

An Understated Dominance [On-Going]

Chapter 2546

Emmett stumbled into Nathaniel's courtyard, drenched in sweat, his face still etched with fear.

Nathaniel sat alone at his desk, deep in thought under the glow of a solitary lamp. Hearing the frantic footsteps, he frowned and looked up.

"Your Highness! Something terrible has happened!" Emmett burst in, too panicked to salute.

"What is it?" Nathaniel asked, clearly displeased by the interruption.

The mansion was large, and the earlier destruction at the gate hadn't reached his ears.

"Your Highness, Zeus and Hera—the King and Queen of the Gods from the Pantheon—just broke into the mansion! General Veilleux tried to stop them, but Zeus struck him with lightning. He... he was killed instantly!"

Emmett forced himself to stay calm as he quickly recounted what had happened.

A seasoned soldier, Emmett wasn't easily shaken—but the way General Mateo Veilleux died had rattled him to the core.

In an instant, Mateo exploded into a cloud of blood. There wasn't even a body left.

It was a brutal display of power. Mateo was a master-level warrior—yet to Zeus, he was no more than an insect. Emmett's confidence had been shattered.

"What are you saying? Why would the King of Gods from the Pantheon come here? And kill one of my people? Are you sure you're not mistaken?" Nathaniel's first reaction was disbelief.

He had no conflict with the Pantheon—in fact, he'd even worked with them secretly.

From any angle, it didn't make sense for them to target him, much less send two top-level gods.

The gods of the Pantheon were rulers in their own right. They didn't move unless there was a strong reason. They certainly didn't kill without gain.

"Your Highness, I swear it's true! General Veilleux's remains are still at the gate—I wouldn't dare lie!" Emmett insisted, his expression filled with dread.

“How could this happen? I’ve never crossed them. Why would they come after me?” Nathaniel’s face darkened.

“It’s because of Mr. Rhys!” Emmett blurted. “Zeus came looking for him. General Veilleux was killed just for hesitating to answer! If I hadn’t offered to help them track Mr. Rhys, they might’ve stormed the mansion and come for you next!”

“Dustin Rhys?” Nathaniel’s expression turned grim.

He had already sacrificed much to win Dustin over.

Even after his treasure vault was destroyed and the Dracan essences were stolen, he held back his anger—for the sake of future plans.

But he never expected Dustin to bring trouble so great that it would draw two gods from the Pantheon to hunt him down.

If he protected Dustin, he’d be going against the Pantheon—and that would spell disaster.

But if he gave Dustin up, he’d risk offending the West Lucozia Palace and damaging his reputation. Worse, all his past efforts and investments in Dustin would go to waste.

Either way, it was a lose-lose situation.

“Your Highness, what should we do now? Zeus gave us until sunset tomorrow. If we don’t give him an answer, he’ll come back—and next time, he’ll kill us,” Emmett said, pale and shaking.

“Damn it! How did I end up in this mess?” Nathaniel cursed, his expression darkening.

If he didn’t handle this well, he could lose everything.

“Prepare the car! I’m heading out!” Nathaniel suddenly ordered.

There was only one person he could turn to for guidance—his mother.

Whenever serious trouble arose, she always had a solution.

This time, with gods involved, it was beyond what he could handle alone. He needed the wisdom of his mother—and the power of the Spanner family—to navigate this storm.

Night deepened.

Nathaniel, along with Emmett and a few trusted aides, rushed toward the Forbidden City at full speed.

To avoid drawing attention, Nathaniel even wore a disguise.

Fortunately, the journey went smoothly, and they soon arrived at **Jacqueline's** residence.

She was reading under the soft light of a lamp when her son arrived, clearly distressed.

"Nathaniel? What's wrong? Why the panic?" Jacqueline asked, surprised by his unannounced visit.

"Mother, I'm in trouble..."

Without hiding anything, Nathaniel explained the entire situation.

Jacqueline's face grew serious. She motioned for him to sit and had someone bring tea.

After a long moment of thought, she finally spoke.

"This isn't unsolvable. In fact, if we handle it right, it could turn into an opportunity."

"Oh? Do you have a plan?" Nathaniel asked, hope lighting up his face.

"As for Dustin," Jacqueline said calmly, "send someone to warn him. Let him know two gods from the Pantheon are after him. Remind him to stay alert. Use this as a chance to do him another favor."

"But Mother, won't that bring the gods' wrath onto me?" Nathaniel frowned.

