The Azure Organization

Kade's steps halted.

For the first time since leaving Tartarus he looked genuinely surprised.

"Who are you people?" His eyes narrowed slightly. "And what is the Azure Throne?"

The woman in the black suit raised her head, though she remained kneeling.

"I am Zia Makari," she said calmly. "We were sent by Master Zucker. I cannot explain everything here. Please, follow us. All your answers await."

The moment Kade heard that name...

Zucker—

His heart skipped.

Zucker was the old man.

The eccentric, unpredictable, terrifyingly powerful old man who had taught him everything inside Tartarus.

"Zucker?" Kade repeated slowly. "You mean the old man?"

"Yes, Young Master," Zia replied without hesitation.

Young Master.

The title echoed strangely in his ears.

Zucker had vanished from Tartarus without a trace. No sign of transfer. Not even a record of his corpse. Kade had searched for months within Tartarus but no one knew where the old man went. Even the guards had no idea who Zucker was. He doesn't even have a record as one of the recorded inmates, he was like a ghost.

And now...this? A link.

Kade studied them for a long moment.

They did not look like impostors. And even if they were, they'll be the one in danger, not him. Finally, he gave a slight nod.

"Very well."

The three rose immediately and opened the car door for him.

Kade entered first.

The door shut with a soft, expensive thud.

Outside the hospital, whispers spread quickly.

"Wasn't that the man who came with Warden Sky?"

"I thought he was some ex-con..."

"Why are those luxury cars waiting for him?"

Perception shifted in seconds.

The fleet of black vehicles rolled away smoothly.

—

Inside the car, the atmosphere was quiet.

Zia sat across from Kade, posture straight, hands folded neatly over her lap. The two men remained silent, eyes forward.

Kade's gaze was sharp.

"Start talking," he said calmly. "Who are you really? And what connection do you have to Zucker?"

Zia inclined her head respectfully.

"We serve the Azure Organization."

She continued.

"The Azure Organization is one of the largest and most influential powers in Ashville."

Kade's brows furrowed slightly.

"A business group?"

"To the outside world—yes," Zia replied. "A multinational conglomerate. Investments. Infrastructure. Energy. Private security. Assets valued in the billions."

Kade's expression didn't change.

Zucker had once mentioned something like that.

He had laughed while saying it.

"I own half the City, brat," the old man had said casually while drinking prison tea. "Don't embarrass me when you get out."

Kade had assumed it was another one of his ridiculous jokes.

Zia's next words froze his thoughts.

"The founder of the Azure Organization is Zucker."

Kade's eyes widened slightly.

"You're telling me..." Kade said slowly, "...the old man actually founded one of the biggest organizations in Ashville?"

"Yes, Young Master."

Silence filled the car for several seconds.

Kade leaned back slightly. So it wasn't a joke.

All those late-night rants about wealth and power...

They were real.

Kade's gaze remained fixed on Zia.

"If you serve him," he said slowly, "then tell me where he is."

For the first time since the conversation began—

Zia hesitated.

Her fingers tightened slightly over her lap.

"We do not know, Young Master."

The words were calm.

Kade's eyes sharpened. "You don't know?"

Zia shook her head.

"Master Zucker disappeared ten years ago."

Kade's breathing slowed.

Ten years.

"He vanished without informing the inner council. No trace. No communication. No financial activity tied to his personal signatures."

The two men in front remained silent, but even they seemed uncomfortable at the topic.

"He has always been... unpredictable," Zia continued carefully. " Throughout the years, he would disappear without explanation. Sometimes for months. Once, for nearly two years."

"But ten years..." she added softly, "was the longest."

Kade's mind began connecting threads.

Ten years ago—

An old man had appeared inside Tartarus.

An eccentric prisoner no one dared provoke.

A man who somehow possessed knowledge, power, and resources that made no sense within prison walls.

Ten years.

Kade's master had been in Tartarus for approximately ten years.

"If he's been absent that long, how do you know I was the chosen heir?" Kade's eyes snapped back to her.

Zia replied briefly. "Three weeks ago, he reappeared."

"He came to headquarters. Briefly. He summoned the inner council."

Her tone became more formal, as if recalling something sacred.

"He informed us that he had already chosen his heir."

Kade felt his pulse shift.

"He did not give details. He did not explain where he had been. He simply said—"

Zia's voice lowered slightly.

"'When the dragon awakens, the throne will recognize him.'"

Kade's jaw tightened.

"That heir..." he said quietly.

Zia met his gaze directly.

"Is you."

There was tension in the car.

Outside, the scenery had changed. The city lights were long gone.

The vehicle had crossed bridges, highways, and unmarked roads.

Kade leaned back slowly.

His master had been in Tartarus. Teaching him. Training him. Forging him.

While an empire waited.

"Why me?" Kade asked.

Zia did not answer immediately.

"That," she said honestly, "is something only Master Zucker can explain."

By the time nearly an hour had passed, the car began slowing.

Kade glanced outside.

Dark water stretched endlessly under the night sky.

They were crossing a private bridge.

Ahead. A massive gate rose from the mist.

Black steel. Thirty feet tall. At its center, a colossal dragon emblem carved in silver, its eyes embedded with glowing blue lights.

The vehicle stopped.

The gates began to open with a deep mechanical rumble.

Beyond it was an isolated island.

"This," Zia said calmly, "is the headquarters of the Azure Organization."

The cars rolled in.

As Kade stepped out, he was taken aback by the vast empire. " Zucker owns this?"

"One of the thirty seven companies under Azure." She replied, leading him inside.

Rows of suited guards lined both sides of the pathway in perfect formation. The moment they saw him. They bowed simultaneously.

Kade's expression remained unreadable.

Zia walked beside him.

"Only a handful of members know this location," she explained. "The outer world believes Azure's executive offices are downtown."

They passed landscaped gardens, marble walkways, and towering glass structures built into the island's terrain.

"How much is Azure worth?" Kade asked out of curiosity.

She paused.

"The exact net worth is impossible to calculate due to layered holdings and shadow assets."

She looked at him.

"But conservatively... approximately nine hundred billion dollars."

Kade stopped walking for half a second. He almost couldn't understand what he was feeling. A combination of shock and disbelief.

Nine hundred billion. Nearly a trillion dollars. And according to them... He was now its heir? Its owner? 1

Kade exhaled once. Then his eyes sharpened.

If he was going to uncover the truth behind his imprisonment... If he was going to exact revenge. He would need resources. Manpower. Information networks. Influence.

And Azure... Was the perfect weapon.

They entered the main building.

Glass doors opened silently.

The interior was vast and minimalistic—polished floors, high ceilings, subdued lighting. 2

Zia led him down a long corridor.

"This is the central administrative wing," she explained. "Only the inner council operates here."

They stopped in front of two massive wooden doors engraved with the same dragon insignia.

Zia turned to him.

"This is the meeting chamber."

Her tone became formal again.

"Several elders of the Azure Throne wish to greet you personally."

Kade gave a small nod. Then the doors opened.

Inside—

A long obsidian table dominated the room.

Twelve individuals sat around it.

Each over forty, exuding quiet authority.

Their eyes turned toward the entrance.

Zia stepped forward and gave a respectful nod.

"Elders of the Azure," she announced clearly. "I have brought the successor of Master Zucker."

She stepped aside.

"Kade Hollow."