you really know the price, go sell it yourself."

The seller pretended not to hear.

More voices followed. Louder. Desperate. Aggressive. Hands reached out, items shoved forward, promises thrown like bait.

Felicia didn't spare them a single glance. She walked straight to the entrance of a two-story antique shop.

Stepping into the largest building in the area, she took a deep breath. Then she leaned closer, lowering her voice.

"This place is full of hidden treasures."

Alex nodded slowly.

"Yes. Hidden under layers of fraud, false hope, and people who thought exactly the same thing."

She scoffed. "You sound jealous."

"I am," Alex said flatly. "They still believe in miracles. I only believe in invoices."

"Tiring,"

," Felicia muttered. "Talking to people without dreams."

She turned away and approached the receptionist.

"I have an appointment."

The receptionist nodded at once and gestured politely.

"Please follow me to second floor."

The three of them were led toward a stair at the back.

Alex had just taken a step forward when Felicia suddenly turned around.

"You'd better stay out here with Pauline," she said sharply. "You don't understand luxury items. If you break something by accident, it'll be a nightmare. Just wait here. Look

around if you want."

Alex glanced at the shelves filled with antiques labeled from Xia, Estoria, and other nations. He nodded.

"Alright."

With her chin lifted and arrogance written across her face, Felicia stepped up to the second floor.

Alex and Pauline wandered along the shelves.

Pauline stopped again and again, drawn to the strange and exotic pieces. Her eyes sparkled, convinced she was surrounded by hidden treasure.

Alex saw something very different.

Most of the items were mediocre. Overhyped. Already filtered and rejected by

serious appraisers. Almost everything here was useless. Looking was a waste of time.

But for Pauline, this place felt like a dream. A beginner's fantasy—gold everywhere, waiting to be discovered.

Then, without warning, a sharp scream tore through the air.

It came from the second floor.

Two men rushed down, dragging Felicia between them. Her hands were pinned behind her back. Blood ran down her face.

One of the men shouted, his voice violent and raw.

"Who's the guarantor for this woman? If nobody answers, she dies here."

"Alex!" Felicia screamed. "Please help me!"

One of the men turned and stared straight at Alex.

"Are you her guarantor?"

Alex shook his head slowly. His voice was flat. Cold.

"I don't know her. Do whatever you want to her."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 525[1,149 words]

"Alex!" Felicia screamed, her voice tearing apart with panic. "You're my son-in-law. Pauline is my daughter. You're both my guarantors!"

"Mom!" Pauline shouted, horror flooding her face. "What have you done?!"

The two men slowly turned their cold, predatory gazes toward Alex and Pauline, measuring them the way traders inspect livestock.

"These two," one of them said indifferently. "A strong young man and a young woman. Far better guarantors than a useless old woman."

They shoved Felicia away without a second thought and let her go.

"You can go," the man said. "We'll keep them."

Felicia staggered free, terror flooding her face. She backed away, shouting over her shoulder, "I'm sorry! I swear I'll find the money outside! Please-stay here!"

Then she turned and ran. She didn't look back.

Pauline instinctively tried to run after her, but a staff member grabbed her arm and yanked her back.

A large, thick-necked man stepped forward, looming over Alex and Pauline like a wall of muscle.

"You two," he growled, stepping closer. "Come with me. If you can't pay, you'll work in the mine until your mother finds the money."

Pauline was shaking so badly she could barely stand. She hid behind Alex, clutching his coat.

Alex lifted his head and stared straight at the man, fear flickering—but not submission.

"And if I refuse?" Alex asked calmly.

The man sneered. "Then I break your bones."

He lunged.

Alex moved.

A single sharp slap echoed through the room.

The big man flew backward and hit the ground hard. His eyes rolled back. Unconscious.

The others froze.

"How dare you!" Then two men rushed Alex together.

Another slap.

One went down.

Another slap.

The second collapsed.

The remaining staff stared in disbelief as four men charged at once.

Pauline screamed and pressed herself tighter behind Alex, her hands trembling.

But it didn't matter how many came.

One slap. One body down.

Four men attacked.

Four slaps answered.

All four hit the floor.

Silence swallowed the room.

Alex lifted his gaze to the second floor and narrowed his eyes. "Wait here," he said quietly. "I'll see what's upstairs."

"No," Pauline said, her voice shaking. "I—I'm coming with you."

Alex didn't argue.

They climbed to the second floor. Wooden crates were stacked everywhere, rough and old. One box sat open. Inside were piles of books, densely packed, covered in writing from Xia's country.

A middle-aged man stepped forward, his expression cold and businesslike.

"Are you Mrs. Felicia's guarantor?" he asked. "She bid on a mysterious box at the auction."

He gestured toward the open crate.

"This is what she opened," he continued flatly. "Only books from Xia's country."

He looked Alex straight in the eye.

"The price is one million dollars per box."

The man was Klaus Dornberg, manager of Thorn & Coin.

Klaus stared at Alex with icy contempt. "So," he said coldly, "how would you like to settle this?"

Alex spread his hands, casual and calm. "I don't have any money."

"No money?" Klaus clenched his jaw, fury flaring. "Felicia said you're a rich man.

You already opened the box. That alone is unforgivable. And now you dare say you have no money?" His voice dropped. "Do you want to die?"

Alex smiled faintly. "Then how are you planning to kill me?"

"You arrogant brat!" Klaus slammed his foot against the floor. "Guards! Come here! Beat him down and make him kneel!"

Silence answered him.

Alex tilted his head. "How many guards do you have?" he asked calmly. "If it's only ten, they're all asleep downstairs."

"That's impossible," Klaus snapped.

He rushed down the stairs.

Every guard lay scattered across the floor, groaning or unconscious.

Klaus's face went pale. This man is dangerous. Panic slammed into him. He immediately pulled out his phone and called his boss. Only after that did he force himself to return upstairs.

He pointed at Alex, his finger

shaking with rage. "You-you dared touch my people. You're dead. I've called my boss. Pay for the box and

my guards' medical bills, or you'll never see the sky again

Alex was already seated at the manager's desk. He picked up a book from the mysterious box and flipped through it, calm and detached, as if no one in the room mattered.

"Do whatever you think you should do."

He reached across the desk, took a handful of chocolates and candy, and placed them in Pauline's hands.

"Leave this place. Go find your mother."

"No," Pauline said immediately. "I'm staying with you. They could kidnap me outside."

She was still shaken, but watching

Alex so effortlessly crush grown

men made her feel safer beside him.

She took the chocolate, sat down

quietly, and glanced around at the strange items in the room.

Klaus Dornberg had never met someone this reckless. He pointed at Alex, his voice

shaking. "You... you'll regret this when my people arrive."

His blood boiled. If he didn't crush Alex here and now, word would spread. Thorn &

Coin would look weak. Its reputation would be trampled.

Alex ignored him and reached into the large wooden box and lifted out book after book-nearly twenty in total.

He scanned the pages with ease.

Years ago, Alex had already mastered the Xia language.

The box contained nothing but books-cheap, worthless cultivation techniques and basic movement manuals. They were common

mased studied by everyon

in Xia.

Interesting at a glance, but ultimately useless. Nothing of real value could come from them.

Alex flipped through them one by one, calm and methodical, until the wooden box was empty.

Then he paused.

His fingers brushed the base of the box. There-barely visible—a thin line carved into the wood.

Alex's eyes sharpened.

He pressed lightly.

A hollow sound answered.

A hidden compartment.

He knocked once, precise. The concealed drawer slid open.

Inside lay a single thick book.

No title. No markings.

Alex opened it.

Formations.

His breathing slowed.

He had studied countless manuals on healing and cultivation, but never formations.

This was different. Rare. Complex. Powerful.

His attention locked in.

He read seriously, fully absorbed—unaware of the storm gathering around him.

Klaus Dornberg had been waiting impatiently, watching Alex sit at the desk, calmly reading, as if nothing in the world concerned him. It made Klaus's skin crawl.

Then footsteps thundered from the first floor.

Klaus stiffened and rushed down the stairs.

"Boss!"

The owner of Thorn & Coin arrived with nearly thirty men behind him, their presence heavy and threatening.

"Where is the man who beat our people?" the boss demanded coldly.

"He's upstairs," Klaus said quickly. "Reading a book. Boss, you have to teach him a lesson."

The boss stepped forward, eyes hard. "Of course. Do you think I'd let someone trample our place and walk away? Everyone-upstairs."

Pauline froze when she saw the group marching toward the stairs. Panic surged through her.

Alex was still seated, reading, unmoved.

She rushed to his back, pressing close behind him.

The boss entered the room, anger already rising to his throat. He opened his mouth to shout.

"Who dares to "

The moment his eyes landed on Alex, all color drained from his face.

His words died instantly.

He stopped breathing.

Klaus rushed up beside him and yelled, "My boss is here! How dare you—"

Before Klaus could finish, the boss spun around in sheer panic and slapped Klaus across the face-once, twice, hard.

"Shut up!" he hissed desperately. "Shut up! Don't you dare disturb him!"

Klaus staggered back, clutching his face.

"Boss! Why are you hitting me?! He beat our men!"

The boss struck him again, harder.

"You fool," he hissed. "You almost got us all killed."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 526[912 words]

"But, boss—" Klaus tried to speak.

The slap came again, harder than the first. His head snapped to the side.

What he wanted to say died in his throat: Boss, everyone here is afraid of you-so how can you be this terrified of one young man?

But the boss didn't let him finish a single word. He seized Klaus by the collar and dragged him down the stairs, barking hurried orders for everyone to move quietly— slow, careful, not a sound-terrified that even the smallest noise might disturb Alex. Pauline froze. Just moments ago, those people had gone upstairs with confidence.

Now every single one of them had retreated back to the first floor, faces pale, bodies stiff, as if they had just seen death itself.

"Klaus," the boss said. "Do you know who that man is?"

"I... I don't know," Klaus answered honestly. For the first time, he saw pure fear in his boss's eyes.

"Good," the boss snapped. "Then listen carefully. Say nothing about us coming here. Whatever he wants-whatever you prepare it. Food. Drink. Anything. Even if he wants every treasure in this place, you give it to him. You don't charge him a single cent."

Klaus stared at him, stunned beyond belief.

"Boss... are you sure?"

The boss struck his own head in frustration. "If you still want that head on your neck, you'd better do exactly what I say. Understand?"

"Yes—yes, boss," Klaus replied quickly, though none of it made sense to him.

"But boss," he asked weakly, "who is he?"

The boss leaned in, his voice turning cold and ruthless. "You don't need to know who he is. You only need to know this—if he feels dissatisfied, I'll take your head and offer it to him myself. I'm not dying with you."

Klaus's eyes reddened. He was on the verge of tears.

The boss didn't stay another second. He turned and fled with the others, vanishing from the place as fast as they could run.

As he fled, the memory clawed at his mind.

Two years ago, this same young man had appeared. One man alone.

By the next morning, countless underworld bosses were gone erased overnight.

He had survived only because he was insignificant, a nobody too small to be worth killing. But the great bosses? Every last one of them died by that man's hand.

That man now stood at the top of the entire underworld. And he a minor boss, a disposable pawn—would be insane to provoke him.

He wanted to live.

Inside Thorn & Coin, Klaus stood alone, trembling.

He didn't know what else to do.

He immediately called the female staff, ordering them to prepare the best food they had everything good, everything clean—for Pauline and Alex.

Alex didn't even look up when the food was laid out neatly on the second-floor table.

Pauline stared at the dishes, uneasy. "Alex... they suddenly prepared all this for us. Are you sure they didn't poison it?"

"Why don't you use your scanner and check," Alex replied calmly, his eyes never leaving the book in his hands.

He was completely absorbed.

The pages were filled with astonishing knowledge-formations.

Formations to gather energy for cultivation.

Formations to conceal one's presence completely.

Formations that could ignite fire from nothing.

It was like reading magic itself—ancient, precise, terrifyingly powerful.

Alex turned the page slowly, his focus sharp, unaware or perhaps uncaring of the fear he had left in his wake.

"Really interesting." Alex mused

Half of the book described another formation—one designed to refine a supreme elixir.

An elixir that could strengthen the body, extend lifespan, and achieve effects far beyond anything the modern world could even imagine.

Alex stared at the pages for a long time, dissecting every word, every line.

He had found a treasure.

No—this was the ultimate treasure.

By the time Alex finished reading, Pauline was already seated at the table. Most of the food was gone. She scrolled through social media” casually, chewing without concern, completely at ease.

Klaus sat nearby, stiff and upright, like a loyal but terrified butler.

“Sire,” Klaus said carefully. "We sincerely apologize for what we did earlier. If you see anything you like here, you may take it with you."

Alex lifted the nameless book and gave it a small wave. "This book is interesting. Tell me where did you get it?"

Klaus bowed deeply, his movements sharp and respectful. "It came from a Prussian general who fought on the front lines against the Xlay cultivators. After the victory, they looted the enemy's valuables."

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He swallowed before continuing. "These items are leftovers from that plunder. The truly valuable ones were already taken by the government and sold off. What remains here... can only be called scraps."

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Alex glanced at the stacked wooden boxes around him. For a brief moment, he wondered if another treasure might be hidden among them.

But he already knew the truth—everything here had been picked clean, sorted from the most valuable to the most worthless.

This book was different only because he had discovered the hidden compartment.

He walked over to one of the wooden boxes and reached out to open it.

"Wait!" Klaus blurted out instinctively.

Each box was supposed to be a mystery box, priced at one million dollars. No one was allowed to open one without paying first.

Alex turned his head slowly. "What?"

Klaus froze. Then he remembered his boss's warning. His face tightened. "N-no. My boss said... if you like anything here, you may take it freely."

Alex opened the box.

He dumped everything inside onto the floor and inspected the box itself. Then he moved on to the next.

One box.

Two boxes.

Five boxes.

Klaus's face turned pale. Cold sweat soaked his back. He could already imagine the nightmare of explaining this later.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 527[823 words]

Alex continued.

Ten boxes.

Fifteen boxes.

Twenty boxes.

Every single one was the same.

No hidden compartments.

No secret mechanisms.

Just useless junk.

Nothing special.

After searching the entire wooden boxes, Alex straightened up calmly.

There was nothing else.

Clearly, it was pure luck.

"I'll take only this book," Alex said, lifting the nameless volume. "Tell me where to transfer the money."

"Sir, our boss said there's no need," Klaus replied, bowing again. "Thank you for coming to our establishment."

"No," Alex said firmly. "You're running a business. I take the book, I pay for it. Open your bank account."

Klaus didn't dare argue. He tapped his bracelet and activated his three-dimensional banking interface.

Alex tapped his bracelet once, aligned it with Klaus's, and sent the payment.

A million dollars transferred instantly.

Klaus watched the number appear. His throat tightened.

"Thank you for your payment, sir," he said carefully.

"No problem," Alex replied. He turned to Pauline. "Pauline, let's go home."

"Okay," Pauline answered, standing up.

"Wait."

A woman stepped forward.

She was stunning—tall, sharp-featured, her figure wrapped in sleek, high-tech clothing that hugged her body like liquid metal. Every step carried authority. Her eyes locked onto the book in Alex's hand.

"Give me that book," she said coldly.

"Nope." Alex slid the book into his pocket without hesitation. "I already bought it. You didn't."

Her eyes darkened. "I warn you. I've been searching for that book for a long time. It belongs to me."

Alex sneered. "I bought it here."

She turned instantly, fury snapping toward Klaus. "I told you. Every unnamed book from Xia is mine."

Klaus bowed deeply. "Miss Leonora von Silberkreuz, I apologize. But that book already belongs to this gentleman."

Leonora's expression hardened, sharp as steel. "Then take it from him. I want that book."

Klaus's face went pale. "For that... I don't dare, Miss Leonora."

She froze. Shock flickered across her face. Klaus had never refused her before.

Her anger ignited. "Do you understand the consequences of refusing my demand?" "Miss Leonora von Silberkreuz," Klaus said, bowing again, his voice steady despite the fear, "Duke Silberkreuz is known for his kindness and justice. I believe he will understand once I explain everything. Please don't make this more difficult."

He lifted his head slightly, eyes serious.

"This gentleman... is not someone I can afford to offend."

Leonora studied Alex carefully, her gaze sharp and cautious.

Is this man really someone special?

Her grandfather's voice echoed in her mind-It's better to make friends than enemies.

The dissatisfaction still burned in her chest, but she forced it down. She straightened, put on a practiced, graceful smile, and spoke politely.

“Hello. I'm Leonora von Silberkreuz, daughter of the Silberkreuz family. How should I address you?” She looked at Alex. “I'm willing to pay ten times the price you paid.”

Alex smiled faintly. "That means you think everything has a price.”

"And you don't?"

"I do," Alex replied. "Just not one you can afford."

Leonora's smile held. Barely.

"...How unfortunate."

"Yes," Alex agreed. "For you."

Pauline winced. Klaus nearly fainted.

Silberkreuz?

The Silberkreuz family-the most elite family in Winchester. The true owners of the city itself.

Duke Silberkreuz was a name that made nobles bow and corporations kneel.

Pauline never imagined she would meet someone from that family in a place like this.

Alex, however, showed no reaction at all.

The Silberkreuz family was immensely powerful. But he was the richest man in Prussia. Even dukes bowed before wealth.

Leonora had never been rejected in Winchester. Whenever she spoke, people rushed to please her, desperate to curry favor. They gave her whatever she wanted-no questions asked.

Klaus knew it.

Pauline knew it.

The moment people heard the name Silberkreuz, they bowed.

But Alex didn't.

Leonora bit her lip hard. She really wanted that book.

A man standing behind her stepped forward, his eyes cold. "Miss Leonora, if he refuses to hand it over, why don't I take it from him

myself. Even if he dies, it can just counted as bad fuck."

Alex glanced at him. "That's very brave."

The man sneered. "You don't look frightened."

be,

"I'm not," Alex said. "I was admiring your confidence."

"...In what?"

"In believing your life insurance covers stupidity."

Klaus broke out in a cold sweat. Panic seized him. He immediately shouted into his communicator.

"Men! Protect this gentleman with your lives! Anyone can die—but this gentleman must not be harmed!"

Leonora and her guards stared at him in shock.

Klaus stepped directly in front of Alex, his men forming a wall behind him as weapons were drawn.

Leonora snapped, "Klaus, stand aside."

Klaus stepped forward instead. "With respect, miss, this is the most correct position

I've ever taken."

"You're choosing him?"

Klaus nodded solemnly. "Yes."

"...Over the Silberkreuz family?"

Klaus sighed. "Miss, your family can ruin my business."

He glanced at Alex. "He can ruin my existence."

"Klaus!" one of the guards barked. "How dare you threaten Leonora von

Silberkreuz!"

"I warned you again. This

gentleman, Klaus said firmly, "is not to be touched. As for you-if you

proceed, will file a report to Dunet

item in my

Silberkreuz himself. I'll report that you attempted to steal a shop and threatened others without just cause. Let's see how the duke

judges that."

The man laughed softly, eyes gleaming with malice.

"He'll just destroy this shop."

He raised his hand.

"Everyone—prepare your weapons."

The armed men had shifted their stances. One wrong word would have shattered

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 528[1,405 words]

"I'll give you one last chance," the guard said coldly. "Hand Miss Silberkreuz the book, or you die right here."

Alex laughed. It was short and sharp.

"When you threaten someone with death," he said, "have you already decided how you'll die?"

"We are Silberkreuz," the lead guard sneered. "Who here would dare touch us? You think the Duke would ever side with you?"

Klaus nodded, "I think the Duke would ask why his granddaughter started a bloodbath over a book she never owned."

Leonora's gaze snapped to Klaus, eyes flashing.

"You would really drag my grandfather into this?"

"Miss Leonora, there's no need to talk anymore," the lead guard said impatiently. "Just kill them."

The other guards activated their laser weapons. A low hum filled the air.

"Wait," Leonora said sharply.

"There's nothing to wait for," the lead guard replied. "We need to show them who we are. Everyone-kill that man and take the book."

Klaus and his men raised their weapons.

Pauline squeezed her eyes shut and pressed herself behind Alex, her body trembling with fear.

Then something went wrong.

The guards' weapons didn't aim at Alex.

They didn't aim at Klaus either.

They aimed at their own heads.

Panic tore across their faces as they struggled to understand what was happening.

The lead guard and the others went deathly pale, terror freezing them in place as an unseen force seized control of their bodies. Their arms lifted-slow, unwilling-until the barrels of their own weapons were pressed against their heads.

Memories exploded through their minds in a single, blinding rush: childhood, blood, regret, everything at once.

Their fingers moved on their own.

A fraction of a second later, the triggers were pulled.

Light erupted.

Heads were torn open. Bodies collapsed to the floor, lifeless.

Klaus stood frozen, his mind refusing to accept what his eyes were seeing.

Alex stepped past him and stopped beside Leonora. He leaned close and whispered.

"If I hadn't dragged your grandfather into this, and if I didn't respect his past kindness, you would already be dead alongside your guards." His tone hardened.

"Consider this your first warning. If you keep acting like this, your life will become very cheap-even as the Duke's granddaughter."

"I..... I....." Leonora trembled. "I tried to stop them."

Alex straightened, his gaze cold and unwavering.

"That," he said, "is a reason you weren't hurt."

He turned and walked away. Pauline hurried after him without looking back.

Klaus stared at the guards' bodies on the floor. His boss's words echoed in his mind -Don't ever mess with that man.

Now he understood.

If he hadn't listened to his boss, his body would have been the one lying on the ground.

That man wasn't human.

He was a monster.

"Klaus," Leonora called, her voice tight. "Who is that man?"

"I'm sorry, Miss Silberkreuz," Klaus said, bowing deeply. "This is the first time he has come here."

"Then why did you protect him?" Leonora demanded.

"Because my boss warned me not to mess with him," Klaus replied honestly. "He said the man is extremely dangerous. Even my boss ran away the moment he crossed paths with him."

Leonora's eyes shifted, curiosity flickering beneath the shock. In Winchester, there were very few things left that could truly intrigue the Duke's granddaughter.

"Miss Silberkreuz... about the guards' bodies. What would you like us to do?" Klaus asked.

"What do you think?" Leonora asked quietly.

"You can report this to the government or to Duke Silberkreuz," Klaus replied evenly. "But afterward, I will be required to submit the CCTV footage. It clearly shows your guards starting the violence-attempting to steal an item for you. Once that footage is reviewed, it will destroy your reputation, and it will stain the Duke's name as well."

Leonora's jaw tightened.

"So... you're telling me to clean this up quietly?"

Klaus bowed again, deeper this time.

"I wouldn't dare tell you what to do. You have always been known as a kind young lady. But lately, Miss Leonora... your name has begun to sour. Wherever you go, your guards cause trouble. They provoke conflicts. They tarnish your reputation."

He paused, choosing his words carefully. "If this incident is not handled with extreme caution, your position as a possible heir could be erased."

Leonora wasn't foolish. She understood the threat immediately.

"Then clean it up," she said coldly. "Quietly. Nothing leaves this place."

"Yes, Miss Leonora."

Her voice dropped to a whisper.

"That man... I need to know who he is."

Meanwhile, Alex and Pauline were riding a taxi home. Felicia had already fled with their car.

"Pauline," Alex said calmly. "Don't tell Sofina. Don't tell Felicia. Don't tell your father. Don't tell anyone about what happened. Do you understand?"

Pauline was still shaken. The image of Silberkreuz guards turning their weapons on themselves replayed in her mind like a nightmare.

And Alex-he had acted as if Leonora didn't even matter.

She swallowed.

"Tell me, Alex. Who are you... really?"

She remembered it clearly-the most feared underground king in Winchester, Count Oskar himself, lowering himself before this man during a phone call.

Alex smiled at her.

"If you know who I am," he said lightly, "you'll have to die."

Pauline's eyes widened.

"And if I tell someone about you?" she asked cautiously.

Alex spread his hands, his smile gentle and terrifying.

"Poof. You vanish. Understand?"

Pauline nodded rapidly.

"I understand. No one will know anything about you."

"Good."

When they reached their house, Alex's communicator vibrated.

"Sir, this is VÖXEN service," a professional voice said. "We are delivering your vehicle. May we confirm your current location?"

"Give me five minutes," Alex replied. "I'll send it shortly."

He didn't want Felicia—or Pauline—to know he had bought another car. He stepped back into the taxi and headed to the nearest parking lot.

Once there, he sent his location.

Moments later, the air hummed.

A stunning vehicle descended from the sky and settled beside him with effortless grace, its movements so smooth they felt unreal. The body was sculpted from seamless black alloy, sharp yet elegant, every curve designed with ruthless precision.

