An Understated Dominance

Chapter 2741

As soon as Dustin and Natasha stepped out of the police station, the cool night air hit them. He took his phone and made a call. “I ran into some trouble,” he said. “I need a favor.

Gilbert and Frederick were being held inside the police station’s holding area. Although their detention was temporary, they weren’t placed in a standard cell.

Instead, they were assigned to a private holding room with comparatively comfortable conditions. This was an obvious courtesy afforded by the Chandler family’s influence. But the preferential treatment did nothing to cool Gilbert’s rage.

“Damn it! Those blind fools actually dared to lock me up?”

He paced the room restlessly, cursing nonstop. “Once I get out, I’m killing that boy toy Rhys. Then, I’ll deal with the officer who pinned me down earlier.”

The more he thought about it, the angrier he became. He had never suffered this kind of humiliation in his life.

Frederick sat against the wall on the bed with his eyes closed. His face was dark with anger. He didn’t shout or curse like his brother, but his clenched fists and heaving chest showed his fury matched Gilbert’s.

Frederick was the kind of man who didn’t bark to bite. He didn’t shout or threaten when taking revenge. Instead, he struck in the most direct and ruthless way, making his targets pay a price they couldn’t bear.

Dustin hadn’t only injured Gilbert but also humiliated him in front of everyone. Frederick would see that the insult was repaid in full.

One hour later, footsteps and voices echoed from outside. Then, the holding room door opened.

Several well-dressed, imposing middle-aged men walked in. The man leading them was around 50 years old, with features similar to Frederick’s but more stern and commanding

It was Warren Chandler, one of the Chandler family’s key figures and Gilbert and Frederick’s uncle.

“Uncle Warren! You’re finally here,”

Gilbert said, rushing over like he'd found his savior. "Some bastard bullied me. Look at my hand, and see what he did. You must avenge me."

Warren glanced at his plastered wrist and the bruises on his face. He frowned, and anger flashed in his eyes, but it was mixed with disappointment at his nephew's incompetence.

"Useless fool!" he snapped. "All you do is embarrass the family!"

Aside from scolding, having his nephew beaten and locked up was an insult the Chandlers couldn't tolerate.

Warren turned to the police chief who'd entered with him. His expression instantly hardened, radiating authority and intimidation.

"Chief Wolfe, what are you waiting for? Release them now."

Cedric's face tightened. He knew Warren had massive influence and was the key figure in the Chandler family. Not only him, but even his own superiors had to show Warren respect.

Based on his past experience, whenever something like this happened involving a Chandler family heir, a single phone call would be enough. The police would've released them immediately, smiling and apologizing as if nothing had happened, but not today.

As he recalled the unusual calls and orders he'd received earlier, cold sweat ran down his back. He forced an extremely strained smile.

"Mr. Chandler, the situation is... your nephews are involved in serious charges. Gang activity, armed assault, and public endangerment. The evidence is solid, and they threatened officers here at the station.

Procedure requires we hold them for further investigation."

"Procedure?"

Warren laughed coldly, as if he'd heard a joke. He stepped forward, staring down Cedric with icy menace.

"Chief Wolfe, have you gotten too comfortable in your position? Are you lecturing me about procedure? One word from me and you'll be packing your desk tomorrow. Release them now. Don't make me repeat myself for a third time."

The pressure made sweat beads on Cedric's forehead. His lips trembled as he wrestled with himself internally.

On one side was the deeply entrenched, overwhelmingly powerful Chandler family.

On the other were direct orders from an even higher authority. He felt the pressure crushing him and was about to cave in and release the Chandler brothers. But then, a deep, powerful rumble of multiple car engines suddenly filled the air outside the station.

The sound was unlike any ordinary vehicle, but it carried an imposing presence that set everyone on edge. Then came the rapid, synchronized sound of footsteps approaching the holding area.

Warren frowned and, along with Cedric, turned toward the door. They saw a group of people appear at the entrance to the holding room, moving with speed and precision.

Leading them were two young men in black tailored suits, their piercing gazes and icy expressions commanding attention. They carried a rare blend of military precision and lethal skill, and simply standing there, they made the atmosphere feel tense.

Behind them stood a figure that made both Warren and Cedric's pupils shrink instantly

It was a young woman in simple yet commanding attire. She was breathtakingly beautiful, yet her bearing radiated an inviolable nobility and authority.

She stood there, her gaze sweeping across everyone in the room, and immediately became the absolute center of attention. It was Grace Linsor, Dragonmarsh's most favored princess.

Warren's heart sank as soon as he saw her. A cold wave of dread rolled over him, and his stomach twisted at the thought of what her presence here might mean.

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Chapter 2742

Grace's sudden appearance changed the mood of the holding room, replacing it with a tense, unsettling silence. When Warren saw her, the arrogance he had drawn from his family's influence vanished without a trace. In its place came a chill that spread quickly through him, followed by a deep, growing unease.

He knew all too well how much the princess mattered to the King and how vast her influence had become, both inside and outside the government. Someone of her standing would never appear at a small detention facility, so this wasn't some spur -of-the-moment visit.

However, someone failed to read the room. Gilbert, still seething with nowhere to direct his rage, froze for a moment when a breathtakingly beautiful young woman walked in. The two men in black and Grace's own presence clearly intimidated him, but his playboy instincts quickly overrode that flicker of caution.

Seeing that she seemed to be coming for them, his bruised ego flared back to life. Curling his lips into a smirk, he let his eyes roam over her. He believed his gaze was charming, but in reality, it came across as nothing more than lecherous.

He muttered crudely, “Oh? Another one? Pretty hot, I’ll give you that. What, you come here to get a look at the great me in all my misery too? Or maybe you and that boy toy Rhys have something going on-”

“Disgraceful brat! Shut your damn mouth.”

Before he could finish, Warren, his face white with terror, didn’t think twice before slapping Gilbert even harder than before across his already bruised face.

The slap landed crisp and loud.

Gilbert staggered and nearly fell again, blood trickling from the corner of his mouth. He stood there in a daze, clutching his stinging cheek and staring at his uncle in disbelief. Shock and anger churned inside him, mixed with a deep, helpless sense of being wronged.

“Uncle Warren! Why... Why did you hit me again? She’s just some hot chick. Are you seriously losing your shit over this?” he shouted.

He couldn’t understand why his usually doting uncle would hit him so hard over a stranger.

Warren trembled with fury, his eyes blazing with anger. Terrified Gilbert would say something even more outrageous, he kicked him in the stomach, sending him crashing to the floor.

He shouted, “I said shut up! You hear me? Say one more word, and I’ll break your legs.

Warren put disciplining his nephew on hold and quickly turned toward Grace. His face tightened into a nervous, forced smile. He quickly stepped forward, lowering his shoulders and nodding respectfully, his voice trembling as he spoke.

“Your Royal Highness, what brings you here? My nephew doesn’t know when to keep his mouth shut. If he offended you, please forgive him. I’ll discipline him properly when we get home.”

The royal title rang out through the holding room, freezing everyone in its wake.

Gilbert, still struggling on the floor, resentment heavy in his chest, went rigid. He snapped his head up and stared at the stunning young woman. His eyes were wide, and his pupils dilated with shock, terror, and confusion.

He couldn't believe she was Dragonmarsh's princess, Grace Linsor. Even a spoiled brat like him, with no sense of limits, understood the weight of that title. This was true nobility, someone standing at the very pinnacle of power in Dragonmarsh.

The memory of having just flirted with a princess sent a bone-chilling cold straight through him. His blood ran cold, his face drained of color, and his body shook uncontrollably. He forgot even the pain he had felt moments before.

Frederick, usually more composed and ruthless than his brother, went pale. His heart raced, and a cold sweat soaked his back.

He stared at Grace in disbelief, mind racing. Was she here because of Dustin and Natasha? Could they have some connection to her? The thought sent a chill straight through him.

Grace didn't respond to Warren's apology. She didn't even glance at Gilbert, slumped on the floor. Her gaze was sharp and cold, like ice, slowly sweeping over Warren's panic-stricken face before settling on his trembling fingers.

"Warren," she began. Her voice wasn't loud, but carried a natural authority and icy pressure. "Your family really has no regard for the law. Your arrogance knows no bounds."

She paused, glancing at Cedric, who stood frozen beside her.

Grace went on, "Your nephew has committed a crime, and the evidence is clear. As his elder, you show no remorse or intention to punish him. Instead, you personally come to the police station to openly threaten the officers and demand his release."

Her voice turned icy, sending a chill through everyone present. "What? Do you really think your family can act with impunity in Oakvale and ignore the law?"

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"I... I swear, Your Royal Highness. It's not true. There's absolutely no such thing," Warren stammered. His face drained of color, sweat rolling down his forehead. He waved his hands frantically and hunched over, trying to make himself smaller.

His voice cracked with desperation, saying, "You've misunderstood. Just a... It was just a small misunderstanding. I was worried my two foolish nephews were being mistreated at the police station.

"I got flustered and spoke too harshly, but I never meant to threaten Chief Wolfe. Right? It was a misunderstanding, wasn't it?"

He pleaded with his eyes at Cedric, silently begging him to speak on his behalf. Cedric didn't dare to say anything. He kept his head down, staring at his toes, as if he'd heard nothing.

Grace's lips curved into a faint, cold smile. "A misunderstanding? Speaking too harshly? Warren, did you really think you could fool me?"

"No, Your Royal Highness. I-"

"Then tell me," she cut him off, her tone sharp and unforgiving. "Your precious nephew, Gilbert, gathered dozens of street thugs armed with knives and clubs to corner, chase, and attempt to harm someone in broad daylight in a busy street.

What do you call that? A minor conflict?

"And your other dear nephew," she added, her gaze shifting to the pale-faced Frederick. "As the elder brother, you encouraged Gilbert instead of stopping him. And afterward, you had the audacity to threaten the officers at the station. What do you call that? A small misunderstanding?"

Warren was left speechless. Cold sweat had soaked through his undershirt as he forced himself to defend them.

"Your Royal Highness, there must be some misunderstanding here. Perhaps they're young and hot-headed, got into an argument with someone, and acted impulsively..."

"Acted impulsively?" Grace shot back, sneering.

She'd had enough of his excuses, then gave a slight nod to one of the men in black beside her.

The man stepped forward immediately and handed her a thick folder. Without even looking at it, she hurled it toward Warren.

The folder burst open on impact, sending a flurry of documents and photos scattering over his head and across the floor.

Warren stood stunned, then looked down. With just one glance, his pupils contracted sharply. The color drained completely from his face, and even his lips began to tremble.

What lay scattered on the ground weren't just photos from that evening's incident, but also printed documents.

They documented Gilbert's past involvement in multiple brawls, assaults, and even connections to gray market operations. Times, locations, witnesses, and partial transaction records were all included.

The files on Frederick were even more damning, including evidence of him using family influence to crush business rivals, and involvement in several instances of serious commercial fraud and suspected personal threats.

Each piece of evidence was clear and well-documented, leaving no room for doubt.

This wasn't some hastily compiled dossier since everything had been meticulously prepared in advance. It seemed someone had been watching Gilbert and Frederick for a long time, and perhaps the entire Chandler family.

"Now..." Grace's icy voice cut through the room like a verdict. "Do you have anything left to say? Or are you going to tell me these are all misunderstandings too? And that someone framed your family again?"

Warren felt a chill shoot up his spine, his hands and feet turning icy. He knew she had come prepared this time. With such irrefutable evidence, she clearly meant business.

"Your Royal Highness, please show mercy, " he said.

Overwhelming fear shattered Warren's last line of resistance. He no longer cared about his pride. His legs buckled, and he dropped to his knees before Grace.

His voice shook as he pleaded, "It's my fault for failing to discipline them properly. Your Royal Highness, please have mercy.

"In light of our family's past service to the country, I beg you to be lenient and spare them this once. We'll be eternally grateful and will strictly discipline our children from now on. We swear this will never happen again."

He begged incoherently, attempting to buy mercy with his family's past service.

"Your family's past service to the country is not a free pass for wrongdoing," Grace said, looking down at him with an unwavering gaze. "Warren, your family's past service may have spared them for now. But do you really think this would stop with just these two if not for that?"