"Listen," Jacqueline said with a slight smile. "Show kindness to Dustin, but shift the blame elsewhere. Find someone else to take the fall for whatever offense the gods believe was committed. That way, you avoid offending West Lucozia *and* the Pantheon. Isn't that the perfect solution?"

Chapter 2547

"Looking for a scapegoat?"

Nathaniel blinked, confused. "What do you mean, Mother? Please explain."

"It's simple," Jacqueline said with a faint smirk. "Let the King of Gods from the Pantheon deal with your powerful enemies for you."

"Like my royal brothers... or any other major threats?" Nathaniel's eyes lit up as realization hit. "Mother, that's brilliant! You've completely opened my eyes!"

He had been so panicked earlier that this angle hadn't even occurred to him.

The God Kings from the Pantheon coming to stir up trouble—yes, it was dangerous, but also an opportunity. If he played this right, he could use the Pantheon's hand to wipe out his own rivals.

Not only would it resolve the immediate crisis, it would also avoid offending the West Lucozia Palace. Better yet, it would help him clear the path to power—killing with a borrowed knife. This was a masterstroke!

No wonder Jacqueline was his most trusted advisor.

"Nathaniel," Jacqueline said calmly, "no matter what happens, you must stay composed first—then you can find your way out. I've said all I need to say. Now it's your turn to make the next move."

"Don't worry, Mother. I'll handle it," Nathaniel assured her with a nod.

Now that he had a plan, it was time to act. His intelligence network and personal connections would finally come in handy.

"Oh, one more thing." Jacqueline's tone shifted slightly as if remembering something important. "Make sure you maintain a good relationship with Dustin. He's a crucial player. If you can pull him to our side, it'll be a huge advantage."

"Dustin might be valuable because of West Lucozia Palace backing him, but honestly, he doesn't seem interested in political power. No matter how much effort I put in, it probably won't help much," Nathaniel replied, shaking his head.

He didn't have a good impression of Dustin. Every attempt to win him over had failed. Dustin barely acknowledged him, never gave him any respect—and to top it off, he had used the Dracan essences to manipulate him. If it hadn't been for Jacqueline's persuasion, Nathaniel would've already cut ties.

From his perspective, Dustin looked powerful on the surface, but he wasn't worth the time or effort.

"Nathaniel," Jacqueline said seriously, "even if Dustin doesn't care about power, you can approach him in other ways. He's a long-term investment worth making. Whatever you do, don't offend him. Understand?"

"I'll remember what you said, Mother." Nathaniel nodded again, though his agreement was more out of respect than genuine belief.

In his mind, Dustin might have value, but if there was no return on that value, then continuing to invest in him seemed like a waste of time.

He had already done his part—tolerating the tricks, taking the blame for the chaos Dustin caused, and offering help again and again. What else was expected of him? He was the Third

Prince of Dragonmarsh. His status and position were far above Dustin's. Was he supposed to keep chasing someone who clearly didn't care?

That said, even if Dustin couldn't be recruited, Nathaniel wasn't about to turn him into an enemy—unless Dustin made the first move.

"It's getting late. Go now," Jacqueline said in a soft but firm tone. "And remember: those who achieve great things must take it step by step. Don't be impatient."

"I understand. I'll take my leave," Nathaniel bowed before turning and walking away.

Jacqueline watched him go, sighing quietly. "That boy... still lacks a bit of maturity."

With her insight, how could she not see what he was really thinking?

He had taken most of her advice to heart—except for the part about Dustin.

"Young people tend to be proud," said a voice gently beside her.

It was her most trusted maid, an older woman who had grown up with Jacqueline. More than a servant, she was a close confidante—and, secretly, a martial arts master who doubled as Jacqueline's personal bodyguard.

Jacqueline's rise to power in the palace owed much to this woman's quiet protection over the years.

"Many years ago, someone in the Imperial Guards said Dustin was destined for greatness—an ideal figure to support an emperor," Jacqueline said softly. "He's been quiet for years, but the potential is still there. Everyone sees the West Lucozia Palace behind him, but they're missing the real point. Dustin himself is the key. I just hope Nathaniel realizes that before it's too late."

"If Dustin truly wants no part in the court's power struggles, then forcing him won't help. At worst, he'll become a threat," the maid said reassuringly.

Jacqueline nodded and changed the subject. "For Nathaniel's safety, go to the Spanner family in person. Ask the two elders to come out of seclusion and protect him in secret. I won't take any chances."

"Yes, ma'am." The maid bowed her head—and vanished without another sound.

