

Tyrant 106

Chapter 106: The Price of Exchange

The cooking class ended shortly after Selara gave her usual blunt verdicts on the students' dishes. Some laughed, recalling how she had called certain plates "unbearable shit", while others muttered that they'd never try again. Despite her sharp tongue, no one seemed offended—if anything, her honesty had become part of the entertainment of the class.

'She probably opened this elective just to eat properly,' Trafalgar thought as he cleaned his station. 'Knowing her personality, I wouldn't be surprised at all.'

One by one, the few students in attendance filed out of the room, their laughter and chatter echoing down the hallway. Among them was Aubrelle, who helped tidy up the leftovers before leaving with her usual serene smile.

Trafalgar's eyes lingered on her for a moment. 'The Rosenthal family... who are they, really? Aubrelle is a legendary character, so it wouldn't hurt to get closer to her. Besides, she has such a calm personality—it's hard not to like her.'

When the last footsteps faded, silence settled over the classroom. Selara was still at her desk, her pen scratching furiously across a notebook smudged with ink. Her platinum-blond hair was a wild mess, her odd-looking goggles resting crookedly on her forehead. She seemed entirely absorbed in her notes, jotting down which dishes she had enjoyed the most.

Trafalgar hesitated. She hadn't even noticed he was still there. But after a moment, he started walking toward her desk, each step echoing against the empty floor.

Selara finally looked up, adjusting her goggles with a finger. Her emerald eyes, sharp yet distracted, landed on him with mild curiosity.

"Oh... the boy who made the best dish today," she said with a crooked smile. "What are you still doing here? Class ended a while ago."

Trafalgar lingered in front of the desk, gathering his resolve. "Professor Selara... is it possible to create an item that can locate someone? To find where they are?"

Selara didn't even look up at first. She was scribbling notes furiously, muttering about "tomato sauce ratios" of all things. Then, with a lazy flick of her wrist, she finally tilted her glasses down and peered at him.

"Of course it's possible," she said casually. "Alchemy can do almost anything if you know the method."

Trafalgar's heart skipped. He leaned forward slightly. "Then... would you help me—"

"No." Selara cut him off flatly, turning the page of her notebook as if the conversation was over.

The blunt rejection made Trafalgar blink. For a second, he thought she hadn't even understood his request. "...I see. Then maybe I should pick another elective. Something less pointless."

That finally got her attention. Selara pushed her chair back and snapped her head up, emerald eyes gleaming with a mischievous spark. "Now, now, don't be dramatic. I didn't say I wouldn't help. I just said it won't be free. Big difference."

Trafalgar let out a quiet breath and nodded. "I understand. Nothing is ever free."

"Exactly!" She clapped her gloved hands together, leaving faint chemical smudges on the desk. "If you want my help making something that outrageous, you'll have to give me something in return. Payment, entertainment, bribes... I'm not picky, but I don't work for nothing."

Her grin widened, almost childlike, before she leaned forward with both elbows on the desk. "So... what are you willing to offer, Mister Morgain?"

Trafalgar met her gaze calmly, even though his mind was racing.

Trafalgar kept his expression steady, though inside he was weighing his words carefully. "What could I possibly give someone like you? You're one of the four directors of this academy. Money or trinkets wouldn't mean anything."

Selara's lips curled into a sly smile. She tapped her pen against the desk, eyes glittering with amusement. "Ahh, smart boy. You're right. I already have more gold than I'll ever spend, more trinkets than I know what to do with. Things bore me."

She leaned back in her chair, rocking it dangerously on two legs. "What I like are experiences. New tastes. New feelings. That dish you made today? That was fun. Do that again—many times. Surprise me. Make my tongue dance, make my head spin, and maybe I'll be entertained enough to help."

Trafalgar frowned slightly, then nodded. "Food... that, I can manage."

Selara raised a finger. "But don't misunderstand. Food alone won't cut it. If you want me to craft something powerful enough to find someone, you will fetch the materials. Rare herbs, stones, beast parts, mana-ink. I won't lift a finger to gather them. I'll give you the list, and you'll do the running."

She rummaged through one of her overflowing pockets and slapped a folded parchment onto the desk. It was stained, slightly burned at the edge, and smelled faintly of vinegar. "There. That's your shopping list. Some things are simple, others... well, they bite back. Have fun."

Trafalgar picked it up, his eyes scanning the strange symbols and rare names. He tucked it safely away. "I understand."

Selara smirked, lowering her glasses to peer at him over the rim. "Good. Make me delicious food, fetch me the impossible, and maybe—maybe—I'll help you."

Trafalgar gave a faint smile. "Then we have a deal."

For a moment, silence hung between them. Trafalgar held the parchment tightly, its rough edges scratching against his palm. He gave Selara a small bow, more out of respect than habit.

"Then I'll start preparing," he said evenly.

Selara waved her hand dismissively, already scribbling notes into one of her many journals. "Go on, then. I expect good food next time. Don't disappoint me, boy."

Trafalgar turned, walking toward the door.

Once outside the building, the air felt cooler, calmer. Students were dispersing across the courtyard, some laughing, some exhausted from the day's lessons. Trafalgar ignoring the chatter. His path wasn't toward the dormitories. He had another destination in mind.

'Velkaris,' he thought, the name rolling like steel across his mind. 'Looks like I'll have to use my new place for the first time now.'

He made his way to the station, blending into the evening crowd. The mana-powered train loomed ahead, glowing faintly under the setting sun. Trafalgar boarded the first wagon reserved for wealthy and powerful people.