Her words hit him hard. He jerked his head up, eyes wide with shock. The princess meant that if he didn't know his place, the entire Chandler family could be implicated.

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Grace no longer looked at Warren. She fixed her gaze on Gilbert, who was scared out of his wits, and Frederick, whose face had gone completely pale. Her voice was sharp and unwavering, radiating undeniable authority.

“You’ve broken the law, led a gang to commit violence, carried weapons, harmed others, and threatened public officials. Your criminal history is well established, and the evidence is undeniable. You will face the harshest punishment the law allows.”

Her eyes swept to Warren, still on his knees, and warned him one last time. “If anyone is to blame, blame your dear nephews. They did what they shouldn’t have and offended the wrong people.”

She spoke deliberately, each word cutting through the room as she sealed the brothers’ fate.

“Effective immediately, all privileges and status held by Gilbert and Frederick are revoked. They will be transferred to the judicial authorities and severely punished in accordance with the law. From now on, they’ll spend the rest of their lives in prison to reflect on their crimes.”

The thought of his nephews spending a lifetime behind bars struck Warren like lightning. His face turned ashen as he collapsed to the ground, unable to utter even a plea. He knew that once Grace delivered her judgement, there was no room for negotiation.

Gilbert and Frederick’s fates were sealed. Their family’s hard-won favor with Grace and Valon was now irreparably tarnished. After hearing the verdict, Gilbert finally snapped out of his paralyzing fear. He let out a blood-curdling scream as he scrambled toward Warren.

“No! Uncle Warren, save me. Please save me. I don’t want to go to prison. I don’t want to.”

Frederick’s face went deathly pale. His lips trembled as he tried to speak, but no sound came out. Only an endless wave of fear and despair consumed him.

“Take them away,” Grace ordered, waving her hand dismissively without another glance. Behind her, two men in black, who looked like special operatives, stepped forward.

They efficiently restrained the thrashing, screaming Gilbert and the rigid Frederick, then secured them in specially designed handcuffs.

“Uncle Warren! Uncle Warren, say something to save me. I’m one of the Chandlers.”

“Let go of me. Do you know who I am?”

“Your Royal Highness, I was wrong. Please spare me. I’ll never do it again.”

The Chandler brothers' cries, struggles, and desperate pleas echoed through the holding cell, sharp and full of hopelessness.

Warren remained on his knees, watching helplessly as his two nephews were being dragged away. Their cries faded into the distance, and his heart ached, but there was nothing he could do.

He didn't dare utter a word or lift his eyes to look at Grace. From this moment on, he knew Gilbert and Frederick's lives had plunged into utter darkness, without hope or escape. And all of it had happened because they had crossed a seemingly ordinary person.

Gilbert and Frederick were taken into a black, special vehicle that had arrived outside at some point. It vanished into the darkness of the night, and their cries were cut off completely.

The entire detention area at the police station fell into deathly silence. Only the devastated Warren remained, along with Cedric and the others, who stood frozen in fear. After everything was settled, Grace took out her phone and dialed a number. She spoke only a few words.

"It's all taken care of."

"Thank you," Dustin said on the other end.

"There's no need for such formalities between us," she replied with a faint smile.

"If you run into any trouble in the future, just contact me."

"Okay. We'll talk more another time."

"Alright."

After hanging up, Grace still felt unsettled. She was surprised when Dustin had contacted her earlier. In her mind, he was someone who could handle anything, and there was almost nothing he couldn't resolve. That confusion deepened once she learned what he wanted her to do.

To him, Gilbert and Frederick were insignificant. He could eliminate them with just a snap of his fingers

Despite her surprise, she didn't press him for an explanation. She acted at once, mobilizing her intelligence network and using her authority to arrest the Chandler brothers.

At Dustin's request, they were sentenced to life imprisonment.

After leaving the police station, Dustin and Natasha didn't head straight home. They stopped by the hospital for a quick bandaging, then found a small diner to grab a late-night snack. The place was busy, filled with the mouthwatering smells of sizzling burgers, fries, and grilled chicken wings.

She ordered a pile of sliders, a plate of cheesy fries, and two ice-cold milkshakes. Resting her chin in her palm, she watched Dustin's profile. He looked slightly weary but still calm, and she felt a mix of concern and curiosity.

"What do you mean you can't use your cultivation anymore? Is it serious?" she asked in a low voice. Dustin grabbed a hot, juicy slider and took a bite, his eyes narrowing slightly at the first taste.

"It's not necessarily a bad thing. However, it's a necessary stage before breaking through to the next realm. I need to gain certain experience before I can advance. But during this period, I can't use my cultivation," he explained.

Natasha didn't fully understand, but hearing him say it was fine put her mind at ease.

"Then eat more and take care of yourself," she said, handing him a plate of hot, crispy chicken wings. He smiled and offered her a bite from his slider in return.

They sat there amidst the diner's bustle, enjoying the simple comfort of being alive. Their conversation was quiet and casual, yet it carried an unusual sense of peace.

Just then, Natasha's phone suddenly rang.

She answered it, and her expression immediately changed.

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Chapter 2745

Natasha received a call from her secretary, Liora Hayes. "Ms. Harmon!" Her voice was choked with tears. "We have a crisis. Half an hour ago, we received several calls from Vanguard Group, Sterling Group, and Paramount Properties. They've all issued unilateral notices terminating their contracts. Even every agreed-upon project is suspended."

"What?" Natasha's face paled instantly. " They're terminating their contracts? How is that possible? The contract's already been signed. Are they planning to breach them outright?"

"They only mentioned strategic adjustments and refused to elaborate. As for the penalty clauses, they stated they're willing to pay in full," Liora explained, her tone urgent.

She added, “But it gets worse. Several of our long-term suppliers and distribution partners have just sent formal notices. They’re claiming circumstances beyond their control and cutting off all supply and support.”

“How can this be happening?” Natasha asked.

Dread settled in her chest as the reality of the situation began to sink in. These clients and suppliers were the backbone of Dash Corporation. For all of them to turn at once was no coincidence.

She steadied herself and spoke in a low voice. “Everything was fine just a moment ago. How did this happen out of nowhere? Did you manage to find out anything?”

Liora hesitated, then lowered her voice. “I called in a favor and spoke with Mr. Vanguard’s assistant. He wouldn’t say much, only hinting that we might have offended the wrong person. Could be someone important, but he didn’t know who.”

Natasha’s mind raced through a dozen possibilities. The Chandler family was the first to come to mind, but she quickly dismissed it.

Gilbert and Frederick were still locked up at the police station, barely able to protect themselves. They were in no position to launch a counterattack so swiftly.

As for other rival companies, she couldn’t think of a single one with the influence to sway so many major industry players at the same time.

“I understand,” Natasha said, taking a deep breath.

Then, she added firmly, “Your immediate priority is to calm the employees and keep operations running. I’ll handle everything when I return tomorrow. Also, try to gather information through other channels, but don’t tip anyone off.”

“Got it, Ms. Harmon,” Liora replied. After the call ended, Natasha stood rooted to the spot for several heartbeats. A night breeze swept past her, carrying a chill that seeped into her bones.

She pressed her fingers to the space between her eyebrows, smoothing away the tension and anger that had gathered there. Only when her expression was carefully schooled into one of calm did she return to her seat.

Dustin noticed the subtle shift in her mood and asked, “What’s wrong? You don’t look well.”

Natasha sat down, took a sip of her milkshake, and smiled as if nothing had happened.

“It’s nothing serious,” she replied. “Just some minor issues at the company. Several clients made some last-minute changes. This happens all the time in the business world. I can handle it.”

She didn’t want him to worry, especially now when he couldn’t use his ability and was in such a vulnerable state. Moreover, the cutthroat world of business was her battlefield.

Dustin looked at Natasha but didn’t press further. He simply nodded and said, “Okay. Just let me know if you need anything.”

“Of course, Mr. Rhys.”

Moved by his words, she leaned over and kissed his cheek; the brief touch left behind a faint smudge of lipstick and a familiar scent that was uniquely hers.

“You should head back and get some proper rest,” she said. “I might need to go to the office to deal with this matter. I’ll find you later.”

After their late-night snack, Natasha drove Dustin back to his villa. She reminded him to lock his doors and windows before speeding off toward Dash Corporation headquarters.

The city lights blurred into streaks as she drove, their glow a cold mirror for the resolve hardening in her eyes. She vowed that anyone who schemed behind the scenes and threatened her company would soon face the full force of her wrath.

Natasha hadn’t slept a wink that night. As dawn lightened the windows of her office at Dash Corporation, dark circles framed her eyes. Even so, her gaze remained sharp and focused.

Her desk was stacked with contracts, financial reports, and lists of affected clients and suppliers that Liora had compiled overnight.

Natasha went through each document carefully, her frown deepening with every page. The losses were stacking up, and the crisis was spiraling faster than she had feared.

Besides the major clients and suppliers, even smaller partners had caught wind of the situation. Many had chosen to wait and see, but some were already quietly reaching out to her competitors.

With both cash flow and supply chains being strained, a single misstep could put her entire company in serious jeopardy. Just then, a sharp rap sounded at the door. Liora entered, her face even paler than it had been the night before.

“Ms. Harmon, I’ve just received word that Spectrum Tech and Pinnacle Media have formally sent notices terminating their advertising and project collaborations with us for next quarter.”

They had lost two more major partners. Natasha slammed her pen on the desk. She leaned back in her chair, rubbing her throbbing temples.

After spending the entire night investigating and calling in favors from her private contacts, she still couldn't identify the person behind this crisis.

Her initial suspect, the Chandlers, had been ruled out after further investigation.

Warren was entangled in his own troubles, and other factions within the family were furious at the foolish actions of Gilbert and Frederick. The brothers were unlikely to stir up more trouble for the time being.

Natasha knew her main business rivals inside out. They might seize the chance to kick her while she was down. But none of them had the clout to rally so many powerful, well-connected partners against her in such a short time.

This wasn't just about business interests. It was pressure from someone higher up, forcing those below to comply.

Only a figure with overwhelming influence could make so many powerful executives across multiple industries cut ties overnight, even while paying massive penalties.

Besides the few long-established ancient houses in Oakvale, only individuals with direct lineage to the royal family or the highest-ranking elites with extremely close ties to the King could dare to act with such boldness.

Natasha's thoughts immediately turned to the royal relatives. Like a sudden flash of clarity, one figure surged into her mind.

Dahlia.

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Natasha was convinced Dahlia was behind it. As Seamus' goddaughter, Dahlia controlled nearly half of the Mosey family's finances. Her influence in business and high society was undeniable. With the full support of the Moseys behind her, crushing Dash Corporation would be child's play.

Natasha's eyes narrowed, a cold glint flashing within them as she searched for Dahlia's motive. Her thoughts snapped back to the barbecue restaurant the day before, to her own blatant display of affection, which she knew had struck a nerve.

Given Dahlia's pride and aloof nature, Natasha was sure she wouldn't make a scene in public. Yet she could easily imagine Dahlia nursing a private grudge and using her business influence to exact revenge, all to humiliate her.

In fact, Natasha sensed this might not just be about revenge. Something more calculated had been at play.

"Dahlia, I didn't expect you to be this petty, "Natasha muttered, tapping her fingers on the desk absently, her gaze hardening.

"Everyone says all's fair in love and business. You couldn't win Dustin's heart, so you're pulling this dirty crap instead? Do you want me to back down? Or just hoping to watch me make a fool of myself? 11

She scoffed, anger and resentment settling into a cold resolve.

"Fine. If you want to play this game, I'll see it through to the end. Let's see whose resources run deeper, the Mosey family's fortune, or my own methods."

Without hesitation, Natasha grabbed the phone on her desk and quickly dialed a number. After a few rings, the call connected, and a steady, middle-aged voice came through. " Natasha? Is everything alright? You never call this early."

The person on the other end was Jensen, one of the key figures of the Ballard family and Natasha's maternal uncle. He had considerable influence in both business circles and certain specialized fields.

"Uncle Jensen..." Natasha began, her voice grave and skipping all pleasantries. She got straight to the point. "My company's being targeted. Key clients and suppliers were poached overnight, and it's hitting us hard.