Soft lines of faint crimson light traced along its frame like veins, pulsing slowly, as if the car itself were alive.

The surface reflected the world like a mirror, yet absorbed light at the same time—luxury and menace fused into a single, perfect form.

No engine roar. No vibration. Just silence and authority.

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The car was impossibly sleek—too beautiful, too refined—like something meant only for royalty gods. People nearby stopped walking. Conversations died mid-sentence. Bracelet phones rose into the air as heads turned in

Unison, Capedin

the impossiblë

sight hovering before them.

The supercar settled smoothly in front of Alex. Its door lifted on silent hinges.

"Mister Alex Saint-Claire," the car said in a calm, refined voice. "This is your vehicle.

Please enter."

"Well then," Alex muttered as he stepped inside.

The moment the door closed, he froze.

The interior was pure luxury—far beyond the VÖXEN Seraphine. The materials, the interfaces, the seamless blend of glass and light—it was on another level entirely.

Cleaner. Smarter. Deadlier.

The car spoke again.

"Sir, shall we synchronize?"

Alex glanced out through the transparent panels. More people were gathering now. Cameras flashing. Eyes locked on him.

"We're attracting too much attention," he said flatly.

"Understood," the AI replied. "Would you like me to activate stealth mode? They will see nothing."

"Please," Alex said, genuinely impressed.

The world outside reacted instantly.

Gasps rippled through the crowd as the car vanished before their eyes—no distortion, no flash. One second it was there. The next, it was gone.

The vehicle lifted soundlessly, gliding through the air without wind, vibration, or resistance. It passed through the space where people stood, leaving no wave, no

noise. Just silence.

Too smooth.

Alex exhaled slowly.

"What's this car called?"

"This vehicle is designated VÖXEN Lucifer," the AI answered. "The name means Light Bringer."

Alex raised an eyebrow.

"The late King chose the name," the AI continued. "He wished to bring light to this country."

"Is that a good name," Alex asked, "or a bad one?"

"Sir," the AI replied evenly, "a knife can save a life or take one. Meaning depends on

the hand that holds it. In this case-yours."

Alex laughed once.

"You're a smart Al."

"Yes, sir," it replied. "I am directly

connected to the Prussian Artificial Core Intelligence. Access is restricted to the royal family, granted by the latexing himself and permanently authorized to this vehicle by his final directive."

Alex's smile faded.

That meant the Prussian Core was now within his reach.

Before he could process it, his bracelet rang.

"Yes, Sofina?" he answered.

Her voice came through strained and shaking.

"Alex... I'm sorry, but I need your help. Something happened to Renata. Her

boyfriend tried to kill her. He failed—but barely."

Alex's expression hardened.

"She's in the emergency room," Sofina continued, panic breaking through. "She's...

half alive. Half gone. I don't know. She refused to tell her family. She's alone. Can you go see her?"

She took a breath, forcing herself steady.

"I'm stuck in a meeting with Eden Group. I'll go as soon as I can."

Alex didn't hesitate.

"I'm on my way."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 529[1,670 words]

Upon arriving at Winchester Central Hospital, Renata lay on a ward bed, barely recognizable. Her body was mapped with bruises and cuts, her face pale and swollen. A thick cast wrapped her right leg, heavy and unforgiving.

She looked shattered-physically and emotionally.

Alex paused at the doorway.

This was a grown woman who had trusted the wrong man, been betrayed, had her heart crushed—and now paid for it with blood and broken bones.

The moment Renata saw him, her red, swollen eyes filled instantly. Tears spilled down her cheeks in an endless stream.

"Alex..." Her voice broke completely.

She collapsed into sobs.

"Sofina will arrive soon," Alex said quietly as he moved to her bedside and sat down. He didn't rush her. He let her cry.

When her sobs grew heavier, Alex's expression softened. His voice dropped.

"Did you find out the truth?"

Renata nodded weakly, her chest shaking.

"After Sofina sent me your video... I felt something was wrong. I couldn't ignore it. So I tracked him in secret."

Her fingers clenched the blanket. "He went to a villa in the Winchester suburbs." Her voice cracked.

"I found him there... with another woman. In bed. Together." Rage and pain twisted her face. "I lost control. I confronted him. I demanded answers. But-but—"

Her breathing collapsed into broken gasps.

"He ordered his security androids to attack me," she said, her voice shaking. "They beat me. They tried to kill me."

Terror still flickered in her eyes.

"I survived only because I fought back and ran. Some passersby helped me." Her voice dropped to a whisper. "That's how I ended up here."

Silence pressed down on the room.

Alex spoke carefully. "Why didn't you call the police?"

Renata shook her head violently.

"What's the point?" she cried. "The police would report everything to my father. He'd be furious. And in the end-this is my fault." Her voice sank into despair. "I was stupid for believing him."

Alex looked at her bruised face, her trembling hands, the shame etched into every word she spoke. His expression softened.

"It's okay," he said quietly. "He's a bastard. He was never worth this—not from the very beginning."

Renata swallowed hard, tears streaming again.

"We were together for three years," she said hoarsely. "Three years. I threw away my pride, my dignity-everything for him. Everyone warned me. They said he was just a low-rank baron, someone who didn't deserve me. But I believed in him."

Her hands curled into fists.

"And now I realize..." Her voice shook with self-hatred. "I was clinging to trash. I dragged myself down for someone who wasn't worth a damn."

Her shoulders shook as she cried—anger, regret, and heartbreak crashing together, leaving nothing behind but pain.

"That bastard didn't just cheat on me and walk away," she cried, her voice hoarse and broken.

"He wanted to ruin me. I poured everything into that fake auto shop-every cent of my savings, money from my father, my grandmother, my grandfather. Tens of millions. And now he refuses to pay back even a single cent."

"The contract says if I leave, he gets everything. Everything!" She clenched her fists. "How could I be so stupid? How could I believe him? I was blind. Completely blind. How did I ever fall for such a rotten, evil man?"

Alex leaned closer. "Renata, calm down first. You need to heal. We'll deal with him later. We'll find a way."

"I want him dead," Renata screamed. "I want him to suffer. I want him and that woman of his thrown into the sea!"

Alex fell silent.

He had never been good at comforting someone with a broken heart. He stayed by her side, paid her medical bills, and waited for Sofina to arrive. That was all he could do.

He listened as Renata poured out everything her loyalty, her sacrifices, her suffering for a man who never deserved any of it.

Then the door opened.

Matthias von Sturmfels walked into the hospital room, calm and arrogant, with a woman named Jess at his side.

The moment Renata saw him, she exploded.

"What are you doing here?!" she screamed. "After everything I did for you, you tried to kill me! You bastard!"

Matthias laughed, sharp and mocking.

"Enough with the cursing. We don't have time for this."

He spat on the floor, his eyes cold with contempt.

"I'm here for the VÖXEN Sixth Generation. Where did you hide it? Hand it over. Now."

Renata's fury boiled over.

"Matthias von Sturmfels! That car belongs to Alex! Who do you think you are to take it from me?!"

Matthias sneered.

"Stop pretending." His voice turned hard. "Our contract is clear. Everything you have belongs to me. Don't try that 'the car isn't mine' excuse."

He leaned closer, his tone threatening.

"You've already breached the contract. I could report you to the police right now."

Renata never expected Matthias to sink this low.

Her body shook with rage as she glared at him.

"Matthias von Sturmfels, don't you dare cross that line," she snapped. "I invested thirty million dollars into that auto shop. Thirty million. And you stole everything from me!"

Matthias's face twisted in irritation.

"Stop this bloody nonsense," he said coldly. "We have a contract. While we were together, everything you had was mine. The auto shop-you gave it to me. Your savings you gave them to me."

His eyes narrowed.

"And that VÖXEN Sixth Generation? That belongs to me too. If you don't hand it over, I'll call the police and report you for theft."

His lips curled into a cruel smile. "Or better yet, I'll call your father directly. Duke Winter. Let's see what he does to his own daughter."

Jess, standing beside him, let out a sharp, mocking laugh.

"Listen carefully, bitch," she said, her voice dripping with contempt. "You should cooperate. You're a duke's daughter, right? I have your private photos with Matthias."

She leaned forward slightly, eyes gleaming.

"Imagine how furious your father will be. Imagine the media tearing you apart. Your life ruined. Your inheritance as a duchess-gone. You don't want that, do you?"

Her smile turned vicious.

"Pay us at least a hundred thousand every month," she said coldly, "and we'll keep our mouths shut—and those private photos will stay in our hands." Renata's tears poured down like rain. Her voice broke as she stared at Matthias.

"I was good to you," she cried. "For years. I gave you everything I had. Everything."

Her chest heaved.

"It's fine if you never loved me," she sobbed. "But why do this to me? Why be this cruel? What did I ever do wrong to deserve this?"

Matthias laughed a short, cold sound without warmth.

"Love you?" he sneered. "You're just a duke's daughter sitting on a pile of money."

He stepped closer.

"You were my ATM. When I wanted cash, you paid. That's all you ever were to me. I never loved you."

t forgot," Jess smiled

"Oh, I almost

with sharp, mocking delight. "You

were hoping for some holy

nonsense, right? Virgin love. Married-only sex. One man, one Woman, forever. She laughed God, you're boring. So conservative. Such a nerd."

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She hooked her arm around Matthias.

"Matthias and I have sex at least three times a day."

Matthias flushed, putting on a fake, shy act.

"Hey, Jess, why are you saying that?" he said with a grin. "You're embarrassing me."

"Embarrassed?" Jess laughed. Her

eyes slid toward Renata. "Why don't

we close the door and show this

useless piece of trash how it's really done? Show her how you usually satisfy me."

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"Jess, darling, no," Matthias said, laughing openly now. "That would be so embarrassing."

It was pure mockery.

Renata couldn't take it anymore.

She grabbed a glass and hurled it at them, screaming, "You maniacs! Get out! Get out of my room!"

Matthias caught the glass midair with ease. His smile vanished.

"I'll warn you once," he said coldly. "Hand over the car. Or I'll break your bones."

Jess crossed her arms, sneering.

"And don't forget-one hundred thousand a month. Miss a payment, and we call your father."

Renata's eyes went wide. Her heart shattered completely.

How could I have been so stupid... to fall in love with this bastard?

Alex, who had been silent the entire time, finally moved. He reached out and gently held Renata's trembling hand.

"Can I hit their faces now?" he asked calmly. "I've been holding myself back long enough."

Jess turned sharply and stared at him.

"And who the hell are you?" she snapped. "Don't stick your nose into trouble you don't understand. Want to end up like this woman?"

"Me?" Alex smiled faintly. "I'm Alex Saint-Claire."

His eyes locked onto Matthias.

"I'm the owner of the VÖXEN Sixth Generation."

He glanced at Renata. "She borrowed it from me."

Matthias stared at Alex with icy contempt.

"So you want to play this kind of

game?" he said coldly. "You think you can steal that car from me by pretending to be the owner of the VÖXEN? You think that way Renata won't have to hand it over

His voice dropped, sharp with threat.

"I'll give you three seconds to get out of my sight. I'll pretend you were never here.

Leave now, and I won't touch you."

Alex broke into a wide smile.

"Renata," he said calmly, "I won't ask for your permission anymore. This bastard has already crossed my line."

Matthias clenched his jaw, fury flashing in his eyes.

"Are you trying to challenge me?" he snarled. "Do you know who I am? I graduated from military training."

Alex Saint-Claire's voice turned ice-cold.

"I don't care who you are. I don't care where you graduated from." He stepped

forward slightly. "You pissed me off today."

He continued, slow and deliberate.

"I'll give you one chance. Apologize to Renata. Now. Then let her break your bones fair payment for the injuries you caused. After that, return every cent you stole from her."

His eyes hardened.

"If you refuse, you'll die. And it won't be quick."

Jess burst into wild laughter, her face twisting into something ugly.

"What the hell did you just say, punk?" she snapped. "You want Matthias-my boyfriend to apologize to her?"

She sneered.

"Are you suicidal?"

Alex didn't even look at her.

"Shut your mouth, bitch."

Jess froze. Then her face burned red with rage.

"You—!" She spun toward Matthias. "Darling, did you hear that? He called me a bitch! Call your people. You've got mafia friends. Have them tear this bastard apart!"

Matthias clenched his teeth again, voice shaking with fury.

"Just wait. I'll have someone kill you right now."

Alex Saint-Claire smiled—cold, sharp, merciless.

"Go ahead," he said. "But remember this."

His gaze locked onto them both.

"If you fail to kill me, you and this bitch will pay a price you'll never be able to afford."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 530[1,244 words]

Matthias didn't hesitate. He activated his bracelet and placed the call.

"Bruno," he said coldly. "I'm at Winchester Central Hospital. Bring a few of your men. There's a brat here who needs to be taught what fear really is. I'll pay you a hundred thousand dollars."

Across the room, Alex Saint-Claire didn't call anyone. He didn't need to. He glanced around, already calculating-he could wipe out everyone here if he wanted.

But death would be too easy. Too merciful.

So he sent a single text to Oscar.

Send your people to Winchester Central Hospital. Room 802. Something needs to be cleaned up. Now.

When Matthias noticed Alex typing on his bracelet, he sneered.

"Hah. What's that supposed to be calling backup?" He laughed coldly. "Starting to feel scared? You can kneel right now and lick my shoes. Maybe then I'll forgive you."

"I need someone to clean up," Alex replied with a faint smile. "Like I said earlier, I'll make sure both of you live the most painful life possible."

Matthias burst into laughter, as if he'd just heard the funniest joke in the world.

"Who the hell do you think you are?" he shouted. "In Winchester, no one dares to defy me!"

Renata panicked. She struggled to sit up, her face pale with fear.

"Alex, just leave," she pleaded. "I'll call my father myself. If this goes wrong, I'll destroy all of us together."

"You wouldn't dare, Renata," Matthias laughed coldly. "I know you too well."

Alex stepped to her side and gently pressed her back onto the bed, his movements calm and controlled.

"Lie down," he said softly.

Still trembling, Renata grabbed his arm. "You don't understand how powerful he is. His family is famous in Winchester. They're tied to the underworld. Please-I don't want you hurt. Let me handle this."

Her fingers moved toward the bracelet on her wrist, ready to call her father.

Alex caught her hand.

"Give me time," he said quietly. "Okay? If my way doesn't work, then you can call your father. Not before."

He looked straight into her eyes.

"Believe me."

There was something in his gaze-steady, deep, unshakable—that made Renata's breath catch. Against all logic, she wanted to trust him.

She turned toward Matthias, her voice shaking but fierce.

"If anything happens to Alex, I swear I'll call my father. And when I do, you'll see what hell really looks like."

Matthias laughed again, cruel and unbothered.

"Is that so?" he sneered. "It's been three years, Renata. You didn't just steal your own savings you took your father's money too. You really want to expose everything? For him?"

He looked Alex up and down with disgust.

"Don't tell me you've fallen for this trash. You're too late anyway. I swear-if this man doesn't die today, he'll spend the rest of his life crippled."

"How dare you," Renata snapped.

Alex remained seated. He nodded calmly, as if confirming a business decision.

"Then it's settled," he said. "Both of you will end up crippled."

Jess's face twisted with rage. She turned to Matthias and screeched, "Matthias, this bastard is cursing us! Why are you still standing there? Make him kneel!"

Matthias wrapped an arm around her and sneered at Alex.

"Relax, babe. Bruno's already on his way with his men. Once he gets here, this trash will end up dead in a ditch."

Alex tilted his head, suddenly intrigued. His eyes shifted to Renata.

"He keeps daring you to call your father," Alex said calmly. "Do you even know who this idiot's father is? Why don't you call his father instead—and tell him exactly what his son has been doing?"

"My father?" Matthias burst out laughing. "Even if my father knew, he'd still back me!"

"He would be ashamed of you!" Renata shouted.

"Who knows?" Matthias laughed mockingly. "You're not my father."

Alex smiled. He raised his wrist and sent a message.

Invite Baron von Sturmfels-the father of Matthias von Sturmfels-to Winchester Central Hospital, room 802. If he can't arrive immediately, destroy his business. Everything he owns.

Seconds later, a reply came from Countess Marlene.

Already done. If he doesn't arrive within twenty minutes, his entire business empire will be erased.

Alex lowered his wrist and looked straight at Matthias.

"Your father will come. And he'll see exactly what you've done."

"My father?" Matthias's face darkened. His voice dropped into a warning growl.

"I'd advise you not to cross certain lines, punk. Once my men arrive, you really will die in a ditch."

Alex snorted.

"Tell them to hurry. I'm losing patience."

Matthias opened his mouth to curse him-but the ward door suddenly slammed open.

A thick-necked, bull-faced man strode in, followed by eight hardened underlings. Their presence sucked the air out of the room.

"Bruno!" Matthias shouted instantly, pointing at Alex. "It's this brat! Teach him a lesson!"

Bruno narrowed his eyes and stared at Alex.

"So you're the one who pissed my brother off?"

Alex met his gaze and smiled faintly.

"So what?" he said. "Are you going to piss me off too? Are you not afraid of dying together with him?"

Bruno stared at him, confused.

He had never seen Alex before-but

this man showed no fear of Bruno or the men behind him. And a man like

that was usually the most like

dangerous of all:

After a long, uneasy pause, Bruno spoke carefully.

"Hey. Who the hell are you?"

Alex answered without interest.

"Alex."

Matthias quickly leaned in and said, "Bruno, this brat has no background. Do whatever you want. If anything happens, I'll take responsibility. Break both his knees: Make him apologize to me. Then cut off his limbs-and his penis."

"His penis?" Bruno raised an eyebrow.

It was obvious-Matthias was more than angry. Seeing Renata so close to Alex had

stirred something ugly inside him.

Alex widened his eyes in mock shock.

"Wow," he said dryly. "That's cruel. I'm terrified."

"A nobody?" Bruno laughed harshly. "Good. Let's see if he still refuses to kneel after

we're done with him."

He flicked his hand at his underlings.

"Teach this jerk how to kneel."

Matthias laughed loudly.

"Are you sorry now, Alex?"

Renata's voice trembled.

"Alex..."

"Relax, Renata," Alex said calmly. His eyes never left Bruno and his men. His voice dropped, cold and sharp.

"Kneel down. I might consider forgiving your sorry ass."

Bruno froze. He dug a finger into his ear as if he'd misheard, then frowned deeply.

"What did you just say?" he snarled. "Say that again, and I promise you a quick death."

At that moment, a furious shout thundered from outside the ward.

"Bruno! The man told you to kneel—are you fucking deaf?"

Bruno stiffened.

The door burst open.

A new man walked in with two companions. They didn't speak. They didn't hesitate.

They pulled out guns and fired without warning.

Shots cracked through the room.

Bruno's men screamed as bullets slammed into their legs. One by one, they collapsed, forced to their knees by pain and terror.

"Who the fuck are you?!" Jess screamed.

One of the men didn't hesitate. He lifted his foot and kicked her hard. Her body flew across the room and slammed into the wall.

"Get away from my woman!" Matthias shouted. "Don't you know who I am?!"

The man rushed forward, grabbed Matthias by the face, and smashed it down onto the hospital table. The impact sent him crashing to the floor.

One of the thugs panicked and tried to run.

The man raised his weapon. The laser sight settled calmly on the thug's forehead.

He fired.

The body dropped.

Silence swallowed the room.

Even Bruno went pale. He rushed forward and dropped to his knees instantly, his head bowed low.

"Count Oskar."

The man who treated killing like cutting weeds.

Only then did Bruno understand.

He had messed with the wrong class of people. He was nothing but

a small-time thug-standing before Count Oskar and possibly the man named Alex, who was still seated calmly behind him.

People like them didn't even bother to notice men like him.

To them, he wasn't an enemy.

He was a bug.

Waiting to be crushed.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 531[1,343 words]

Bruno stared at Count Oskar, frozen in disbelief. His mind went blank, like a circuit had been burned out.

Count Oskar Winterhagen.

The underground overlord of Winchester.

Bruno was nothing more than a local leader, a small-time figure ruling a narrow slice of territory. But Count Oskar? He ruled this entire area.

No-he ruled the city's shadows themselves. Every man in Winchester's underworld knew his name. He was absolute power.

Bruno never imagined he would cross paths with someone like that—especially over something so trivial.

All of this, just because Matthias had asked him to deal with a minor nuisance.

Matthias, completely unaware of who Count Oskar was, had just been struck down by Oskar's men.

Dazed and furious, he leaned close to Bruno and whispered through clenched teeth, "Bruno, what the hell is going on? Who is this old man? Can't you handle him? I'll give you another hundred thousand dollars."

The moment those words left his mouth, Bruno started shaking.

The next second, he exploded.

Bruno grabbed Matthias by the hair and slammed his face into the ground. A sickening crack rang out as Matthias's nose shattered on impact.

Blood poured out instantly.

Bruno's eyes were red with terror and rage as he roared, "If you're looking to die, bastard, don't drag me down with you! This is Count Oskar!"

"What?!" Matthias and Jess shouted at the same time, their faces draining of color.

Count Oskar?

The underground overlord of Winchester?

Why was someone like that here?

Bruno looked up and met Count Oskar's cold gaze. In that instant, everything clicked. His heart dropped straight into his stomach.

He scrambled forward, rushed to Alex, and fell to his knees.

"Sir, I'm sorry!" Bruno cried out. "Please forgive me! I truly regret what I did!"

He began slapping his own face-hard. The first two strikes left his nose bleeding. The third split his lips open. Blood dripped down his chin, but he didn't stop.

He meant every slap.

Count Oskar walked over calmly, then suddenly kicked Bruno square in the face. White-hot pain exploded through Bruno's skull. He crashed to the ground-but the moment he hit the floor, he forced himself back up, kneeling again, and kept slapping himself.

He knew the truth better than anyone.

If he stopped, he would die here.

Alex watched silently. He remembered sending a message to Count Oskar, asking

him to send people to clean up after he'd beaten these men.

He hadn't expected Count Oskar to come in person.

Then Count Oskar turned toward Alex Saint-Claire.

In front of everyone, he bowed deeply, his posture filled with absolute respect.

"I apologize for being late, Mr. Saint-Claire," Count Oskar said solemnly. "I will take care of everything."

The moment everyone saw Count Oskar treating Alex with such deep respect, the room went dead silent.

Jaws dropped.

Matthias finally understood what kind of monster he had provoked. The realization hit him like ice water. His legs went weak, his body trembling uncontrollably.

Alex Saint-Claire glanced at Bruno and spoke calmly, his voice flat and cold.

"You know this man?"

Count Oskar answered without a pause.

"Yes. He's nothing more than a minor leader in this area. But he dared to offend you, Mr. Saint-Claire." His gaze turned icy. "I'll make sure he dies right here."

Bruno felt his soul leave his body.

He didn't want to die.

He stayed kneeling, scrambling forward on his knees until he reached Alex. Tears streamed down his face as he slammed his forehead to the floor.

"Mr. Saint-Claire! This is my fault! All of it! Please-please give me another chance! I swear I will never offend you again!"

Alex looked down at him, "How about this," he said slowly. "I remember you were ordered to cripple me. To cut off my penis."

He paused, letting the words sink in.

"So show me how you plan to regret that."

Bruno's eyes turned bloodshot with panic.

"Yes, sir! Yes! This was all because of that bastard Matthias! He ordered me to do everything! I'll cripple him! I'll cut his penis off right now!"

He jumped to his feet and started walking toward Matthias.

Matthias's face drained of all color. He collapsed to his knees, crawling backward in terror.

"Alex—no, Mr. Saint-Claire! I was wrong! I really was! I shouldn't have let my mouth run wild! Please forgive me!"

Jess was shaking so hard she could barely stand.

The moment Matthias began begging, she dropped to her knees as well, bowing repeatedly.

"I'm sorry! I'm so sorry! Please forgive us!"

Alex let out a cold scoff.

"I won't decide that," he said flatly. "I'll ask Renata whether she's willing to forgive you after what you did to her. If she says yes, you can consider yourself lucky."

He turned his head toward Renata.

"What do

you

think?"

Renata stared at Matthias. Her eyes burned with anger, pain, and humiliation.

Before she could say a word, Matthias rushed to speak.

"Renata, I always loved you!" he pleaded desperately. "It was this woman—she poisoned me! I know you still love me! Please, I'll change, I swear!"

Jess snapped instantly, her fear turning into rage.

"You liar! You were the one who said Renata was boring! Too conservative! You said

you were only using her for money! How dare you blame me now!"

"Shut up!" Matthias screamed, his face twisted with hatred. "You're just a bitch! I never loved you—not even once!"

He turned back to Renata, eyes filled with panic.

"Renata, please forgive me. I promise you I'll change."

"You'll change?" Renata asked quietly. "After what you did to me? It's already too late."

