

An Understated Dominance (Dustin Rhys)

Chapter 2692

“What? There’s an outbreak in Reedcrest?”

Grace’s expression hardened at the report. “That’s impossible. Weren’t we told it was contained last night?”

When the contagion began, she immediately ordered the entire village sealed off and placed all infected individuals under strict quarantine.

Anyone who’d had contact with the infected was put under close surveillance.

Given all these precautions, how had the outbreak spread across Reedcrest overnight?

“The outbreak in Ashwillow Village has indeed been contained,” her aide reported grimly. “But a new source of infection has emerged in Windham, and there was no way to see it coming. Over 100 people are showing symptoms, and the numbers keep climbing.”

“Seal off every entrance and exit to Windham immediately,” Grace ordered decisively. “We cannot allow this outbreak to spread beyond the town. Place all infected individuals under strict surveillance and thoroughly screen everyone else. Go now.”

“Yes, Your Highness.”

Her aide left immediately to execute the orders.

As a precautionary measure, military forces were deployed to blockade every access point into and out of Windham so that residents couldn’t leave and outsiders couldn’t enter.

While the strict containment protocols would undoubtedly cause considerable inconvenience, the gravity of the situation left no room for half-measures.

“Things are more complicated than I thought. The Skull Covenant is spreading outbreaks everywhere,” Dustin said, narrowing his eyes slightly.

If Ashwillow Village was just their opening move, then the real battle was about to begin.

“Our enemies work from the shadows while we operate in plain sight. Until we can locate the Skull Covenant’s stronghold, we’ll have to proceed cautiously and try to minimize casualties,” Grace said with a frown.

“The outbreak is spreading faster than I can handle alone. We need to bring in reinforcements from Oakvale,” he suggested.

“We should summon every doctor skilled in acupuncture. I’ll show them how to draw out the toxins. That way, if we encounter more outbreaks, we won’t be caught unprepared.”

“Good call. I’ll make the arrangements,” Grace agreed without hesitation.

Without saying anything else, she immediately mobilized all the forces to recruit qualified doctors.

It was better to train a dozen physicians than exhaust Dustin by having him race from crisis to crisis. Despite his exceptional abilities, she knew he would feel overwhelmed by the scope of the epidemic. So, they desperately needed skilled backup to share the load.

While finding someone with his extraordinary abilities would be nearly impossible, Oakvale had many accomplished doctors well-versed in acupuncture techniques.

With more hands available, they could learn his techniques and be better prepared for the next crisis.

In Harbortown, Tristan was overseeing operations from the governor’s mansion. As he listened to his subordinate’s report, his expression grew increasingly grave.

“Your Highness, our investigation shows over 100 plague cases in Harbortown,” his trusted aide reported.

“We’ve quarantined most of the infected, but some have slipped our cordon. Should we implement a full city lockdown?”

Tristan pondered the situation carefully before responding with decisive authority.

“100 cases are still manageable. We don’t need a full lockdown yet. Gather all the infected in one central location, then immediately dispatch troops to hunt down those who have escaped. We must capture and bring them back to prevent further outbreaks,” he said.

A complete city lockdown would be too costly politically and create a bad impression, which would make him appear incompetent.

To stand out in the succession struggle and gain the upper hand, he needed to contain the outbreak with minimal disruption and maximum efficiency. Only by demonstrating such efficient crisis management could he prove his superiority over Matthias and Nathaniel.

Milton reminded him, “Your Highness, besides containing the outbreak, we urgently need to develop an antidote. If all hundred victims die on our watch, it won’t look good when word reaches the King.”

“I’ve already summoned two skilled doctors from Oakvale. They should be arriving any moment. With their expertise, creating an antidote won’t be much of a challenge,” Tristan replied confidently.

Milton broke into a relieved smile. “It turns out Your Highness was already three steps ahead. I should have known better than to worry.”

Just as they were talking, a guard hurried in and dropped to one knee. “Your Highness, the two skilled doctors have arrived and are waiting outside,” he said.

“Quick! Bring them in immediately.”

Tristan’s face lit up. The doctors’ arrival couldn’t have been more perfectly timed to solve his pressing crisis.

“Yes, Your Highness,” the guard acknowledged and departed quickly.

Soon after, the guard escorted two people into the room—an elderly man and woman. Both appeared to be in their late 60s with silver-streaked hair, yet they still looked very energetic.

The elderly man was Icarus Carmel, a skilled doctor from Oakvale known for his exceptional acupuncture skills.

The elderly woman was Lenora Strum, whose reputation matched his. She had studied pharmacology extensively and was an expert in toxicology.

Upon entering, both doctors straightened up and addressed Tristan formally, “Greetings, Your Highness.”

Tristan stood up to greet them and said enthusiastically, “Dr. Strum, Dr. Carmel, you’re finally here.”

“We have an outbreak in Harbortown, which started two days ago, and the contagion is spreading rapidly. You two are our only hope.”

“An outbreak?” Icarus was taken aback. “How could such a calamity strike without warning? Could someone be behind this?”

Unlike common ailments, plagues were catastrophic diseases capable of wiping out entire populations. They were classified as the most severe category of epidemic and always caused widespread panic whenever they emerged.

“We’re still investigating the exact cause,” Tristan replied. “Right now, our immediate priority must be treating those who have been infected and developing an antidote as quickly as possible.”

Lenora nodded. “Saving lives is an urgent business. Of course, we’ll help.”

“Your Highness, where are the patients? Could you take us to them?” Icarus asked.

“Of course. Please follow me.”

Without further delay, Tristan led them quickly out the door.