Chapter 2548 – The moonlight on this chilly autumn night was hidden behind thick clouds.

Back at the mansion, Nathaniel sat deep in thought, secretly plotting how to toss the two ticking time bombs—Zeus and Hera—into the hands of his second brother, Matthias.

He chose Matthias over Tristan because Matthias held the most power. With a strong military background and a host of elite warriors under his command, he was the most qualified to face off against the God Kings of the Pantheon.

The ideal outcome? Both sides tear each other apart, and Nathaniel walks away with the spoils.

“Someone come!”

After mulling it over for a while, Nathaniel suddenly stood up and said calmly, “Summon Judah, Santino, and Corbin. Have them meet me in the study in half an hour.”

“Yes, Your Highness!”

The guard responded and rushed out.

An hour later, the three men Nathaniel had summoned arrived one after another.

These were his top strategists and trusted aides—smart, capable, and essential to his plans.

“We greet Your Highness!”

They stepped into the room and bowed respectfully.

“Please, take a seat,” Nathaniel said, raising his hand. “Let’s skip the formalities. The reason I called you here is very serious.”

He didn’t hold anything back. Nathaniel laid everything on the table—from his mother Jacqueline’s plan to redirect the crisis to Matthias, down to his own thoughts on the strategy.

Once he finished, the room fell into a tense silence.

“Your Highness, the plan is sound, but risky,” Judah said solemnly, twirling his snow-white beard. “If anything goes wrong, the consequences could be severe.”

“No risk, no reward,” Nathaniel replied with steady conviction. The candlelight danced on his face, casting eerie shadows. “The God Kings may be dangerous, but in the right hands, they’re as deadly as any weapon. And I intend to use that weapon—to shatter everything Matthias has built.”

Santino, dressed in his official robes, visibly tensed. “But Your Highness, if Zeus or Hera discovers you’re manipulating them, it could backfire terribly...”

“That’s why it has to be flawless,” Nathaniel cut in. “Here’s what I’ve planned: we lure Zeus and Hera to Zuanlo. Then, we unleash three teams of assassins.”

He paused, eyes gleaming. “The first team poses as drunken swordsmen. They’ll sit nearby and speak loudly—half-whispering, half-boasting—about a ‘mysterious injured person hidden in the palace’s secret chamber.’ Just loud enough for the next table to overhear.

The second team dresses like Matthias’s men. After a few drinks, they get into a scuffle and blurt out Dustin’s name—like it’s a slip during a heated argument.

The third team? Their job is to stir chaos—overturn tables, bump into guests, break jars. Just enough confusion to trigger Zeus and Hera’s instincts to act.”

“Brilliant!” Corbin’s eyes lit up. “With that many angles, even fiction starts to feel real!”

“But, Your Highness,” Judah asked, raising an eyebrow. “Would rumors and drunken talk really convince them?”

Nathaniel smirked. He walked over to the wall, pressed a hidden compartment, and pulled out a jade plaque. The word ‘*Guang*’ was carved into it—distinctly the emblem of Matthias’s trusted guards.

The polished stone gleamed ominously in the candlelight.

“This badge is proof enough. With this in our hands, Matthias won’t be able to deny a thing.”

He tossed it to Corbin and added, “Tomorrow night, you’ll lead the operation. Our death squad will carry that badge, along with forged letters—ones that mention secret dealings between Dustin and Matthias. Make sure the documents use Matthias’s personal wax seal.”

“Understood!” Corbin immediately bowed.

Nathaniel looked toward Judah and Santino. “You two prepare the cover-up. Every detail must hold up under scrutiny. The more convincing the lie, the more believable it becomes.”

“Understood,” they both said in unison.

They knew they were walking a fine line. But at this point, there was no turning back.

If they played their cards right, they could use the Pantheon’s fury like a blade—cutting down Matthias and clearing a path for Nathaniel’s rise.

Should Nathaniel ascend to the throne, their loyalty would be rewarded with glory and power.

The gamble was dangerous, yes.

But the potential reward?

Absolutely worth it.

Even if the plan failed, they'd still have a way out.

For now, the power was in *their* hands.

Chapter 2549

By noon the next day, Zeus and Hera were sitting across from each other playing chess.

Suddenly, a middle-aged man entered hastily and bowed. "Lord Zeus, Lady Hera, we've discovered Logan's whereabouts!"

At those words, both gods immediately looked up.

"Oh?" Zeus asked, his eyes narrowing. "Where is he?"