"Renata!" Matthias snapped, anger exploding through his fear. "Don't forget-if my father finds out what you did to me, he will—"

Alex grabbed the glass off the table and hurled it straight at Matthias's face.

Crash.

Glass shattered against skin. Blood streaked down Matthias's cheek.

Alex's voice was calm, lethal.

"Go on. Tell me what your father will do."

Matthias touched his bleeding face, eyes blazing with fury and humiliation.

"My father," he snarled, "will kill everyone here."

At that moment, the door burst open.

A man rushed in, pale and frantic, his eyes sweeping the room.

"Which one of you is Mr. Alex Saint-Claire?"

"Father?" Matthias froze, his blood running cold.

Alex turned slowly, his expression calm and deadly.

"Baron Sturmfels thanks for coming," he said evenly, "were you aware that your son was cheating on Renata Winter?"

Baron Sturmfels's legs nearly gave out.

He had been warned. He had been

told his son had caused

trouble-real trouble. Trouble so serious that if it wasn't handled properly Eden Group would erase his entire business. And now standing right there, was Count Oskar.

In that instant, Baron Sturmfels understood everything.

His son hadn't just made a mistake.

He had dragged the entire family into hell.

"I... I didn't know," Baron Sturmfels stammered, shaking his head desperately. "I really didn't know..."

Alex nodded slowly.

"Strange. Because I heard you're quite famous in Winchester." His eyes hardened.

"Your son even said you'd kill all of us."

Count Oskar raised his hand slightly.

One of Count Oskar's men stepped

forward and slammed a brutal punch into Baron Sturmfels's stomach. The air burst from his lungs as he doubled over and collapsed

Then the man raised his gun and fired.

Bang.

The bullet ripped through Baron Sturmfels's thigh. Blood sprayed across the floor as he screamed and crashed down in agony.

Count Oskar's voice was flat and merciless.

"Well then. Why don't you try killing us now?"

Baron Sturmfels writhed on the ground, blood pooling beneath him.

Alex crouched slightly, his gaze unrelenting.

"I'll ask you again," he said calmly. "Were you aware that your son was cheating on Renata?"

Baron Sturmfels broke.

He sobbed uncontrollably, clutching his wounded leg.

"I knew... I knew," he cried. "It's my fault! I'll discipline him properly from now on, I swear!"

Alex let out a cold breath.

"So you did know." His voice turned

razor-sharp. Then why didn't you stop him? You knew your son was causing trouble-cheating Renata out of thirty milo-and you die nothing. He even claimed you'd help him kill us."

Alex straightened, disgust clear in his eyes. "What a great father you are. What a fine Sturmfels family."

He stepped closer, his shadow falling over Baron Sturmfels.

"Starting today, if Renata does not forgive you and your son, then the name Sturmfels will disappear from Winchester."

Count Oskar added calmly, as if reading a grocery list,

"We have received orders to kill every member of the Sturmfels family. No exceptions. Not even the dogs."

Baron Sturmfels and Matthias stood frozen, unable to process what they were hearing.

They knew the truth.

With Count Oskar involved, their family could be erased—today.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 532[1,165 words]

Matthias's face went completely white. Panic tore through him as the words poured out in a frantic, broken rush.

"Renata—please. I was wrong. I was wrong to ask for the sixth-generation VÖXEN. I was greedy. Disgusting. Shameless."

His legs trembled, barely able to keep him standing.

"I'm sorry," he choked. "I swear I'll never do it again. Never. Please... please forgive me."

"That's it?" Renata snapped. "You think forgiveness will end all of this?" Her eyes burned as she stared at him. "Fine. Then I'll sit back and eat popcorn while I watch your entire family die. Good luck."

Baron Sturmfels turned to Renata and dropped his head.

"Renata, please forgive what my son did to you," he begged. "He was blinded by greed. I'll repay every cent he stole from you. All of it. Please-tell Mr. Saint-Claire to spare my family. We are innocent."

Renata's scream ripped through the room.

"Innocent?" Tears streamed down her face as her voice shattered. "He took all my money. Fine-you can return it. But what about the three years I gave him?" Her chest heaved. "Can you give those back to me?"

Her eyes blazed with fury and raw pain.

"If you're innocent, then he isn't. Or is this all my fault now-for loving him?"

Her voice shook with rage. "Fine. Then add my guilt to it. Let my 'fault' be the reason your family dies today."

"Renata!" Matthias snapped, eyes wild, voice unhinged. "I swear I'll love you this time with my heart. I'll give you everything. If not for this woman telling me to take your money, I would never have left you. My eyes are open now. I'll love you forever."

Jess stared at him in disbelief.

"What are you saying?" she cried. "You said you loved me."

"Shut up, you bitch!" Matthias lunged.

His hands closed around Jess's throat.

"If it weren't for you," he snarled, squeezing tighter, "I wouldn't have fallen this low. This is all your fault."

Jess clawed desperately at his face, her nails raking his skin. Blood streaked down his cheek.

"Stop... please... stop..." she gasped.

"No!" Matthias screamed. "You're going to die here!"

In front of everyone, he kept choking her. Harder. Longer. Jess's struggles

weakened. Her arms fell limp. Her body went still.

Silence swallowed the room.

“Renata,” Matthias said, blood dripping from his face as he turned to her. “I killed that bitch. Now I’ll love you. Truly.”

Renata stared at him.

At the man she once loved.

At the man who had just murdered another woman with his bare hands.

Something inside her froze solid.

She felt nothing but revulsion.

She couldn't understand how she had ever loved someone like him.

Renata broke down completely. She cried until her chest burned, until her vision blurred. None of it felt real. All she had ever wanted was to be loved-but no one had ever truly loved her.

What Matthias had shown her was never love.

It was filth. Rotten, selfish, disgusting filth.

Her tears stopped. Her eyes hardened.

Fueled by rage and revulsion, Renata screamed, “Baron Sturmfels—if you kill Matthias, I will forgive the entire Sturmfels family.”

The room froze.

Matthias stared at her, then slowly turned toward his father. His face drained of all color.

"Father... please. Don't do this."

Baron Sturmfels struggled to stand, his wounded thighs shaking violently. Pain twisted his face, but his eyes were clear-resigned.

"Matthias," he said hoarsely. "You know our family. Your brothers. Your sisters. Your mother. Your grandparents."

"Father, what are you doing?" Matthias stepped back, panic breaking through.

"If I don't kill you," Baron Sturmfels said, dragging one bleeding leg forward, "they will wipe out our entire family. I warned you. I told you not to touch the duke's daughter. You swore everything would be fine. You said nothing would happen."

His voice cracked.

"This is what I warned you about for years. And you never listened."

"Father!" Matthias backed into the wall. "Please!"

Baron Sturmfels kept moving, each step soaked in blood.

Desperate, Matthias lashed out. His fist slammed into his father's face.

"Don't force me to do this!"

"Do what?" Baron Sturmfels asked calmly. "Even if you kill me, you'll still die here. Along with your mother, your brothers, your sisters. Why not let me kill you—so they can live?"

"No!" Matthias screamed, punching again and again, striking the old man wildly.

Until

Two aged hands clamped around Matthias's throat.

Baron Sturmfels choked him with everything he had left.

Matthias gasped, eyes bulging.

Alex glanced at Renata.

She had already shut her eyes, trembling in fear.

"That's enough," Alex said coldly.

The command cut through the room like a blade.

Baron Sturmfels and Matthias froze instantly and turned toward him.

"Count Oskar," Alex said evenly. "They don't need to kill each other. And you don't need to execute the Sturmfels family."

Everyone held their breath.

"Recover at least five times the money they took from Renata. Return every single cent. If they can't pay—seize all their businesses. And if that's still not enough, sell them all into slavery."

"Yes, sir," Count Oskar replied without hesitation.

He turned sharply. "You heard the order. Drag them out."

"No-please, don't take our businesses!" Baron Sturmfels begged, his voice

breaking. "Let me kill this bastard instead!"

He lunged back toward Matthias, hands reaching for his throat. Killing his own son, he knew, would cost him less than letting him live.

But Count Oskar's men were faster. They tore the two apart and dragged them out of the room, their boots scraping across the floor.

The door slammed shut.

Only Alex and Renata remained.

"Why did you stop them?" Renata asked. Tears slid down her cheeks. She didn't look at him.

"You've never killed anyone before," Alex said calmly. "Don't start because of anger." "Why?" Her voice shook.

"Because once you cross that line,"

Alex sighed, "you won't be able to stop. Keep your heart clean. Anyway, they'll return your money-five times over. Use it to wash away the pain those bastards caused you."

Renata clenched her fists. "Do you really think it'll work? It hurts so much."

Alex thought for a moment, then shrugged "Take their money. Leave them with nothing. And if one day you still can't forgive that bastard, use the money to hire people to beat him a few times-record it live."

His voice stayed flat. "As long as he's alive and in pain. It might make you feel better."

Renata's eyes suddenly lit with a dark spark.

"Yeah. You're right," she said slowly.

"Every time remember what he did to me, I'll have someone break his legs #1 wait, few months forthen to heat then break them again. I'll keep doing it until this hatred disappears."

Alex raised an eyebrow. He knew one thing well-women's grudges could last a

lifetime. Matthias's future would be hell until the day he died.

“Alex,” Renata asked suddenly. "Who are you, really?"

"I'm nobody," he replied.

"But Count Oskar listens to you."

Alex paused, then answered casually, "When Count Oskar was young, my grandfather helped him once. He owed my family a favor. I used it for you. After today, I won't have any connection with him anymore."

Renata froze.

"What?" she whispered. “You used your last favor with Oskar... for me?”

Alex exhaled softly. "You're my wife's best friend. When you're sad, my wife is sad. I

wanted you to smile-so my wife can smile."

Renata bit her lip, thinking hard.

Then she lifted her head and looked straight at him.

"Let's make love."

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Alex glanced back at Renata and shook his head.

"Did they hit your head too hard?"

She stared at him blankly.

"What are you talking about?"

He frowned in disbelief.

"No sane woman asks about making love while she's lying injured in a hospital bed."

"I didn't mean this very moment," Renata answered quickly, clearly embarrassed.

"Let's make it never," Alex replied flatly.

"What?"

"I refuse," he said firmly.

"Are you sure?" Renata studied him, trying to understand. She had forced herself to be brave, to offer intimacy as a way of saying thanks.

In her mind, that kind of offer usually made men thrilled and eager. She absolutely believed no one would reject her.

She was a duke's daughter, admired wherever she went, breathtakingly beautiful and fully aware of her effect on people.

Yet after gathering all her courage, after swallowing her pride and speaking honestly, the man in front of her dismissed her without hesitation.

And that stung more than any of her visible wounds.

Alex folded his arms.

"I heard you used to be conservative. You planned to stay pure until marriage and devote yourself to the man you married. Is that right?"

"Yes," she admitted. "That was my belief."

"Then what changed?"

Renata's eyes hardened.

"That was in the past. I've learned the hard way there's no advantage to being a conservative woman. Look what that jerk did to me."

Alex softened his tone.

"Meeting one asshole doesn't mean all men are assholes. You just trusted the wrong person."

She sighed.

"Finding a man who truly feels the same way I do that's impossible. It was only a dream. Better to let go of that naïve mindset."

"It's your decision to make," Alex said. "Just don't put that expectation on me. I've been married to Sofina, and I don't plan to change how I live."

"You're faithful?" Renata asked, startled.

"I am," he answered calmly. "In all this time, in the last three years in Prussia, I've only slept with Sofina. And that's exactly how it will stay."

She blinked at him in shock.

"Are you lying to me?"

Alex looked directly into her eyes.

"Why would I lie? What reason would I have?"

Renata fell silent, stunned. Everything she believed about men suddenly felt uncertain.

Alex touched the bracelet on his wrist and changed the subject.

"Anyway, Count Oskar tried to squeeze Baron Sturmfels and Matthias for money,

but it was like shaking an empty jar. They couldn't pay what they owed. You can only recover twice what Matthias scammed from you."

"Twice?" Renata echoed.

"Exactly," Alex said. "Your original loss was thirty million. That means you're entitled to sixty million. Open your bank account. I'm transferring sixty million right now."

"Sixty million?" Renata gasped. She had already believed the thirty million she'd lost -money from her savings and the amount she had secretly taken from her father- was gone forever and impossible to recover. Now a miracle had happened, and it had returned to her doubled.

Even with her body aching as she moved, the word money cut through the pain. She activated the bracelet and opened the secure connection.

Alex completed the transfer without hesitation. The figure appeared on her screen- sixty million dollars deposited into her account.

Renata stared at the balance. Her smile grew wider and wider, washing away, for a moment, the bitterness in her heart.

Renata looked Alex in the eye.

"Alex Saint-Claire, I'll repay this favor no matter what. I'll do anything you command without hesitation."

Alex gave a small nod, accepting her gratitude without making much of it.

"Just remember—don't tell Sofina about this. If she ever found out I had dealings with people like Count Oskar, she'd hate me. I can't afford that."

"It will stay our secret," Renata said.

She studied him again, searching his face for an opening. After a long pause, she finally spoke the words she had rehearsed in her mind.

"Let's make love. I'm starting to feel that I truly want to be with you."

"No," Alex answered immediately.

Renata blinked, caught off guard.

"You're not impotent, are you?"

He waved the question away.

"Yes. I'm impotent. So leave me alone."

The lie came out cold and careless.

She sighed in disappointment.

"That's sad. You're very handsome, but impotent. What a pity."

Before Alex could respond, the door burst open and Sofina rushed into the hospital room, worry written across her face.

"Renata! I heard you were hurt!"

Renata forced a cheerful smile.

"Nah, it's just a small wound. Advanced healing. I'll be walking out tomorrow."

Sofina hurried to her side.

"Renata, I was really worried."

The two women embraced while Alex stood quietly near the window.

Then Renata's expression turned thoughtful, and she glanced back toward him.

"Sofina... I'm truly sorry you ended up with an impotent husband. That must be hard for you."

Sofina stared at her in confusion.

"Impotent? What are you talking about?"

"Alex said he's impotent," Renata explained.

Alex was already halfway out the door.

"Impotent?" Sofina burst into laughter. "That man is a sex machine. If you don't stop him, he can go all day without rest. He makes my whole body ache."

Renata looked toward Alex with rising anger, but he was gone.

The next day, while Alex was at home cleaning the house, he received an unexpected video call from an unknown number.

"Hello, Mister Alex," a woman said as her face appeared on the screen. "I am Leonora von Silberkreuz."

Alex frowned, completely puzzled.

"What do you want? We don't have anything to talk about."

Leonora's smile trembled just slightly.

"I hope you'll forgive me," she said.

Alex didn't bother to look. "I already did. Goodbye."

"Wait," she rushed. "Please. This call isn't about yesterday."

His finger hovered over the screen. "Then make it fast."

Leonora took a breath.

"I really like everything related to Xia culture, especially their books. But I'm not experienced in this field. Yesterday I would see that you are. Someone is offering me a collection of Xia texts. Would you fancy helping me identify which of them might be rare?"

That caught his attention.

"And what exactly are you being offered?"

Leonora's expression grew serious.

"Xia's royal family cultivation books and martial arts manuals. The seller claims they're the best. But I don't know

"They're real or fake. Too many fake books have been sold to me before."

Alex nodded slowly. The last Xia

formation text he had read had

already helped him more than he expected. If he could even glance at higher level methods, it would be a chance worth taking.

"Fine," he said. "I'll go with you."

"Thank you, Mister Saint-Claire," Leonora replied with relief. "I'll send the address immediately. Could you come shortly?"

Minutes later, the VÖXEN Lucifer carried Alex across the city. The vehicle moved

like a dark streak of polished metal, slicing through traffic with effortless speed.

He arrived at the destination alone.

It was a large estate with an enormous garden. Tall iron gates stood open, and the

house beyond them looked quiet and elegant in the afternoon light.

Alex stepped out onto the gravel path and waited.

The silence didn't last.

From behind the trees, a group of men appeared without warning. No words. No

threats. Only raised weapons.

Laser guns erupted in flashes of brutal light.

Energy rounds ripped through the air toward Alex Saint-Claire, turning the quiet garden into instant chaos and deadly intent.

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The laser rifle fired.

A blade of white heat ripped through the air and struck the exact spot where Alex had been standing.

The men didn't slow down. They were certain he was dead. Six figures in sleek black armor, weapons pulsing with high-tech power.

They moved forward, cautious but confident.

Nothing.

No body.

No blood.

Only scorched ground. A tree split open, still smoking. Grass burned to ash.

The air went cold.

"So," a voice said behind them, calm and clear, "there are six of you."

The voice came from behind them.

All six men spun around in panic.

Alex stood there calm, unharmed, already watching them. Close. Too close.

Weapons snapped up instantly, muzzles locking onto his chest.

Then everything stopped.

Their fingers froze on the triggers. Arms locked mid-motion. Muscles screamed but refused to move.

One by one, they felt it.

An invisible force seized their bodies.

Their own guns began to turn-slowly, deliberately—until each barrel pointed directly at its owner's head.

Fear hit them all at once.

Alex stepped forward, eyes cold, voice steady.

"Let me ask you something," he said. "Why do you want to kill me?"

His mind flickered to Leonora Silberkreuz. Of course.

This had to be her doing. A setup. Revenge for their last meeting.

Silence.

No one answered.

Alex smiled faintly.

"No one?" he said.

He snapped his fingers.

One man screamed—just once—before his laser rifle fired. The beam burned straight through his skull. His body collapsed forward, crashing into the dirt at the feet of the others.

Alex didn't flinch.

“Same question,” he said, turning his gaze to the remaining five. “Why did you try to kill me?”

Snap.

Another rifle fired.

Then another.

Bodies dropped one by one, smoke rising from shattered helmets.

Two remained.

The last two were shaking now. One of them broke completely, sobbing as his knees gave out.

"Please!" he cried. "You're Miss Silberkreuz's appraisal! That's who you are! We were ordered to kill you!"

Alex frowned.

“Because I'm Miss Silberkreuz's appraisal... you tried to kill me?” he said slowly. "That makes no sense. Why?"

"We don't know!" the man shouted desperately. "We swear! We were just hired! We were told a Miss Silberkreuz appraisal would be here, and that we had to eliminate the target. That's all we know!"

Alex studied them for a moment.

Then he nodded.

"Alright," he said. "You can go."

The pressure vanished.

Both men staggered backward in disbelief.

One turned and ran as fast as he could, disappearing into the garden.

The other hesitated.

Then—stupidly—he raised his gun and aimed it at Alex.

The weapon jerked violently.

The barrel twisted backward.

A split second later, it fired.

His head exploded in a burst of light and heat. The body collapsed without a sound.

Alex touched the bracelet on his wrist.

"Gaia," he said.

"Yes, Master," a calm female voice replied.

Gaia-the core intelligence of Eden Group.

The central AI.

The one many called the mother of artificial intelligence itself.

"I planted a tracker on the man who just tried to kill me," Alex said calmly. "I want eyes and ears on him. Every second."

"Yes, Master," Gaia replied without hesitation.

Alex opened his interspace ring.

The bodies vanished one by one-five corpses erased from reality as if they had never existed. No blood. No evidence. The garden returned to silence, clean and untouched.

Five minutes later, the hum of engines broke the stillness.

Leonora Silberkreuz's flying car descended smoothly and landed near the garden entrance. The door slid open.

She stepped out, flawless and composed.

"I apologize for being late," she said. "Traffic was unbearable."

Alex studied her face the perfect posture, the effortless elegance. Was this woman truly innocent?

Was the daughter of Duke Silberkreuz really not the one who wanted him dead?

He didn't know.

But he knew one thing.

He could kill her anytime he wanted.

Letting her live for now-might be more useful. At least until he uncovered who was truly behind the assassination attempt.

They walked together from the garden toward the massive gatehouse of the mansion. The estate loomed ahead, cold stone and iron gates radiating authority. As they walked, Leonora began her briefing.

"Mr. Saint-Claire," she said, her tone professional, measured, "the competition for these rare books will be intense. I've heard bidders are coming not only from Winchester, but from outside as well. Some have already begun scheming against one another."

Alex nodded, unbothered.

"The number of competitors doesn't matter," he said. "What matters is the value of the item. If it's truly worth the price, I'm confident Miss Silberkreuz will secure it."

Leonora smiled slightly.

"Thank you, Mr. Saint-Claire. Still, we don't know who we're really dealing with. Some powerful figures may be hiding in plain sight."

Alex raised an eyebrow, feigning surprise.

"Powerful figures?" he asked. "How is that possible? Isn't the Silberkreuz family the strongest force in Winchester? Duke Silberkreuz controls everything here, doesn't

he?"

Leonora smiled again—but this time, there was something sharper beneath it.

"That's what people believe," she said. "But reality is messier."

She continued, "From the outside,

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people only see the Silberkreuz name and the Duke himself. What they don't see is what happens. Inside rive sons and daughters. More than twenty grandchildrer Alliances, betrayals, internal plots. We're constantly stabbing each other in the dark."

She paused.

"And from the outside world-yes, Winchester belongs to the Silberkreuz family. But money tells a different story."

Her eyes flicked toward Alex.

"The Eden Group alone holds wealth powerful enough to crush the entire Silberkreuz family several times over. Influence isn't always loud. Sometimes it's

quiet. Hidden. Waiting."

Alex smiled faintly.

"Isn't the owner of the Eden Group Count Marlene von Aldren?"

"That's what the public believes," Leonora said. "But here's a secret-Count

Marlene is only a proxy. The real founder and owner of the Eden Group has remained hidden from the very beginning."

Alex raised an eyebrow.

"So Duke Silberkreuz knows this person personally?"

Leonora exhaled, almost tired.

"To be honest," she said, "my grandfather-Duke Silberkreuz—and I both want to meet this man. We've tried. Everyone has tried. But he's impossible to trace. No one has ever uncovered his true identity."

She glanced toward him, gauging his reaction.

"Do you know about the Winchester Mobile Suit betting market?" she asked.

Alex nodded.

"That single event," Leonora continued, "turned the Eden Group into the wealthiest organization in Prussia. And that mysterious man became the richest individual in the entire nation."

She paused.

"The gap between him and the second-richest person isn't small. It's nearly double. Compared to him, even the Silberkreuz family looks... insignificant."

She stopped at the gate and turned to him fully.

"So, Mr. Saint-Claire," she said softly, "never underestimate the power a single person can hold."

They reached the towering mansion ahead. Its stone walls rose like a fortress.

A butler drone glided toward them.

"Welcome, Miss Silberkreuz. The auction is about to begin. Please follow me to the hall."

It turned smoothly and led them inside.

The moment they entered the grand hall, Alex felt the weight of attention.

About forty people were already gathered inside. Conversations stopped. Eyes turned.

Before Leonora could take another step, a silver-haired old man rose from his seat and approached her.

"You've arrived, Miss Silberkreuz," he said warmly.

Leonora stiffened for just a fraction of a second.

Then she nodded.

"Uncle Kaltmann. You're here as well." Her tone tightened. "I already told you—I have my own appraiser this time. I don't need your help."

The old man smiled, but it didn't reach his eyes.

"Miss Silberkreuz," he said smoothly, "I have always been your appraiser. Why replace me halfway through the journey?"

He tilted his head slightly. "Even if you don't require my services, why not allow me to assist—just in case your new appraiser turns out to be... insufficient?"

His gaze snapped to Alex.

It was sharp. Hostile. Filled with naked killing intent.

Leonora stepped closer to Alex and lowered her voice.

"Alex," she said quietly, "this is Uncle Kaltmann. He's the chief appraiser of the

Silberkreuz family. He usually handles antique evaluations for me."

Her lips tightened.

"I told them I'd be using my own appraiser this time. But someone in my family must have sent him here just in case something goes wrong."

Kaltmann glared at Alex Saint-Claire, his eyes full of contempt.

"This is the appraiser you hired?" he sneered. "He's barely old enough to shave. Who are you really bunk?"

His voice rose. "Are you scamming Miss Silberkreuz? Get out of here. You don't belong in this place."

Leonora frowned—but before she could speak, another voice cut in.

A middle-aged man standing beside Kaltmann stepped forward, lips curled in a vicious grin.

"You hired a child to do an appraisal?" he mocked. "Does the Silberkreuz family lack capable hands now? Should I introduce you to some real appraisers?"

He laughed loudly. "Or are you trying to disgrace your own name? Has the dignity of the Silberkreuz family collapsed in your generation?"

The room stirred.

Leonora's expression turned ice-cold.

"Anton Dunkel," she said sharply,

"this is Winchester—not Dunkelfets. Watch your mouth." Her eyes locked onto his. "I choose this man as my appraiser, then he is my appraiser. What problem is that to you?" Anton shrugged lazily.