I think Dahlia from the Mosey family is behind it."

"The Mosey family? Dahlia?" Jensen's tone turned serious at once. "Are you sure?"

"I don't have any solid evidence," she replied. "But aside from them, I can't think of anyone else with both the capability and the motive."

Then, she quickly briefed him on the situation, including her conflict with Dahlia the day before.

"Uncle Jensen, I need your help. I didn't want to trouble Grandfather, but I have no choice now."

"Don't worry. I'm with you," Jensen said decisively. "We may not have the Mosey family's reach, but we're not pushovers either. If it comes to a fight, we won't necessarily lose."

He continued, “I’ll take care of the funding and pull in the connections immediately. I’ll also inform Dad to put pressure on the Mosey family. You just need to hold your ground, verify the facts, and be ready to strike back when the time comes.”

Hearing his firm and unwavering support, relief washed over Natasha. The pressure and gloom that had been weighing on her seemed to lift slightly.

“Thank you, Uncle Jensen. I know what to do.” After the call ended, she straightened in her chair. The exhaustion in her eyes was replaced by sharp determination.

She pressed the intercom button and ordered, “Liora, notify all department heads. Emergency meeting in 30 minutes.

“Also, compile every piece of intelligence we have on the Moseys’ business operations, especially anything where we might compete or where they have weak points. I want everything on my desk.”

“Yes, Ms. Harmon.”

As daylight spread across the city, a different war was underway; one that waged in spreadsheets and boardrooms, but every bit as ruthless.

Inside a luxurious villa, Florence was happily enjoying her breakfast. A tablet was propped on the table, streaming the latest viral short drama.

“The Domineering CEO Falls for His Divorced, Single-Mom, Post-Menopausal Ex-Wife” was riddled with clichés. The plot was utterly ridiculous, yet she watched with rapt attention, barely looking away from the screen even while eating.

Just then, Dahlia came down from the second floor in her silk pajamas.

“Come check this out. This short drama is so addictive, and I can’t stop watching it.” Seeing her daughter come downstairs, Florence waved her over enthusiastically and gestured for her to sit beside her.

“It’s all just cheesy nonsense. What’s so interesting about it?”

Dahlia sat beside her and picked up a bowl of warm oatmeal from the table, eating slowly. Having tossed and turned all night, her mind relentlessly replayed that familiar silhouette.

She had once believed that with the passage of time, she’d gradually forget Dustin. But after running into him last night, she realized she’d just been fooling herself. She couldn’t forget him at all.

Just then, her phone rang. Dahlia answered and immediately frowned. After a long moment, she nodded.

“Alright, I understand,” she said. “Don’t do anything rash. Wait until I investigate, then I’ll get back to you.”

“Dahlia, what’s wrong?” Florence asked casually, her eyes still glued to the screen.

“Just a minor issue at the company. I need to go and deal with it. Take your time eating.” Dahlia offered no further explanation. After a few brief words, she headed upstairs to change.

She had just received a call from her secretary, Lyra, reporting that Dash Corporation was applying pressure on her company, with the Ballard family pulling the strings behind the scenes.

Her relationship with Natasha had always been one of strained coexistence, a deliberate and mutual understanding to stay out of each other’s way.

Natasha’s sudden aggression was a calculated escalation that didn’t fit. The thought that it might stem from jealousy over Dustin crossed her mind, but she dismissed it just as quickly.

But knowing Natasha’s temperament, she doubted a personal matter would provoke such a drastic business move. She had to uncover it, and quickly.

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Chapter 2747

Back at the office, Dahlia settled into the executive chair behind her desk. Her fingers drummed a silent rhythm on its smooth surface as she focused on the screen. The briefing from Lyra showed that pressure from Dash Corporation, backed by the Ballard family, was rapidly mounting.

After a moment’s consideration, Dahlia stopped hesitating. She picked up her phone, scrolled to a number she rarely dialed yet knew by heart, and pressed call. The line rang several times before connecting

The voice on the line was Natasha’s. Her composure was clearly forced, and the icy edge beneath it was impossible to miss.

“What a rare pleasure, Ms. Nicholson. Is this a call to flaunt the Mosey family’s influence, or simply to savor my current predicament?”

Dahlia ignored the jab, cutting straight to the point. “I’m not behind the troubles that your company is facing.”

A short, derisive laugh came through the line, heavy with scorn.

“So you’ve got the nerve to make a move, but not to admit it?” Natasha said. “Last night at the restaurant, you couldn’t get Dustin’s attention, and it bruised your pride.

“Now you’re pulling underhanded business tricks? Leaning on the Mosey family’s influence to squeeze my company. And you call that a strategy? That’s your famous Ms. Nicholson’s pride?”

“I admit.” Dahlia’s voice was calm and clear. “It’s true that I want him back. But I’ll go about it my own way, openly and fairly. I won’t play games behind someone’s back or use business pressure to get revenge. That’s not my style, and it’s certainly not how the Mosey family operates.”

“Who else could it be if it’s not you?”

Natasha shot back, burning with anger.

My team already traced the trail. Every single pressure order leads straight back to the Mosey family and a few of your outside operatives. The evidence is right in front of you, Dahlia. How long are you going to keep up this act?”

Dahlia’s frown deepened. The certainty in Natasha’s voice told her that the fabricated trail was disturbingly thorough and almost indistinguishable from the truth. That only strengthened Dahlia’s own conviction.

“My conscience is clear,” she said. “If I had done this, I wouldn’t deny it. But this matter has nothing to do with me, nor with anything I know of the Mosey family’s intentions.”

She paused for a beat before emphasizing, “Think about it. If I really wanted to target you, would I leave such obvious traces for you to find?

“Would I make a move so crude and self-destructive that it drags both our families into a public feud? All that would do is turn us into a spectacle and hand the real advantage to our competitors. What would I gain from that?”

Natasha fell silent. The possibility had crossed her mind, but it had been drowned out by anger and her own assumptions.

Hearing Dahlia lay it out with such detached clarity was a sobering jolt. It was true that, given Dahlia’s character and her formidable intellect, any covert move she made would never be this clumsy.

“So you’re saying...” Natasha’s voice was calmer now, edged with dawning consideration. “Someone is impersonating the Mosey family to drive a wedge between us,” Dahlia finished, her tone sharp and unwavering.

She continued, “The target probably isn’t either of us directly. They want to set our families against each other, weaken us both, and reap the benefits. Or perhaps this is a probe, a way to gauge the Mosey family’s strength while setting us up to take the fall.”

Natasha leaned back in her chair and rubbed her temples. The business world was a battlefield, and such underhanded tactics were nothing new to her. Yet the sheer ruthlessness of this move, and the perfection of the forgery, sent a chill down her spine.

“I’m inclined to believe you, for now,” she said. “But if it wasn’t you, then who? Who else has the reach and the audacity to issue orders that perfectly mimic the Mosey family’s authority?”

“That’s exactly what I intend to find out,” Dahlia stated. “Anyone bold enough to use the Mosey family’s name must have backing, or they’re extremely familiar with their internal operations.

“I’ll personally look into this and use every resource available to get to the bottom of it. When I do, no matter who’s behind it, I’ll give you a clear answer.”

“Fine. I’ll take your word this time, Natasha responded. “I’ll also keep digging through my channels. I expect you to follow through and get me results as soon as possible.

“Until the truth comes out, I’ll hold off on targeting your company, but don’t mistake that for inaction. That doesn’t mean I’m letting my guard down or stopping the investigation.”

“Got it,” Dahlia said firmly. “Keep me updated. If you find anything, let me know right away.”

“Let’s hope so,” Natasha replied, then hung up. She studied the tangled web of corporate connections on her screen, eyes narrowing. If it wasn’t Dahlia, whoever was hiding in the shadows was even more dangerous and unpredictable.

Dahlia set her phone down, unease settling in her chest. She had managed to placate Natasha temporarily, but time was tight, and there was no room for complacency. After a moment’s consideration, Dahlia dialed another number.

“I need you to look into something for me. The more detailed, the better...” She quickly laid out her suspicions and pressed the person on the other end to speed up the investigation.

Her priority was to check the Mosey family's inner circle for any irregular personnel changes or data breaches. She also wanted to trace all external forces that had recently made unusual contact with them.

This mole had to be found, or the threat would remain.

An Understated Dominance

Chapter 2748

Within an elegantly appointed study at the Mosey mansion, Seamus, the prince of a different lineage, was personally pouring drinks for two young visitors.

The atmosphere was markedly different from the rest of the mansion. The usual imposing grandeur was absent, replaced by the cautious courtesy reserved for those of superior status. Evander Quinton remained impassive, offering only a slight nod in response to Seamus' attentiveness.

Elowen Quinton lifted her cup and inhaled the aroma of the tea. She held herself gracefully, yet there was an unmistakable distance in her posture. "This tea is excellent," she remarked after a sip, sounding genuinely pleased.

"These leaves are spiritual tea from the Appalchi Highlands, a most rare vintage," Seamus replied with a smile. "Should it be to your liking, I will have a selection prepared for you at once."

"No need for such formalities, Sir Mosey." Evander set down his cup and got straight to the point. "We don't have much time. Have you given proper thought to what we discussed last time?"

Seamus replied solemnly, "Being noticed by the Quinton family is a rare honor. But... There's something on my mind that I'm not sure if it is appropriate to ask."

"Go on," Evander replied, his expression unreadable. Seamus began, "Your family's lineage stretches back thousands of years. You've always stood apart from the temporal world and pursued paths far beyond mortal rule.

"Moreover, you've never interfered in mortal politics or in which king sits on the throne. Why choose me? Why choose to meddle in the affairs of Dragonmarsh's throne succession?"

Seamus held Evander's gaze, his expression one of earnest inquiry. But behind that carefully maintained facade, his eyes were sharply observant, meticulously scanning Evander's face for the slightest reaction.

Evander exchanged a glance with Elowen, who shook her head almost imperceptibly. Turning back to Seamus, Evander's eyes were as deep and unreadable.

"This isn't something you need to concern yourself with," he said. "We act by our own rules. If you agree, we can help you claim the throne and hold absolute power over Dragonmarsh for ten years. In return, you will follow our orders and carry out tasks for the family. If you refuse..."

He paused for a beat. His tone was calm but left no room for doubt about the stakes. " We can always support someone else. I've heard the three Dragonmarsh princes each have their own merits. We could just choose any one of them.

"What you seek is the pursuit of a lifetime. But for our family, it is merely a matter of selecting a slightly more or less convenient piece on the board." Seamus felt a sudden chill, and cold sweat broke out across his back.

Evander's calm tone and absolute control made him fully aware of just how terrifying a hidden, centuries-old family could be. To them, the so-called royalty and power were probably no more significant than ants.

Seamus instantly abandoned any thought of pressing further.

"You flatter me, Lord Quinton," he said quickly. "It's already a great honor that your esteemed family holds me in regard. How could I possibly harbor any doubts? I am entirely at your disposal and will dedicate my utmost to serving the Quintons."

A faint, almost imperceptible smile finally touched Evander's lips. "Good. You are a wise man, Sir Mosey. It's always a pleasure to work with someone sharp."

With a flick of his finger, a token engraved with strange, cloud-like patterns landed soundlessly on the table before Seamus.

"This is a token and a means of communication. Whatever you need to do will be conveyed through it. You don't need to contact us unless we instruct you to do so. Just focus on your duties, and above all, don't draw attention to yourself or provoke anyone you shouldn't."

His last sentence was laden with unspoken warnings. Seamus picked up the cool token with both hands and noticed it felt heavier than its size suggested.

"Got it," he replied. "I will remember it."

"Your task now is to consolidate your position and build up your forces quietly," Evander instructed. "When the time is right, you will be told the next steps."

With that, he and Elowen rose to their feet. Without any visible movement, their figures seemed to blur and fade like dissipating mist, vanishing from the study as if they had never been there at all.

Seamus remained standing in place for a long while, with the token in his hand, before finally straightening his posture. His eyes held a new, complex depth of thought.

The Quintons, a family withdrawn from the world for so long, were now suddenly involving themselves in royal affairs. He couldn't tell if this was a blessing or a curse.

