

An Understated Dominance (Dustin Rhys)

Chapter 2688

Grace explained, “The Skull Covenant is pure evil. They sacrifice human lives and commune with death itself. Wherever they go, they leave nothing but ruin.

“It was their heyday 30 years ago. They had hundreds of core members and over 10,000 followers. They were all masters of the dark arts and posed an enormous threat.

“30 years ago, they nearly conquered the entire Ashen Coast and threatened the stability of our nation. Later, my grandfather ordered my father to lead 200,000 troops in an extermination campaign.

“It took three months to annihilate them.

Afterward, my father established an intelligence and assassination organization to hunt down any remnants because he vowed to erase them from existence.

“It took several years to root out every last remnant of the Skull Covenant. I thought we’d wiped them out for good. Still, I never imagined that 30 years later, these evil monsters would return.”

Grace’s expression grew stern as she frowned slightly. Just when she thought one crisis was ending, another began.

She still had pressing matters to handle, and now the evil Skull Covenant had emerged again. How could she not feel troubled?

“I’ve heard rumors about them as well,” Dustin said thoughtfully. “They worship dark gods and are brutally violent. Every year, they’d offer mass sacrifices in its name. Sounds like this plague is just another one of their rituals.”

“These bastards just won’t stay dead. I don’t understand why anyone would join such a cult.” Grace sighed.

“People who join cults are either mindless or consumed by greed. Their mindset defies all rational thought,” Dustin said, and shook his head.

What sane person would join the Skull Covenant, knowing it was a death sentence?

“Regardless, we need to control this plague first,” she said with a grave expression. “Your medical skills are exceptional. Would you accompany me to Ashen Coast to minimize casualties?”

“As a citizen of Dragonmarsh, I naturally cannot refuse such a duty,” he replied with a nod.

“Excellent! Saving lives is urgent, so we’ll leave now,” Grace said.

She immediately ordered her people to arrange transportation. They boarded a vehicle and headed straight for the airport.

Ashen Coast was approximately 1,900 miles from Oakvale. Even flying by private jet, it was still a grueling day-long journey.

While Dustin and Grace headed to Ashen Coast, three golden decrees were issued in Aylka from the throne hall. Then, elite courier squads delivered them in three different directions.

Within an hour, Tristan, Nathaniel, and Matthias had received their golden decrees along with secret edicts. Though the decrees were identical, each prince’s secret instructions differed slightly.

After reading their edicts, all three princes departed immediately. They gathered their trusted retainers and set out for the Ashen Coast with unprecedented urgency.

The content of the secret edicts was deceptively simple-there was an outbreak of plague in Ashen Coast, and it required swift intervention. Each prince would govern a different city, and whoever successfully contained the outbreak while minimizing civilian casualties would receive a royal commendation.

Typically, such a relief mission would be handled through standard administrative channels. Under normal circumstances, there would’ve been no need for such secrecy, let alone golden decrees.

The extraordinary measures indicated that this was more than a simple rescue operation. Instead, it was meant to test the princes.

During that critical period of succession, every small event within Aylka’s palace had far-reaching consequences throughout the kingdom.

Valon’s decision to issue golden decrees and secret edicts in response to this plague outbreak clearly demonstrated the weight he placed on the situation.

Tristan, Nathaniel, and Matthias understood what was at stake. Whoever handled that crisis most effectively would prove their worth to their father. The journey to Ashen Coast would prove decisive in determining the next heir to the throne.

The princes departed for Ashen Coast immediately after receiving their secret edict as they raced against each other to gain every possible advantage.

The first to arrive would hold the initiative, and whoever contained the plague most swiftly while minimizing civilian casualties would return to Oakvale to receive royal commendation. This mission represented the opening gambit in their competition for the throne.

Around 8:00 pm, Dustin and Grace’s plane touched down in Reedcrest, the transportation hub of the Ashen Coast. This bustling city had earned the grim distinction of being where the plague was first discovered.

They had to contain the outbreak there first. If panic spread and people scattered in all directions, the entire Ashen Coast would descend into chaos.

After disembarking, Dustin and Grace entered a waiting black sedan.

In the passenger seat sat a woman dressed in a crisp black uniform. She was strikingly beautiful yet carried herself with unmistakable authority-this was Sadie Lennox, the intelligence chief Grace had stationed in Ashen Coast.

“Ms. Linsor, we’ve sealed off the infected village where the outbreak started. Currently, 23 people are infected. We’ve managed to keep the news from leaking,” Sadie reported while handing over a thick folder.

The documents contained detailed profiles of every infected individual, including family backgrounds, personal relationships, recent contacts, and their travel history.

The thoroughness of their intelligence gathering in such a short time frame was remarkable. It was clearly the work of exceptional operatives.

Grace skimmed through the reports before asking, “Who was infected first among these people?”

“A man named Callan Banks,” Sadie replied. “I’ve assigned guards to watch him closely.”

“Arrange a meeting. I need to speak with him personally,” Grace ordered.

If the outbreak’s source could be traced back to Callan, it would prove he had likely made contact with the Skull Covenant. There was even a chance he was one of them.