"So the Silberkreuz temper is real," he said with a smirk. "I'll bet he doesn't even have an appraisal license, does he?"

Kaltmann seized the opening.

"You there," he barked at Alex. "Do you have an appraisal license or not? If you

don't, get out of this hall immediately. Do you think just anyone can walk in here?" Alex noticed something clearly now.

Even as the Duke's granddaughter, Leonora was being tested-pushed, challenged, treated as if she could be cornered.

Alex stepped forward.

No warning.

No hesitation.

His palm cracked across Kaltmann's face.

The sound echoed through the hall.

The old man flew backward and slammed into the marble floor.

Gasps erupted. Shock froze the room.

Alex didn't stop.

He walked up and kicked Kaltmann hard in the ribs, sending the old man sliding across the polished floor like trash.

"Listen carefully, old man," Alex said coldly. "I got license from your dead grandfather to slap you."

Alex looked down at Kaltmann with open contempt.

"If you want to question that license," he said coldly, "go die and ask him yourself."

"You- you're not an appraiser!" Kaltmann screamed.

"I am an appraiser," Alex replied flatly. "And right now, I'm a hitman-because you needed to be hit. Depending on how big of an asshole you decide to be, I can also be a killer."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 535[1,196 words]

"What the hell are you doing?!" Kaltmann roared, his voice cracking with rage. "I'm calling the police!"

Alex knew exactly what that meant. If this reached the authorities, there would be sanctions—serious ones. His status, his citizenship—everything he had spent three brutal years fighting to obtain—could be erased in a single decision.

He turned sharply to Leonora.

"Miss Silberkreuz," Alex said, "I slapped and kicked this man under your authority. Do you want me to kill him too?"

Leonora froze. For a split second, even she looked shaken. Alex had just dumped every risk straight into her hands without hesitation.

"That's a lie!" Kaltmann shouted, staggering upright. His finger shook as he pointed at Alex, fury trembling through his arm.

"Miss Silberkreuz never ordered you to touch me! How dare you hit me—kick me! You'll pay for this!"

Alex stepped forward.

In one brutal motion, he grabbed Kaltmann by the collar and smashed his fist into the old man's face—once, then again.

"Miss Silberkreuz told me to hit you," Alex snarled between blows.

"She told you to stay home. You still showed up. Do you have any idea what that means?" He yanked the collar tighter. "You're already trying to make her your enemy—by defying her order."

"And why shouldn't the duke's granddaughter strike you? Who do you think you are?" Another punch whipped Kaltmann's head sideways. "A duke? A count?" A blow sent him reeling. "You're nothing—just a nobody."

Kaltmann's face had swollen into a grotesque mask, bruises blooming dark and ugly as blood pooled at the corner of his mouth. Still, Alex didn't let go. He never let a threat slide—especially not from someone who had already shown open hatred and clear killing intent.

"Stop—please—stop..." Kaltmann sobbed, his voice collapsing. "Miss... Miss Silberkreuz... please..."

Alex finally paused. He turned his head slightly, eyes never leaving Kaltmann. "Miss Silberkreuz," he asked again. "Do you want me to kill him... or forgive him?"

Leonora watched the old man shake at Alex's hand. Years of resentment burned quietly in her chest. Seeing him broken like this brought an unexpected release. "Well," she said at last, "let's forgive him."

Alex answered with one last slap that echoed through the room.

"You're forgiven," he said coldly. "So shut your mouth and never question Miss Silberkreuz again—unless you're tired of breathing."

He released Kaltmann and shoved him forward. The old man collapsed at Anton's feet like discarded trash.

"Good. Very good," Anton laughed, clapping slowly. "Seems your people are becoming more and more unbearable."

Alex straightened and turned to face him.

"Miss Silberkreuz," Alex said evenly, "may I hit this man? I believe I can kill him with a single blow."

Leonora laughed, amused now.

"Tempting," she said. "If he keeps showing off that arrogance, you may give him one hit." Her eyes gleamed. "Tell him it's from me."

"How dare you!" Anton Dunkel shouted.

At the exact same moment, Alex's hand came down.

Slap.

The sound cracked through the hall.

Anton was struck square across the face, right in front of everyone.

The room froze.

Gasps rippled outward. Even Leonora stiffened in shock.

Alex didn't raise his voice. He didn't need to.

"My miss told you to shut your mouth," he said calmly. "Can you do it yourself, or do you need my miss to help you shut it?"

He looked at Anton Dunkel the way a dignified man looks at vermin—without anger, without fear, only contempt.

Anton Dunkel was a marquis of the Dunkel family. In his entire life, no one had ever laid a hand on him.

His face burned red with rage. "You'll regret this. Do you know who I am?!"

Alex nodded calmly. "Yes."

Anton sneered. "Then why did you hit me?"

Alex tilted his head. "Because knowing who you are didn't make you sound smarter."

Leonora coughed softly.

Anton pointed at Alex, shaking. "I am a marquis!"

Alex shrugged. "Then congratulations. You're officially the highest-ranking man I've slapped today."

Alex answered with another slap.

Harder.

Anton clutched his face, stunned.

"You- you just hit me again!"

Alex nodded. "Yes."

"In public!"

"Yes."

"After you know who I am!" Anton shouted, disbelief twisting his face. His voice rose, sharp with fury. "Do you have any idea what you've done?!"

Alex glanced at Leonora. "Miss Silberkreuz, does he always repeat obvious things, or is this stress-related?"

Leonora bit her lip, barely holding back laughter.

"This insult will not go unanswered." Anton roared.

Alex leaned closer. "That sounds threatening."

"It is threatening!"

Alex frowned slightly. "Ah. Then you should try saying it with fewer tears in your eyes."

Anton's jaw tightened. "I will remember this."

Alex smiled faintly. "Good. Most people don't remember the hand that teaches them manners."

Alex's hand moved again.

Slap.

The sound cracked through the hall.

"How dare a mere marquis get slapped by the daughter of a duke and still complain?" Alex said coldly. "You should feel honored. You should bow your head and accept it."

The hall erupted into stunned silence.

No one had ever seen anything like this-someone so brutally direct, so utterly unconcerned with status or etiquette, striking nobles as if titles meant nothing at all.

A barbarian.

A madman.

Or something far worse.

"You-" Anton tried to shout again.

But Alex's hand lifted slightly.

That was all it took.

Anton's face drained of color. His courage collapsed. He clenched his jaw, turned on

his heel, and walked away without another word.

Alex returned to Leonora's side.

She stared at him, eyes wide.

"I didn't know you were this bold," she said slowly. "You dared to strike a marquis in front of everyone."

Alex smiled faintly.

"Well," he said, "technically, it wasn't me hitting them." He glanced at her. "It was you, Miss Silberkreuz."

Leonora blinked. "You used my name like a weapon."

He met her gaze. "Because no one fears a blade without an owner."

Leonora's jaw tightened. "And if they come after me because of this?"

Alex didn't hesitate. "Then they're challenging the Prussian system itself touching

the duke's

granddaughter is an open challenge

to Prussia's authority. You won't be harmed."

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His voice dropped, cold and certain. "But they will learn—painfully—from what I

teach them."

She looked at him, eyes sharp. "You're teaching them that I'm dangerous."

Alex corrected her. "I'm teaching them you're untouchable."

"Why would you do that to me?" she asked.

Alex's expression sharpened.

"Yesterday, I saw your guards ignore your orders," he said. "They didn't respect you. Today, your own subordinate looked down on you. And now a marquis from another duchy dares to shove you.

His gaze held hers, unwavering.

"Do you really want the world to think you're someone they can push around?"

Leonora said nothing.

"You need to put people like them in their place," Alex continued. "You need to show

them that you stand above them."

"That isn't ethical," Leonora said.

Alex's eyes narrowed. "A woman

who lies to herself loses all

respect for herself and for others His voice was calm but cutting. "Don't pretend you enjoy being

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looked down on And don't pretend

you didn't feel a sense

of

relief-maybe even satisfaction-when I put

them back

where they belong."

Leonora stared at him, eyes wide and unblinking. She had never met anyone like

him so direct, so fearless, so dangerously convincing.

It was the kind of danger that pulled a good girl toward a bad man in all the wrong ways.

She took a slow, steady breath.

"Next time, Alex," she said quietly, "just break their bones." A faint smile touched her

lips. "I'll happily say it was all my order."

Before Alex could reply, a voice cut through the tension.

"Ladies and gentlemen," the host announced, stepping into the center of the hall. "Please take your seats. The auction will begin shortly. VIP guests, please proceed to the front."

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The host smiled tightly.

"We're here to do business, not start a war. Let's all calm down."

Leonora found her seat at the very front of the hall, her name engraved neatly on the table. As expected, Alex was seated automatically at her right.

The problem was the left seat.

Old man Kaltmann had already taken it.

Alex Saint-Claire sat down without reacting. As he did, Leonora leaned closer, lowering her voice.

"That man over there the one you slapped," she whispered, her eyes flicking forward, "is Marquise Anton Dunkel. The richest man in Dunkelfels. His duke despised my grandfather, so our families have been at each other's throats for years."

Her voice hardened. "The one beside him is Leon Zhao—a powerful cultivator from the Xia country. He defected to Prussia long ago and now works directly for Dunkel."

Alex followed her gaze.

Next to Anton sat an old man dressed in traditional white robes. His hair was completely gray, thick and untrimmed, and his posture was unnervingly calm.

He carried an otherworldly presence, distant and cold. His eyes were closed, as if nothing in this room was worth his attention.

Leonora continued, "And the man who just spoke as the host—Count Maximilian von Nachtburg. Head of the Nachtburg family in Winchester. His family has deep roots."

Alex absorbed everything quietly.

"Now that everyone is present," Maximilian announced smoothly, stepping forward, "we'll begin the private auction. Whoever wishes to present their antique first may step forward."

A man from one of the families rose immediately.

"This blade belonged to my grandfather," he said proudly. "He acquired it during the Prussian war against Xia. It is the blade of a Xia general."

He drew the weapon and demonstrated its edge, slicing cleanly through iron as if it were soft tofu.

Whispers spread through the room.

Alex knew at a glance that if the blade were sold on the Estoria market, it would fetch a staggering price. But this was Prussia. Laser blades were standard here— weapons that sliced through iron as if it were empty air.

Compared to modern technology, the artifact felt outdated.

A few people showed interest. Some made low offers. But it failed to catch

Leonora's attention—and Alex barely spared it a glance.

After roughly five families had finished presenting their antiques, a red-haired man finally stepped forward.

Before placing anything on the table, his eyes locked onto Leonora. Only after that did he set down an iron box and open it.

Inside, resting on velvet, was a book.

"This," the man said slowly, letting the silence build, "is a cultivation manual from the royal family of the Xia Empire."

The room stilled.

"It can rejuvenate the body, increase power, and cure internal sickness," he continued. "If cultivated to its highest level, one could live for a thousand years."

The reaction was immediate.

Eyes widened. Breaths hitched.

Even Leon Zhao—who had sat motionless with his eyes closed—snapped them open, his gaze sharp and piercing as it fixed on the book.

People leaned forward. Murmurs erupted. Questions flew.

Authentication was demanded at once.

For the first time since the auction began, the atmosphere changed completely.

The red-haired man raised his hand, and a three-dimensional screen unfolded in the air. Light flickered as the first and second pages of the book were projected clearly for everyone to see.

"You may examine the first and second pages," he said evenly. "Decide for yourselves whether it's authentic."

Leonora's eyes lit up instantly. Her breath caught.

"Miss Silberkreuz," old man Kaltmann said, his hands trembling with excitement. "This must be your lucky day. What you've searched for over a decade has finally appeared. This is the book you need. If your grandfather sees this, he would be overjoyed."

Leonora stared at the projection, her heart pounding.

"Do you think the book is real?" she asked.

"Yes," Kaltmann replied without hesitation. "It's real."

Leonora nodded slowly. She wanted it-badly. But when she noticed Alex sitting calmly beside her, completely unmoved, she hesitated. She turned to him.

"What do you think, Mr. Saint-Claire?"

Alex didn't even try to hide his disgust.

"It's a useless book," he said flatly. "I suggest you never touch it."

The words hit the table like ice water.

Kaltmann's face darkened instantly. He glared at Alex.

"You're nothing but a young fraud of an appraiser," he snapped. "Who gave you the right to spew lies in front of this many people?"

Before Alex could respond, the old man in white robes finally moved.

Leon Zhao, seated beside Anton, opened his eyes and fixed his gaze on the book.

"May I open it?" he asked calmly, stepping closer to the book.

The red-haired man let out a cold laugh.

"Mr. Zhao," he said with a mocking smile, "are you serious? Do you not understand

the rules of appraisal?" His tone turned cold. "Books must never be opened. The

moment someone reads the contents, their value is destroyed."

Leon Zhao stiffened, a trace of embarrassment crossing his face.

"Ah... forgive my carelessness," he said.

The red-haired man paused, then added evenly, "However, I will allow you to touch the cover—for authentication only."

He leaned forward and gently placed his fingers on the book's cover. His expression changed subtly. After a moment, he nodded.

"I cannot say with certainty that the contents are genuine," Leon Zhao said slowly.

"But the cover-woven with gold thread-matches records used exclusively to preserve the most important cultivation manuals of the Xia imperial family." The reaction was explosive.

Gasps. Murmurs. Heated whispers.

To most of them, the contents no longer mattered. A book bearing the royal mark of

the Xia Empire carried immense value on its own.

Kaltmann smiled smugly.

"Mr. Zhao has a sharp eye," he said pointedly. "Unlike certain people who lack experience and are nothing but impostors."

Leonora felt a faint sting in her chest.

She glanced at Alex, a trace of disappointment creeping into her expression. She had trusted him. She believed he was a master.

But compared to these seasoned old experts, he now seemed... lacking.

And for the first time, doubt quietly settled in her heart.

Alex chose not to interfere.

It was obvious these people were eager to be deceived. They wanted to believe. And if someone insisted on jumping into a trap with open eyes, Alex had no interest in dragging them back.

The red-haired man closed the iron box with a soft click after the appraisals were submitted. He smiled, satisfied.

"Well," he said smoothly, "now that the book has been appraised, isn't it time to begin the bidding?"

Maximilian answered at once. "One hundred million dollars."

"Two hundred million," Anton Dunkel cut in without hesitation.

The red-haired man glanced toward the front row. Leonora still hadn't spoken.

"And what about Miss Silberkreuz?" he asked, feigning curiosity. "You're usually the most eager when it comes to cultivation manuals from Xia."

Leonora hesitated.

Sensing her doubt, Kaltmann leaned close and whispered urgently, "Miss, this is an extremely rare treasure. This book is worth at least a billion. If you secure it for under five hundred million, the benefits will far outweigh the cost."

For a moment, Leonora was almost convinced.

Then she looked at Alex.

He sat calmly beside her, expression steady, as if none of this mattered in the

slightest. That calmness stirred her doubts all over again.

"Miss Silberkreuz," the red-haired, man pressed, his voice tightening, "we're waiting for your bid. Opportunities like this come once

every fifty years. This has n

appeared before

He lowered his voice theatrically. "If I didn't urgently need funds, I would never sell

it."

That was when Kaltmann stood up.

"Everyone here is an experienced appraiser," he announced loudly. "Miss Silberkreuz has always been respected by all of you. She has always secured the finest cultivation

books from Xia for Duke

Silberkreuz."

His gaze snapped toward Alex.

"But now, because she listened to this young fraud—who claims the book is useless

—she hesitates. He even says it's fake." Kaltmann sneered. "Do all of you agree

with him?"

The room turned instantly.

Eyes full of contempt locked onto Alex.

Scorn spread like poison.

"Young man, if you don't understand cultivation books, then get out of here."

"You're disgracing the name of appraisal."

"Just leave."

Jeers erupted from every direction.

Alex rose slowly.

Without a word, he walked straight up to the nearest man who mocked him—and

slapped him hard across the face.

The crack echoed through the hall.

Gasps erupted.

Alex turned to the next man.

Slap.

Then another.

Slap.

One by one, he struck every person who had dared jeer at him. His movements were steady, deliberate, and utterly merciless.

As he moved, his voice remained cold.

"Miss Silberkreuz sends this slap to each of you."

Another blow landed.

"How dare you look down on Miss Silberkreuz."

Then another.

Slap.

"How dare you," Alex said evenly, "decide who she is allowed to trust."

No one laughed anymore.

No one spoke.

They finally understood this wasn't rage.

It was discipline.

The hall sank into stunned silence.

Leonora stared at Alex, her heart pounding.

She couldn't escape the truth.

This man feared nothing.

He did exactly as he pleased without hesitation, without apology.

Then Alex stepped directly in front of old Kaltmann and raised his leg to strike. Kaltmann realized it in a flash—this time, no one was going to save him.

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Alex's foot snapped forward in a brutal arc and slammed into Kaltmann's chest.

The old man was launched backward. Blood sprayed from his mouth as his body crashed across the floor.

"How dare you," Alex said coldly, stepping forward, "as an advisor, criticize a decision made by Miss Silberkreuz."

He stared down at Kaltmann like a judge passing sentence.

"Who do you think you are?" Alex continued. "You think you can control your own boss?"

"This kick was sent by Miss Silberkreuz," he said. "To remind you of your place. And to make sure you never mislead her again."

Kaltmann wiped the blood from his lips and glared at Alex Saint-Claire with hatred burning in his eyes.

Leonora was hesitating. She hadn't made a bid yet. And it was because of Alex. Kaltmann's voice was rough and strained, scraping out of his throat.

"You're the one who lied to Miss Silberkreuz," he snarled. "You're the reason she lost a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

Alex laughed—a short, sharp sound full of contempt.

"What kind of shitty opportunity are you talking about?" he snapped. "That thing is nothing but a money pit. A guaranteed loss. Anyone who buys it is throwing cash into a grave."

Kaltmann clenched his teeth and forced himself upright, his legs trembling. He straightened his robe, struggling to regain his authority.

"Well then," he said, forcing a smile, "since Mr. Saint-Claire claims this book is useless, I'd like to hear how he reached that conclusion."

He spread his hands toward Alex.

“Go on,” Kaltmann shouted. “Show us what you've got. Don't tell me all you're good at is beating people who don't agree with you, you bastard.”

Inside, he was confident.

If Alex tried to bluff-if he hesitated even once-Leonora would see through him. The moment that happened, she would bid without hesitation.

Around them, the crowd began to murmur.

“He's just a useless brat,” someone scoffed. “What could he possibly know?”

“Yeah,” another voice sneered. “Who gave him the right to talk big?”

“If you're not serious,” someone shouted impatiently, “stop wasting everyone's time.”

Insults rained down from every direction.

Alex didn't react.

He simply looked at Kaltmann, his eyes calm, almost amused.

“Are you sure,” Alex asked slowly, “that you want me to explain?”

“Of course!” Kaltmann laughed. “Speak freely. I'd love to see how con artists like you twist the truth.”

Alex shrugged, casual and relaxed.

“I wasn't planning to expose anyone today,” he said. “But since you're insisting... it would be rude of me to stay quiet.”

“Expose?” Leon Zhao said, finally speaking.

“So you're saying,” he said evenly, “that all of us missed something?”

Alex Saint-Claire glanced at him and laughed softly, the sound sharp and cutting.

“Out of everyone here,” he said calmly, “you're the dumbest one.”

Leon's face twisted with rage. He shot to his feet, eyes blazing.

"Are you looking to die, you little bastard?"

Alex didn't flinch.

"The book is real," he said evenly. "Don't get that twisted. But it's royal family cultivation."

The room stilled.

"That means only people with royal blood can cultivate it," Alex continued. "Not just anyone from Xia—royal Xia blood. A bloodline that's guarded tighter than a throne." His gaze swept across the room, cold and dismissive.

"I don't see a single person here with that blood. Especially not any Prussian."

Kaltmann's face darkened. "Bullshit," he snarled. "Cultivation manuals can be learned by anyone!"

Alex sneered. "Then explain this."

He turned his eyes to the red-haired owner.

"Why did the owner of this book never learn it," Alex asked slowly, "even though he's had it for decades?"

The red-haired man panicked and shouted, "I—I don't have the aptitude for cultivation! That's why I'm selling it! I hoped someone else could learn it!"

Alex burst out laughing.

"I'll bet you this," he said sharply. "By the third or fourth page, there's a warning. It says the cultivation is useless outside the royal family."

The red-haired man froze. His face drained of color.

"There-there's no page like that," he stammered.

Alex's smile vanished. His eyes turned icy.

"Then that means you tore it out."

The red-haired man exploded. "You filthy brat! How dare you spread such disgusting lies!"

He slammed his hand on the table and stood up.

Before anyone else could speak, Maximilian's expression turned grim. His gaze locked onto the red-haired man like a blade.

"Then let's settle this properly," Maximilian said coldly. "Open page three and page four."

The red-haired man began sweating uncontrollably.

"O-open the pages?" he stuttered. "Didn't I already say this book cannot be opened unless someone intends to buy it? This brat is clearly lying! Why are you all falling for his nonsense?!"

The room was silent.

Then Leonora stood.

"I want you to open page three and page four," she said firmly. "If there is nothing there—nothing matching what Alex said—I will buy this book for five hundred million."

Her eyes were locked on the red-haired man.

Unblinking.

Unyielding.

"Opening three or four pages out of a hundred isn't an issue, is it?" Maximilian said. "Plenty of books are sold with sections left unread. Buyers understand that."

His gaze sharpened, turning cold.

"But if he's right," Maximilian continued, "then you're selling us a worthless book. And in that case, you owe everyone here a very clear explanation."

The red-haired man was unraveling.

Cold sweat streamed down his forehead. His hands trembled. The two noble families in front of him weren't people you offended and walked away from.

He never should have agreed to this.

He had only taken the risk because Kaltmann and Anton promised him an easy win.

Leonora Silberkreuz would attend. Kaltmann would guide her hand. Anton would drive up the price to lure her in. And she would buy the book.

A useless piece of trash, sold for an insane price.

Easy money.

They would split the money.

Clean. Quiet. Perfect.

But Alex ruined everything.

Kaltmann and Anton had sworn they'd already killed this new appraiser. Who could have imagined he was still alive-standing here-ripping the scheme apart piece by

piece?

Seeing the red-haired man frozen in silence, Alex smirked.

Alex had never studied royal Xia cultivation manuals himself. But during his years ruling the underworld, surrounded by smugglers, refugees, and illegal immigrants froma, he'd fean enough.

One truth above all others.

Royal family cultivation was bound by blood.

Without that bloodline, the cultivation was worthless.

“Well?” Alex said lightly. “What's wrong? Feeling guilty? Why aren't you defending yourself?”

The red-haired man's face turned ghostly white.

“I—if you don't want to buy the book, then don't,” he stammered. “No one is forcing you. I won't open it. Opening it will destroy its value.”

His voice broke.

He snatched the box, slammed the lid shut, and hugged it to his chest like a lifeline.

"I'm ending this here," he shouted. "This book is not for sale!"

Maximilian finally lost his patience.

"You think you can walk away just by canceling the sale?" he roared. "Let me make something very clear to you—this is Winchester. And tonight, I am the host."

He stepped forward, eyes burning.

"It's my responsibility to ensure that everything sold here is authentic. Do you have any idea who you're standing in front of? he snapped, "Everyone in this room holds power. Rear power. The kind that can make your life a living nightmare.

His tone dropped, slow and lethal.

"They could have you dumped in a ditch and forgotten by morning-no questions asked. So I strongly advise you to tell us the truth. Right now. Because if you don't you won't even be able to save yourself."

Leonora stood beside him, her expression cold and unyielding.

“The Silberkreuz family has always been fair,” she said evenly. “And respected.” "But if anyone believes they can scam us, we will teach them exactly what that mistake costs. If we let you walk away, our reputation would be destroyed."

Her words landed like a verdict.

The red-haired man felt his legs go weak.

Everyone knew the Silberkreuz name carried terrifying influence in Winchester. If

Leonora von Silberkreuz truly turned against him, he wouldn't leave this city alive. Panic seized him.

He spun toward Anton and Kaltmann, desperation pouring out of him.

"Anton! Kaltmann!" he shouted. "Help me! This isn't what we agreed on!" Anton's expression twisted instantly.

"I don't know you!" he yelled. "Don't you dare spit nonsense and drag me into this!" Kaltmann rushed forward as well, his face warped with rage.

"You bastard!" he snarled. "What are you saying? Scamming the Silberkreuz family and trying to pin it on me?! I'll kill you!"

In one smooth, practiced motion, Kaltmann pulled a gun from his pocket.