Since the throne was within his reach, he had no reason to refuse. With the backing of the Quinton family, he could rule Dragonmarsh and perhaps even the entire world. Just then, someone knocked on the door.

"Come in," Seamus said, collecting himself. The door opened, and Anders stepped inside. He said respectfully, "Godfather, the matter you entrusted to me has been taken care of."

"Good work. You've done well," Seamus responded with a nod.

"It was nothing," Anders replied. "But I don't understand why a small company like the Dash Corporation is worth your attention?"

"Targeting them wasn't my decision," Seamus said evenly. "I'm simply following orders."

"Oh?" Anders couldn't hide his shock. " Who in this world could possibly give you orders?"

"Have you heard of the Quinton family?" Seamus asked.

"The Quintons?" Anders frowned, then his expression shifted to one of grave understanding. "You mean... the legendary cultivator family that stays hidden from the world?"

"That's right," Seamus replied with a nod.

"Their family's legacy spans a thousand years, and very few people have heard of them. If I hadn't seen it myself, I wouldn't have believed it either."

"You're saying they have already approached you?" Anders asked, stunned.

"Yes." Seamus didn't deny it. "An emissary came. They say they'll support my ascension to the throne. But in return, I must follow their orders for the next ten years."

"And you agreed?" Anders ventured. If it meant ascending to the throne, obeying the Quinton family for a decade didn't seem like too steep a price.

“Of course,” Seamus said. “If I refused, they’d support someone else. Then, we wouldn’t survive the fallout. We’re not in a position to offend a family of cultivators.”

“You’ve made a wise decision, Godfather,” Anders said.

“I’m getting old,” Seamus said calmly. ” Even if I ascend to the throne, I won’t enjoy it for many years. When that time comes, everything I have will be yours. So from now on, you need to handle things properly and not make any mistakes.”

“You have my word. Godfather. I won’t let you down,” Anders replied, unable to hide his excitement.

At last, the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity he had been waiting for had arrived. If he could bypass Seamus and deal directly with the Quinton family, might his future look even brighter?

An Understated Dominance

Chapter 2749

Over the next few days, the crisis at Dash Corporation showed no signs of resolving, despite Dahlia’s attempts to clear things up.

Natasha had paused her direct attacks, but the market pressure hadn’t lifted. Most of the clients and suppliers who’d been swayed remained hesitant to return. It was as if someone were quietly steering events from behind the scenes.

She even mobilized the Ballard family’s full resources and launched a counter-investigation. Natasha didn’t believe in flawless conspiracies. If someone had impersonated the Moseys, they would have left traces behind.

At the same time, she also started sharing information with Dahlia more regularly. Though tension still existed between them, this uneasy alliance seemed necessary when facing an enemy hidden in the shadows.

As for Dustin, he’d begun living a relatively quiet life under Natasha’s insistence. Without his power, he now experienced the vulnerability and limits of mortality in ways he never had before.

But from another perspective, it was a rare opportunity. Stripped of his power, he could experience the world as an ordinary person and notice things he’d overlooked. He could also feel the rhythm of everyday life he’d been too elevated to see.

It was a sunny afternoon. Dustin went out alone to a large public park not far from the neighborhood. Tall trees lined the walking paths, an artificial lake reflected the blue sky, and people were scattered across the grounds, enjoying their weekend.

Parents pushed strollers while joggers in athletic gear passed by. College students sat on benches with their laptops, and food trucks lined the main pathway, creating a lively atmosphere.

Dressed in simple casual clothes, Dustin wandered along the lakeside path with his hands in his pockets. He felt the warmth of the sun on his skin, caught the scent of freshly cut grass mixed with grilled food from nearby vendors, and listened to the ordinary sounds of life around him.

The sense of being fully immersed in everyday life felt both unfamiliar and intriguing. His gaze moved calmly over the crowd, taking in their small joys and quiet frustrations. As he neared an open stretch of lawn, two figures caught his attention.

A man and a woman stood out sharply from the crowd around them. The man looked to be in his late 20s. He was good-looking, but he seemed out of sync with the modern world, like someone from an earlier era.

He wore what looked like a modified frock coat in deep navy blue. The fabric appeared exceptionally fine, catching the light with a subtle sheen. Strapped across his back was a long, narrow object wrapped in weathered cloth. Its shape suggested a sword.

The woman was younger, probably in her early 20s. Her striking beauty had an almost ethereal quality.

She wore a flowing ivory gown with wide sleeves, silver embroidery tracing delicate patterns along the hem. Her long hair was pinned up with a simple emerald hairpin, a few dark strands falling loose around her face.

In a park full of T-shirts, jeans, and athletic wear, the two of them looked like they'd stepped off a period drama set. But what made Dustin's gaze sharpen wasn't just their unusual clothing.

Without his divine sense or cultivation, he couldn't detect any spiritual energy or special energy waves. But instinct honed through countless life-and-death battles told him these two were dangerous.

The man's movements seemed casual, but each step held a precision and balance that was hard to define. He moved as if he were part of the environment, yet could detach from it at any moment.

The woman held a pink cloud of cotton candy that looked absurdly out of place with her refined elegance. She took small, delicate bites, her face lit with content.

Her cold aloofness had melted away, replaced by an almost childlike sweetness. But when her gaze drifted across the people around them, something shifted.

For just a moment, her eyes held the kind of indifference someone might have when looking at insects. These two were Evander and Elowen Quinton.

Elowen seemed fascinated by everything in the park, especially the street food vendors. After finishing her cotton candy, she wandered over to a stand where a vendor was making hand-pulled taffy. Her eyes lit up as the man expertly stretched and twisted the candy into colorful ribbons and shapes.

Evander followed his sister by half a step, quietly observing the park scenery. He seemed completely oblivious to the curious, surprised, and even pointed stares from passersby. It was as if all the noise and bustle were separated from him by an invisible barrier.

“Evander, this is amazing.” Elowen held up a ribbon of taffy twisted into the shape of a bird and turned to him with a smile. At that moment, she looked like any carefree young woman out enjoying the day.

His lips curved slightly, his eyes softening with affection. “I’m glad you like it. The mortal world may lack spiritual energy, but these little pleasures have their own appeal.”

As they continued walking, Elowen admired her candy while taking in the sights. When she rounded a corner, a group of breakdancers caught her attention, and she didn’t notice the couple heading straight toward her.

She let out a startled cry as the collision sent her stumbling backward. Her taffy figure and the stick from her cotton candy slipped from her hands and hit the ground. The candy figure landed with a splat, the delicate bird shape flattening and sticking to the pavement.

The one who’d bumped into her was a young man, dressed in designer streetwear with multiple ear piercings. His arm slung around a woman in elaborate makeup wearing a crop top. He frowned immediately after the impact. When he took in Elowen’s strange outfit, contempt flashed across his face.

“Hey! Watch where you’re going!”

His tone was aggressive, with no hint of an apology. His girlfriend looked down at the flattened taffy figure on the ground with disgust, curling her lip.

“Dressed like some weirdo. You scared the hell out of me!” she spat. “Do you have any manners? You ran right into us!”

An Understated Dominance

Chapter 2750

Elowen's smile disappeared in an instant. The playful warmth in her expression turned ice-cold as she slowly raised her head to look at the couple. Her gaze was icy, as though she were staring at lifeless objects.

The air seemed to freeze around them. The moment her eyes shifted with intent, Evander's hand came to rest gently on her shoulder, stopping her before she could act.

He stepped forward, positioning himself between his sister and the couple. His expression softened into a warm, apologetic smile as he nodded at them. "I'm so sorry. My sister wasn't paying attention to where she was going. We apologize for startling you."

His tone was sincere and humble as he tried to defuse the situation. The young man's irritation eased slightly when he saw the genuine apology, particularly after noticing Evander's polished demeanor.

Still, he couldn't resist saying, "Just pay attention next time. What's with the outfits anyway? You guys filming something?"

His girlfriend gave a dismissive snort and pulled on his arm. "Come on. Let's go. No point talking to weirdos."

The couple tossed out a few more remarks as they walked away with an air of superiority. Evander kept smiling as he watched them leave.

It wasn't until the couple had walked a dozen yards away and disappeared into the crowd that Elowen finally spoke. Her voice was cold with displeasure. "Why did you stop me?"

He withdrew his gaze. Though he was still smiling and the warmth in his expression had deepened, his eyes held nothing but indifference. It was as if his earlier apology had been nothing more than brushing away a speck of dust.

Evander turned to look at Elowen and said softly, "Why bother with insects? We rarely get out like this. Don't let them ruin your mood."

"But it has already been ruined," she said icily, looking down at the flattened taffy figure stuck on the ground. Elowen wasn't upset about the ruined candy but about the disrespect those two had shown her.

Evander's smile deepened, as if he had heard something amusing. His gaze drifted toward where the couple had gone. They were laughing and chatting as they headed toward the other side of the park, completely unaware of the attention they'd drawn.

"Should I kill them for you?" Evander asked casually, as if asking about dinner plans, except his eyes showed he wasn't joking.

Elowen fell silent for a moment before shaking her head. Her red lips parted as she said, “No. I want them to wish they were dead.”

When she spoke, there was no anger in her expression, yet her words carried unmistakable cruelty.

“Okay.”

Evander nodded as if this were the most ordinary request imaginable. His left hand remained behind his back while his right hand was raised.

He formed a seal with his fingers and traced patterns in the air. The movements were light and subtle, drawing no one’s attention and stirring not even the slightest breeze.

In the distance, Dustin’s gaze had been fixed on them the entire time. He saw Evander raise his hand, but he couldn’t make out the exact movement. However, the casual gesture combined with the flash of cold focus in Evander’s eyes set off alarm bells in his mind.

Evander pointed lazily at the couple’s retreating backs from a distance. There was no light, no sound, and nothing visible at all.

But the next moment, the couple, who had walked more than 100 feet away, suddenly let out piercing screams that barely sounded human.

“My head! My body!”

They convulsed violently as if struck by an invisible sledgehammer before pitching forward onto the pavement. ement. Once down, they began thrashing and rolling wildly while clutching their heads with both hands.

Their faces twisted in agony as their eyes bulged and mouths gaped open. The guttural sounds and broken wails coming from them suggested they were enduring the cruelest torture imaginable while remaining fully conscious.

“What’s happening?”

“Someone collapsed!”

“Call 911!”

“Wait. Are they having seizures or epilepsy?”

The passerby around them froze in shock before rushing over seconds later. Some shouted for help, some tried to assist the couple, and others frantically dialed the helpline on their phones.

Chaos erupted as a crowd quickly formed around the couple. The onlookers blocked the view, but the screams still pierced through, sending chills down everyone's spines.

Evander lowered his hand as if he'd just done something trivial and turned to Elowen with a warm smile.

"Now, are you satisfied?" he asked. She watched the chaos in the distance and listened to the faint screams. Her face returned to that ethereal, detached expression, as if she hadn't just requested a cruel punishment moments ago.

Elowen let out a soft hum and turned toward another part of the park. Her steps were light, as if the incident had nothing to do with her.

An Understated Dominance

Chapter 2751

Evander smiled faintly, unbothered by Elowen's indifference, and followed after her. Just as he was about to turn away, something seemed to catch his attention. His head shifted ever so slightly toward where Dustin stood.

Dustin's heart stirred, but his expression remained unchanged. He kept the same calm demeanor, his gaze sweeping casually over the chaotic scene before resting on the lake's shimmering surface. It was as if he were just another bystander drawn by the commotion.

Evander's gaze lingered on him for less than half a second. He saw an ordinary-looking young man in plain clothes with an unremarkable presence, standing by the lake watching the scene unfold. To him, Dustin just looked like other curious onlookers nearby.

The corner of Evander's mouth curled upward almost imperceptibly, forming an ambiguous smile. In that expression lay indifference, superiority, and perhaps a trace of contempt for ordinary people. It was something even he might not have been aware of.

Withdrawing his gaze, he turned and followed Elowen at an unhurried pace. The two figures soon disappeared around a bend in the path on the far side of the park, as if they had never been there at all.

Dustin stood still, his gaze returning to the lake's surface as his fingers brushed against something in his pocket.

"I want them to wish they were dead."

