

An Understated Dominance (Dustin Rhys)

Chapter 2673

Grace was telling the truth. No matter how strong someone's willpower was, tiny tells always gave them away when they lied. To an ultimate grandmaster, those tells weren't just noticeable, but they were amplified a hundredfold.

Most of what she said was true. She'd simply laced it with a few well-placed lies. Truth and falsehood blurred together until no one could tell them apart.

The breakthrough technique she claimed to have found in the ancient manuscripts was real. However, she never promised it would work or how far someone could get with it. Just in case, she'd made sure to cover her tracks.

Grace had copied the technique exactly as written, so she could swear a binding oath that it was authentic. But she had also scrambled key parts of the instructions and built two conflicting cultivation paths into it. That way, neither Zeus nor Hera could detect the sabotage or break through.

Grace had poured time and effort into the deception. To her, his sudden threat was nothing more than a test.

When Zeus couldn't separate truth from lies, he turned to intimidation. She saw through the tactic but said nothing about it.

Grace wasn't afraid. She knew Zeus and Hera didn't have the cultural context to comprehend the technique. In the end, they still needed her to interpret and explain it.

That was why she was sure he wouldn't hurt her. And as expected, the moment she swore the oath, his grip loosened.

"Hmph. I'll give you the benefit of the doubt just this once," Zeus said with a straight face. "But your breakthrough technique is somewhat unusual. Until we fully comprehend it, you're not going anywhere."

"You got what you came for. Isn't it time you held up your end of the deal and left?" Grace shot back, her brow creasing in frustration.

"We agreed to spare you if you handed over the real technique," Zeus replied firmly. "But we're not convinced it's authentic. We need time to study and confirm it. That doesn't break our word."

Grace's frown deepened. "So if you can't figure it out in a day, you'll just camp here until you do?"

"Exactly!"

The truth was, the book was far beyond the two royal gods' current understanding.

They couldn't crack it on their own. They needed her, both as a key to the text and as insurance.

By staying, they kept her within arm's reach. And as long as she was under their watch, they controlled the board.

"You better help us understand this breakthrough technique soon, missy,"

Hera said with a smirk. "Otherwise, we're not leaving Embercrest Hill anytime soon. As for your lover, he can stay hidden in the mountains and focus on healing."

She knew Grace was stalling, but she didn't care. Even if Logan made a full recovery and returned to his peak form, he still wouldn't stand a chance against them. If the two of them wanted to, they could wipe Embercrest Hill off the map without lifting a finger and crush Logan right along with it.

"If you're both set on this, then I have nothing more to say. Just promise me you'll keep your word once you've broken through," Grace said.

"You have my word," Hera replied with a nod. "As long as you help us break through, you'll become a major contributor to the Hall of Gods. How could we bring ourselves to hurt you?"

"There are plenty of empty rooms in the temple. Make yourselves comfortable. But let me be clear-no more violence. If anyone gets hurt again, I won't help you. Not even if it kills me," Grace said coldly.

"Got it."

Zeus and Hera agreed in unison, then stepped inside the ancient temple together.

For now, neither of them pressed their advantage. Even if they had the books, they couldn't decipher them without Grace's help. That fragile dependency kept a temporary truce in place.

But once they mastered the technique once it came time to break through-there was no telling how far they'd go.

As royal gods, Zeus and Hera were both allies and rivals. Whoever succeeded first would shape their future and possibly claim the top seat as Supreme Leader of the Hall of Gods.

Inside the temple, Zeus and Hera began their studies under Grace's careful guidance.

To avoid suspicion, Grace taught them earnestly, explaining every word without holding anything back. Her plan was already in motion.

She wasn't afraid they would master the technique, but was worried they wouldn't. As long as they kept learning, she could buy Dustin more time.

That was all she could do for now. She just hoped he'd seize the moment and break through soon. If he didn't, she wasn't sure how much longer she could keep delaying the inevitable.

After all, Zeus and Hera weren't just anyone. Sooner or later, they'd sense something was off. And when they did, everyone in the temple would likely die with her.

This was a high-stakes gamble, one Grace couldn't afford to lose. She had to win and hoped Dustin would break through before Zeus and Hera did.