The red-haired man didn't retreat. He stood his ground and glared straight at him, eyes burning with rage.

"Fuck you!" he screamed. "You're going to shoot me now, you backstabbing bastard?!"

The words spilled out of him in a wild, desperate rush.

"You were the one who said Miss Silberkreuz trusted your appraisal completely! You said this piece of shit would sell the moment you approved it!"

He suddenly hurled the box across the floor. It skidded and slammed to a stop at Alex's feet.

Then he turned to the room, voice cracking, hands shaking.

"Everyone—I admit it!" he shouted. "This useless book belongs to Anton! I'm just a paid front, pretending to own it so it could be sold!"

"They told me it would be easy!" he screamed. "They said Kaltmann has pulled this kind of scam on Miss Leonora many times already!"

The room erupted in chaos.

Kaltmann's face contorted with murderous rage.

"How dare you lie to us—"

A gunshot tore through the hall.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 538[1,305 words]

The gunshot cracked through the hall.

Everyone saw it.

The red-haired man's head snapped back as blood sprayed the air. His body dropped before anyone could even scream.

What shocked the crowd even more-Kaltmann was shot too.

Leon Zhao's bullet tore straight through Kaltmann's body. A dark hole bloomed in his chest. Kaltmann staggered, eyes wide, staring at Anton in pure disbelief.

"You... you... how dare_"

Bang.

Leon Zhao fired again. This time, straight through Kaltmann's head.

The old man collapsed lifelessly to the floor.

Leonora stood abruptly, her chair scraping loudly. She stared at Leon Zhao, fury burning in her eyes.

"How dare you open fire in this hall?"

Leon Zhao smiled calmly, as if he had merely corrected a mistake.

"I never let people who try to scam me walk away alive," he said. "And that bastard even dared to accuse my Master of helping him. What kind of poisonous snake would do that? I had to kill him."

"Wonderful," Alex said. He clapped slowly, mockingly. The sound echoed through the stunned silence.

"What a beautiful performance," he added coldly. "Now no one can tell who the real mastermind is."

He stepped forward, bent down, and picked up the metal box from the floor.

The latch clicked open.

Inside lay the book.

Alex opened directly to the third page.

"This third page," he said coldly, "and the fourth page were glued together to look like a single sheet."

He carefully separated them.

Gasps rippled through the crowd.

"These are two pages," Alex continued. "Not one."

He turned the pages outward so everyone could read.

Most of the collectors specialized in Xia artifacts. They understood the writing instantly.

The words were unmistakable.

"This cultivation method is restricted to those of royal blood. Anyone without royal lineage who attempts to practice it will die a slow, miserable death."

The hall exploded into whispers and shocked cries.

Alex closed the book.

"I think everyone here understands now," he said evenly. "This book is worthless to every single person in this room. Worse-it's deadly."

His gaze shifted slowly to Anton Dunkel.

"And yet," Alex continued, voice sharpening, "someone still tried to sell this dangerous trash to Miss Silberkreuz."

Leonora's face flushed deep red with anger.

"Anton Dunkel," she snapped, pointing straight at him. "Did you collude with Kaltmann this entire time? Were you the mastermind behind him-scamming me again and again, forcing me to buy your worthless garbage, draining my money without end?"

Anton laughed loudly, unfazed.

"Miss Silberkreuz, our country has laws," he said smugly. "Even if you are the granddaughter of Duke Silberkreuz, you can't accuse me without proof."

"What proof do you want?" Leonora shouted. "Two people were just killed!" Anton shrugged and stood up.

"The dead can't talk," he said casually. "And the dead prove nothing. You can't point a finger at me for anything."

He straightened his coat and added calmly, "The auction is already over. I believe it's time for me to return home."

He turned as if nothing had happened leaving behind blood, corpses, and a room full of fury.

Anton Dunkel strode toward the exit with Leon Zhao and several bodyguards flanking him.

"Stop right there!" Leonora Silberkreuz shouted. "You can't walk away from this!" Anton laughed without even turning his head.

"You can't stop me without a legal warrant," he said coldly. "Do that, and you'll spark a war between my Duke and your grandfather. Know your place, little girl."

He kept walking.

Outside the hall, Anton leaned close to Leon Zhao and spoke in a low voice. "Have you wiped every connection to Kaltmann clean?"

Leon Zhao nodded. "There's nothing that can be traced back to us."

"Good," Anton said. "We leave now-before the police start their search."

He headed straight for his aircraft.

Inside the hall, Leonora stood motionless, staring down at the two bodies on the floor. Her eyes were cold, unreadable. Then she turned to Alex.

"Please excuse me, Mr. Saint-Claire," she said, regaining her composure. "Thank you for accompanying me today. Let's leave. My family will send people to handle this mess."

Alex nodded once. "Alright. Let's go."

As they walked out of the hall, Leonora let out a slow breath and shook her head.

"I really must thank you, Mr.

Saint-Claire," she said bitterly. "Hiring

that scammer bastard was our

mistake. To think Kaltmann had

been bleeding me dry for so long... it's humiliating."

Alex glanced at her, "As long as there's light, there will always be darkness. You

don't need to blame yourself, Miss Silberkreuz."

At that moment, Maximilian Nachtburg rushed out from the hall. The moment he

saw Alex, he grabbed his hands tightly and shook them with force.

"Mr. Saint-Claire!" he exclaimed. "Thanks to you, I avoided disaster. If Miss Silberkreuz had been cheated,

people would've thought!!-

-the

host was involved. You saved my

neck from the Duke's wrath."

Alex smiled faintly. "Don't worry about it. Miss Silberkreuz invited me to appraise the

book. I was just doing my job."

"Oh—right," Alex added, lifting the book in his hand. "This book."

Maximilian's face stiffened the moment he saw it. Sweat broke out on his forehead.

"I'm only the host," he said hurriedly. "The owner is already dead. I don't dare keep

that thing. It's more trouble than it's worth. Please, Miss Silberkreuz-you can take

it."

Leonora let out a sharp, humorless laugh.

"Me? Keeping a book that could kill me?" she said coldly. "I wouldn't touch that thing even if you paid me."

Alex looked at both of them and let out a quiet sigh.

"I'll keep the book," he said evenly. "If either of you ever wants it, you know where to find me."

Maximilian nodded at once. "That's the best solution."

After a brief exchange of polite words, Alex and Leonora got into the car. The engine started, and soon they were gone.

Meanwhile, Anton Dunkel and Leon Zhao were already aboard their aircraft, leaving Winchester airspace.

That was when it happened.

Three drones slammed into the hull without warning.

The impact rocked the ship. Alarms screamed. The drones detonated, tearing through the exterior plating.

"What the hell is going on?" Anton shouted.

"We're under attack!" the pilot yelled. "Sir, the engines are failing. We're losing control. We have to make an emergency landing forest below. I'm sending a distress signal now!"

The aircraft shuddered violently before crashing into the forest. Trees snapped like matchsticks as the ship tore through them.

Two other aircraft descended immediately, landing on either side of the wreck.

When Anton, Leon Zhao, and the five bodyguards stumbled out of the ruined ship, weapons drawn-
They froze.

Around twenty people dressed in black were already waiting for them. Every one of them had a gun trained directly at their heads.

"Who the hell are you?!" Anton roared. "I am Marquis Anton Dunkel! How dare you provoke me?!"

One man stepped forward. He moved calmly, confidently.

"We're not here to provoke you," he said coldly. "But if I remember correctly, you paid assassins to kill our boss."

Anton frowned. "Your boss?" he snapped. "I don't remember hiring anyone to kill your boss. Who are you talking about?"

His eyes swept over them. Advanced weapons. Advanced ships. These weren't people you casually offended.

"Didn't you pay five men today to kill Miss Silberkreuz's appraiser?" the leader said. "That man is our boss. And you chose the wrong people to mess with."

Alex.

Anton's blood ran cold. The only man he had wanted dead today was Alex Saint- Claire—the man who could destroy his entire arrangement with Kaltmann.

"But... he's a nobody," Anton muttered.

Gunfire exploded.

His bodyguards dropped one by one before they could even react. Bullets tore them apart. In seconds, only Anton and Leon Zhao were left standing.

The leader raised his gun again.

"We're kidnapping you and demanding ransom," he said flatly.

Anton had been shaking now, rage and fear bleeding together. "You want ransom?

Name it!"

The man in black had answered instantly. "Your territory. All of it."

Anton had screamed, "That's robbery!"

The man had nodded. "No. Robbery is what you did with Kaltmann."

Anton's voice had cracked. "You can't just take land!"

The man had leaned in. "We're not taking it."

He had cocked the gun.

"We're charging you... for staying alive."

Anton's shoulders had slumped. "And if I refuse?"

The man had looked past him at the forest.

"Then this place becomes your grave. Unmarked. Unremembered."

'When the blade reaches the throat,

titles turn to dust.'

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 539[1,184 words]

Alex was at home when Oskar called.

"Sir," Oskar said. "How do you want to proceed with Anton Dunkel?"

Alex lay back on the bed and stared at the ceiling. He thought for a moment. "He wanted me dead over a cheap money scam involving Leonora," he said flatly. "But we're not going to kill him over something that small, are we?"

"No, sir," Oskar replied. "We'll drain him dry. Every last cent. Then we take over all his land."

Alex's expression hardened. "Marquis Anton Dunkel controls a major state. It borders Xia territory. Do you really think we can handle it?"

"Of course we can," Oskar said without hesitation. "Our underground network includes many Xia people who are still deeply connected to Xia."

"They're ready to take any position we give them. They know the terrain, the systems, and the routes. Their big families are there-and to them, family is everything. They'll handle it perfectly."

Alex fell silent. He had money-more than enough—but in Prussia, money alone didn't equal power.

Taking Anton Dunkel's land would be difficult. Still, he could seize pieces of it. A slice here, a corridor there. Control would start small, then spread. Power always did.

"What about Gaia's prediction?" Alex asked.

Oskar smiled, calm and confident. "Sir, Gaia predicts an eighty-five percent chance we can absorb all of Marquis Dunkel's land within three months—and a ninety-nine percent chance within one year."

Alex smiled, "Then start devouring everything."

Conquering Prussia was never easy. But when artificial intelligence controlled logistics, modeled human behavior, and calculated outcomes down to the smallest variable, time became the only real requirement.

Given enough time, victory was inevitable.

A knock sounded at Alex's bedroom door. He ended the call.

"Enter," Alex said, too lazy to get out of bed.

Pauline stepped inside and glanced around the room. "Where's Sofina?"

"She's busy," Alex replied. "Probably coming back late. If you need her, wait until morning. She'll be exhausted tonight."

Pauline bit her lip. "Alex... when are you going to buy me a car?"

"Never," Alex said without blinking.

She suddenly closed the door and turned the lock, then glanced back at it.

"You know," she said softly, "I can give you the first service now. You can pay me later."

She began to open her clothes.

Alex's eyes widened.

Sofina was beautiful. Pauline was beautiful too. They shared the same blood, and their mother's looks had blessed them both.

But Pauline had something else youth. A raw, careless confidence. She was a high school girl, still glowing with that unspent energy.

Her body was flawless. Young. Perfect.

And for a brief moment, the room felt tighter, heavier, charged with something dangerous.

On the other side of the city, Renata walked out of the hospital doors with anger burning in her chest.

Winchester felt cold to her. Empty. She had no real friends here, no one she could truly rely on. The realization made her mood even darker.

After being discharged from the hospital, she wanted a celebration. A party. A strong drink.

She craved good food at a famous restaurant-somewhere loud, vibrant, alive- anything that could drown out the frustration pounding in her head and mark her return to freedom.

Without thinking twice, she called Sofina, hoping she would come with her.

But Sofina was buried in work and could only meet very late at night.

Renata couldn't wait that long.

She considered calling Alex. The thought lingered for a second-then she dismissed it. It would feel wrong. Wrong to Sofina. Wrong to herself. And to make it worse, she had already sent Alex several messages earlier.

That asshole hadn't even bothered to reply.

A perfect asshole, she thought coldly. I'm the Duke's daughter-someone every man is lining up to chase—and this so-called Marquis from a fallen family dares to reject me?

Did that jerk have any idea how many people were desperate to win her hand? They would line up for miles.

Renata let out a long, tired sigh, her shoulders slumping as disappointment settled in.

Then she heard a voice.

"Renata!"

She looked up and saw Gerhard Wolfsbane-Sofina's cousin grinning widely and waving at her, as if he had been waiting for this very moment.

"Renata, I heard you're being discharged today," he said cheerfully as he approached. "How about I accompany you to a restaurant? What do you think?"

Renata stared at him, her eyes cold.

She had never liked Gerhard. Not once. She could see through him too easily. Every word, every smile was polished and calculated.

He didn't care about her recovery. He cared about her title. About getting close to her, winning her favor, and eventually becoming the Duke's son-in-law.

The thought alone made her skin crawl.

She had rejected him many times before. Firmly. Clearly.

Yet Gerhard never learned when to stop.

Normally, she would turn him down again without hesitation. But today was different. She was exhausted, angry, lonely-and painfully aware of how desperate she felt.

The Duke's daughter... without a single companion.

Gerhard seized the moment.

"Renata, you've been in Winchester for quite some time, but we rarely meet," he said smoothly.

"I'm also very sorry about the unfortunate incident at the Imperial Amber House the other day. To 1. express my apology I'd like to invite you to dinner tonight

He paused, then added warmly, "Besides, today is a joyful day. You're finally discharged from the hospital. That deserves a celebration. What do you say?"

Renata frowned. "Not today, Gerhard. I'm not fit to do much yet."

Gerhard didn't back down. He leaned in slightly, lowering his voice. "Renata, your discharge is today. If we don't celebrate while it's fresh, the joy will fade by tomorrow And honestly you don't have many friends here in Winchester

The words stung more than she expected.

"I've already booked a table," he continued. "Just the two of us. Somewhere quiet. A small celebration. Nothing tiring. What do you think?"

Renata hesitated.

Gerhard smiled, sensing the crack.

"You looked like the city abandoned you," he said gently.

Renata's voice stayed sharp. "Don't flatter yourself. I don't need rescuing."

"Of course not," he replied smoothly. "You're the Duke's daughter. You stand alone by choice."

Her jaw tightened. "You don't know anything about my choices."

He stepped closer. "I know you're tired of pretending you're fine."

Silence stretched.

Renata exhaled slowly. "I don't like you, Gerhard."

He nodded, unfazed. "I didn't ask you to."

She looked away, anger flickering with something weaker. "Then why won't you leave me alone?"

"Because today," he said softly, "you looked like someone who didn't want to go home alone."

For the first time, something in her expression softened. Honestly, she wanted to celebrate her discharge with anyone at all.

Gerhard was already here. Two people were better than one. Loneliness didn't spare anyone-not even kings and queens-and tonight, it had found her.

Gerhard had arrived at the exact right moment.

Renata crossed her arms. "You're enjoying this too much."

Gerhard chuckled. "Enjoying what?"

"My weakness," she snapped.

His smile faded just slightly. "If you were weak, you wouldn't still be standing."

She laughed bitterly. "You think flattery works on me?"

"No," he said calmly. "Timing does."

That hit harder than she expected.

"You planned this," she accused.

"I hoped," he corrected. "You'd finally be human for one evening."

Her eyes flashed. "Careful. You're not my savior."

"I know," he replied. "I'm just the man who answered when no one else did."

Renata's shoulders sagged.

"...One dinner," she said. "That's all."

Gerhard smiled again—but this time, it was slower. Hungrier.

"You won't regret it."

Renata sighed

"Better with someone than alone,

Even if that someone is wrong."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 540[951 words]

Gerhard's face lit up as he led her to one of Winchester's most famous bistros. The place was elegant and warm, wrapped in soft lighting and low, murmuring

conversations.

They had barely taken their seats when the dishes began arriving, one after another, perfectly arranged.

Gerhard signaled the waiter. "A bottle of your finest red wine."

Then he turned to Renata with a polished smile. "It's such a happy day. You've been discharged. We should drink to celebrate."

Renata raised her hand immediately. "I'll pass."

"No can do!" Gerhard blurted out, his voice sharp and impatient.

His disappointment was instant. His plan was obvious-get her drunk, loosen her guard, find an opening. But Renata shut him down without hesitation.

"I'm really sorry, Gerhard," she said calmly. "I'm still not feeling well, so I can't drink."

Gerhard didn't realize how transparent he was. But Renata did.

He laughed awkwardly. "Renata, it's a celebration."

"And I'm recovering," she replied. "Unless the wine cures organs now."

"It helps people relax."

"I'm relaxed," she said calmly. "You're the one sweating."

Gerhard swallowed his frustration and forced a smile. "That's fine. Then let's just have something light."

Renata nodded. "Thank you for being considerate."

At the table beside them, a well-dressed young man sat quietly, pretending to mind

his own business. In truth, his eyes kept drifting toward Renata. From the moment she walked into the restaurant, her presence had caught his attention—and it hadn't

let go.

The woman is unreal, the young man thought the moment his eyes landed on Renata. She looks like a fairy who slipped out of a storybook and walked straight into this place.

He watched them for a while. The dynamic was obvious. No intimacy. No warmth. No bond. They weren't a couple.

That was his opening.

He took a breath, straightened his jacket, and walked over to their table.

"Hi," he said smoothly, eyes locked on Renata. "I couldn't help myself. I fell for you the moment you walked in. May I have your contact?"

Renata felt a familiar wave of boredom wash over her. It didn't matter where she went—restaurants, streets, banquets. There was always a man like this. Always someone who thought a bold line was enough.

Gerhard, however, nearly snapped.

Where the hell did this idiot come from? he thought furiously. Can't he see I'm working here? How dare he cut in—this bastard.

Before Renata could even respond, Gerhard slammed his voice into the conversation.

"Who the hell are you?" he said coldly. "And what do you think you're doing, bothering us at our table?"

The young man didn't flinch. He smiled lazily. "I'm talking to this beautiful lady. Stay out of it."

Then he turned back to Renata, ignoring Gerhard completely.

"Miss, I've noticed you for a while," he said. "I didn't want to interrupt your dinner, but honestly, I couldn't stand watching this any longer." His eyes flicked briefly to Gerhard, full of contempt.

"You look bored out of your mind sitting with this asshole. How about I keep you company instead? I promise it'll be a lot more fun than wasting time with this jerk."

Gerhard's blood boiled.

His fists clenched under the table.

Where the fuck did this dog come from? he raged. How dare he try to steal my woman right in front of me?

Gerhard shot the man a vicious glare and growled, his voice low and dangerous.

"I'm warning you get the hell away while I'm still being polite. If you dare talk again, or even look in our direction, I'll gouge your eyes out."

The young man frowned, clearly unimpressed. He turned to Renata instead.

"Is he your boyfriend?"

Renata shook her head, calm and direct.

The young man looked back at Gerhard, a sharp edge in his voice now.

"Then what's your problem with me confessing to her?"

Gerhard let out a crooked, arrogant grin.

"I don't like you staring at her. I don't like you talking to her either. Keep your filthy eyes off her."

The young man laughed. "Relax. If she wanted you, I wouldn't be standing here." Gerhard slammed his hand lightly on the table. "Watch your mouth."

Renata sighed. "Please don't fight."

Both men turned to her.

She continued, "If you're going to compete, at least make it interesting. Right now, you're both exhausting."

The young man raised his hands. "Fair enough."

Gerhard's face darkened. "You're enjoying this."

Renata shrugged. "It's the most stimulation I've had all evening."

What she didn't say was how pathetic it felt-being fought over by two men she didn't want. The man she once believed was her boyfriend. turned out to be nothing but a Scam And the one she truly wanted-Alex-was ignoring her completely.

That thought cut deeper than any insult.

Tonight wasn't flattering. It wasn't exciting.

It was humiliating.

And in that moment, Renata knew this was the worst day of her life.

"Get lost. Now," Gerhard shouted at the young man.

The young man sneered back. "Why are you so damn arrogant? You really think you're something special?"

Gerhard puffed up instantly.

"Kid, I'm from the Wolfsbane family. Do yourself a favor and get lost while I'm still talking nicely—unless you want trouble."

The young man's eyes hardened.

"Oh, the Wolfsbane family," he said coldly. "A baron, huh?" He leaned forward "My father is Baron Ferdinand. Now I'm the one telling. you to move. If you don't, I'll make sure you don't walk out of this restaurant tonight."

Gerhard clenched his teeth, rage pounding in his head.

He was becoming a joke. A punching bag for anyone who walked in.

He had already humiliated himself the first time he invited Renata out. If he lost face again—right here, right now—he knew it was over. Completely over.

His hand shot out.

He grabbed the wine bottle from the table and roared,

"You asked for this!"

Before anyone could react, he swung.

The bottle smashed into the young man's head with a deafening crack.

Blood exploded from the impact,

pouring down his face and splattering across the floor as his body staggered backward, the Sound of chaos ripping through the restaurant.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 541[1,553 words]

The young man staggered back, his vision spinning. The bottle smash had rattled his skull. Blood poured down his face, blurring his sight.

He stumbled like a drunk, crashing into nearby tables. Wine glasses shattered. Bottles tipped and rolled. Plates clattered to the floor. Then his legs gave out, and he collapsed hard onto the tiles.

Gasps rippled through the restaurant.

Gerhard stepped forward and glared down at him. Blood soaked the young man's hair, dripping onto the floor. Gerhard's lips curled into a vicious sneer.

"Get lost," he growled coldly, "or you'll die right here."

The young man groaned and forced himself up, swaying as he pressed a trembling hand against his bleeding head. His eyes burned with rage as he locked onto Gerhard.

"Alright, tough guy," he spat through clenched teeth. "Just wait. Let's see if you can survive tonight."

With unsteady steps, he turned and staggered toward the exit, leaving a trail of red behind him.

"Fucking loser," Gerhard scoffed. "Who does he think he is, threatening me? I'm Gerhard Wolfsbane, you bastard."

He straightened his jacket and turned to Renata with a smug grin, clearly pleased with himself.

"There are always annoying bugs crawling around," he said casually. "Don't let trash like that ruin our night. Come on, let's enjoy our dinner. The night is still young."

Inside, he felt invincible. Victorious. Like he had just proven something important.

Renata felt none of it.

Any trace of celebration inside her was gone, crushed by the ugliness of what had just happened.

Out of basic courtesy, she nodded without saying a word. But her mind was already searching for a way to leave.

Gerhard might think he looked heroic, throwing bottles and barking threats. To her, he was nothing more than reckless and small-minded. A man who mistook violence for strength.

Alex was nothing like this.

Alex handled everything with calm elegance, never loud, never crude. Just controlled. Precise. Powerful in silence.

She missed him deeply.

Renata looked at Gerhard again and felt absolute certainty settle in her chest. Even

if he were the last man alive on earth, he would never be on her list.

Never again.

Gerhard, meanwhile, completely misunderstood the situation. He believed his "macho" display would impress her, that crushing a nobody in front of her would make her swoon.

Blind to her mood, Gerhard kept talking. He bragged nonstop, spinning stories about schoolyard brawls and past fights, exaggerating every punch, every victory. Tales only he believed.

Instead, Renata looked at him with growing discomfort—almost disgust.

The meal dragged on.

When the plates were finally cleared, Gerhard leaned back with a confident smile.

"How about we go somewhere else?" he suggested. "Get to know each other better."

Renata frowned slightly and shook her head.

"It's getting late," she said evenly. "I should head back now. Thank you for dinner."

A shadow slipped beneath Gerhard's eyes—a brief flash of disappointment he couldn't fully suppress.

"Then let me take you to your hotel," he said at once, forcing warmth into his voice. He tried to sound charming.

Renata shook her head without hesitation.

"It's fine," she replied. "My car is waiting in the parking lot. It will take me home automatically."

Her tone left no room for misunderstanding. A clear line had been drawn, and Gerhard was standing on the wrong side of it.

The turn of events left Gerhard seething inside. This night was supposed to be perfect. A romantic dinner. A confession. Maybe more much more-ending in her bed.

Instead, that damn bugger had ruined everything. Worse, Renata now looked at him differently. Colder. Distant. Disgusted.

Nothing had gone his way.

"If I see that fucking dog again, I'll kill him," Gerhard muttered through clenched teeth.

They had just stepped out of the restaurant and were walking toward the parking lot when shadows peeled themselves away from the darkness.

A group of young men burst forward, charging straight at them.

"That's the man!" someone shouted.

"Kill him!"

The young men wore black masks. Steel pipes gleamed in their hands as they sprinted closer, their footsteps pounding like war drums. Revenge was written all over them.

"Damn it!" Gerhard cried out, his voice shaking as terror seized him.

He knew instantly this was because of the young man. And from the looks of it, this wasn't a warning. This was an execution.