Elowen's words echoed in his mind. With just a gesture through the air, they had inflicted excruciating agony on others.

Dustin was aware that this technique went far beyond what ordinary martial artists or gifted individuals could manage. The casual way they'd drawn those symbols in the air looked like spellcasting.

Something about Evander and Elowen felt deeply wrong. Their clothing and demeanor seemed completely out of place in the modern world, and they regarded human life with cold indifference. The eerie abilities they wielded so effortlessly only added to the unsettling impression.

"Are they disciples of the reclusive cultivator families?" Dustin wondered aloud. He didn't know much about them, but had only heard rumors in passing.

He used to dismiss them as fairy tales. But after witnessing the scene, he understood that this world really did harbor powerful cultivators. For ordinary people, such cultivators might as well be myths.

Ever since Dustin had broken through to the terrestrial immortal realm, he'd crossed the threshold from martial artist to true cultivator. Right now, he was in the nascent soul stage of mortal transformation.

"It seems another wave is about to sweep through Oakvale," he muttered to himself. Once disciples from the hidden cultivator families emerged, they inevitably caused upheaval. But without his cultivation, there wasn't much he could do about it. He felt that it was better to keep his head down and mind his own business.

At that moment, Evander and Elowen were already in the back of a luxury sedan.

"That guy by the lake earlier was interesting," she said casually, toying with a small pinwheel she'd just bought.

"Oh? You sensed it too?" he asked, leaning back in the plush leather seat with his eyes closed. "I can't quite put my finger on it Something felt off, but I couldn't see anything special about him," Elowen said with a shrug

She added, "Maybe I'm overthinking it. In these mundane lands where spiritual energy is lacking, what kind of person would even be worth noticing?"

Evander opened his eyes. A faint golden gleam flashed in their depths before vanishing.

"Better be cautious than sorry," he said. " But even if there is something unusual about him, he's not a threat to us in this world.

"Our mission is to ensure Seamus takes the throne and controls Dragonmarsh's government so our family can move forward with its plans. Anything else that doesn't get in our way isn't our problem "

“Got it.” Elowen stuck the pinwheel out the car window and watched it spin rapidly in the wind, a childlike smile spreading across her face. She didn’t look like she had just casually decided another person’s fate back at the park.

The sedan pulled smoothly into Oakvale’s heavy traffic and disappeared. The park incident seemed minor and was quickly forgotten. But the course of events had already been set in motion.

By the time Dustin returned to his villa, the setting sun had painted the horizon orange - red. These past few days had been so peaceful they felt foreign to him, but he’d surprisingly found he didn’t mind it.

Without his cultivation, he’d become more focused on the details right in front of him. The aroma of coffee, the words in a book, and the way light and shadow shifted across the windowsill.

That morning, he came downstairs to prepare breakfast as usual, only to find something off in the kitchen. The milk carton that had been half-full last night was gone, several slices of ham were missing from the fridge, and an empty milk carton sat in the trash.

Dustin frowned. The neighborhood had excellent security, and there shouldn’t be any break-ins. Could Natasha have stopped by last night? But if it had been her, she wouldn’t have just taken the food.

He searched the kitchen carefully, then heard a faint noise coming from the pantry. Dustin walked over quietly and opened the door. A pair of amber eyes stared back at him from the shadows, wary and alert.

It was a small white fox, about the size of a house cat. Its right hind leg was curled beneath it, marked with an obvious wound. Dried blood had crusted into dark brown patches on the fur.

Its coat was pure white without a single marking, and its fluffy tail was wrapped tightly around its body. Traces of milk still clung to the fur around its mouth.

When it saw Dustin, the fox bared its teeth and growled low in its throat. But the injury made its defensive stance look awkward and vulnerable.

An Understated Dominance

Chapter 2752

Dustin didn’t step closer. He remained at the doorway and spoke gently. “It’s okay. I won’t hurt you. If you’re hungry, you can come eat anytime.”

The white fox's amber eyes glimmered in the dim light. They stayed locked on him, sharp and wary. He stepped back and grabbed more food from the fridge. Then, he placed a few slices of ham and a small bowl of milk in the corner of the kitchen. He returned to the living room with a book and pretended to read while watching the kitchen from the corner of his eye.

Half an hour passed before the fox finally limped out from the storage room. It scanned the area carefully. Only after confirming that Dustin posed no threat did it dart forward to grab the food, then hurry back to its hiding spot.

Over the next few days, Dustin left food in the kitchen corner every day. Sometimes it was sliced fruit, and other times, cooked chicken or pet treats he'd bought at the store.

The fox came at irregular times, appearing at dawn on some days and late at night on others. Yet, he always knew of its visit by the food that had disappeared

Gradually, the fox grew less cautious. At first, it waited until Dustin left the kitchen before venturing out. Soon, it began slipping in even while he stayed in the living room.

A week later, Dustin was reading one quiet afternoon when the white fox approached his feet. It lifted its head and nudged the apple in his hand with its nose. Dustin smiled and broke off a small piece then placed it on the floor.

The fox hesitated before lowering its head and began to eat But instead of fleeing afterward, it stayed, lying down on the carpet beside him and gently licking its injured hind leg

Finally, Dustin had a clear look at the wound. It wasn't a simple scrape or bite. Faint scorch marks traced the edges of the injury, as if it had been burned by some kind of mystical force.

"Let me take a look at that, okay?" he asked softly. The fox seemed to understand. It lifted its head, its amber eyes flickering with hesitation, but didn't resist

Carefully, Dustin cleaned the wound. He disinfected it, applied ointment, and bandaged it. The fox trembled now and then, but it neither struggled nor tried to bite him.

"There you go. Keep it dry for the next few days, and it should heal soon," he said, gently stroking its head. The fox nudged his hand in thanks before limping away.

From that day, the white fox appeared more often. It curled up at his feet while he read, sniffed curiously at his tea, and even let him stroke its smooth, silken fur.

Dustin even named it Snowy.

“Snowy, I got your favorite salmon today,” he said, placing a small plate of fish in the kitchen corner. However, the fox didn’t come that day, nor the following day. Dustin grew a little worried, but he reasoned the fox might have returned to the wild now that its leg was healed.

On the fourth night, he was startled awake by the sound of frantic scratching at the door. He opened it to find Snowy standing there, drenched. Beside it lay a woman, equally soaked and unconscious.

Wounds covered her body, her skin pale as paper, and breathing shallow. The white dress she wore was soaked through with blood. Even in this state, she was still breathtaking.

She had delicate features and flawless skin. Even while unconscious, she radiated an ethereal presence that seemed almost untouchable.

Snowy had dragged the woman to the doorstep. It nudged her with its nose, then looked up at Dustin with its amber eyes, as if pleading. Without hesitation, he scooped her into his arms and laid her on the couch.

Upon examining her injuries, he found many external wounds, but the internal injuries were far more severe. Her organs bore varying degrees of trauma, and within her body, an unusual, wild energy churned violently.

Though Dustin could no longer use his cultivation, he still had the skill to treat her injuries. He quickly treated her external wounds, then used acupuncture to stabilize her internal energy flow. After that, he prepared a herbal remedy to restore her vitality and carefully fed it to her.

Snowy stayed by her side, always keeping an anxious eye on him.

“Who is she to you?” Dustin asked the fox. Naturally, Snowy didn’t answer. It just gently nuzzled the woman’s hand with its head.

The woman remained unconscious for two days. During that time, he tended to her meticulously, while Snowy never left her side.

As he treated her, Dustin discovered that this woman was far from ordinary. Her circulatory pathways were different from ordinary people.

The energy inside her was wild and erratic, yet pure at its core. Her cultivation was more advanced than any typical martial artist.

On the third morning, the woman finally stirred. The moment she opened her eyes, he froze and was caught off guard by the sheer depth of her gaze. It was clear yet distant, as if they could see right through him.

At the sight of Dustin, her gaze sharpened immediately. She tried to sit up, but the movement pulled at her injuries, making her wince.

“Don’t move. You’re badly injured,” he said quickly. The woman’s eyes swept the room before landing on Snowy at her side. Her expression softened slightly.

“You saved me?” she asked. “Snowy brought you here,” Dustin said, gesturing to the white fox. “I only did what needed to be done.”

An Understated Dominance

Chapter 2753

The woman glanced at Snowy, and the fox immediately strutted over and affectionately rubbed against her hand. A trace of warmth flickered in her eyes, but it vanished as quickly as it appeared, replaced by her usual cool composure.

“Thank you,” she said. “Once I’ve recovered, I’ll leave and won’t trouble you anymore.” “No worry,” Dustin replied. “Just focus on your recovery. By the way, may I know your name?”

She was silent for a moment before answering softly, “Blanche Frost.”

Over the next few days, Blanche stayed at the villa to recover. She spoke very little and spent most of her time meditating to restore her strength. Occasionally, she would stand by the window, gazing toward the distant mountains, lost in thought.

Dustin soon noticed something unusual. Her recovery speed was astonishing. Injuries that would have left an ordinary person bedridden for months had healed to the point of near recovery in just a few days.

One afternoon, he was trimming plants in the courtyard when the doorbell rang. He opened the door to find Natasha standing outside, smiling brightly and carrying a food container.

“Surprise! I had my family’s chef make your favorite pastries,” she said, casually pulling him into a hug. Dustin took the container with a smile.

“What brings you here? I thought you were swamped with work,” he said. “Things at work have finally eased up, so I figured I’d come see you,” she replied as she stepped inside. “How have you been? Did you miss me…”

Her words trailed off as her gaze fell on the corner of the living room. At that moment, Snowy was dozing in the sunlight by the floor-to-ceiling window. Its white fur gleamed softly in the warm rays.

“Wow!” Natasha exclaimed, hurrying over. “What a beautiful fox.”

She bent down, trying to pet Snowy. “You have a pet now? Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Wait!”

Dustin tried to warn her, but it was too late. Snowy snapped awake. Seeing a stranger reaching for it, it bared its teeth in a low growl before darting behind the couch. Natasha jumped back, quickly withdrawing her hand.

“It doesn’t seem to like me,” she said. “It’s a bit wary of strangers,” Dustin explained. “Give it some time. It’ll warm up once it gets familiar with you.”

Natasha nodded but couldn’t take her eyes off Snowy. She clearly found the fox irresistible.

“What’s its name? Where did you find it?” Natasha asked. “It’s so adorable.” As they were talking, light footsteps sounded from the stairs.

Blanche came down from the second floor. She was no longer wearing the bloodstained white clothes. Instead, she had on the simple loungewear Dustin had prepared-a plain white T-shirt and gray sweatpants.

Even in such casual clothes, she carried a detached, almost ethereal presence. Her long hair fell loosely around her face, a few strands brushing her cheeks and emphasizing her pale, flawless skin.

Natasha froze when she saw her. She looked at Blanche, then at Dustin. Surprise shifted to confusion, then to heartache, and finally settled on jealousy.

“And who is this?” she asked, her tone sharp. “You’re not hiding a mistress here, are you? Don’t tell me you’ve got someone else already.”

“Of course, not,” Dustin said quickly. “I just met her-”

“Just met her?” Natasha’s voice rose slightly, jealousy flaring. “She’s living in your house and you ‘just met her’?”

“You’ve got it wrong. She was badly injured. I happened to save her, that’s all. Once she recovers, she’ll leave,” he replied with a helpless smile.

“You sure?” she asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Mr. Rhys is telling the truth,” Blanche said. “He saved my life, that’s all. You don’t need to worry, miss...”

“Harmon. Natasha Harmon. Well, that’s good then,” Natasha responded. She finally smiled and looped her arm through Dustin’s, clearly staking her claim. Blanche looked at them with calm, unreadable eyes.

“Mr. Rhys, Ms. Harmon,” she said evenly. ”

Now that the misunderstanding has been cleared up, I won’t intrude any longer. My injuries have mostly healed. I’ll be leaving today.”

“Ms. Frost, you haven’t fully recovered yet, “Dustin said.

“Don’t worry. I have somewhere to go,”

she replied, looking at the fox. “Snowy, let’s go.”

Snowy sprang from behind the couch and padded to Blanche’s side, stopping at her feet. It glanced back at Dustin, amber eyes lingering, almost as if it didn’t want to leave.

