

An Understated Dominance (Dustin Rhys)

Chapter 2691

The night passed quickly, and by morning, Callan had finally regained consciousness. A whole night's rest had restored color to his face, though he was still physically weak.

Grace had kept watch outside his room all night. As soon as she learned that he was awake, she immediately walked in.

“Callan, I'm the official in charge of handling this outbreak. I need to ask you several questions, and I kindly request that you answer them truthfully. Understood?” Grace said, getting straight to the point.

“Yes,” he replied, nodding with visible apprehension.

“When did you first get infected?”

“I'm not sure how long I was unconscious, but from what I remember, it started about three days ago. I suddenly felt dizzy and weak, with chills running through my entire body,” Callan said weakly.

He went on, “At first, I assumed it was just a common cold, so I took some medicine. But the symptoms kept worsening, and by the time I realized something was seriously wrong, it was already too late.”

“Before you fell ill, did you come into contact with any strangers?” Grace pressed.

“I hardly ever leave the house, but a few days ago I met up with this woman I'd been chatting with online. We'd known each other for two years, and this was our first time meeting in person,” he explained.

He continued, “She was gorgeous and even said she wanted to be my girlfriend. I was thrilled at the time and had a meal with her. Afterward, she said she was going to Harbortown to see her best friend, so she left for a while.”

“You started showing symptoms after that meeting?” Grace asked.

“You can say that,” Callan replied.

“Do you know who she was planning to see in Harbortown?”

“I'm not sure. Even though we'd been chatting online for two years, we rarely asked about each other's personal details.”

“Surely you know her name, right?” she asked again.

“She told me her name was Lauren Stephan, though I have no idea whether or not that was her real name,” Callan replied.

“I need you to describe Lauren's appearance in detail,” Grace requested.

She turned and snapped her fingers at Sadie, signaling for paper and a pen.

Grace began sketching based on Callan's description. After nearly an hour of adjustments and corrections, she finally captured Lauren's general appearance on paper.

When he saw the finished portrait, his eyes lit up and he nodded enthusiastically. “Yes, that's her. No doubt about it-you've captured her almost perfectly, about 80 to 90 percent.”

Grace nodded and handed the sketch to Sadie. “Find out who she is, and make it a priority,” she ordered.

“Got it,” Sadie responded before hurrying away.

“Besides Lauren, did you notice anything else unusual around you recently?” Grace asked.

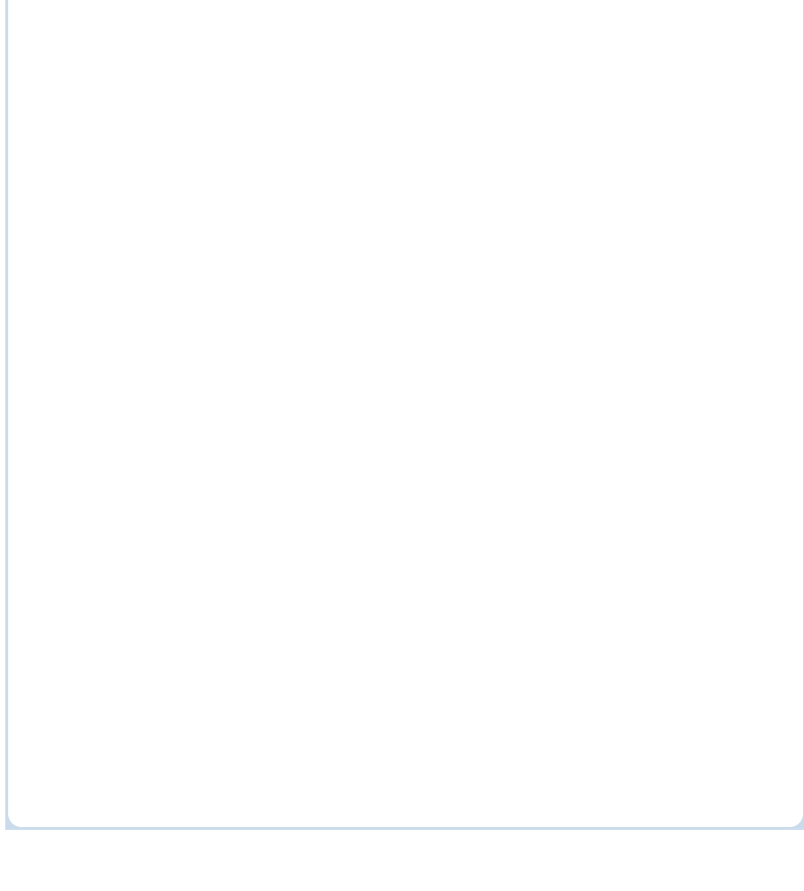
“Nothing else comes to mind,” Collan replied, shaking his head. “I spend most of my time at home gaming and seldom go out. Anyone in the village can vouch for me. 11