As if to confirm it, the young man himself stepped into the light. A bloody bandage wrapped around his head. His eyes burned with hatred.

"Let's see if you can survive tonight!" he roared.

Panic swallowed Gerhard whole. His mind went blank. Men rushed toward him, iron batons raised high. The steel pipes cut through the air as they swung forward.

As one pipe came down toward him, Gerhard froze in sheer terror. His legs shook violently. He nearly pissed himself.

Then instinct took over.

He grabbed Renata and shoved her forward, screaming, "You can have this woman!"

Before she could react, he turned and bolted.

Gerhard sprinted to his car, yanked the door open, jumped inside, and floored it. The engine roared. In seconds, he vanished into the night without a single glance back.

Renata screamed as she stumbled forward into the path of the masked men. Rage exploded inside her when she saw Gerhard fleeing like a coward.

Damn him.

Gerhard Wolfsbane was nothing but a spineless wuss.

After causing all of this, he had the nerve-the absolute nerve to shove a woman forward as his shield and save himself. In a moment where lives were at stake, he chose to run.

Alone.

He was the lowest kind of filth.

The young man screamed in rage as he watched Gerhard disappear into the night.

"Damn it! That fucking bastard!" he roared. "He dumped the woman and ran! What a pathetic piece of shit!"

He turned slowly toward Renata, his eyes cold and vicious.

"Beauty," he snarled, "call that coward back. If you don't, you won't survive the night."

The men around him stared at Renata with open hunger.

"You're right," one of them chuckled darkly. "She's even prettier than you said. We'll all take turns. She won't sleep tonight."

"I agree," another added with a grin.

Renata's breath hitched. Panic surged through her chest.

"He and I have nothing to do with each other," she said quickly. "Please don't drag me into your business."

The young man jabbed a finger at the bloody bandage on his head.

"Look at this!" he growled. "I got this. because you too. I won't be satisfiof

until I get my revenge if

that astard doesn't come back

you you'll pay with your boo

Renata's fingers snapped to her bracelet. With a sharp pulse of light, the three- dimensional crest of the Winter family appeared in the air.

"I am Renata Winter," she said clearly. "Daughter of Duke Winter. If you dare touch me, you noblescum will learn exactly what happens when you offend the Winter family."

The young man froze. Shock flashed across his face as he stumbled back a step.

"I—I'm sorry," he stammered.

But another man stepped forward, sneering.

"Who cares about nobles?"

"Yeah," another scoffed.

Renata saw it clearly now. They were young. Stupid. Blind to the danger they were courting. Too ignorant to understand the weight of what they were threatening. "Just take her back to our place," one of them said casually. "Whatever comes later, we'll deal with it. A duke from nowhere doesn't scare us. We only know Duke Silberkreuz."

The other laughed. "She might even like us after tonight."

"Yeah," another added. "We could even ask for ransom."

"You can't do this!" Renata screamed, terror ripping through her voice. "If you touch me, every one of you will die! Dare lay a hand on a noble, and you will be erased!"

"Illegal?" The man laughed harshly, his voice thick with menace. "You think you can lecture me about the law? am the law. When I'm done with you, you'll learn what real law** feels like."

A freezing chill slammed into Renata's chest.

"I—I'll call him," she stammered. "I'll call that bastard right now!"

Her hands trembled violently as she touched her bracelet and dialed Gerhard's number.

Gerhard was gripping the steering wheel, driving like a man fleeing a nightmare. He wanted distance-miles of it-before those men could even think of chasing him. When Renata's name flashed across the floating screen of his bracelet, his heart

slammed hard against his ribs.

Damn it.

Earlier, all he cared about was running. Saving himself. Leaving Renata behind without a second thought. She must hate him now. No-despise him.

What rotten luck.

This night was supposed to be his breakthrough. Get close to her. Win her over. Become the Duke Winter's son-in-law-and use that connection to his entire bloodline to higher level.

Instead, he had burned everything to the ground.

He had offended Renata down to her soul.

How could he possibly answer that call?

The reason was obvious. She wanted him to come back. Anyone with half a brain could see that.

But if he went back, would he even survive?

Those men were feral. Armed with steel pipes. Even if they didn't beat him to death, they would cripple him for life.

Compared to romance, survival mattered more.

So Gerhard made his choice.

He ignored the call and slammed harder on the accelerator.

Renata stared at her bracelet in disbelief as the call went unanswered. Panic clawed up her throat.

The phone rang.

Once.

Twice.

Silence.

The man tilted his head. "Still ringing?"

Renata stared at the dead screen.

The man smiled slowly. "Guess your hero already clocked out."

She turned desperately to the young man and pleaded. "I can give you money. As much as you want. Please, let me go. This has nothing to do with me."

The young man's grin widened, slow and vile.

"I don't want your money," he said coldly. He grabbed Renata's chin and forced her face up. "I want you and your money. I want everything you have."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 542[1,542 words]

There is a common saying that women's preferences often change with age.

In their late teens and early twenties, many women focus on attraction and excitement. Looks, confidence, and charm matter most.

In their twenties to early thirties, attraction is still important, but money, stability, and future plans start to matter more.

In their thirties to early forties, many women value a calm and stable life. Kindness, reliability, and emotional support become more important than wealth or status.

From the forties onward, companionship matters most. Many women want a caring, loyal partner to share life with peacefully.

Men, however, are a different species entirely.

Their preferences come with a lifetime subscription and no updates.

In their early twenties, they like young and beautiful women.

In their thirties, nothing changes. In their forties, still the same.

In their fifties? No difference.

And right up until the day they die, many men are still looking at the same type and saying, Yep... young and beautiful women still my favorite.

And now Alex was watching exactly that.

A young, beautiful woman stood in front of him, slowly undressing.

Pauline slipped off her top, then her bottoms. When she looked back at Alex, her face was flushed red, eyes bright with mischief.

"Do you like what you see?"

Alex cleared his throat and coughed lightly.

"I like young and beautiful women," he said plainly. "And since it's free, of course I like it. Anything free is good."

She folded her arms, pride sharpening her voice. "Men like you always want more." Pauline smiled, confident and teasing.

"But sadly, if you want to touch this body, you need to promise me a car. A VOXEN. Any generation is fine."

"Fine," Alex said casually.

He stood up and walked to the window. He opened it, letting the night air rush in, then smiled over his shoulder.

"Anyway, thanks. But since the free part is already finished, it's time for me to go."

With that, he stepped onto the sill and jumped.

Pauline froze, her mind blank as she stared at the open window.

"It's the second floor!" she screamed, shock finally catching up to her.

She rushed outside.

The window gaped open. The night was empty. Alex was already gone.

"Damn it!" Pauline spat, fury burning her throat. "He's running away!"

Alex was already airborne, cutting through the night like a shadow, when his bracelet began vibrating nonstop.

"What is it, Gaia?" he muttered. "You know I was supposed to at least touch a little. Maybe it was still free. How dare you keep calling me during my very important private time."

"Master," Gaia replied calmly, "you instructed me to monitor Renata Winter, since establishing a connection with Duke Winter is essential."

"Yes." Alex remembered. He had told Gaia to watch her closely. Renata wasn't the only one-Sofina and several others were already on his list.

"She is currently in danger," Gaia continued. "There is a high probability of severe injury. Possible death, if you do not intervene."

"Send me the location," Alex said without slowing down.

Coordinates flashed across his bracelet mid-flight. A second later, he frowned.

"Why didn't you send a drone to her?"

"Master," Gaia answered smoothly, "this is what humans call the heroic rescue of a damsel in distress. Such events often end in emotional bonding... sometimes even in bed. You should not miss this opportunity."

"Can I choose not to save her?" Alex snapped. For the first time that night, he felt no desire to play hero.

"Yes," Gaia replied. "However, you will miss a direct connection with Duke Winter. There is also a significant risk that Duke Winter will initiate conflict with Duke Silberkreuz."

"Damn it," Alex hissed.

"Master?" Gaia asked suddenly.

"What?"

"Your manhood is still standing proudly," she said bluntly. "You can always use it on Renata later—after you finish saving her."

"Shut up."

Elsewhere—

Renata clenched her teeth as the man stepped closer. He reached up and removed his mask, revealing a leering, lust-filled face.

"Believe me," Renata said coldly, her voice steady despite the fear burning in her chest, "you should put that mask back on. You're a thousand times more handsome with it."

Before he could react, she drove her foot straight into the golden eggs between his legs.

The man never saw it coming.

He let out a shrill, broken scream and collapsed onto the road, clutching himself in agony.

"Kill that woman!" one of the men shouted as Renata turned and ran, her heart pounding as survival took over.

Several of the young men hurled their weapons at Renata.

An iron baton slammed into her back. A knife struck deep into her hip. Pain exploded through her body, ripping the air from her lungs, and she collapsed onto the road.

"Where do you think you're going?" one of them sneered.

Nearly twenty young men closed in, forming a tight circle around her.

"We should share her," one of them said casually.

Another laughed, eyes crawling over her body. "I can't wait to throw her on a bed."

"I'll take her mouth," someone else added, laughing loudly.

One man grabbed Renata by the hair and yanked her head back, his grin twisted and cruel.

"Congratulations," he said mockingly. "You've triggered me. My brothers and I will take very good care of you tonight."

Tears streamed down Renata's face, soaking her cheeks.

In her heart, she had already seen her own death.

She knew these people would never let her go. She was terrified that her life would end here—worse, that her body would be defiled by them. This body she had kept only for her future husband.

Despair crushed her. She could no longer hold it back. Tears kept falling, unstoppable.

"Hey," a voice called out calmly. "That woman is a duke's daughter."

A young man stepped forward, facing the group of thugs.

"Do you know the law?" he continued. "Do you understand the consequences of harming—or even having improper intent toward—a duke's daughter?"

The twenty men turned and looked at Alex, who was walking toward them alone.

"You know this is a death sentence, right?" Alex said casually, never stopping.

The men glanced at each other. Then three of them stepped forward, raising their iron batons as they charged.

"You're the one who's going to die!" one of them shouted.

Alex watched them rush toward him.

He lifted one hand.

Then he slapped one of the young men across the face.

The impact was brutal.

So violent that the man's face twisted unnaturally backward, his body spinning as he flew away.

The remaining thugs froze in shock, staring in disbelief at what they had just witnessed.

Alex moved to the next one.

He raised his leg and kicked.

The thug was launched backward like a rag doll, smashing into the nearest car.

Metal crumpled on impact.

The man hit so hard that his body folded against the vehicle and dropped to the ground, completely broken, unable to move.

Another thug swung an iron baton at Alex.

Alex stepped in and struck first.

His blow crashed into the man's stomach with terrifying force. The thug was lifted off the ground, flew nearly six meters through the air, and slammed down headfirst onto the road.

Silence fell.

The remaining seventeen thugs stared at Alex in horror.

Three of their men were down-completely destroyed in the span of just a few seconds.

Some of them finally broke. Some young men threw their iron baton away and turned to run.

But their leg wouldn't move.

Panic flashed across their face as they realized their body no longer obeyed them.

Alex walked toward Renata.

The seventeen men stood frozen, unable to move. Their bodies were stiff, locked in

place, paralyzed by pure fear.

"Alex..." Renata looked up at him, her face soaked with tears.

"Renata," Alex said softly as he knelt beside her and helped her stood up.

"Eat this," Alex said. "It will heal you."

He placed a small potion pill into Renata's hand. It would close her wounds and stop the bleeding.

Renata swallowed the pill, but her body was still trembling violently, fear running through her even as the pain began to fade.

"These people wanted to rape you.

Then they planned to kill you. They thought you were easy to handle. I guarantee they've done this many

times before-to other women and maybe men."

He picked up a knife from the road and placed it gently in Renata's hand.

"Now," he said calmly, "do to them what they wanted to do to you."

Renata gripped the knife.

She looked at the young men who were staring at her now-not with lust, not with arrogance, but with terror.

Their smug smiles were gone.

Their bullying confidence was gone.

Only fear remained.

Total fear.

Renata's hand shook as the knife rested in her palm.

"I... I can't," she whispered, tears falling again.

"Renata," Alex said, his voice low but

carrying clearly to everyone around them, almost like a whisper. "When they had power over you, they wanted to ruin you and kill you ever while you begged for mercy. Now you hold the power, and they're the ones begging. What do you think you should do to them?"

Renata stepped closer. She pressed the knife's tip against one of the young man's stomach.

"Please," the young man begged, his voice shaking. "I—I was just following my friends. I didn't hurt you."

"Then next time," she said coldly, "don't follow the wrong people."

The blade slowly pushed into his stomach.

His face drained of all color. He began to cry, sobbing uncontrollably.

Nearby, other young men watched in horror—some trembling, some already wetting themselves in sheer panic.

"Please..... please..... please forgive us," they begged, their voices breaking.

Their bodies wouldn't move. Terror had locked them in place as they watched death approach—slow, inevitable.

They knew their lives would end here today, all because of things they once thought were fun, harmless, a joke.

"To show kindness to the cruel is to betray the innocent."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 543[1,332 words]

Renata walked forward despite the pain burning through her body. Each step sent a sharp ache through her hips, but she didn't slow down. She stared straight into the eyes of the young man who had tried to rape her.

"Remember my face," she said coldly. "Remember what you tried to do to me."

She drove the knife into another man's stomach.

"This is the karma you earned."

She moved down the line, stabbing them one by one. Her voice stayed steady, flat, terrifying.

"Remember the price of touching a duke's daughter."

"Please—please," one man sobbed, his voice breaking. "I don't want to die."

Renata's eyes filled with tears, but her hand didn't shake.

"Neither do I," she said quietly. "I didn't want to die either. But you forced your hands on me. You chose this first. I'm only finishing it."

Another man was stabbed. None of them could move. An invisible pressure wrapped around their bodies, paralyzing them with pure fear-Alex's unseen force holding every one of them completely still.

"No-please," one of them cried. "I have a family."

"So do I," Renata answered. "I have a father. I have a mother."

She plunged the knife into another stomach.

"Why can't we live a decent life," she whispered, "without hurting others?"

Seventeen men fell, one after another.

Only then did Renata stop.

She dropped to her knees and broke down, sobbing.

Alex released his invisible grip. The seventeen men clutching their bleeding stomachs lay helpless on the ground.

Alex stepped forward.

"All of you," he roared. "You have ten to thirty minutes to call for help. Make it in time, and you might save your souls. Fail—" his eyes went cold, "—and you can report directly to the Creators for being complete trash."

No one answered. Some of them, shaking and panicked, activated their bracelets and called for emergency medical support.

One call went through.

Within seconds, a medical drone descended, hovering over a wounded man as scanners lit up his body.

"Stab wound detected," the drone announced calmly.

"I am accessing the patient's bracelet records to determine the cause of injury."

The drone linked to the man's bracelet.

"Confirmed. You were stabbed by Renata Winter due to attempted assault against the daughter of a duke. Sanction: death."

"No!" The man screamed.

"You are currently alive," the drone continued evenly. "Emergency treatment will be administered. Your surviving organs will be preserved for medical redistribution to patients in need."

The young man's face drained of all color.

"No..... please—no! I'm still alive! Please, help me!" he screamed.

The drone began its work as the man sobbed in terror.

"You are a common citizen who attempted to harm a noble," the system replied coldly. "The law is enforced by your own actions."

Those who had already managed to call emergency services stood frozen in shock. They had been waiting for death.

Waiting for the drones to harvest their organs as payment for what they had done.

Some of the young men clutched their torn stomachs and staggered away from the scene.

A few barely made it several steps before their legs gave out and they collapsed onto the road, bleeding and gasping.

One of the medical drones peeled away from the group and floated toward Renata.

"We will take care of you, Lady Renata," it said in a calm, professional tone. "We will take care of you, Lady Renata. Please remain at ease."

"Alex..." Renata whispered, suddenly remembering how he had shielded her.

No answer.

She turned her head sharply, pain tearing through her body.

"He was here," she said, breath shaking. "He was right here."

The drone paused, then replied, "No registered guardian detected."

Renata laughed once, bitter and cracked.

"Of course he's gone," she murmured. "He always leaves after saving me."

Her lips trembled despite her effort to stay composed.

"So he saved me again," she whispered.

Then anger flared through the tears.

"And I didn't even get to thank him."

Then she cursed loudly as the ambulance finally glided to a stop beside her.

"Damn it!" Renata snapped. "I just walked out of the hospital, and now I'm being dragged right back in. And if Gerhard dares to show his face, I swear I'll kill that bastard."

With a deep stab wound on her ass and several fractured bones, she was forced to remain hospitalized for days, barely able to move, sleeping through waves of pain and medication.

The assault on Renata by a group of young men quickly became headline news across local Winchester channels. The story spread fast-violent, scandalous, impossible to ignore.

Meanwhile, at the Wolfsbane family mansion, the household gathered under Baroness Wolfsbane's urgent summons. The atmosphere was tense as they discussed their response to the news.

"We must visit Renata at the hospital," one of them said firmly. "This is the perfect chance to grow closer to the Winter family."

Several heads nodded immediately in agreement.

Baroness Wolfsbane's eyes

gleamed. This was an opportunity. A rare opening. If played correctly, they

could turn this, tragedy into a heroic

stage for Gerhard-reshape the

narrative, push him closer to

Renata's heart.

She stood decisively.

"Hurry," she ordered. "We're going to the hospital. Before another family uses this chance to get close to her first."

Gerhard said nothing.

He didn't dare.

He was walking on thin ice, his guilt pressing down on his chest like a blade. He could only swallow it all, clench his teeth, and follow his

family to the hospital

full

Well that he was the true cause of everything that had happened.

On the way to the hospital, Gerhard rehearsed his lies again and again.

Ten reasons for why he shoved Renata forward and ran.

Another ten for why he ignored her call.

Twenty excuses in total. Every one of them sounded reasonable to him.

He just didn't know if Renata would accept a single word.

Baroness Wolfsbane studied Gerhard. "You seem pale."

"I'm fine," he lied.

Inside, his chest felt split open.

The Baroness spoke lightly, "Be charming. Be supportive."

Gerhard followed, heart pounding.

Because no one there knew the truth-

That every step he took toward the hospital felt like walking back to the crime he caused.

The moment he entered the hospital room and saw Renata lying on the bed, pale and wounded, Gerhard acted fast.

Before she could speak-before she could accuse him he rushed forward, his face twisted into practiced shock.

"Renata, are you alright?" he said urgently. "I was just about to call my family and bring a team to rescue you!"

"Rescue me?" Renata's lips curled into a cold, bitter smile. "You almost got me killed."

Gerhard panicked. "Please don't misunderstand me," he said quickly. "I was trying to draw them away. They were after me, not you. I thought they wouldn't hurt you.

You're a high noble! Duke's daughter."

Renata blinked. "That was your plan?"

"Yes!"

She nodded slowly. "So your strategy was...

leave me alone with criminals and trust their manners?"

Gerhard opened his mouth. "What else was I supposed to do?"

She smiled faintly. "Stay."

The room went quiet.

Gerhard swallowed. "That... wasn't an option."

Renata nodded. "Of course it wasn't. Running is much safer-especially when someone else is slower."

"Thank you—for understanding," Gerhard said.

"Come closer," Renata replied.

Gerhard's heart relaxed. He thought he had succeeded. Thought he had been forgiven.

He stepped to her bedside.

Renata's fist shot out.

Crack.

Her punch smashed straight into his nose. Blood burst out instantly as Gerhard screamed and stumbled back.

"Gerhard!" Baroness Wolfsbane cried out in shock. "Renata-what did you do to

Gerhard?"

"Why don't you ask this bastard

what he did? Renata shouted, her

voice sharp with fury. "He's the reason I'm lying here! If Sofina were it's my best friend would see already called my father and wiped

out the entire Wolfsbane family!"

The room froze.

Baroness Wolfsbane turned slowly toward Gerhard, her eyes hard.

"Explain," she demanded. "What did you do to Renata?"

"I didn't do anything!" Gerhard yelled defensively.

"I took her to dinner. Some men harassed her, so I stepped in to protect her. But

they came back there were twenty of them, and I was alone! I ran to get help!" Baroness Wolfsbane turned back to Renata, her tone firm and condescending.

"Renata, my grandson was trying to help you. You shouldn't have hit him. You should be thanking him. Rewarding him."

Renata laughed a sharp, dangerous sound.

"Wonderful," she said coldly. "The great Wolfsbane family. You cause me suffering, then come here to accuse me."

Her eyes burned as she stared them down.

"If I don't see the Wolfsbane family destroyed by the Winter family," she said slowly, "then my name is not Renata Winter."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 544[1,413 words]

The moment Renata vowed to destroy the Wolfsbane family, the room froze.

Every member of the Wolfsbane household stood stunned, their minds blank.

Baroness Wolfsbane felt the blood drain from her face. She had come here to force Gerhard into becoming Duke Winter's son-in-law-not to invite Duke Winter's wrath and wipe her family off the map.

Her voice trembled as she spoke, trying to salvage what little control she had left.

"Renata, please don't be like this. You are Sofina's best friend. You should be kind to Gerhard."

Renata's eyes turned icy.

"Kind?" she snapped, spitting straight into Gerhard's face. "Kind to the man who nearly got me killed?"

Her voice dropped, sharp and venomous. "I don't want to be kind. I want to destroy the entire Wolfsbane family. Because of him. So what are you going to do about it?"

"Renata!" Baron Wolfsbane growled, rage surging through him. How dare this woman threaten the Wolfsbane name so openly?

But Renata no longer paid him any attention.

She lifted her wrist and tapped her bracelet. A call request flashed and connected.

"Who are you calling?" Baroness Wolfsbane asked, her chest tightening with dread.

"None of your business," Renata replied coldly.

The air shifted.

A three-dimensional screen unfolded in front of them. Duke Winter's face appeared, stern and imposing, his presence alone enough to crush the room into silence.

"Daughter," Duke Winter said. "Why are you calling?"

"Father..." Renata's voice broke. Tears streamed down her face as the composure she had been forcing finally shattered. "I went to Winchester. And the Wolfsbane family dare to bully me-"

She told him everything.

Every accusation. Every humiliation. Every threat. Every lie.

As Renata spoke, the color drained from the Wolfsbane family's faces. Pale didn't begin to describe it. They looked like people already standing at the edge of execution.

"Father," Renata said, "I want you to send people to destroy the entire Wolfsbane family. How dare they come here and blame everything on me?"

Baroness Wolfsbane's legs began to shake uncontrollably.

If Duke Winter truly wanted to erase a small baronial family like hers, it wouldn't take days or even hours.

Minutes would be enough.

Panic took over.

Without hesitation, Baroness Wolfsbane turned and slapped Gerhard hard across the face, the sound echoing through the hall.

"Grandma?!" Gerhard cried out, stunned.

"Don't call me that!" Baroness Wolfsbane screamed. She yanked her cane free and brought it down on him again and again. Each strike landed with vicious force.

"You damned bastard!" she shrieked as she beat him. "How dare you hurt Renata! How dare you lie to me? How dare you drag the Wolfsbane family into this mess!"

Gerhard collapsed to the floor, blood running down his face.

"It was you," she spat, striking him again. "You were the one who harmed Renata!"

"Grandma," Gerhard tried to protest.

His words never finished.

His uncle lunged forward first. Then his own father joined in. Fists came down hard, knocking Gerhard off his feet. He hit the floor, and they didn't stop. Boots followed—kicking him over and over as he curled in on himself.

"Why don't you just die?" one of them shouted. "You dared to lie to all of us! Just go die!"

An older man stepped in and struck Gerhard again, his blow heavy and merciless. Baroness Wolfsbane rushed forward and dropped into a deep bow before Renata. "We are truly sorry for what Gerhard did to you," she said urgently. "We didn't know he was such a damned bastard. You can kill him—we won't say a word. But please,

let the rest of us go. We truly didn't know what this bastard was doing."

On the screen, Duke Winter's eyes narrowed. He understood this tactic well.

Cut off the tail to save the lizard.

He spoke calmly, his voice carrying quiet authority.

"Daughter, what do you think?"

Renata looked at Gerhard.

His face was swollen and blood-soaked. Tears streamed down his cheeks as he begged silently for mercy.

But when the Wolfsbane family saw that Renata's expression remained cold and furious, they hit him even harder.

A sharp crack echoed through the room.

Two of Gerhard's teeth flew out. His nose bent sideways with a sickening snap.

"Miss Renata," Baroness Wolfsbane said desperately. "If this still isn't enough, I will kill this bastard myself—right here in front of you. Just please, let our family go. For Sofina's sake."

Duke Winter spoke again.