She gave Dustin a slight nod. “I won’t forget that you saved my life. If you ever need me, use this to find me.”

She removed a white pendant and handed it to him. The surface was smooth and warm, carved with unusual cloud patterns and an intricate “F” in the center.

Dustin accepted it and said, “Take care, Ms. Frost.”

Without another word, Blanche turned and left. Snowy followed at her heels, and the pair soon disappeared through the door.

“What was her name again?” Natasha asked suddenly.

“Blanche Frost.”

“She’s beautiful,” she said with a meaningful smile. “And the name suits her, too. You have quite the luck with women.”

Dustin cleared his throat and said awkwardly, “It’s just a coincidence.” Natasha was smiling, but something in her expression made him uneasy.

“She doesn’t seem like an ordinary person, and that white fox seems to understand everything,” she said, changing the subject.

“Yeah,” Dustin said thoughtfully. “Lately, Oakvale’s been getting visitors who don’t usually show up here. I’ve got a feeling something big is about to happen.”

“Something big? Like what?” Natasha asked curiously.

“Not sure yet. Without my cultivation, I can’t use my divine sense to probe what’s going on. We’ll have to take things as they come.”

He added solemnly, “Listen, you need to be extra careful too. If anything happens, tell me immediately. Don’t take any chances.”

An Understated Dominance

Chapter 2754

“Don’t worry,” Natasha said with a smile. ” I’ve been keeping a low profile lately, and hardly make any public appearances. I’ve already assigned people to handle company matters.” “Glad to hear that,” Dustin responded with a nod.

After Blanche left, his life returned to its usual calm. Natasha started visiting the villa even more often. She no longer carried the constant rush of business affairs as she used to. Instead, she deliberately made time to savor simple moments with Dustin.

It was the weekend, and she arrived early in the morning, carrying several bags.

“It’s such a beautiful day. Let’s go on a picnic,” she said with a bright smile, her eyes sparkling with anticipation. “I had the chef prepare a lunchbox, along with some fruit and pastries.”

Dustin looked out at the bright sunshine filling the courtyard and nodded.

“Sounds good. Where to?” he asked.

“I know a place not far from here,” she replied. “There’s a meadow with a gorgeous lake view.”

They drove out of the city, winding up a mountain road for about half an hour until they reached a secluded hillside. The view stretched wide, overlooking a reservoir sparkling below, with the city skyline faintly visible through the morning haze.

Natasha unloaded the picnic basket from the car and spread a blue-and-white checkered blanket on the grass. She began laying out sandwiches, fruit salad, grilled chicken wings, cupcakes, and a thermos of iced tea with effortless ease.

“You really went all out,” Dustin said, helping her arrange the food.

“We don’t get to do this often,” she replied with a smile, handing him a sandwich. ” Try this one. I had the chef add that sauce you like.”

Dustin took a bite and nodded appreciatively. “It’s delicious.”

They sat side by side on the blanket, watching the distant scenery and chatting casually. The breeze carried the fresh scent of grass and wildflowers across the meadow.

After a while, Natasha broke the silence. ” Sometimes I wish things could be simpler. You know, if you could just be an ordinary person.”

Dustin turned to look at her. “Why do you say that?”

“Because then you’d always be with me,” she replied, leaning on his shoulder. “No more dealing with all that fighting or facing any danger. We could just live a normal life, go to work, come home, cook dinner, and enjoy picnics on the weekends.

He was quiet for a moment, then gently put his arm around her shoulders. “I’d like that too.”

“Really?” Natasha lifted her head, her eyes bright.

“Yes,” Dustin replied with a nod. “Even without my cultivation, I’ve actually enjoyed the quiet life. Making breakfast in the morning, reading, going for walks, waiting for you to come home from work.”

“Then, it’s settled,” she said, sitting up straight and holding out her pinky finger. ” Once everything is sorted, we’ll live like this. Promise.”

Seeing her so earnest, he felt genuinely moved. Then, he extended his pinky and hooked it with hers. “Okay. Promise.”

The afternoon sun was warm and gentle. The two spent the rest of the day lying on the grass, watching clouds drift lazily across the sky.

Conversation flowed in easy, casual bursts, with occasional pauses as they simply savored the rare quiet. They didn’t pack up until the sun began sinking toward the horizon.

On the drive back, Natasha’s phone rang. She glanced at the screen, frowned slightly, and hesitated for a moment before answering.

“Hello?” Dahlia’s calm, cool voice came through. “Natasha, it’s me.”

“I know. What do you want?” Natasha replied, her tone returning to its usual calm detachment. Dustin glanced at her, silently asking who it was. She mouthed a single word, “Dahlia.”

He looked surprised but said nothing, keeping his eyes on the road.

“The investigation’s done,” Dahlia said, getting straight to the point. “The attacks on Dash Corporation weren’t my doing, nor were they officially sanctioned by the Moseys.”

“Then, who?” Natasha asked.

“It’s Anders, my godbrother,” Dahlia replied. “You’ve probably heard of him.” Natasha’s eyes narrowed. “Sir Mosey’s adopted son? Why would he do this?”

“He went behind my godfather’s back, secretly using some of the Mosey family’s resources and forging orders.”

There was a trace of exhaustion in Dahlia’s voice.

“It took me days to get the truth out of one of his confidants. He covered his tracks well and almost fooled me.”

“What’s his motive?” Natasha asked, confused.

“He’s trying to bypass my godfather and make direct contact with a certain faction, “Dahlia replied. After a beat, she continued, “I’m still investigating the details, but this faction is not to be taken lightly. It might be connected to some of the ‘special figures’ who’ve shown up in Oakvale recently.

“Either way, you need to be careful. There are undercurrents running through the Moseys right now. I can’t even read the situation clearly anymore.”

Natasha stayed silent for a moment, then asked, “Why are you telling me all this? If something happened to me, wouldn’t that benefit you?”

The line went quiet for a few seconds. Then Dahlia’s voice came through, clearer and more resolute than before.

“I know Dustin cares about you. I owe him too much already. I don’t want to see him hurt.” She paused, then added, “Besides, I want fair competition, not underhanded tactics. I’m not so desperate that I’d stoop to winning that way.”

Natasha blinked, then couldn’t help smiling faintly. “Well, you’ve certainly earned my respect.”

An Understated Dominance

Chapter 2755

“The Moseys’ situation is unclear right now. You need to be careful too,” Natasha said, sounding concerned for once. ” Losing a rival like you would make life pretty boring.”

Dahlia seemed to laugh on the other end. ” Don’t worry. I’m not going to die before you do.” Natasha snorted before hanging up. Dustin couldn’t help asking, “What did she say?”

“She said Anders is behind it and warned me to watch out. Things at the Moseys have become dangerous,” Natasha replied, putting her phone away. “She said there are unknown factions involved now, and even she can’t do anything about it.”

Dustin frowned. “Anders... I remember him. He’s an ambitious guy. But if even Dahlia finds these factions troublesome, they’re no joke.”

“Yeah. She said it might be connected to those ‘special figures’ who showed up in Oakvale recently,” she said, looking out the car window. “Could the people you encountered in the park before be...”

“It’s possible,” Dustin responded with a nod. “The methods those two used are definitely not something ordinary martial artists possess.”

By the time they got back to the villa, it was completely dark outside. Natasha stayed over that evening. They made a simple dinner together and sat in the living room eating while watching the news.

The broadcast reported a bizarre incident from earlier that afternoon. A mansion in the Oakvale suburbs had suddenly caught fire.

The fire had been unusually intense. When firefighters arrived, they found the temperature at the center of the blaze abnormally high. The burn patterns were strange, unlike those of an ordinary fire.

Even more disturbing was that the investigators discovered three charred bodies at the scene, burned beyond recognition. The coroner’s preliminary assessment suggested the victims had died before the fire even started.

“This news...” Natasha frowned. “Could it be related to those ‘special figures’?”

Dustin stared at the screen for a few seconds. “It’s possible,” he said finally. “But there’s nothing we can do about it right now. We’ll just have to wait and see how things develop.”

“Great. Just when I thought we could have some peace and quiet,” she said with a sigh, resting her head on his shoulder. ” Where do you think these people come from? Why are they interfering in mundane affairs?”

“No idea,” he replied, shaking his head. ” But if they’re showing up now, it means something’s about to happen.”

They talked late into the night before Natasha finally went to the guest room to rest. Dustin returned to his own room but couldn’t sleep. He stood by the window, looking out at the city in the darkness. A nagging feeling settled in his gut.

Their peaceful days probably wouldn't last much longer. Elsewhere in Oakvale, the atmosphere at the Weston family estate was so oppressive that it was almost suffocating.

The Westons were an upper-middle-class family in Oakvale. They had some influence in the business world. Their family enterprises covered real estate and import-export trade, making them a respected name in the city.

But right now, dozens of family members were kneeling in the main hall. They were trembling and dared not make a sound.

In the seat of honor sat a cultivator, Narcissa, in her early 30s. She wore a flowing dress of pale lavender, her long hair pinned up with an emerald clasp. Her features were beautiful, but her expression held a cruel edge

She sat with her legs crossed, idly toying with a crystal glass while her cold gaze swept over the people kneeling before her. Beside her stood a boy around six years old.

The child had delicate features and wore an expensive silk attire, but his face held a cruelty and arrogance that didn't belong to someone his age.

He snapped the riding crop occasionally, each sharp crack making the children in the front row shrink back against their parents.

"Mr. Weston," Narcissa said coldly. "Is this how your family treats guests? Can't even brew a decent cup of coffee?"

The white-haired elderly man kneeling at the front was the family patriarch, Oswald Weston. He bowed his head low and said, " Please forgive us. It was the maids' fault. I'll have them make a fresh pot immediately."

"Don't bother." She waved her hand dismissively. "I can see your family doesn't have anything worth offering anyway. If this estate wasn't positioned on a ley line, I would've already left."

Narcissa turned to the boy beside her. " Kael, what do you think of this place?"

Kael wrinkled his nose. "Mom, this place is boring. They don't even have any decent toys. And these people are all clumsy idiots. That woman almost scalded me when she poured me a drink earlier."

"Oh?" Her eyes went cold. "Which one?"

Kael pointed to a young woman kneeling in the corner. She was in her early 20s, a distant niece of the Westons named Rachel Weston.

She usually helped with household tasks around the estate. Now, singled out, she trembled violently as tears streamed down her face.

“P-Please spare me. I didn’t mean to.” Rachel slapped herself hard across the face. “My hand slipped. I was just so nervous...”

“Nervous?” Narcissa sneered. “You were nervous serving my son? What, you think he’s not good enough to drink what you pour?”

“No. That’s not what I mean.” Rachel kept slapping herself across the face, each blow harder than the last. Her cheek swelled, her lip split, and blood trickled down her chin.

“Mom, she got my clothes wet” Kael pointed to a water stain on his shirt. Though it had already dried, he wouldn’t let it go. “This was a gift from Fallridge Haven. She ruined it.”

Narcissa’s expression darkened completely. She slowly rose and walked over to Rachel, her voice deadly cold.

“Since you can’t even pour a drink properly, then those hands of yours are useless.”

An Understated Dominance

Chapter 2756

“No-” Rachel’s scream was cut short before Narcissa raised her hand and flicked her wrist. A flash of purple light sliced through the air, and Rachel’s hands were severed cleanly at the wrists. As blood sprayed across the floor, she let out one agonized cry before losing consciousness.

Muffled gasps and stifled sobs filled the hall, but no one dared cry aloud. They were terrified of being the next victim.

“Take her away.”

Narcissa waved her hand dismissively, as if shooing off a fly. Two trembling Weston family maids shuffled forward and dragged Rachel’s limp body out, leaving a bright trail of blood behind.

“Anyone else want to challenge me?”

Narcissa asked, her piercing gaze sweeping across the room.

Everyone lowered their heads. Not a single person dared to meet her eyes.

Kael still wasn’t satisfied. He walked toward a young woman kneeling on the floor.

She was Oswald's granddaughter, Marilyn Weston, a college freshman home for summer break to help with the family business. She was delicate and pretty, but now deathly pale with fear.

