

Tyrant 111

Chapter 111: It's Not What I Expected

The stairs creaked faintly beneath their steps as Trafalgar and Garrika climbed to the first floor.

Trafalgar slid the brass key into the lock, twisted it, and the door opened with a soft click. He stepped aside, gesturing with a hand for Garrika to enter first.

"A gentleman, huh?" she teased, though she accepted the gesture without hesitation.

The moment she crossed the threshold, Garrika's wolf tail swayed and she threw herself onto the bed with no restraint. "Ahh... comfortable," she murmured, spreading her arms across the sheets as if testing the fabric.

Trafalgar ignored her antics, walking instead to the window. He pulled the curtain aside, and his gaze fell upon the harbor beyond. Towering ships crowded the docks, their sails drawn tight as cranes and crews unloaded barrels and crates. The sheer size of them—their masts stabbing skyward like spears—was impressive even to him. 'Incredible,' he thought, his reflection faint in the glass.

Then, turning from the window, his deep blue eyes fixed on Garrika. His voice cut through the quiet with a blunt edge.

"I'm not interested in being in a relationship right now."

The words struck her harder than she expected. Garrika's ears twitched; her tail stilled. For a heartbeat, silence lingered. She propped herself on her elbows, surprise flashing in her green eyes.

"...Hm. That obvious, huh?" she asked, half-smiling but not hiding her disappointment.

Trafalgar nodded. "Pretty easy to figure out. You weren't exactly subtle."

"Can I at least ask why?" she pressed.

"I can't afford it," he said flatly. "It's not safe for anyone to be close to me. And right now... it's impossible."

Her gaze searched his, ears tilting slightly back. "So that's final?"

"Not forever," Trafalgar admitted. "But now's the wrong time. And honestly—we barely know each other."

Garrika's lips curved faintly, somewhere between a smile and a frown. "Your opinion of me could change, though."

Trafalgar's eyes narrowed. "Then tell me... why? Why me?"

Her answer was steady. "You saved my life. You helped the two I call parents. Maybe your reasons were selfish, but you did it anyway. And... you're a Morgain. Who wouldn't want that?"

Trafalgar's voice was quiet, almost sharp. "That's just gratitude. If you knew what it means to carry the Morgain name, you'd think twice."

The air thickened with silence between them.

"Shall we go?" Garrika asked suddenly, her voice cutting through the silence that had settled in the room. Her green eyes gleamed with certainty, as if nothing about their earlier conversation had shaken her.

Trafalgar slipped the key into his pocket. "Yes. That's what we came here for."

With that, they left the quiet comfort of the hotel room, stepping back into the streets of Mariven.

The salty wind greeted them instantly, heavy with the tang of fish, seaweed, and spice carried from the market stalls. Merchants shouted prices, sailors barked orders at one another, and the clamor of wooden carts rolling over cobblestones filled the port city with restless energy.

Trafalgar adjusted the pouch of coins at his waist, scanning the crowds with cool detachment. Garrika, however, looked relaxed, even playful. Her wolf tail swayed behind her, and her ears twitched at the sounds of the busy harbor.

She gave him a sideways glance, lips curving into a faint smirk. "You know, maybe I'll make you change your mind someday."

His eyes slid toward her, flat and unimpressed. "That's unlikely."

"Maybe," she echoed lightly, clearly unbothered. Then her tone shifted, practical and sharp. "But for now, we've got work. The shop isn't far. Just keep up."

Trafalgar's gaze lingered on her for a moment. 'Confident, decisive... she doesn't waste time sulking. At least she knows when to focus.'

They moved through the streets. Wealth glittered openly—pearls and coral in shop displays, exotic spices steaming from food stalls, inns advertising luxurious rooms.

"This city reeks of money," he muttered.

"Because it's run by money," Garrika replied without missing a beat. "Independent, remember? One of the world's most famous merchants owns this entire port. His coin keeps it free."

Trafalgar nodded faintly. "Independence bought with money."

They turned into a quieter street, the noise of the market fading. Garrika's ears pricked, and her tail flicked once. "We're close. Just a few more blocks."

The afternoon sun cast a golden glow across the quieter street as Garrika finally slowed her pace. The crowd had thinned; here the noise of the market was little more than a distant murmur. Ahead stood a modest shop, its wooden sign swinging gently in the breeze. From the outside, it looked completely ordinary—freshly painted shutters, glass panes intact, the kind of place one might expect to find charms or equipment for travelers.

Trafalgar narrowed his eyes, studying the storefront. "Is that the one?"

Garrika nodded, her green eyes flicking over the familiar facade. "Yes. That's the shop of the merchant who hired us before. A lycan. Let's go in."

They approached but as they reached the threshold, Garrika froze. Her wolf ears twitched, and her nose lifted slightly. The casual air she carried vanished, replaced by sharp tension.

"...I smell blood."

Her tail stiffened, every muscle taut.

Immediately, Trafalgar's face hardened. With a thought, Maledicta materialized in his hand, the blade glowing faintly with dark energy. The weapon's weight grounded him, ready for whatever waited inside.

"Stay alert," he muttered.

Together, they pushed through the door.

The interior was chaos. Shelves had been overturned, crates splintered, glass shattered across the floor. The metallic tang of blood seeped through the air, heavier now, undeniable.

Dark streaks stained the wooden planks, dragged toward the back. Garrika crouched low, touching the crimson trail with her fingers before lifting them to her nose. "Fresh. Within the last day."

They advanced carefully, the silence of the wrecked shop pressing down on them. Garrika's wolf instincts sharpened, her ears flicking at every faint creak. Trafalgar moved like a shadow behind her, Maledicta poised.

In the far back room, they found him.

A large figure slumped against the wall, his clothes torn and matted with blood. Clawed hands twitched faintly, and the fur that ran along his arms was stained dark. His breathing came shallow, ragged, but he was alive.

"It's him." Garrika whispered.

The lycan's body trembled faintly, his breaths shallow and uneven. Trafalgar crouched beside him, disappearing Maledicta back into his inventory. Up close, the wounds looked bad—deep claw marks raked across his chest and side, fur clotted with half-dried blood.

"He won't last long like this," Garrika said quickly, her green eyes sharp with urgency. Her ears twitched, already scanning the ruined shelves. "I'll look for something. Maybe water, bandages... anything."

"Do it," Trafalgar muttered.

He pulled at the hem of his own undershirt, ripping a strip of cloth free with one sharp tug. His fingers moved swiftly, steady despite the weight of the situation. Wrapping the makeshift bandage around the lycan's side, he tightened it until the bleeding slowed.

The man groaned faintly, a sound more animal than human, but the rise and fall of his chest grew steadier.

Across the room, Garrika rummaged through the debris. Glass clinked as she pushed aside broken bottles, her tail lashing in frustration until finally—"Here!" She lifted a half-full jug of water, its clay cracked but intact.

She hurried back, kneeling beside Trafalgar, and tilted the jug carefully to the lycan's lips. "Easy... drink."

At first his throat refused, but then he swallowed, slow and shaky. A few gulps later, some color began to return to his pale face. His eyelids fluttered.

Amber eyes flickered open, hazy but sharp enough to focus on Trafalgar. His lips parted, voice cracked and low.

"...Trafalgar... du Morgain?"

Trafalgar froze, narrowing his eyes. "You know me?"

The lycan coughed weakly, a trace of blood at the corner of his mouth. His voice trembled but carried certainty.

"I... remember... I helped you... when you collapsed... at the Council..."