"Daughter, I believe this small baronial family will never dare to cross you again. How about letting them go for Sofina. She is from the Wolfsbane family too. If you punish them too harshly, you may damage your relationship with Sofina."

Renata inhaled slowly.

"You're right, Father."

She lifted her gaze to Baroness Wolfsbane, her voice sharp and absolute.

"I want all of you out of my room. Now."

"Yes yes!" Baroness Wolfsbane answered immediately.

She turned and fled. The others followed in panic, dragging Gerhard's broken body across the floor as they rushed out.

The next morning, the moment Sofina woke up, her bracelet rang.

It was her grandmother-Baroness Wolfsbane.

"Sofina Scheinwald," the old woman said, "go to Count Lorenz Stahl immediately. He is calling about our five-million-dollar debt. He's already trying to cut off our supply lines. If this continues it will seriously damage our connection with the Eden Group."

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Sofina spoke quickly, "Grandma, we still have some money from the Eden Group.

Why don't we just pay off the debt?"

Baroness Wolfsbane let out a long, weary sigh before answering.

"Sofina Scheinwald, the family is trapped between internal chaos and external pressure. We need liquid. cash for emergencies. This debt has existed for more than twenty years. It's a business debt- it flows in and out. Don't worry about it. What we need now is time. Please go and speak with Count Lorenz Stahl."

Sofina hesitated, her brows knitting together. After a moment, she nodded reluctantly.

"Alright, Grandma. I'll try to see him."

"Very good," Baroness Wolfsbane said, relief clear in her voice. "I knew you could do it."

The call ended. Sofina stared at the wall, her mood sinking.

Alex noticed immediately.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

Sofina briefly explained her grandmother's request.

Alex frowned.

"If you have the money, why not just pay him?"

Sofina sighed and rubbed her temple, exhaustion flashing across her face.

"Once that cash goes into Grandma's hands, it'll never come back out. She's too stingy. Now even our mineral supply is at risk." Her voice hardened. "I'll go talk to Count Lorenz Stahl myself."

"I'll go with you," Alex said without hesitation.

"No, you won't," Sofina replied firmly. "Who brings their husband to a business meeting? It looks unprofessional."

She paused, then added lightly,

"Just stay home. If you're bored, go out. There's nothing much to do around here anyway."

Seeing her resolve, Alex fell silent.

He knew his wife well. Sofina had always been independent, proud, and fiercely committed to building her own achievements. She wanted her success to come from her own hands.

There was no harm in letting her try.

If things went wrong, he would be there-quietly, from the shadows.

After breakfast, Sofina scheduled an appointment with Count Lorenz Stahl. She stepped into her VÖXEN Seraphine and flew to his residence alone.

Count Lorenz Stahl's territory lay on the outskirts of Winchester City. A massive factory and an enormous mine spread across thousands of acres dominating the landscape.. The fund radiated power industrial cold, and oppressive.

Sofina's VÖXEN Seraphine glided through the air with perfect control, then

descended smoothly and came to a precise stop before the doors of Count Lorenz Stahl's mansion.

The moment Count Lorenz saw her, his face lit up with an exaggerated, enthusiastic smile. He strode forward, reached out, and clasped her hand.

"Miss Sofina, welcome!" he said warmly. "I should have sent a car to pick you up.

I'm terribly sorry for the oversight."

Sofina returned the handshake politely.

"Count Stahl," she replied calmly.

She tried to pull her hand back.

He didn't let go.

Instead, his grip tightened-slowly, deliberately.

Sofina had to use force to free herself. She stepped back at once, her eyes sharp and guarded.

"Count Stahl, you—"

He laughed awkwardly and scratched the back of his head, putting on a sheepish expression.

"I'm truly sorry," he said. "I've heard countless rumors about how stunning Miss

Wolfsbane is. Meeting you in person... I was completely captivated. Please forgive me if I frightened you."

His bluntness, paired with the immediate apology, eased Sofina's tension—just a little.

Count Lorenz gestured toward the mansion.

"Miss Wolfsbane, please. Let's talk in my study."

He escorted her inside. The heavy door closed behind them with a dull thud.

The moment it did, something dark flickered in Count Lorenz's eyes.

He quietly locked the door.

Then he motioned for Sofina to sit on the sofa, his smile never leaving his face.

Keeping his expression calm and composed, Count Lorenz subtly tapped his device and sent a message:

"I have Marquis Alex Saint-Claire's wife. Just as you command, I'll ruin his woman and make her pay for what Alex Saint-Claire did to you."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 545[1,131 words]

In another place, Katarina sat with her father, Otto Rosenheim, inside a study.

Otto leaned back in his chair, his fingers steepled.

"Have you successfully taken Heinrich out of prison?" he asked calmly.

"Yes," Katarina replied without hesitation. "If nothing goes wrong, he'll be released in a few days."

She paused, then added, "Father, Count Lorenz just messaged me. He has Sofina -the wife of that Alex bastard."

Otto didn't even blink. He gave a slow, indifferent nod.

"Tell him to kill the woman."

Katarina frowned slightly. "What's your plan?"

"Katarina," Otto said coldly, "in the past, Marquis Saint-Claire and his entire family were destroyed because they offended someone far more powerful than they ever should have."

Katarina's lips slowly curled into a knowing smile.

"More powerful than a Marquis..." she said softly. "Then it has to be a Duke, right? One of the great Dukes who hates Alex Saint-Claire."

"You don't need to know who," Otto said coldly. "All you need to understand is this: the last time they sent an assassin, that bastard escaped because someone was secretly protecting him. This time is different. They've set a trap with full backing behind it. No matter who Alex comes with, no matter who tries to protect him, they will all be destroyed together. This time, nothing survives."

Meanwhile, at the Stahl mansion.

Count Lorenz greeted Sofina with a practiced smile as she entered the hall. "Miss Sofina," he said pleasantly, "may I ask what brings you here today?" Sofina Scheinwald forced a timid smile, though tension tightened her shoulders. "Frankly speaking, Mr. Stahl," she said carefully, "our families have done business for decades. Suddenly demanding full repayment of all debts at once... it's difficult for our accounting department to absorb. Please, for the sake of our long relationship."

Lorenz's smile vanished. His expression hardened.

"Not planning to pay your debt, are you?"

He folded his arms, his voice turning cold.

"Miss Wolfsbane, you should know my company's policy. We never operate on credit. No payment, no materials. That has always been the rule."

He paused, then sneered faintly.

"My father once had a good relationship with Baron Wolfsbane. Because of that, he made exceptions. But the Baron is dead. My father is dead too. I am not bound by their sentiments."

He stepped closer, his tone sharpening.

"Now you either pay every coin you owe, or we report this to the government. I believe they'll find a way to take the money back-by force if necessary."

Sofina's face paled.

"Please don't do that," she said quickly, bowing her head slightly. "You know we're currently collaborating with Eden Group—the largest corporation in Winchester. They will never default on their payments. Once the project funds are settled, we will repay you immediately."

Count Lorenz stared at her in silence, his eyes dark and calculating.

"It's because of that," Count Lorenz said coldly. "We heard you received a massive payment from Eden Group-nearly a hundred million dollars. Yet you don't seem eager to settle the twenty million you owe us. So tell me, Miss Wolfsbane, what's the real problem here?"

"But our long-standing relationship—" Sofina began.

"I already told you," Lorenz cut in sharply. "My father is dead. Whatever favors he gave your family died with him. I won't extend credit. You pay first, then I'll prepare the mineral supply for your collaboration with Eden Group."

Sofina Scheinwald pressed her lips together, disappointment flashing across her face. The answer was clear. She stood slowly.

"I'm sorry to have troubled you today, Mr. Stahl," she said quietly. "I'll return and speak with my grandmother. We'll see if we can settle the debt as soon as possible so our workers can continue their operations."

She turned to leave.

"Hey-Miss Wolfsbane," Count Lorenz said suddenly.

She paused.

"What's the rush?" he added, his tone changing. "There is another way... if you want to keep the debt arrangement like before."

Sofina frowned and turned back.

"What do you mean, Mr. Stahl?"

Lorenz narrowed his eyes, his gaze roaming over her without restraint.

Truth be told, Sofina was breathtaking.

So beautiful it made his breath hitch.

"You came all this way with a request," he said slowly. "We can talk this through. I'm not as unreasonable as you think."

Sofina hesitated, then sat back down, hope sparking in her chest.

"Mr. Stahl," she asked carefully, "will you continue supplying the materials?"

"Yes," he replied with a nod. "But first- you've been here for quite some time, and I haven't even offered you a drink."

He stood and walked to the cupboard, retrieving an ornate teapot.

"I have a very expensive tea from Xia," he said casually. "It's said to relieve stress and improve the skin. Extremely rare. Only royalty used to drink it. You should try it."

As the tea brewed, a rich, soothing aroma filled the room.

Lorenz smiled as he set the teacup in front of Sofina.

What he didn't tell her was the truth: it wasn't just tea. It was laced with a powerful aphrodisiac—one that stripped away restraint and twisted desire, forcing any woman who drank it to crave the nearest man.

"Relax, Miss Wolfsbane," Count Lorenz said softly. "Let's have some tea—and talk things out."

Sofina Scheinwald was parched after all the talking. Without thinking, she lifted the teacup and drained it in one go.

"Thank you, Count Lorenz," Sofina said, setting the cup down. "Hmm... it's good. Very pleasant."

Count Lorenz's pulse spiked as he watched her empty the cup.

It worked.

Now he could have her first—then take photos and videos as proof that he had done his job" and send them to his superiors. With their backing, even if Sofina died in this room, no, one would dare blame him

Better yet, he could lock her away in his underground cells.

A woman like her—kept, controlled, available whenever he wanted. His Sex Slave!

The thought made him dizzy with excitement.

His gaze burned as it dragged over her-long legs, narrow waist, flawless curves,

that beautiful face. Desire poured off her like heat from fire, and his heart hammered harder with every second.

He had hit the jackpot.

He lifted his own cup and drank as well, the tea stoking the fire in his blood, sharpening his hunger, steadying his resolve for the long night he imagined ahead.

Just thinking about touching her made his entire body feel like it was burning alive.

Then-

Something went wrong.

Sofina stiffened.

A sudden, overwhelming heat surged through her body, rushing straight to her head. Her breath grew uneven as her eyes drifted to Count Lorenz. For a terrifying moment, he looked... attractive. Desirable.

She bit her lip hard, trying to stay clear.

"Count Lorenz," she said, her voice unsteady, "something's wrong with my body. It

feels... hot. All of a sudden."

"Good," Count Lorenz replied smoothly, his smile turning sharp. "If you want your materials delivered without any problems, we can start by having sex first. What do you think?"

"No, I must not," Sofina said faintly, yet her hands already moving toward her clothes.

The most terrible betrayal is when the body turns against the soul.

Count Lorenz's grin widened.

This time, his plan had truly worked.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 546[1,227 words]

Sofina's skin burned as if fire ran beneath it. Heat pooled low in her body, fierce and humiliating, stealing her breath.

What was happening to her?

A terrifying thought slammed into her mind.

Did Count Lorenz drug her?

She looked at Count Lorenz, and without warning a violent urge surged through her -to want him, to crave him, to have sex with him-this middle-aged man who was objectively ugly, yet twisted by her thoughts into a handsome prince.

She understood it then.

Her mind had been compromised.

Sofina tried to stand, forcing her palms against the armrest. Her legs buckled instantly.

They felt weak, useless, like they no longer belonged to her. From the way her body refused to obey, escape was impossible. She was trapped.

Watching her struggle, Count Lorenz smiled.

It was slow. Satisfied.

"Miss Wolfsbane," he said smoothly, his voice thick with delight. "Everyone in Winchester calls you the most beautiful woman alive. Your reputation is legendary. Truly." His eyes roamed over her without shame. "I was honored to meet you today."

He leaned closer, his smile turning ugly.

"No," he corrected himself softly. "I'm honored that you're about to become my sex slave."

With a sudden, brutal motion, he grabbed her clothing and ripped it apart.

"Come on," he murmured, his grip tightening as he moved to her side and seized her arm. "Stop fighting yourself. Just follow your desire."

Sofina's heart slammed wildly in her chest.

"Help..." she whispered, her voice breaking as the last of her strength slipped away. She knew it. She couldn't protect herself anymore.

Then-

The entire mansion shook.

A thunderous roar tore through the walls, heavy and violent, like the sky itself had cracked open.

"You bastard-how dare you touch my wife!"

The voice was wrath given sound.

Alex hovered above the mansion, suspended in the air like a god of judgment descending from the sky.

Count Lorenz stiffened.

An invisible force crushed down on him, so heavy his organs screamed. Blood surged up his throat, and he nearly vomited it out. Staggering, he rushed to the window and looked up.

There he was.

Alex.

Count Lorenz threw the window open and laughed, wiping his mouth as if amused. "Marquis Alexander Saint-Claire," he said, grinning. "I'm already tired of waiting for you."

Alex shot forward, rage blazing in his eyes.

"You dared to touch my wife."

But before he could reach him—

A figure burst from the opposite direction.

The ambush struck without warning.

The impact was monstrous. Alex was smashed out of the air like a missile, his body hurled downward. He slammed into the ground below with explosive force, the earth cracking open beneath him in a spiderweb of destruction.

Dust and debris erupted sky-high.

Alex forced himself upright-

And in that instant, another presence appeared behind him.

Steel flashed.

A sword swung toward his back with terrifying speed.

Alex reacted on instinct, drawing on his inner energy, hardening his body to

withstand the blow. Power surged around him like armor—

But the strike was vicious.

Fast.

Razor-sharp.

And unforgiving.

Pain finally caught up with him.

Alex felt his body tearing apart from the inside. For the first time in many years-

after countless battles he was wounded. Truly wounded.

Before he could steady himself, another presence exploded behind him.

A brutal kick slammed into his back.

The impact shattered his protective energy like glass. A sickening crack echoed through the air as both of Alex's arms snapped. His body was hurled backward, uncontrollable, crashing straight into the mansion behind him.

Stone and steel gave way.

The wall collapsed as his body punched through it, leaving behind a massive, gaping hole.

Alex lay amid the ruins, blood soaking his torn clothes. Every bone screamed. His arms hung uselessly. His legs barely responded.

Still, he forced himself up.

Minutes earlier, an anonymous message had flashed on his communicator.

Sophia is under attack at Count Lorenz's mansion.

He hadn't hesitated. He had flown here at full speed, abandoning all caution.

And now-

Alex looked up.

Three elderly figures hovered in the sky above him, gazes cold and amused, watching him like prey trapped in a snare.

It clicked.

This was never about Sophia.

This was a trap.

They had used her to lure him here.

"Who are you?" Alex demanded.

One of the old men stepped forward. He wore no shirt, his body hardened and corded with muscle, fists clenched like forged iron.

"You don't need to know who we

are," the man said coldly. "But you, Marquis Saint-Claire-you should have stayed in whatever hole you were hiding in. Why come back to Prussia just to seek your own death?"

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Flames ignited around his fist.

Alex's eyes narrowed.

Cultivators.

From Xia.

But how could cultivators from Xia cross into Prussian territory?

There was no time to think.

The old man lunged.

The air screamed as he attacked.

Alex drew a deep breath and released everything he had left. Power surged violently through his body as he threw his strongest punch.

Their fists collided midair.

The shockwave detonated outward like a bomb.

Every window in Count Lorenz's mansion shattered at once. Glass rained down in glittering shards. Walls split, foundations groaned, and deep cracks raced through the Structure

Before Alex could recover-

Steel flashed behind him.

Another old man appeared out of nowhere, sword thrusting straight toward his spine.

Alex twisted instinctively, barely avoiding a fatal strike-

Too slow.

A third figure dropped from above.

A heel slammed into Alex's shoulder with devastating force.

There was no time to evade.

The kick crushed him downward.

Alex was driven into the ground like a meteor, the earth exploding beneath him as a deep crater formed on impact.

Dust rose. Stone collapsed.

And Alex lay at the center of it-broken, bleeding, and surrounded.

Alex trusted himself in a one-on-one fight. If it came down to that, their strength was close enough for him to gamble on victory.

But not like this.

The other two were at least on his level as well.

One against three.

The shirtless old man sneered, fists clenched.

"Sword Master," he barked, clearly irritated. "My fist alone is enough to kill him. Why did you both jump in?"

"Shut up, Fist King," the old man with

the sword snapped coldly. "We don't have all day. LEPIS

Highness paid us

to kill this insect, then we kill him quickly and go back to our harem."

Before Alex could even draw another breath, the third man struck again.

A savage kick came crashing down on him as he lay on the ground.

Blood burst from Alex's mouth. A sharp, hollow pain tore through his chest as his ribs shattered one by one.

"Sword master, cut off his head," the third man said calmly. "Take it back to His Highness, and we're done here."

The Sword Master stepped forward, blade gleaming.

Alex lay there, soaked in blood.

Every part of him screamed.

Looking at the three figures closing in, he finally understood.

He wasn't leaving this place alive.

There was no escape. No miracle coming.

He would die here.

Regret flooded him all at once-regret for wasted years, regret for mistakes in his training, regret that he hadn't been strong enough to protect Sofina... or himself.

His fingers trembled as he pulled out a hidden elixir pill.

His last resort.

He swallowed it without hesitation.

If he was going to die, then at least one of them would die with him.

At that moment, the Sword Master lunged.

The blade pierced straight into Alex's chest.

He didn't dodge.

He couldn't.

But the instant the sword went in, Alex's hand shot up. He seized the Sword Master

by the throat, eyes burning with madness, and released everything he had left.

Bones cracked.

The Sword Master screamed in terror.

"Help !"

"You dare!" the Fist King roared. "Insect!"

The Fist King and the man known for his lightning kicks attacked at the same time, their killing blows already on the way.

Alex knew the truth.

He would die here.

But if fate demanded his life—

Then he would drag at least one of these old monsters down with him, straight into the afterlife.

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 547[1,219 words]

"Princess Sofina... are you all right?"

The voice cut through the fog in her head.

Sofina blinked hard. Her vision swam, then snapped into focus. An elderly man stood over her, tall and broad, his presence heavy and imposing.

"I've already administered the antidote," he said calmly. "You should be regaining clarity by now."

She flexed her fingers. Then her arms. The burning heat was gone. The overwhelming urge had vanished. Her body answered her again, fully under her control.

Her heart slammed as she turned her head.

Count Lorenz lay sprawled on the floor.

Blood pooled beneath him, dark and spreading. There was no movement. No breath.

He was unmistakably dead.

"Who are you?" Sofina asked, her voice tight.

The old man stepped back and bowed deeply. "Princess Sofina. You activated the emergency signal. I came immediately to secure your safety."

"Emergency signal?" Her eyes dropped to the bracelet on her wrist.

She didn't remember pressing anything.

But fragments rushed back—panic, raw fear, the drug blurring her thoughts. In that chaos, her hand could have activated it to save her life.

"I... I don't think I did it consciously," Sofina said slowly. "If it was a mistake, can I cancel it?"

The elder man straightened, his expression firm.

"Princess, once the signal is activated, it is recognized as a formal summons to return to the royal family. From this moment forward, you no longer act under your former surname. You resume the royal name."

Her blood ran cold.

"But I pressed it while drugged," Sofina said sharply. "That can't represent my true decision. I never chose to return."

She clenched her fists.

If her status as princess was officially reinstated, everything from her former life would be erased.

Everything.

Including her marriage to Alex.

The royal family would never allow her to remain with him. She would be turned into

a political asset—married off to whoever the King deemed useful.

Before the old man could respond-

A violent shock tore through the mansion.

The walls trembled. Dust rained from the ceiling. The floor shuddered beneath their feet.

"What was that?" Sofina demanded, panic surging as another impact rippled through the building.

The elder man's eyes narrowed. "It appears your husband came here to rescue you. Unfortunately... this place was a trap."

Her heart stopped.

"Three fighters from the Prussian Hundred-Rank have been deployed," he

continued. "Their objective is to eliminate him."

"What?!"

Sofina spun and ran to the window.

Outside, the courtyard was chaos.

Alex was there.

Not fighting-being overwhelmed.

Blows crashed into him from all sides. His body staggered, blood spraying as he was driven back again and again.

Her breath caught in her throat.

The elder man stepped up beside her, his gaze steady. "Your husband is formidable. Few can last even seconds against Hundred-Rank fighters."

His voice lowered.

"He's holding his ground. Fighting on their level."

Sofina's hands pressed against the glass as her chest tightened.

Alex was out there.

Bleeding.

Alone.

And everything she feared was crashing down on her at once.

"But he's facing three of them at once," The old man sneered. "He'll die."

She could see it clearly now.

Alex was getting hit.

Blow after blow slammed into him. His body reeled. Blood flew. Each strike drove him closer to collapse.

"Stop them!" Sofina shouted.

"That depends," the old man replied coolly. "You just stated that you activated the emergency signal while under the influence of drugs. That means you were not acting as a princess."

His gaze hardened.

"And if you are not a princess, then I have no obligation to obey your command."

Sofina turned to him, panic tearing through her chest.

"Please," she said. "Help him."

"No."

The word was absolute.

"Unless," the elder man continued, "you declare that you are ready to return as Princess of the Royal Family. Only then will I follow your order."

Sofina froze.

She understood the price instantly.

If she became a princess again, she would lose Alex.

There would be no marriage. No future. The royal family would erase her personal life and use her as a political tool.

But outside-

Alex was struck again.

Three fighters. No mercy. His life was hanging by a thread.

"If your husband doesn't die here," the old man said coldly, "he has the potential to reach Hundred-Rank himself. It's unfortunate. Truly. Dying in a place like this." "Help him!" Sofina screamed.

"No."

Her heart shattered.

"I command you," Sofina roared, her voice breaking, "as Princess of the Royal Family!"

She knew it the moment the words left her mouth.

This was the only way to save him.

"Yes, Princess," the elder man answered immediately.

He drew a gun.

He fired.

The shot streaked toward Alex-

But it didn't hit him.

Instead, a massive burst of energy exploded around Alex, forming a blazing plasma barrier just as the Fist King and the Lightning Kick closed in.

Their attacks slammed into the shield.

And stopped.

The impact sent shockwaves rippling through the courtyard.

"What is this?" the Fist King barked, turning sharply.

His eyes locked onto the elder man.

The old man touched his bracelet. A three-dimensional royal emblem unfolded in the air-brilliant, unmistakable.

"That man," he said evenly, "is under the protection of Princess Sofina. For one day."

The Fist King and the Lightning Kick exchanged looks.

They understood immediately.

With the royal family involved, they could not kill Alex today.

But one day.

That meant tomorrow.

Still, the prey was right in front of them.

Letting go now felt like spitting out meat already in their mouths.

The Fist King stepped forward, fists clenched.

"We need to kill this man now," he said coldly. "We hope you're not planning to make things difficult for us."

The elder man laughed.

It was low. Mocking.

His hand slid to a small knife at his waist. With a lazy flick of his wrist, he sent it flying.

"You're nothing but a Hundred-Rank fighter," he said coldly. "And you dare speak to me without showing respect?"

The Fist King felt something sharp-

Then it was too late.

Before he could dodge, his body split apart. Blood burst outward as his upper half slid away from his lower body.

He died without even understanding how.

The Lightning Kick stared in horror.

He watched the Fist King collapse, dead before he could even react.

Fear punched the air out of his lungs.

He turned and ran.

He had never imagined there existed a man who could kill a Hundred-Rank fighter with a single move.

Sofina rushed toward Alex, who lay unconscious inside the glowing energy barrier.

The elder man stepped in front of her and stopped her short.

"That shield will remain for several hours

he said calmly. It will

him from all harm

protect

you touch it,

you'll be burned."

Moments later, the sky roared.

A line of flying cars descended toward Count Lorenz's mansion and landed in perfect formation before Sofina.

The doors opened.

Ten soldiers in royal family uniforms stepped forward. In unison, they knelt.

"Princess Sofina," they said solemnly, "welcome back to the royal family."

Sofina understood then.

Her life would never be the same again.

She looked at Alex.

From this moment on, he would become her past.

Alex was unconscious.

But somewhere deep inside, one truth settled into him.

He had spent too long believing he was unbeatable in Estoria.

Maybe he ruled the Prussian underground.

But against true Prussian ranker power-he was still far from the top.

There was always another sky above the sky.

When Alex finally woke up, white light blinded him.

The smell of disinfectant filled his lungs.

He was in a hospital bed.

Countess Marlana von Adler sat beside him.

"Where am I?" Alex asked hoarsely.

"Winchester Prime Hospital," Marlana said calmly. "VIP ward. Your

body needs several days to recover. Multiple broken bones, The doctors were shocked you were still alive."

Alex fell silent, trying to piece together what had happened.

"Sire Alex," Marlana said softly, "there's something you need to hear."