"You," he said, pointing his riding crop at her. "Bring me some pastries. The sweet kind."

Marilyn scrambled to her feet and practically ran to the kitchen. Moments later, she returned carrying a plate of delicate pastries and carefully set it on the table in front of the boy.

Kael picked one up, took a bite, then spat it out.

"It's too sweet. Are you trying to make me sick?"

He flew into a rage and lashed her across the face with the crop. Marilyn screamed, and a bloody welt rose on her cheek. She clutched her face and collapsed to the floor, tears streaming down uncontrollably.

"Useless!"

He raised the crop to strike again, but Narcissa stopped him.

"Kael, that's enough," she said flatly, her tone dismissive. "Don't waste your energy on mortals. It's beneath you." He lowered the crop but kicked Marilyn hard anyway.

"Get out of my sight!"

Marilyn crawled to the side of the room, sobbing quietly while covering her wound.

Oswald watched it all with tears streaming down his weathered face, but he didn't dare say a word. He knew these two were far beyond anything the Weston family could handle.

Narcissa claimed to be from some hidden cultivation family. Three days ago, she'd shown up at the Weston estate and announced she'd be staying temporarily.

He had tried to politely decline at first. But she had simply waved her hand, and the Westons' two best security guards went flying, coughing up blood.

Since then, the Weston estate had become the mother and son's temporary residence. The entire household was forced to serve them. The slightest displeasure meant beatings or worse. By then, three staff members had already been killed.

"Mom, I'm so bored," Kael complained, rolling around on the couch. "This place is a dump. When are we going after that bitch? I want to catch her and make her my pet."

A cold glint flashed in Narcissa's eyes.

“Soon,” she said. “I’ve already sensed her energy waves. She’s badly injured and couldn’t have gotten far. Once I finish things here, we’ll go find her.”

“Really?” Kael’s eyes lit up. “I want to catch that white fox too. That little beast bit me. I’m going to skin it and turn it into a scarf.”

Narcissa smiled and patted her son’s head. “Of course, darling. Whatever you want.”

Just then, a faint sound came from outside the window. Kael was the first to notice. He rushed to the window and looked outside.

“Mom, look. It’s that white fox,” he said excitedly. Under the moonlight, a pure white fox was perched on a rock in the garden. Its amber eyes were coldly fixed on the house.

“You’re right.” Narcissa walked to the window, greed gleaming in her eyes. “That fox has a strong spiritual essence. If we can capture and tame it, it’ll be a powerful asset.”

“I’ll catch it.” Kael started for the door.

“Wait.” Narcissa grabbed his arm. “That creature is cunning. It escaped last time. Let me handle this myself.”

She opened the window, and her figure blurred before appearing in the garden. The moment Narcissa emerged, Snowy turned to run. But her speed was noticeably slower than usual because her hind leg clearly hadn’t fully healed.

“Let’s see how you’re going to escape now. Narcissa sneered and thrust her hand forward. Purple light shot forth, forming a net of light that swooped down toward Snowy.

Just as the net of light was about to close, a figure in white dropped from the sky and landed gracefully in front of Snowy. With a casual wave of her sleeve, the net dissolved into nothing.

Under the moonlight, Blanche stood in flowing white robes, her long hair cascading down like a waterfall. Her pale face remained expressionless.

She bent down, gathered Snowy into her arms, and gently stroked its head. “You’re safe now.”

“It’s you!” Narcissa narrowed her eyes. Blanche, I was going to hunt you down, but here you are, delivering yourself to my doorstep.”

Blanche raised her head, her gaze cold as ice. “You and your son have been terrorizing this family and killing the innocents. Aren’t you afraid of retribution?”

“Retribution?” Narcissa sneered. “From you? A wounded stray dog who lost everything. You think you can lecture me about justice?”

As she spoke, her energy waves exploded outward. Purple energy swirled around her body, forming miniature cyclones.

The flowers and plants in the courtyard bent violently in the wind. The windows of the Weston estate rattled and cracked under the pressure.

Inside the hall, the Weston family members felt an overwhelming force crush down on them. They collapsed to the floor, and some of the weaker ones passed out entirely.

Blanche’s expression remained blank. She set Snowy aside and said coolly, “Since you refuse to see reason, don’t blame me for what happens next.”

An Understated Dominance

Chapter 2757

“How arrogant!” Narcissa roared as her hands formed a series of hand seals. A purple lightning bolt shot from her palms straight toward Blanche.

Seeing that, Blanche didn’t dodge. She just raised her right hand, and a white barrier shimmered into existence. The lightning struck the shield with a thunderous crack but dissipated harmlessly.

“How is that possible?” Narcissa’s face twisted in disbelief. “You’re seriously wounded. How can you still fight like this?”

Blanche didn’t answer. In a blur of motion, she appeared right in front of Narcissa and struck out with her palm. The attack looked effortless, yet the palm wind contained tremendous spiritual energy.

Narcissa didn’t dare to take it head-on. She retreated hastily while her hands moved rapidly, sending out purple energy blades one after another.

Blanche weaved through the barrage with ease. Each blade missed her by a breath. At the same time, she struck forward with another palm.

This time, Narcissa couldn’t dodge in time. The palm strike grazed her shoulder, and she let out a muffled grunt, stumbling back several steps.

“Mom!” From inside the house, Kael saw his mother losing ground. He screamed and jumped out the window. In his hand was a dagger gleaming with cold light, which he thrust toward Blanche’s unprotected back.

“Watch out, Kael!” Narcissa screamed in terror. Without even turning her head, Blanche flicked her hand backward. A burst of energy shot out and struck him.

He screamed and was flung away like a rag doll, slamming into an ornamental rockery. Blood sprayed from his mouth as he crumpled to the ground.

“Kael!”

Rage twisted Narcissa’s features. Purple energy flared around her hands as she lunged at Blanche, her movements wild and desperate.

Blanche’s gaze hardened, and she stopped holding back. She formed a series of hand seals, her lips moving in a silent chant. The temperature around them plummeted. In the air, snowflakes began to materialize out of thin air.

“Frostfall!”

Recognition and fear flashed across Narcissa’s face. She tried to retreat, but it was already too late. Blanche thrust her palm forward. A blast of icy force carrying countless crystal shards slammed into Narcissa.

A choked scream tore from her throat as she was hurled backward. She smashed through the courtyard wall and landed in a broken heap among the rubble. Her energy waves snuffed out like a candle, leaving no doubt about how badly she’d been hurt.

Blanche walked over and looked down at her.

“You’ve committed too many atrocities,” she said calmly. “Today is your reckoning.” Narcissa coughed up blood, her eyes burning with hatred.

“You... You just wait... We won’t let you go...

“Let them come, then,” Blanche replied indifferently and raised her hand to deliver the final blow. Just then, sharp whistling sounds tore through the air from the distance. Several figures descended from the night sky and landed in the courtyard.

At the front stood an elderly man in sage-green robes. His hair and beard were white, but his face was ruddy and his eyes sharp. He took in the scene with a single glance, then frowned slightly.

“Hold it,” he said. His voice wasn’t loud, but it carried an undeniable authority. Blanche’s hand froze midair, and she turned to him. “Mr. Greenwood, are you taking their side?”

The elderly man, Octavius Greenwood, sighed.

“Ms. Frost, one should be merciful where mercy is due. While Narcissa has committed a sin, it doesn’t warrant death. Please spare the mother and son for my sake.”

“And if I refuse?” Blanche frowned. “Then, you leave me no choice but to intervene,” Octavius replied, and any trace of warmth vanished from his face.

“Do you truly wish to make an enemy of me?” she asked, her eyes turning icy.

“I’ve been entrusted with this task and must fulfill my duty. Today, I will not stand idly by and do nothing,” Octavius replied evenly

He went on, “I am aware of your capabilities, Ms. Frost. But you are injured and haven’t fully recovered. Dealing with all of us here would not be easy for you. Besides... once we start fighting, none of these mortals will survive. Are you really willing to see them die?”

Blanche fell silent. She glanced down at Snowy in her arms, then at the terrified family members huddled inside the Weston estate. Finally, she lowered her hand.

“Fine,” she said coldly. “I’ll give you this courtesy, Mr. Greenwood. But they must leave immediately and swear never to trouble these people again.”

Octavius nodded, then he turned his gaze toward Narcissa, who lay amid the rubble.

Did you hear that?”

Narcissa gritted her teeth. However, left with no choice, she could only nod weakly. “Got... Got it.”

“Then, leave at once.”

With a wave of his hand, a gentle force lifted Narcissa and the unconscious Kael, carrying them out of the courtyard. Blanche watched them disappear, the cold in her eyes didn’t thaw, only hardened. She knew this matter was far from over.

After all, Narcissa was the type to hold grudges and wait for the perfect moment to strike back. But with Octavius standing in the way, there was nothing more Blanche could do tonight.

“Ms. Frost, until we meet again,” he said with a polite salute, then left swiftly with his people. She murmured quietly, “Looks like I’ll need to call for help.”

She formed a hand seal, then the spiritual energy gathered and condensed into the form of a luminous messenger-hawk. It spread its wings and took flight, quickly disappearing into the night sky.

An Understated Dominance

Chapter 2758

The night wind swept over the Weston estate, carrying a biting chill mixed with the lingering stench of smoke and blood.

Narcissa fled Oakvale in disgrace, cradling the severely injured and unconscious Kael as a handful of loyal guards escorted her out of the city. They sought temporary refuge in a hidden outpost deep within the remote mountains.

The monastery there had been abandoned for years. Amid the crumbling walls and shattered pillars, a few side rooms were still mostly intact.

Moonlight filtered through the broken window frames, casting over her twisted, pale face and sharpening its sinister angles.

“Mom... It hurts...” Kael murmured, still unconscious, his small body curling in pain. Narcissa carefully laid him on a broken bed covered with thick blankets and checked his injuries.

Although Blanche’s strike hadn’t killed Kael outright, her icy spiritual energy had infiltrated his circulatory pathways, severely damaging his fragile core. Without immediate treatment, the damage could be permanent.

“Blanche... I’ll make sure you die a miserable death,” Narcissa hissed through gritted teeth, her eyes burning with hatred.

She was a distant relative of a reclusive family. Even without the prestige of the main family, she had always been proud and arrogant.

All her life, she had never suffered such humiliation, especially not in front of her son, and certainly not at the hands of a wounded peer.

Narcissa took out a precious healing pill and fed it to Kael, then used her internal energy to stabilize his disrupted energy pathways.

She worked through the night until dawn. His breathing finally steadied, and he sank into a deep sleep, though his face remained deathly pale.

Watching her son suffer had pushed Narcissa’s killing intent to its limit. She left her room and stepped into the dilapidated courtyard outside.

Three of her long-serving family retainers, who also acted as her guards, were already there. Each of them was a late-stage First-Circle Arcanist, and their strengths were not to

be dismissed. Ragnar, the sinister-looking middle-aged head guard, greeted respectfully, “Lady Narcissa.”

“Have you contacted them?” she asked hoarsely.

“I’ve already sent a message back to the main family through the secret channel,” he replied. “We reported the situation here, especially Blanche’s whereabouts and her injuries, as well as her protection of mortals.”

“And what was their response?”

“They issued a direct order,” Ragnar replied, lowering his voice.

He went on, “They stated that Blanche is a remnant of the Frost family who carries clues related to ‘that object.’ Her life is of great importance. She must be captured alive, or at the very least, ensure whatever she carries doesn’t fall into the hands of outsiders.

“They have dispatched three Shadow Guard teams and were personally led by Elder Sevran, who’s at Core-Forged level. They’re on their way and should arrive by tomorrow evening at the latest.”

“They’re sending the Shadow Guards? And Elder Sevran is leading them?” Narcissa first looked shocked, then ecstatic. “Great! Perfect timing. With him and the Shadow Guards, Blanche can’t escape even if she grows wings.”

She paced the courtyard, and the bitter hatred in her gaze hardened into a savage kind of thrill.

“Once Elder Sevran arrives, I’ll personally destroy Blanche’s cultivation. Then, I’ll throw her into the family’s water dungeons and let the frost-poison gnaw at her heart for eternity. As for that damn white fox, I’ll skin it alive and make Kael a new scarf.”