“That's all I need for now. Get some rest.”

With that, she stood to leave.

She'd already reviewed his background file and found nothing suspicious. He was a classic shut-in whose parents had died in a car accident a few years back.

He survived by doing game boosting services for other players, rarely left his house, and had virtually no social skills. He was passive and indecisive, which was precisely the type who'd believe whatever someone told him without question.



If Callan was telling the truth, then Lauren had to be the source of the outbreak. Her trip to Harbortown meant the epidemic would spread there next. This was turning into a serious problem.

“Ms. Linsor, I found Lauren's details!” Sadie exclaimed.

A few moments later, she had compiled everything she could find using the name and sketch.

“What have you got on her?” Grace asked.

“The woman Callan described checks out. Her name was indeed Lauren Stephan. She returned to the country three years ago and got into Nexology. She spends a lot of time online spreading their teachings and appears to be a devout believer,” Sadie reported.

“What about her family and friends?”

“Her parents died when she was young, and we can't trace her foreign identity right now. However, she does have several close relatives and friends here in the country, whom she still keeps in touch with.”

“Did you run background checks on all of them?”

“I did. They're all into Nexology, just like Lauren. She's the one who recruited every single one of them into it. I suspect this Nexology is just the Skull Covenant operating under a new identity,” Sadie said with a serious expression.

Grace wasn't surprised upon hearing that.

“For the Skull Covenant to rise from the ashes and cause trouble again, they must have been planning this for years. They'd need a front organization to stay hidden. Otherwise, how else could they have survived this long?” she said.

“What should we do now, Ms. Linsor?” Sadie asked.

Grace said indifferently, “I don't care if they call themselves the Skull Covenant or this Nexology. If they're harming people, we're taking down their entire operation.

“Start digging into everything about this Nexology, especially Lauren. Find her and bring her in as soon as possible. I'll request authorization from headquarters to seal off the Ashen Coast and put an end to the Skull Covenant's comeback.”

“Got it.” Sadie acknowledged the orders and left.

Since Lauren didn't know many people in Harbortown, a thorough investigation of her contacts would quickly reveal her whereabouts.

“So, how are things progressing? Any leads yet?” Dustin asked as he walked through the door, stifling a yawn.

After staying up all night and expending so much energy, he was feeling drowsy.

“We've uncovered some promising clues,” Grace replied. “I'm confident we'll catch whoever is behind this outbreak.”

“Glad to hear that.” Dustin breathed a sigh of relief. “Once we eliminate the source of the outbreak, everything else should become much more manageable.”

“When things go this smoothly, it usually means we're walking into a trap,” she said thoughtfully.

She continued, “The Skull Covenant has risen from the ashes to spread this disease. But if their only goal is for the blood ritual, they're being remarkably conspicuous about it. I can't shake the feeling they have some other ulterior motive.”

“Whatever they're plotting, we'll get our answers once we capture them,” Dustin said.

Grace nodded. “Then, I guess all we can do is wait.”

Just as they were talking, one of her trusted aides rushed inside with urgent news. “Your Highness, we have a serious problem. Word just came in that there's an outbreak in Reedcrest. Right now, there are over 100 infected and counting.”