

Tyrant 113

Chapter 113: Toward the Mine

The night before had ended with Garrika slumped across his back, her weight surprisingly light for someone who had downed so many drinks. Trafalgar had only allowed himself a single drink, but Garrika... she hadn't stopped. Her tolerance was impressive—more than most men he had seen—but even that had limits. By the time she laughed herself into hiccups, she was far past them.

He had carried her through the quiet halls of the hotel, ignoring the curious glances from passing staff. Their rented room was on the first floor, and once inside, Garrika collapsed onto the bed without protest. Trafalgar lingered a moment, watching her curl up against the sheets, then turned on his heel. He would not sleep there. After rejecting her, sharing the same bed—or even the same room—was not part of his plans.

Instead, he rented a smaller single room nearby. It was nothing special: a narrow bed, a cramped desk, and a small bathroom. But it offered him something more valuable than comfort—distance.

Now, as dawn crept through the curtains, Trafalgar stirred awake. He rubbed the sleep from his eyes and let out a quiet breath. The room was small and plain, but it had one advantage—privacy. At least here he could sleep as he preferred: without clothes, letting the mana in the air flow freely into his body. His core pulsed faintly with strength, fuller than the night before.

Sitting cross-legged on the bed, he steadied his breathing, joining his hands. Thin strands of ambient mana stirred around him, sliding into his core with practiced ease. Minutes passed, the world narrowing to the steady pull of energy. When he finally opened his eyes, the dim weight in his chest eased.

Routine followed: a quick shower, clean clothes, and his long dark hair tied back into a low ponytail. He tightened the strap of his gold pouch before stepping out into the corridor.

Just next door was the room he had carried Garrika into. Trafalgar hesitated briefly, then knocked.

Tock, tock, tock.

No answer.

Tock, tock, tock.

Still nothing.

His patience thinned. They had agreed to meet Augusto that morning, and time was already against them. With a quiet sigh, Trafalgar slid the key into the lock and pushed the door open.

The door creaked softly as Trafalgar stepped into the room. The curtains were still drawn, letting only a faint strip of sunlight cut across the floor.

Garrika was sprawled across the bed, still in the same clothes from last night. Her black top hung loosely from one shoulder, exposing the line of her collarbone. She clutched a pillow tightly to her chest, her wolf ears twitching faintly even in sleep.

Trafalgar moved to the window and tugged the curtains aside. Light flooded the room, spilling across her face. Outside, the harbor glimmered under the morning sun; cranes already hoisted cargo from ships, and the chatter of the port carried faintly through the glass.

Behind him, Garrika stirred. A soft, muffled sound escaped her throat. "Gmh~..."

She stretched her arms above her head, tail flicking lazily against the sheets. Slowly, her eyes cracked open, the green glow inside them sharp even through the haze of sleep.

"Good morning, Trafalgar," she murmured, voice low and rough from rest. "How did you sleep?"

Trafalgar exhaled a short sigh. "Well enough. But fix your clothes—you're practically exposed."

Her gaze dropped to herself, and indeed her top had slid lower than she realized. Instead of embarrassment, a mischievous smile tugged at her lips. She hooked one finger under the hem of the fabric and tugged it deliberately, stretching it just enough to tease.

"Want to see more?" she asked, tone playful, eyes flashing with mischief.

Trafalgar's expression didn't waver. "I think we settled this yesterday. Get dressed. We have to meet Augusto."

Her smirk lingered, but she let the fabric fall back into place. With a lazy stretch, she rolled off the bed and padded into the bathroom. Water splashed faintly as she rinsed her face, taking only a minute before stepping out again. She hadn't changed clothes, but her hair was smoothed, and her expression carried its usual sharp focus.

"Ready?" Trafalgar asked, adjusting the strap of his pouch.

"Ready," she replied with a grin. "You've got your gear too, right? He said we should be equipped."

Trafalgar nodded. "Yes. Items, and Maledicta."

"That blade again," Garrika said, almost approving. "Good."

They descended the stairs together, the wooden steps creaking beneath their boots. The hotel lobby was already busy with travelers checking out and merchants sipping early coffee. Behind the counter, the same receptionist from yesterday morning glanced up. His eyes lingered briefly on their unchanged clothes, but he said nothing, only offering a polite nod as they passed.

The moment they stepped outside, the world erupted with sound. Morning in Mariven Port was chaos wrapped in order—merchants bellowing prices from stalls, sailors hauling ropes and crates, and the metallic clang of tools from the harbor. Ships loomed like giants in the distance, their sails lowered as longshoremen swarmed to unload goods. The air smelled of salt, fish, and spiced bread fresh from the ovens.

Garrika took a long breath, her ears twitching at the symphony of noise. Then, without warning, she slipped her arm through Trafalgar's.

He stiffened instantly. "What are you doing? We talked about this yesterday. Don't make things uncomfortable."

Her grip tightened just enough to be noticed. She tilted her head toward him, green eyes calm but serious. "It's only uncomfortable if you make it so. And besides..." Her voice dropped low, "After what happened to me, don't you think it's normal? I was almost turned into a disposable prostitute. Holding your arm makes me feel safer."

The words hung between them, heavy and sharp. Trafalgar's gaze flicked toward her—he wanted to argue, but the truth in her tone left him silent.

Under his breath, he muttered, "You're stronger than me anyway..."

"What was that?" she asked, ears flicking toward him.

"Nothing," he replied quickly, averting his eyes. "Do what you want, there's no point in fighting."

Her tail swayed once, satisfied, as they pushed through the crowd. Together, they moved along the bustling streets, their pace steady and focused.

Before long, the familiar shop came into view. From the outside, it looked unchanged—sign still hanging, windows intact. But inside, Trafalgar suspected, Augusto's hand had already set things right.

The bell above the door chimed softly as Trafalgar pushed it open. From the outside, Augusto's shop looked unchanged, but the moment they stepped inside, the difference was striking. The wreckage from yesterday had vanished—shelves stood upright, counters polished, and the faint scent of cleaning oils lingered in the air. It was as though the chaos had never happened.

At the far end of the room sat Augusto. The lycan leaned casually against a stool, a steaming cup of coffee in one hand and a thin cigar smoldering between the claws of the other. His eyes lifted toward them, sharper and healthier than the day before. At his feet rested a massive leather backpack, wide enough to carry tools or ore, its straps thick with reinforcement.

His gaze lingered on Garrika's arm still looped through Trafalgar's. A sly grin spread across his face, smoke curling from his mouth.

"Well, well. Something good happen last night?"

Garrika's tail gave a faint flick. "Don't pry," she shot back flatly.

Trafalgar ignored the tease, his tone curt. "Nothing. We rested. Are we leaving?"

Augusto chuckled, setting his cup down with a clink. "Straight to business, I like that. Yes, we're ready. This pack will hold everything we need to extract. The mine's a common hunting ground, so don't be surprised to see other groups there. But..." He tapped ash from his cigar into a tray. "...our goal is deeper. The central tunnels. That's where the rarest materials spawn."

Trafalgar's brow furrowed. "Is the mine far?"

"An hour," Augusto replied smoothly. "I've already hired a driver. All you two need to do is follow me."

He stood with surprising ease for someone who had been half-dead the night before, slinging the enormous pack over his shoulders. The straps dug into his furred arms, but he didn't flinch.

"Come on," he said, his grin widening. "The sooner we go, the sooner we're done."