"He's in Zuanlo Tower, inside the city—it's Pantheon territory. This morning, two waves of mysterious guests arrived at the tower. During their conversation, they mentioned Logan by name. From what they said, it seems Logan is recovering in the secret chamber of an influential figure," the man reported.

"Injured?" Hera and Zeus exchanged glances and nodded.

Logan had recently battled Poseidon and won—but not without taking serious damage. His absence in the past few days now made sense. He'd gone into hiding to recover.

"Did you find out who this so-called important figure is?" Zeus asked.

"These people were cautious and skilled. Our spies didn't dare get too close, so we weren't able to hear every detail. I didn't want to risk exposing us, so I came straight to report. The next move is yours to decide." The man lowered his head respectfully.

Though he held a key position in the Pantheon, he knew better than to make a move without orders. He'd always survived by being cautious—never overreaching, never assuming.

"Useless trash," Zeus growled. "You can't even handle something this simple."

"I'm terrified to have failed," the man stammered. "But Logan is a grandmaster-level warrior. I'm no match for him. Only peerless masters like you and Lady Hera are capable of taking him down."

"Hmph. Looks like we'll have to handle this ourselves," Zeus said coldly, rising to his feet.

"I'll pass," Hera yawned, stretching. "Logan's injured. You should be able to take him down without me."

"It's not Logan I'm worried about," Zeus said. "There's an old monster in the Forbidden City. If he gets involved, I won't be able to handle him alone."

“Fine, I’ll come with you,” Hera relented. “Let’s just get this over with. I can’t stand Oakvale’s climate anyway.”

Back when they were in Lecanon, she’d still be asleep at this hour.

Ten minutes later – Zuanlo Tower

A wave of bloodcurdling screams filled the air. More than a dozen martial arts masters lay groaning on the floor—defeated, unable to stand.

“Tell me where Logan is!” Zeus demanded, stomping on one man’s head, looking down with chilling contempt.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” the man grit out, resisting.

“Then die.”

Without another word, Zeus stomped again and moved to the next target.

“Where is Logan?”

“Please! Spare me! I was just here to drink—I have nothing to do with this! Please, let me go!” the man cried, trembling and kneeling.

“Coward.”

Zeus casually raised a hand. A bolt of lightning exploded from his fingertips, piercing the man’s chest and vaporizing his internal organs. His body smoked, his flesh charred black. The smell of burning meat filled the room.

The gruesome scene turned every face pale. Cold sweat poured down their backs.

“Anyone who tells me where Logan is will be spared. Refuse, and everyone dies,” Zeus announced, his voice icy.

He had no patience for negotiation. He ruled with force—and fear. That was enough.

“I’ll count to three.”

Electricity crackled around Zeus’s raised hand. The pressure in the room thickened, making it hard to breathe.

“Three...”

“Two...”

“One...”

Just as he was about to strike, a man in blue cracked under the weight of fear.

“I’ll tell you! I’ll tell you! I know where Logan is!” he shouted.

“Good.” Zeus snapped his fingers.

Lightning arced through the air, disintegrating the remaining dozen warriors in a blink. Their bodies exploded into ash, blown apart before they could scream. Only the man in blue remained, frozen in terror among the charred remains.

He hadn’t expected Zeus to be so ruthless—to leave no one alive.

Even as a death warrior, fear now overwhelmed him.

“Speak. Where is he?” Zeus asked calmly.

The man swallowed hard. “I’m a guard for Prince Matthias. Last night, a mysterious nobleman visited the prince’s mansion. I believe his name was Logan.”

“Matthias?” Zeus narrowed his eyes. “Prove it.”

“This... this is the proof.” The man pulled a jade badge from his robe, engraved with the word “Guang.”

Zeus lifted the token into the air and handed it to a Pantheon core member.

“That’s right. It’s Matthias’s personal guard insignia,” the member confirmed.

“Then we go to Matthias’s estate—now.”

Without a moment’s hesitation, Zeus killed the man in blue and vanished on the spot.

Chapter 2550

At dusk, in Prince Mosey’s palace.

Matthias Linsor and Seamus Mosey were engrossed in a heated game of chess on the sand table. The battle between the two sides was intense, neither willing to concede defeat.

Frost stood silently nearby, observing the match without uttering a word.

After a long while, the outcome was finally decided. Seamus planted a white flag on the sand table, signaling his surrender.

"Your Highness is truly a military genius. Your tactics are unpredictable and impossible to guard against. I pride myself on being a decent strategist, but I am still far from your level," Seamus remarked with a smile, shaking his head. He then took the white towel handed to him by a maid and meticulously wiped his fingers.

