

## An Understated Dominance (Dustin Rhys)

Chapter 2698

"Ms. Linsor, look out!" Sadie shouted. She had been watching Lauren's every move. The moment the iron chains binding Lauren snapped and scarlet mist poured from her body, Sadie immediately jumped in front of Grace to shield her.

However, the mist was pervasive. It engulfed several people in the room within seconds before expanding outward in all directions at breakneck speed.

The scarlet mist was laced with deadly poison. Wherever it touched, flowers wilted and the ground turned black, as if it were consuming everything in its path.

Lauren laughed maniacally.

"Every last one of you deserves to die. This world is steeped in corruption, and God has turned his back on us. Only our Skull Lord will outlast it all.

"I shall cleanse your sins with his blood and offer your lives as a sacrifice. The Skull Covenant shall rise, and the Skull Lord shall reign eternally."

Her crazed proclamations echoed through the swirling scarlet mist.

As more mist poured out from her body, her figure began to shrivel rapidly. It was as if her very life force was being drained away.

Even so, she kept laughing hysterically as if death meant nothing to her. In her eyes, death wasn't the end but a pathway to eternal life. It would finally allow her to embrace the Skull Lord and serve at his side forever.

"Ms. Linsor, we need to leave now. There's something strange about this scarlet mist," Sadie said urgently.

She grabbed Grace's hand and bolted without a second thought. She'd noticed that the mist corroded everything it touched, including their biohazard suit and respirator.

At this rate, their protective gear would be useless in under two minutes. And when that happened, the consequences would be unimaginable.

"It's pointless. You can't escape," Lauren said. "Skull Lord's blood is specially used to purify the sin that stains your souls. Once it touches you, there's no escape until you're completely cleansed."

She cackled hysterically, as if picturing their corpses. She wouldn't have unleashed Skull Lord's blood without being fully prepared.

To her, this corrupt world would finally receive the purification it deserved as the blood spread to every corner it touched. The devastation wouldn't stop at this small village because entire towns and cities would fall to the same purifying fate.

Reedcrest would then be transformed into Skull Lord's sacred ground, where he would be resurrected to lead the Skull Covenant toward ultimate glory and world domination.

Just then, a deep rumble cracked through the sky like distant thunder.

Lauren stared in stunned disbelief as the crimson mist-just seconds ago spreading like wildfire-abruptly reversed course as though it had struck an unseen barrier. The mist rushed backward with blinding speed, like a tide being pulled back to sea.

Within minutes, the scarlet mist had retreated into the small cabin and condensed into a single crimson orb, no larger than a marble.

That orb now held Skull Lord's blood-the same blood Lauren had been carrying inside her body as its vessel. She had just released the mist, only to watch some mysterious force compress it back to its original form.

"What the hell just happened?"

Lauren's maniacal laughter died instantly.

Her eyes widened with disbelief and rage as she tried to comprehend what force could make Skull Lord's blood retreat so suddenly.

She stared at the floating crimson orb and lunged for it without hesitation. Nothing else mattered except preventing anyone from claiming the blood.

She needed to consume it immediately and absorb its power into her very being. Once merged with her body, she could tap into a fragment of Skull Lord's power.

But the orb suddenly rocketed toward the exit as though yanked by some unseen hand. Lauren made a desperate grab but caught nothing but air. Fighting through her body's exhaustion, she scrambled after it.

When she stumbled outside, she found herself face-to-face with a man in white.

She couldn't tell when he'd arrived or how he'd gotten there first. He appeared young and strikingly handsome, with an almost magnetic presence that made her feel at ease.

But Lauren could sense she was facing a formidable opponent. Every muscle in her body tensed as wariness crept across her features. The man was holding the crimson orb-the one she'd just been chasing-and casually spinning it between his fingers.

"Return it to me," Lauren said sternly.

"Is it yours?" Dustin glanced at her with a faint smile. "How fascinating."

She forced herself to take a deep breath and soften her tone. "Look, handsome, that's my family heirloom. Please return it, and I will reward you generously."

"Family heirloom?" His smile widened. "If you're calling something this sinister a family heirloom, I'm betting you're not on the side of the angels."

"Whether I'm good or bad is none of your damn business. Hand it over now, or you'll regret it," Lauren snapped, her composure cracking.

Seeing Skull Lord's blood in his hands was like watching someone defile a holy relic.

"Oh really?" Dustin replied. "I'd love to see how you plan to make me regret this."

He chuckled softly before lifting the crimson orb to his mouth and swallowing it whole.

"How dare you defile Skull Lord! You'll die for this!" she shrieked.

Consumed by raw fury, her features twisted with rage as she lunged toward him.

"Freeze." Dustin extended one finger in her direction.

Lauren stopped dead in her tracks, unable to move a muscle.