

An Understated Dominance (Dustin Rhys)

Chapter 2680

Like a passing storm, it came and went in the blink of an eye. From the moment Dustin and Grace returned to Oakvale, it took only a single night for the entire underground faction structure to be completely reshuffled.

All previous forces of the Hall of Gods, including their vassals, were uprooted entirely. Hidden masters died without anyone knowing how or when.

Before Dustin, now a terrestrial immortal, any disguise or resistance proved futile and meaningless. The great purge they launched together struck fear into foreign powers while sending domestic factions into panic.

No one had anticipated such rapid escalation. Many major forces received no advance warning at all. The entire operation struck like a bolt from the blue.

This was a critical moment when Tristan was scheming to claim the position of crown prince. The mysterious emergence of such formidable power naturally inspired wariness.

In an instant, factions and intelligence agencies began mobilizing to investigate the truth behind these events.

Within the walls of an understated yet luxurious mansion, Tristan sat with a book in hand. He appeared to be reading, but his attention was elsewhere as he waited for news.

Beside him stood a plainly dressed middle-aged man named Milton Dyer. He served as both Tristan's steward and his most trusted advisor. Whenever important matters arose, Tristan would invariably summon him to discuss them.

"Milton, I've heard that the Hall of Gods' operatives throughout Oakvale have been completely uprooted by some mysterious force. Even our business interests have been affected. Have you given any thought to where this mysterious force might have originated?"

Despite his attempts to read, Tristan found himself unable to concentrate. The uncertainty gnawed at him.

"Your Highness, the events unfolded too quickly. Our people have yet to uncover any trace of who might be responsible," Milton replied respectfully.

Since receiving word that morning, the mansion's intelligence network had been working at full capacity. But given the scope of this mysterious force's capabilities, uncovering the truth would clearly be no simple task.

Tristan then asked, "Do you think this emergence of this mysterious force is a blessing or a curse for us?"

He despised the unknown and felt even more uncomfortable when events spiraled beyond his control. His ongoing struggles with Matthias and Nathaniel were already taxing enough. Adding another variable to the equation might prove overwhelming.

"In my opinion, while this mysterious force poses a threat, it also presents an opportunity. If we handle the situation wisely, it might work to your advantage," Milton analyzed.

"Oh?" Tristan raised an eyebrow. "Tell me more."

Milton explained, "As things stand, we hold no advantage in this struggle against your two brothers. In fact, we are at a severe disadvantage. If this competition proceeds along normal lines, your chances of victory are slim. I estimate it to be less than 20%.

"The various factions have already chosen their sides. Those who would support Prince Matthias have already done so. The same goes for Prince Nathaniel's supporters.

"It would be nearly impossible to shift these allegiances now. Under such circumstances, any attempt to turn the tide would be like trying to move mountains.

"However, the emergence of this mysterious force has presented us with an opportunity. Any group capable of uprooting the Hall of Gods' hidden strongholds throughout Oakvale in a single night possesses tremendous power, perhaps even greater than our own.

"If we could win this force to our cause and forge an alliance with them, we would gain a significant advantage over your brothers. From a strategic standpoint, the appearance of this force represents our best possible outcome."

Milton spoke calmly as he laid out his complete assessment.

Upon hearing that, Tristan felt his spirits lift considerably.

What did he have to fear? His position was already at risk. If he continued to play by the rules, defeat was certain. Better to take this risk and see if he could salvage some hope from desperate circumstances.

"Milton, you've got a point. This is our chance, and we must seize it."

Tristan's hands balled into fists as fire ignited in his eyes.

"Your Highness, even if you wish to make contact, we should wait for the investigation results," Milton said calmly. "Otherwise, how can we establish communication with them?"

"We cannot wait any longer. If we delay further, we'll lose our advantage," Tristan said gravely.

He went on, "The intelligence network I command isn't any better than Matthias' or Nathaniel's. When I receive a word, they surely receive it as well. By the time we act, it may already be too late."

Given his resources and influence, competing directly against Matthias and Nathaniel would only put him at a disadvantage. If he wanted a chance, he had to strike first.

"Does Your Highness have another strategy in mind?" Milton asked with evident surprise.

"I wouldn't call it a masterful plan, but I know someone who can assist me with intelligence matters." Tristan's eyes narrowed slightly.

"Who would that be?" Milton pressed.

"Of course, it's my sister. The incomparably beautiful and talented Princess Grace," Tristan said with a faint smile.

He continued, "The others may not know, but I do. She's the one running Dragonmarsh's most powerful intelligence network under our father's direct orders.

"None of us brothers were ever allowed near it. Anytime something major happens inside the borders, she's the first to know. If I can get to her, I'll find out what this mysterious force really is."