

## An Understated Dominance (Dustin Rhys)

Chapter 2693

Tristan, Icarus, and Lenora left the mansion and hopped into the car. They soon arrived at a hospital that was under lockdown.

It wasn't just the facility, but several surrounding streets had also been cordoned off, with soldiers standing guard, forcing all traffic to detour around the area.

Access to the hospital required special clearance, and even Tristan wasn't exempt.

"Dr. Strum and Dr. Carmel, we've got many plague patients quarantined inside this facility. For your safety, I strongly recommend wearing these medical masks," Tristan said as they approached the checkpoint.

He thoughtfully handed out the masks to Icarus and Lenora. In addition to wearing a mask himself, he'd also suited up in full protective gear. He was taking every possible precaution since he'd been frail and sickly since childhood. If he caught the plague, it would likely be the end of him.

Icarus and Lenora accepted the medical masks without protest. They put on the masks and followed Tristan into the hospital.

All non-essential personnel had been removed from the facility. Only stationed soldiers and a few masked medical staff remained inside.

The patients had been sorted by symptom severity and placed on different floors in separate wards.

Tristan led Icarus and Lenora to the elevator, and they rode directly to the 18th floor. This floor had several critical patients who were barely clinging to life.

Apart from two guards stationed at the entrance, only one nurse remained to tend the dying patients. Her "care" consisted mostly of periodic injections to ease their suffering.

"Dr. Strum, Dr. Carmel, I'll wait out here while you two examine the patients," Tristan said as he stopped at the doorway.

He gestured for the nurse to escort Icarus and Lenora into the ward while he waited outside.

Given Tristan's status, bringing these two doctors there already demonstrated considerable respect. He bet neither Matthias nor Nathaniel would have done the same.

Icarus and Lenora disappeared into the ward and remained inside for an extended period.

Tristan paced restlessly outside the door while occasionally peering through the window.

Nearly half an hour passed before the two doctors finally emerged.

"Dr. Carmel, Dr. Strum, how is the patient?" Tristan asked urgently. "Can anything be done?"

He'd never cared this much about a commoner's fate, but the patient's survival could determine whether they could contain the epidemic quickly.

"Your Highness, the situation is far worse than we anticipated," Icarus said. "This isn't your typical plague outbreak. The pathogen is incredibly virulent and unlike anything we've dealt with before. At this rate, the patient probably won't make it through the night."

Tristan turned to Lenora, still looking hopeful. "What about you, Dr. Strum? You're our expert in pharmacology and toxicology. Surely there's something you can do?"

"I must be honest with Your Highness. My current abilities are insufficient to cure this either," she said, shaking her head with a grave expression.

She went on, "But I know for a fact that this outbreak wasn't the result of natural causes. It was man-made."

Tristan raised an eyebrow. "What makes you say that?"

"I've already examined the patients thoroughly. Whatever's infected them is extremely contagious and appears to be a combination of multiple viruses. I've never seen anything like this before. Unless someone deliberately created it, I can't think of any other explanation," Lenora explained.

"I'll dispatch my men to investigate your theory, but right now we need to focus on developing an antidote. Without it, every infected patient will die. I'm counting on both of you," he said earnestly.

Icarus said, "Please give us some time, Your Highness. We'll find a way to stop this and save as many lives as we can."

"Very well," Tristan replied. "Don't hesitate to ask for whatever resources you need. You'll have my full support."

"Your compassion is truly admirable, Your Highness. We won't let you down," Lenora assured him.

After exchanging a few pleasantries, the two doctors wasted no time getting to work. One checked the ancient medical texts while the other began experimenting with herb combinations.

The critically ill patients in the ward had now become their test subjects. Under normal circumstances, they would never resort to such a method.

But with lives hanging in the balance and time running out, they had no choice but to take extraordinary measures to develop the antidotes.

In Thornwick, Matthias faced an equally dire situation.

After arriving in the city the previous evening, he discovered that dozens of residents had already contracted the plague. But after just one night, the number of patients had increased to nearly 300.

However, the local doctors proved utterly useless against the outbreak.

Matthias had no choice but to call in specialists from Oakvale, but even flying them in would take half a day. So now, all he could do was wait.

If only he had anticipated this crisis, he'd have brought a medical team with him the night before. At least then he might have been able to contain the situation before it spiraled out of control.

"Your Highness!" Neville approached him and reported in a low voice, "The infection count continues to rise, and word of the plague has spread to the neighboring towns. People are fleeing Thornwick in droves, and panic is consuming half the population."

Matthias scowled. "Didn't I tell you to keep this under wraps? How did it end up like this?"

Neville explained, "We arrived too hastily and lacked reliable personnel on the ground. The local officials have been paying lip service to our orders while remaining fundamentally lazy and dismissive.

"They treated this outbreak like common influenza rather than the serious threat it represents, which allowed the situation to deteriorate rapidly."

"Those worthless parasites! They're quick enough to line their pockets with bribes, but now they're doing nothing when a crisis strikes. Once I've contained this outbreak, I'll make an example of every last one of them," Matthias snapped.

"Your Highness, pursuing accountability must wait," Neville said urgently. "Our immediate priority is stopping the outbreak before the consequences become catastrophic."

"There's no other choice left. If we want to contain this outbreak, there's only one option-put the entire city on lockdown," Matthias said with a gloomy expression.

He had hoped to avoid such drastic measures. But now that word of the outbreak was out, chaos in Thornwick was inevitable. So, a full lockdown was their last chance to stop things from spiraling out of control.