"What is it?" he asked.

"Estoria has officially declared war on Prussia," she said. "They're not waiting a year."

Her eyes hardened.

"They're moving now. Because of you."

The Almighty Dominance

Chapter 548[1,143 words]

Alex froze. His eyes widened.

"Why... why is this because of me?"

Countess Marlene folded her arms.

"Because Sofina called Eve to save you," she said. "When Eve found you, you were lying on the ground like crushed meat. Like you'd been hit by an aircraft. Bones shattered. Body torn up. Half-dead. She had no choice but to fly you straight to the hospital."

Alex's mind went blank for a second.

Then memories rushed back.

Three men.

A fight.

Blood.

One of them called someone "Master"... or something like that.

Then-darkness.

He slowly raised his wrist.

His bracelet.

The device that recorded everything.

It was gone.

His heart sank.

Countess Marlene noticed his movement and gave a small nod.

"Your bracelet was destroyed," she said.

Alex's fingers tightened.

"And everything Eve saw..." Marlene continued, her lips curving into a faint smile, "was transmitted to Estoria. To Bella."

She paused.

"Your Bella saw you broken. Dying. Covered in blood."

Her eyes sharpened.

"She was terrified. Furious. She thought you would die here. So she gathered all the governors and demanded an immediate war against Prussia."

Alex felt a sharp pain stab through his head.

Not just from his injuries.

From shame.

His weak body.

His pathetic state.

His defeat.

All of it had been exposed.

To Bella.

To Sophia.

To Lyra.

To Jasmine.

To every governor.

Everyone had seen him lying there like a beaten animal.

Humiliated.

Powerless.

He closed his eyes.

"I heard the declaration is ready," Marlene went on. "They're only waiting for the King's final decision. But the King hasn't said anything for days."

She didn't know Alex was that King.

Alex let out a slow breath.

"I think the King will order them to hold their position," he said quietly. "At least for a year. Don't worry."

Marlene shook her head.

"I don't think it will go that way."

Alex looked up.

"Why?"

She met his eyes.

"Because Estoria already sent an official declaration to Prussia," she said. "They want war."

Alex stiffened.

"What?"

"They've declared it," Marlene replied. "It's all over the media. Every Prussian citizen knows."

Alex's chest tightened.

"Then... what is Prussia's response?" he asked.

Marlene exhaled slowly.

"Let me put it this way."

She leaned back slightly.

"Imagine you're born in a city so advanced that it can launch nuclear weapons anywhere on Earth in seconds."

She looked at him steadily.

"And one day, a hidden tribe walks out of the jungle. Barefoot. Half-naked. Holding wooden spears."

She paused.

"And that tribe declares war on your country."

Her voice lowered.

"What do you think that city will do?"

Alex stared at Marlene.

From her expression, he already knew where this was going.

"They're doing nothing?" he asked quietly.

Marlene smiled.

"Not exactly," she replied. "They're treating it like the biggest joke in history."

Her voice carried faint sarcasm.

"No official response. No emergency meeting. No military alert. Because everyone knows that so-called 'primitive clan' is harmless."

She scoffed softly.

"Wooden spears? Sharpened sticks? One squad with machine guns or laser weapons could wipe them out in minutes."

Alex wasn't surprised.

Prussia had always been arrogant.

Too arrogant to see Estoria as a real threat.

In their eyes, Estoria was poor.

Backward.

Pathetic.

At best, it was just trying to attract attention.

Desperate for publicity.

And even if Estoria wanted to fight, there was another problem.

Between them and Prussia stood Xia.

A powerful nation.

A sealed wall.

Xia would never allow Estorian forces to cross its territory.

Never.

The idea itself was impossible.

Alex exhaled slowly.

"Fine," he said. "If Prussia isn't responding, that's good news."

Then, suddenly, something struck him.

He frowned.

"Where is Sofina?"

Marlene smiled knowingly.

"I knew you would ask," she said. "So I prepared something."

She tapped her bracelet.

A holographic screen appeared.

A video began to play.

On the screen was Sofina.

She stood under bright lights, wearing an elegant, luxurious gown.

Her posture was noble.

Her face was calm.

Regal.

Below her image, golden letters appeared:

"The Princess Sofina Augustus, the one and only daughter of King Wilhelm Augustus. Officially declared three days ago."

Alex froze.

His blood turned cold.

"What...?"

He stared at the screen.

"She's... a princess?"

He looked at Marlene in disbelief.

"Yes," Marlene replied calmly. "King Wilhelm Augustus donated his sperm through Prussia's Royal Reproduction Program. He has twenty-one sons. And only one daughter."

Her eyes shifted to Alex.

"That daughter is Sofina. Your wife."

Alex's breath caught in his throat.

Before he could speak, Marlene added bluntly,

"But now, you're not her husband anymore."

Alex clenched his fists.

"Why?"

Marlene looked at him seriously.

"When someone publicly acknowledges their true royal lineage, they must erase their past."

Her voice became firm.

"They abandon their former family. Their old name. Their old identity. Even their friendships."

"They start over."

"That's how noble law works."

She paused.

"By law, Sofina is now single. No husband. And under Prussian law, you are also single."

Her gaze hardened.

"You are forbidden to reveal any past relationship with her. If you do, you'll be arrested."

"You'll go to prison."

The words hit Alex like bullets.

He was silent for a long moment.

Then he nodded slowly.

"Fine," he said.

He already knew this rule.

He had stayed in Prussia for three years.

He knew their laws.

Their systems.

Their cruelty.

And he knew...

They never made exceptions.

"Then who are the people trying to kill me?" Alex asked quietly. But beneath it, anger burned.

"We don't know yet," Countess Marlene said. "But tell me

everything. Describe them. Evel

detail The people who attacked,

you

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Alex closed his eyes for a moment.

Then he began to speak.

He described them.

When he finished, Marlene fell silent.

She thought for several seconds.

IMS

Then she raised her wrist and activated her bracelet.

A transparent screen lit up.

Data flowed across it.

She searched.

Cross-checked.

Filtered.

Minutes passed.

Finally, she turned the screen toward Alex.

Nine photos appeared.

Nine faces.

Cold.

Dangerous.

Professional.

"Which ones?" Marlene asked.

Alex leaned forward.

His eyes narrowed.

"Those three," he said, pointing. "Those."

Marlene's expression darkened.

"The Iron Fist," she said. "Lightning Kick. And Sword Master."

Her voice was serious now.

"They're originally from Xia. Former elites."

"Later, they pledged loyalty to Prussia and became naturalized."

"They're ranked among the top hundred fighters in the country."

She tapped the table slowly.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

"They usually take high-paying assassination contracts," she continued. "But normal money isn't enough to hire them."

Her gaze sharpened.

"Anyone who can afford them is at least at the level of a Duke..... or even the royal family."

Alex fell silent.

His brows tightened.

His mind began to race.

Faces flashed through his thoughts.

Names.

Powerful figures.

Hidden enemies.

He searched for one answer.

Who wanted him dead?

"Sir," Marlene said quietly, breaking the silence, "do you remember asking me to investigate the destruction of the Saint-Claire family?"

"Yes." Alex nodded. "Did you find anything?"

Marlene exhaled.

"It wasn't easy," she said. "The records were erased. Buried. Almost perfectly."

"But I found someone."

"A survivor."

"Someone who still remembers what happened."

She paused.

"The

was

, the Saint-Claire

because they

supported the wrong prince in the

royal succession battle."

Her voice turned cold.

"First..... the Saint-Claires were wiped out."

"After the prince they supported lost..."

"...he was executed."

Silence filled the room.

"That was about forty years ago," she said slowly.

Alex looked at her.

"Do you think the same person is behind what happened to Saint-Claire... and what's happening to me now?"

Marlene hesitated.

For the first time, she looked uneasy.

She immediately shut down her bracelet.

All screens disappeared.

She scanned the room.

The walls.

The ceiling.

The corners.

Making sure there were no listening devices.

No spies.

No hidden surveillance.

Only after that did she look back at Alex.

"Sir," she said quietly, "I hope you give up on revenge."

Alex's eyes hardened.

"Just tell me," he replied. "I'll decide what to do after I hear it."

Marlene swallowed.

Her voice slowed.

Lowered.

"On that time, there was one prince," she said, "who was supported by four of the eight great dukes."

"That prince had the power to destroy Saint-Claire."

"And eliminate his rival."

Her eyes locked onto Alex's.

"That prince..."

"...is King Wilhelm Augustus."

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The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 549[1,462 words]

When Alex heard that his enemy might be the king himself, his heart went ice-cold. "Countess Marlene," Alex asked suddenly. "How long have I been here?"

"About twenty three hours since we found you," Marlene replied.

"Listen to me," Alex said quickly. "I guess, the only reason I'm still alive is because Sofina, as a princess, demanded my protection. The king may agree-but only for one day. Twenty-four hours."

He tried to stand, then staggered as his legs failed him.

"After those twenty-four hours," Alex continued, forcing herself upright, "he'll send people to kill me again."

A sharp, brutal pain exploded inside his body. Alex froze. In that instant, He understood.

The king had spared his life-but not his power.

His inner core was gone. Destroyed. Completely erased. The force he had cultivated for years was empty, hollowed out like a burned-out star. "...Damn it."

Alex hurriedly pulled on his clothes, his movements stiff and uneven.

"Marlene, I need to leave Prussia. Now. If the king unleashes his full force, I won't make it out of this country alive."

"Are you sure he'll go that far?" Marlene asked, her brows tightening.

Alex let out a bitter laugh. "King Wilhelm Augustus is the type who uses a nuclear strike to kill a rat. He never holds back when it comes to eliminating his enemies."

He started toward the door, pain tearing through his with every step.

"Marlene," Alex said sharply, her face pale, "call our fastest, most secure aircraft. I need to get out of Prussia immediately."

For the first time, Marlene saw real panic in Alex's eyes.

"Yes, sir," she said quickly. "The aircraft will arrive in three minutes. We need to reach the hospital rooftop. Now."

"Fine."

Alex walked out of the room in a hospital gown, her body screaming in protest. Each step felt like broken glass grinding inside him.

"Give me a secure bracelet," Alex said. "I need to make contact."

All his instincts were screaming.

If he made one wrong move now-

He would die.

Marlene pulled out a small black box and opened it. Inside was a thin, transparent band.

"Sir, this is a secured nanobot communication device," Marlene explained. "It can connect you directly to Gaia. Completely untraceable. Nano-grade communication— the latest technology we developed a decade ahead of Prussia."

Alex took the transparent band and lifted it to the back of his ear.

The moment it touched his skin, it dissolved-breaking down into countless nanobots that slipped beneath the surface and vanished into his flesh.

A screen flickered to life directly in front of Alex's eyes-projected inside his vision, wired straight to his brain. Completely invisible. Completely untraceable.

Alex connected instantly.

"Yes, Your Majesty," Logan answered.

"Logan," Alex said urgently while moving. "The one who murdered your family is King Wilhelm Augustus."

"What?" Logan gasped.

"Listen carefully," Alex said. "Tell everyone in Estoria this: I, the King of Estoria, have ordered that we will not go to war until victory is absolutely certain. No less than five years."

"Your Majesty," Logan replied, forcing himself to stay calm, "according to Bella's calculations, we only need one year to guarantee victory against Prussia."

"That's exactly the problem," Alex said coldly. "We could win in one year if we attack from both inside and outside. But the situation has changed."

"How has it changed?" Logan asked.

"That King Wilhelm Augustus controls every stream of information in Prussia," Alex said. "If he's targeting me, there's a ninety-percent chance my identity as a spy— and as the founder of Eden Group—is already exposed. He knows everything."

"...What?" Logan's voice shook. "Your cover is blown?"

"Yes-ninety percent he already sees me as a threat with the power I have right now," Alex said. "I'm on my way back to Estoria. The king tried to kill me yesterday, and I'm certain he'll try again. We need to be ready."

"Yes, Your Majesty," Logan said immediately.

By then, Alex had reached the hospital rooftop. The massive aircraft was already descending, engines roaring as it prepared to take him and Marlene aboard.

"Listen to me, Logan," Alex said as he moved toward the aircraft. "I will return to Estoria—but I'll pass through Xia first. I'll act as a decoy. Prussia must not attack Estoria. They may know I'm a spy, but they don't know I belong to Estoria. They'll assume I'm from Xia."

Alex stepped into the aircraft.

"If something happens to me," he continued, his voice steady but heavy, "you will pretend that the King of Estoria is still alive for at least five years. Make sure Prussia never learns the truth. After those five years—if I haven't returned—you can do whatever you want. Take the throne if you must."

He paused.

"But make sure Estoria is strong enough to stand against Prussia in five years." "Your Majesty," Logan said softly.

The aircraft door opened.

"I've sent the recording to the others. They'll understand," Alex said as he cut the call. He turned to Marlene, his expression hard. "You're not coming with me. Stay here. We'll talk by secure call."

"But, sir-" Marlene started.

"Don't argue," Alex snapped, then looked toward the cockpit. "Everyone out of this aircraft. I'll fly it alone."

Marlene understood instantly. Alex wasn't being reckless he was protecting them. The two human pilots hesitated, confused. Then they looked at Marlene. She gave a single, firm nod.

They said nothing more. They turned and walked back toward the hospital rooftop. Moments later, Alex took full control of the aircraft. He sealed the cabin, set the autopilot for Xia, and pushed the engines to their absolute limit.

As the aircraft tore through the sky, Alex activated his communicator.

He connected to Eve.

Inside the Prussian capital, deep within the castle's changing room, Sofina sat quietly, her posture rigid, her eyes dull with exhaustion.

Eve—the egg-shaped robot she carried with her—suddenly spoke.

"Miss Sofina. Sir Alex is requesting a call. Do you wish to accept?"

"Yes," Sofina answered immediately.

Lately, all her communications had been restricted. She knew nothing about Alex.

They had told her she must sever all contact with her former life.

The three-dimensional screen lit up.

Alex's face appeared.

"Alex," Sofina said softly, relief breaking through her restraint. "Are you okay?"

"For now, I am," Alex replied. Then his eyes sharpened. "Sofina... you really are a princess?"

"I'm sorry I hid it from you," Sofina said, guilt flooding her voice.

"No need," Alex said, smiling faintly. "It suits you. Perfectly." Then his tone shifted. "And Sofina-I need your help. Right now."

"Anything," Sofina said without hesitation. "What do you need?"

"Do you know Eden Group?" Alex asked.

"Of course," Sofina replied. "Its founder is the richest man in Prussia."

"Good," Alex said calmly. "That's me."

"...What?" Sofina froze, shock written across her face.

"I've just transferred all Eden Group assets and funds into your account," Alex continued. "Accept it."

"What?" Sofina gasped.

The thought was absurd. Alex-the man with no official title, no visible power-was the owner of Eden Group? It sounded like a cruel joke.

Then she opened her bracelet.

Her breath stopped.

Transfer documents. Ownership records. Authorization codes. And beneath them—an amount of money so vast it made her hands tremble.

"Alex!"

"Listen to me. I don't have much time," Alex said urgently. On his end, warning alerts flashed as five aircraft locked onto his position.

"You now control Eden Group-and

the entire Prussian underground," Alex continued. "I want you to let Countess Marlana and all the leaders continue their work exactly as planned. Their mission stays the same."

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He looked straight at Sofina through the screen.

"To make you the Queen of Prussia. You will defeat your brothers. You will become the sole ruler of Prussia."

"Alex-what are you saying?" Sofina said, shaken. "I don't want the throne. I don't want to be queen."

"Sofina," Alex said quietly, his voice heavy, "your father-King Wilhelm Augustus tried to kill me. I am the last descendant of the Saint-Claire family don't want to hurt you don't want to hurt your father. But he wants my entire bloodline erased."

He drew a slow breath.

"I have to run now. The only time I can stand before you again... is when you become Queen. When your father's judgment can no longer reach me."

The screen suddenly shook.

An explosion flared behind Alex's aircraft.

"Sofina," Alex said quickly, the image flickering, "your father has sent people to kill me. I'm heading to Xia. Please become Queen. When the time is right... I'll come back."

He drew a sharp breath and continued, urgency cutting into every word.

"For now, do one thing for me. Make an official public announcement that you are the founder of Eden Group Put it in the open. Lock it under public scrutiny. Once the world is watching, your father won't be able to secretly confiscate or touch our people."

Another violent explosion tore across the feed.

The screen went black.

A second later, Eve spoke, her tone steady but urgent.

"Miss Sofina. The connection has been lost. Sir Alex's aircraft communication antenna appears to have been hit."

Before Sofina could react, a new projection filled the air.

Countess Marlene. Count Oskar. Five other leaders.

All of them appeared at once.

They knelt.

"We bow to our leader," Marlene said solemnly. "Princess Sofina Augustus. From this moment on, we are your followers. Please give us your command."

The Almighty Dominance - Chapter 550[1,368 words]

On the throne, King Wilhelm Augustus sat rigid, his gaze fixed on the man before him.

"Christoph," he said coldly, "is it truly necessary to hunt down the last heir of Saint- Claire?"

Duke Christoph von Dornwald inclined his head, just enough to show respect. "Your Majesty, we exterminated the entire Saint-Claire family during the last succession because they were the greatest threat to your crown. They supported your brother."

"If we allow this one survivor to grow unchecked, he will become a danger to us—to our sleep, to our peace. Eliminating him is necessary."

The king's fingers tapped once against the armrest. "Then explain to me this," he said. "How can he be so rich?"

"It appears the rumors are true," Christoph replied. "He studied cultivation in Xia. When he returned, he crushed the underworld leaders one by one, forced them under his command, and used that foundation to build Eden Group. During the last betting event alone, he amassed wealth that surpassed even Your Majesty's."

Wilhelm burst into laughter, sharp and amused. "Impressive. He sounds more capable than my own sons."

His eyes gleamed. "Why not let him marry Sofina? Make him my son-in-law."

Christoph's expression tightened. "Your Majesty," he said carefully, "that man is dangerous. Given time, he will kill you."

The king sighed, the sound heavy with age. "I am already old. Why should I fear death now?"

His tone darkened. "Besides, I never approved your slaughter of Marquis Saint- Claire and his family. You used my succession as an excuse to settle your personal vendetta against your mortal enemy. Since it is already done, I closed my eyes to it for the sake of your support."

He leaned forward.

"But," Wilhelm said slowly, his stare turning icy, "I never agreed to kill that young man."

Christoph stiffened. "It was under my command, Your Majesty," he said quickly. "If that Saint-Claire brat dies, we can brand him a spy and confiscate all his assets for the country."

Silence fell.

The king's laughter was gone now. "Where is that brat now?" The King Wilhelm asked.

In his mind, a single thought lingered-

a man like Alex Saint-Claire was far too valuable to waste.

"He is fleeing toward Xia. Our elite aircraft are already in pursuit," Christoph said coldly. "This time, he will die a hundred deaths. Once he's gone, we will seize all his wealth without delay."

The king let out a long sigh. "What a pity."

If only he had learned the truth before Duke Christoph von Dornwald-the mortal enemy of Marquis Saint-Claire-maybe he could have protected the young man.

But that chance was gone. The past could not be undone.

The doors burst open.

A minister hurried in, breath tight with urgency. "Your Majesty, there is important news. Please-watch this."

He activated the massive three-dimensional screen.

Princess Sofina appeared on it, standing at a press conference podium.

"To all beloved citizens of Prussia," she said, "I speak to you today not only as Princess Sofina Augustus, but to reveal the truth. I am the owner of Eden Group—

and all businesses affiliated with it."

The room erupted into silent shock.

Across the nation, the media exploded.

Group the richest anonymous power

in Prussia-had always been a mystery. And now its owner was revealed to be Princess Sofina herself.

Duke Christoph's face drained of color. "Impossible," he whispered. "Alex owns Eden Group. All the money belongs to him."

The king touched his bracelet, issuing a command to the royal artificial intelligence. The report streamed instantly into his vision.

"It seems," Wilhelm said calmly, "that clever young man transferred everything to Sofina at the last moment."

Christoph dropped into a deep bow. "Your Majesty, you must confiscate those assets immediately."

"Why?" the king asked flatly. "Because you fear Sofina will use that wealth to win the next throne succession—and your supported second prince will lose?"

Christoph's face turned deathly pale.

"Minister," the king said, "summon Sofina to the hall."

Minutes later, Sofina entered. She bowed with perfect composure. "Your Majesty. Father. You called for me?"

"Sofina," Wilhelm asked, studying her closely, "are you truly the owner of Eden Group and all its assets now?"

"Yes, Father," she replied, bowing again.

The king leaned forward. "Tell me why did that Saint-Claire boy transfer everything to you? What did he say?"

Sofina met her father's eyes. She did not flinch. She did not hesitate.

"He told me," she said clearly, "that I must win the throne succession within five years."

Her voice hardened.

"So that he can return."

"Audacity!" Duke Christoph roared.

The king burst into laughter-deep, unrestrained, almost delighted. "That man is truly clever," Wilhelm said, wiping a tear from his eye. "I find myself liking him more by the minute."

"Father," Sofina asked sharply, "why did you want Alexander Saint-Claire killed?"

"I didn't," the king replied with a calm smile. "That was never my intention. This was all Duke Christoph's doing. He was the one who slaughtered the entire Saint-Claire family. He was the one who sent forces after your Alex."

Wilhelm's gaze-hardened. "He supports your second brother. He fears that you and Alex will seize the throne. He wants your second brother crowned-and to erase

rival who stands in the way.

Including you."

Sofina turned slowly toward Duke Christoph. Anger burned in her eyes.

"Your Majesty," Christoph said quickly, bowing low, "everything I've done was for you and for Prussia."

The king waved his hand dismissively, unconvinced.

He looked back at Sofina. "Listen carefully, my daughter. If you wish to become Queen of Prussia, you will have twenty brothers to fight. Each of them is backed by powerful dukes. Your path will not be easy."

"I believe I can handle it, Father," Sofina said, bowing without the slightest fear. "Good," the king replied. "If, within five years, you become Queen, I will approve Alexander as my son-in-law."

"Your Majesty!" Duke Christoph protested instantly. "That man is not worthy of Princess Sofina. She should marry at least a duke's son."

"Oh, I remember now," the king said with a thin smile. "You once suggested Sofina marry your son so you could secure her support and place the second prince on the throne, correct?"

His smile sharpened. "Unfortunately for you, that plan has completely collapsed. All because of one man-Alex."

"Your Majesty, Christoph insisted, voice strained, "I have only acted for

the good of Prussia. The second prince is the most capable among the twenty still believe Sofina marrying my son is the better choice."

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"Enough," the king said, his voice cutting through the hall like a blade.

"I have made my decision. It will be formally recorded." He looked directly at Sofina.

"If you become Queen, I will recognize Alex as your husband."

"Thank you, Father," Sofina replied, a satisfied smile slowly forming on her lips.

Duke Christoph already understood one thing clearly-no matter the cost, Alex had to die.

After the meeting ended, Christoph immediately placed a call to the elite airspace unit pursuing Alex.

"How is the hunt?" he demanded.

The commander's voice came through. "Sir, that driver is extremely skilled. He's evading our laser fire with precision. We are still in pursuit, but he has crossed into Xia's border."

"Use the light bomb if necessary," Duke Christoph said without hesitation.

A pause. "Sir," the commander replied carefully, "the light bomb carries nuclear-level destructive capacity. It's extremely dangerous."

“Listen to me,” Christoph snapped, fury rising. “Five elite aircraft can't take down a single target after all this time, and you want to lecture me about danger?”

His voice turned cold. "I want him dead. Completely. Fire it now. End this."

"Yes, sir," the commander answered.

He stared at Alex's aircraft on the targeting screen—smaller, faster, moving with impossible precision. Every maneuver was clean, calculated, flawless. Only an elite among elites could fly like that.

“What a waste,” the commander muttered. He had already considered recruiting the young man. That was why he initially planned to disable the craft and capture Alex

alive.

But an order was an order.

“Prepare the light bomb," he said grimly. "Lock onto the target."

Inside Alex's aircraft, warning alarms screamed. Laser fire carved through the sky

around him, forcing him into brutal evasive maneuvers.

Then a new alert flashed across his screen.

Light bomb locked.

Alex's heart sank.

Once the light bomb launched, maneuvering was meaningless. Ten kilometers

would be erased. Space itself would be wiped clean.

One pursuing aircraft stayed locked on him. The others pulled back.

Alex understood instantly.

This was the end.

He would die here.

"Launch the light bomb," the commander ordered.

A beam of blinding light stabbed toward Alex's position.

And in the next instant-

The entire ten-kilometer zone vanished in a catastrophic burst of light.

Nothing remained.