“Lady Narcissa...”

One guard hesitated before reminding her, “Mr. Greenwood seems inclined to protect Blanche. If he hadn’t intervened yesterday, we might not have escaped.

“Though Elder Sevran is powerful, Mr. Greenwood has considerable prestige among rogue cultivators and good relations with several families. If conflict arises...”

“Octavius Greenwood?” Narcissa snorted disdainfully. “He’s just an old waste who got lucky breaking through into the core formation level and wallows among rogue cultivators. How dare he meddle in the affairs of the Jornells of Amethysius?

“If he knows what’s good for him, he’ll step aside. But if he dares to interfere, we’ll take him down too. With a mid-level Core-Forged expert like Elder Sevran backing us, taking down Octavius will be easy.”

Narcissa paused, a cruel smile spreading across her face.

“As for those mortals... The Weston family ... They dared to laugh at my disgrace. Before Elder Sevran arrives, we’ll go give them a taste of retribution.”

Ragnar’s heart tightened. “Lady Narcissa, you mean...”

“Back to the Weston estate,” she said through clenched teeth. “Doesn’t Blanche care about those mortals’ lives? Doesn’t she love playing the saint and protecting them? Then, I’ll show her what will happen to those ants when she sticks her nose where it doesn’t belong.”

“If Mr. Greenwood finds out, things could turn ugly,” he said.

“He just happened to be there yesterday,” Narcissa said. “Would he really protect a group of insignificant mortals?”

Her eyes flashed with malice as she added, “Besides, Octavius owes my family a favor.

He won’t dare to interfere.

“Mobilize all the men immediately. I want the Weston family wiped out completely and burn the place to the ground. By the time Blanche hears about it and rushes over, there’ll be nothing left but ashes. I want her drowning in guilt, suffering in pain, and completely broken.”

The three guards exchanged glances. They knew that Narcissa was consumed by rage and vengeance. Reason wouldn’t reach her now.

They could only comply.

“Yes, Lady Narcissa.”

An Understated Dominance

Chapter 2759

As night deepened, Blanche traveled with Snowy, but they didn’t venture far from Oakvale. She found a secluded cave in a remote forest area to rest and recover from her injuries.

Yesterday's battle with Narcissa had ended in her favor, but it had aggravated old wounds. She needed time to stabilize her condition.

Snowy lay quietly beside her, licking her front paw. Its amber eyes occasionally glanced toward the cave entrance with watchful alertness. Blanche's thoughts were far from peaceful. She knew Narcissa's vindictive nature all too well.

If Octavius hadn't suddenly appeared and vouched for Narcissa, she would never have let Narcissa leave so easily. He seemed impartial on the surface, but his attitude was ambiguous, as if he had hidden motives.

And behind Narcissa stood the Jornells of Amethysius, a powerful force among the hidden cultivator families, known for their ruthless methods.

"The Weston family..."

Blanche thought of those ordinary people trembling under Narcissa's tyranny and sighed inwardly.

She'd intervened partly for Snowy, but also because she couldn't stand watching Narcissa and her son slaughter innocent people indiscriminately.

But if she could save them once, could she save them forever? She had her own troubles now, surrounded by powerful enemies on all sides.

She took out the medicine Dustin had given her and swallowed another tablet. The medicine spread through her body, nourishing her damaged circulatory pathways.

Dustin, that young man who couldn't use his cultivation but possessed extraordinary medical skills. The pendant he'd given her was still with her, warm and smooth to the touch. He'd said that if she ever needed help, she could find him. 2

But what could an ordinary mortal do in Oakvale, where dangerous undercurrents were swirling?

Blanche shook her head, pushing aside those distracting thoughts, and focused on circulating her internal energy. She hadn't expected retaliation to come so swiftly and so brutally. At the Weston estate, everyone was on edge. They were jittery and restless as if a sudden alarm had gone off.

Oswald seemed to have aged ten years overnight. He forced himself to stay strong, directing family members to clean up the aftermath and treat the injured.

Rachel, whose hand had been severed, had nearly bled out. Though they'd managed to save her life, she was now permanently disabled and on the verge of mental collapse.

Marilyn, with her now injured face, and the other wounded family members were all submerged in fear and grief.

Oswald took out several treasured antique and gold artifacts from the family collection. He wanted to sell everything and relocate the entire family to somewhere in the south with their distant relatives, far from this dangerous place.

Before they could even begin to act, doom arrived at their doorstep.

Narcissa returned with her three guards, appearing directly at the entrance of the Weston estate. She'd tried to cover the injuries on her face with powder, but the venom and murderous intent in her eyes were impossible to hide.

"You... Why have you come back?"

The Weston family's housekeeper, guarding the gate, saw them and turned deathly pale. He turned to run inside and raise the alarm.

Ragnar scoffed, raising his hand and releasing an energy pulse. It pierced through the housekeeper's back, and he collapsed without a sound.

Narcissa didn't even glance at the body as she strode into the estate.

Members of the Weston family who heard the commotion rushed out. When they saw the vengeful cultivators had returned, despair washed over them.

"Please... Please spare us, Lady Narcissa."

Oswald dropped to his knees, tears streaming down his weathered face.

"We meant no disrespect. What happened yesterday was purely accidental. We'll give you everything we own, so please show mercy and spare us."

"Everything you own?"

Narcissa sneered, her gaze sweeping over the trembling crowd like they were sheep waiting for slaughter.

"You think the possessions of ants like you are worth my attention? I'm here to collect a debt. The debt you owe for laughing at me and causing my humiliation."

"No.... Please don't!" Marilyn screamed and held on tightly to her trembling mother.

"Who should I start with?" Narcissa smiled cruelly, her eyes settling on Oswald. " You're the family patriarch, so I'll begin with you."

She flicked her finger, and a bolt of violet lightning shot out, striking him in the chest

“Dad!”

“Grandpa!”

The Weston family cried out in anguish.

“Kill them. Leave no one alive,” Narcissa said coldly, issuing the death sentence. Ragnar charged into the crowd first, his curved blade reaping lives like Death’s own scythe. Each swing brought a spray of blood and piercing screams.

The other two guards showed no mercy either. Sword aura cut through the air while deadly strikes found their marks.

Oswald tried to resist, but Narcissa hit him with a violet lightning palm strike to his forehead. He went down instantly, eyes frozen in shock and dead before he even knew it. Marilyn and her mother clung to each other before a blade strike cut them both down.

Rachel, who had lost her hands and was lying in bed, heard the screams outside and struggled in terror. A guard burst into her room and crushed her chest with a single stomp.

Housekeepers, maids, children, and elders cried out for mercy, regardless of age or gender. Their pleas and screams merged into a single, horrifying chorus as death claimed them. Blood coated the courtyards, hallways, and rooms. The metallic stench hung thick in the air.

Narcissa stood in the center of the courtyard, watching the massacre indifferently. There was even a hint of satisfaction in her eyes.

She deliberately hadn’t ordered a quick execution, instead letting her guards take their time so she could savor the fear and suffering of the Weston family in their final moments.

About 15 minutes later, there wasn’t a single living soul left in the Weston estate aside from her and her three guards. Corpses littered the grounds, and the scene was too horrific to describe.

An Understated Dominance

Chapter 2760

“Lady Narcissa, everything’s been taken care of,” Ragnar reported. Narcissa nodded, her gaze sweeping across the blood-soaked estate. Her eyes held no compassion, only disgust.

“Burn it. Burn it all to the ground. I don’t want a single stone left standing.” The guards moved immediately, splashing gasoline that they had prepared throughout the estate. Once the torches dropped, flames roared to life, devouring the wooden structures, furniture, and the bodies of the innocent.

Fire lit up the sky as thick smoke billowed upward. The Weston estate, once an impressive property, groaned and crackled as the inferno consumed it, reducing everything to ash.

“Let’s go,” Narcissa said. She took one last look at the burning scene before leading her guards away and disappearing into the night.

Shortly after they left, a streak of blue light descended from the sky and landed in front of the blazing Weston estate.

Octavius gazed at the carnage before him.

He could sense the lingering traces of Narcissa and her party in the air, along with the thick stench of blood and vengeful energy that permeated everything. His expression darkened at the sight.

“Monstrous! Absolutely monstrous!”

Shock and anger flashed across his face. He hadn’t expected Narcissa to go this far. She had completely disregarded his warning and wiped out an entire family.

Octavius stood outside the inferno, watching the flames reach toward the sky. He let out a long sigh, his eyes filled with conflicting emotions-anger, helplessness, and a trace of regret that was hard to detect. He’d underestimated Narcissa’s cruelty. Just to satisfy a petty grudge, she’d annihilated an entire mortal family.

He suddenly realized he might have aided a tyrant’s evil deeds, bringing unnecessary karma upon himself.

Octavius shook his head and sighed in resignation. He left with a sweep of his robes.

The next morning arrived. After a night of meditation to stabilize her injuries, Blanche’s condition had somewhat improved. She left the temporary cave shelter with Snowy, then planned to go to Oakvale to gather information and search for medicinal herbs that might aid her recovery.

As she approached the outskirts of the city, an uneasy feeling crept over her. The air carried a burnt smell mixed with something deeply unsettling.

Following her instincts, she made her way to the neighborhood where she’d visited the Weston estate yesterday. What she saw hit her like a lightning bolt, and her blood seemed to freeze in her veins.

Where the Weston estate had stood, only charred ruins remained, wisps of smoke still rising from the wreckage. Broken walls, scattered debris, twisted blackened beams reaching toward the sky like accusing fingers.

A few objects that hadn't been completely consumed by fire were barely recognizable, reduced to carbon husks.

The entire area was cordoned off with official barriers. Several guards patrolled the perimeter, speaking in low voices, their faces showing a mixture of fear and grim concern.

In the distance, townspeople gathered in small clusters, pointing and whispering. Fragments of their conversations drifted over.

"It's terrible. The whole household, with dozens of people, and not one managed to escape."

"What a tragedy. Who could they have crossed to deserve this?"

"They're saying it was a fire, but what kind of fire burns that fiercely? Not a single survivor."

Blanche stood frozen in place. Snowy seemed to sense something, too, pressing anxiously against her legs with soft whimpers. She walked slowly toward the ruins, ignoring the police cordon. An officer moved to stop her, but her bone-chilling presence made him hesitate and fall back.

Stepping into the wreckage, her boots crunched over hot ash and debris. Though her divine sense was still limited by her injuries and couldn't extend far, her close-range perception was clear enough.

Blanche saw charred bone fragments embedded in the scorched earth and caught the scent of blood and death that even intense flames couldn't fully mask. Countless echoes of terror, agony, and despair stabbed at her senses like frozen needles.

This wasn't an accidental fire but a massacre, a complete extermination. They'd been slaughtered first, then burned to destroy the evidence. But who did it? The answer hit her almost instantly-Narcissa.

Yesterday, Blanche wounded Narcissa here and saved the Weston family. Then, Octavius had intervened and forced Narcissa to retreat. In just one day, the entire Weston family had been slaughtered, and their estate burned to the ground.

Who else could have done something like this but that merciless, vengeful Narcissa? Every act was a warning to Blanche, a ruthless display of her fury.

“It happens because of me...” Blanche muttered, her voice carrying a tremor she couldn’t quite hide. A fire flared in her cold, clear eyes for the first time. A fury that was both chilling and searing, capable of freezing a soul and scorching everything around it.

She could see it in her mind that those innocent people were crying out in despair, running, and then cut down without mercy.

Yesterday, she had stepped in to stop the violence and save lives. But the outcome was devastating. Her intervention had led to the Westons being completely wiped out.

Narcissa didn’t dare confront her directly, so she turned her hatred on innocent people instead. It wasn’t her fault. Still, the weight of their deaths pressed heavily on her chest. Snowy nuzzled her hand and tried to comfort Blanche.

She looked down and gently stroked the fox’s head.

Her eyes hardened. She spoke slowly, her voice calm but icy. “Narcissa... The Jornells of Amethysius... You treat human lives like toys, slaughtering the innocent to satisfy your rage. The world will not forgive such cruelty. If I don’t avenge them, I shouldn’t call myself human.”