"Uncle, you flatter me. I only won by luck today," Matthias replied modestly.

Though he was a prince, he dared not act arrogantly in front of Seamus.

After all, the man before him was his most significant financial backer in his bid for the throne. Not only did Seamus provide him with substantial resources, but he also helped him win over influential factions and eliminate obstacles. It was precisely because of Seamus's support that Matthias had the confidence to outmaneuver Tristan and Nathaniel.

"Your Highness is gifted in both civil and military affairs. Given time, you will undoubtedly become a renowned emperor!" Seamus praised without reservation.

"Uncle, it's too early to say that. The position of crown prince remains undecided, and no one can guarantee who will ultimately claim it," Matthias replied cautiously.

Though confident in his ability to compete with his brothers, he remained prepared for the worst. Until the throne was firmly within his grasp, he could not afford to let his guard down.

"With the support of the noble families and various influential factions, Your Highness's ascension to the crown prince is assured," Frost chimed in with a smile.

"That may be so, but everyone knows how deeply the Emperor dotes on Nathaniel. What if His Majesty insists on placing Nathaniel on the throne?" Matthias narrowed his eyes slightly.

Seamus reclined leisurely in his chair, sipping tea calmly without a word.

Frost glanced at his lord before lowering his voice. "If it truly comes to that, Your Highness may have to take decisive action—a *Boulderthorn Guild Incident* might be necessary."

At this, Matthias's smile froze. He first looked at Seamus, then turned his gaze to Frost. "Brother Frost, choose your words carefully! Do I seem like the kind of man who would kill his own brothers for power?"

"Your Highness may be kind and righteous, but your brothers may not share the same sentiments. While you hesitate out of brotherly love, they may already be plotting your downfall," Frost advised.

"This matter requires further consideration. What do you think, Uncle?" Matthias redirected the conversation to Seamus.

Frost did not yet represent the Mosey family's stance. Even if Matthias were to orchestrate a *Boulderthorn Guild Incident*, he would need Seamus's approval.

"I will follow Your Highness's lead. Whatever decision you make, the Mosey family will fully support you," Seamus declared.

"Thank you, Uncle." Matthias smiled faintly. Then, as if recalling something, he asked, "By the way, has there been any movement from the West Lucozia Palace?"

In the entire kingdom, the only force capable of directly influencing the crown prince's position was the distant West Lucozia Palace. Thirty thousand Black Dragon Army soldiers were enough to sweep away all opposition.

"I've already looked into it. West Lucozia is currently dealing with internal issues—they're undergoing a full-scale purge and have no time to meddle in Oakvale's affairs. Besides, Rufus Rhys doesn't have long to live. If West Lucozia wants to avoid further chaos, their best option is to lay low and pretend nothing is happening," Frost explained.

"Good. Then we can proceed without worry." Matthias relaxed slightly.

As long as West Lucozia Palace remained inactive, everything would remain under his control.

Boom!

Just as the group was conversing, Matthias's personal general, Kyle, rushed in, his expression frantic.

"Your Highness! A disaster has struck the mansion!"

"Why are you so flustered? Can't you see I'm in the middle of a discussion with Uncle Mosey?" Matthias frowned, displeased.

Kyle was a seasoned general who had seen countless battles. How could he lose his composure over something trivial?

"Your Highness! I've just received word that Zeus, the King of Gods, stormed into the mansion and began slaughtering indiscriminately! He's even taken your wife hostage! The entire estate is in chaos!" Kyle reported urgently.

What?!

Matthias shot to his feet, his face darkening. "Zeus, the King of Gods?! How could this happen? I've never had any conflict with the Pantheon! Why would he attack my mansion and kill my people?!"

Not only had he never clashed with the Pantheon, but he had also frequently engaged in trade with them. He couldn't fathom why the Pantheon would suddenly turn against him.

"I don't know the details, but the guards have suffered heavy casualties. We must send reinforcements immediately! Your Highness, please issue your orders at once!" Kyle pleaded, clasping his fists.

"Damn the Pantheon! To slaughter my men without provocation—this is unforgivable!" Matthias gritted his teeth, his eyes blazing with fury. "Kyle, listen well! Mobilize the troops immediately! Surround the Pantheon's forces and make them pay!"

"As you command!" Kyle acknowledged before swiftly departing.

In Oakvale, only a select few had the authority to deploy the army—and Matthias was one of them.