

Tyrant 121

Chapter 121: Questions

The group began to gather their things, the mercenaries shifting under the weight of sacks already stuffed with chunks of violet-black mythril. The air was still heavy with the stink of ichor, but the sense of urgency to leave the mine pressed on all of them.

Trafalgar's voice cut across the clamor, sharp and cold. "Wait."

Everyone froze. Leon turned toward him, wary, his lips parting as if to protest—but the weight of Trafalgar's gaze silenced him before a word escaped.

Trafalgar pointed toward the collapsed body near the entrance: the mercenary he had killed with Widow's Whisper. The corpse lay still, eyes glassy, throat pierced clean through.

"That man," Trafalgar said, his tone steady. "His body leaves this mine. And it will reach his family. You'll make sure of it."

The mercenaries stiffened. One of them shifted uncomfortably. "Y-You want us to... carry him?"

"Yes." Trafalgar's blue eyes narrowed. "He may have been foolish enough to follow Leon's command, but he doesn't deserve to rot in this cave. His family will bury him. That's the least you can do after leading him to his death."

Silence. Then Leon gave a curt nod, jaw tight. "Do it."

Reluctantly, two mercenaries wrapped the body in cloth and hoisted it onto their shoulders. Their eyes avoided Trafalgar's as they did it.

From his place near the wall, Augusto arched a brow. "That's... oddly considerate, coming from you."

Trafalgar adjusted his coat, his voice as flat as ever. "Actions have consequences. He paid his."

No one dared argue. With corpse and ore in tow, the group began their march out of the cavern.

The path through the mine twisted in long, echoing corridors. Their boots scraped against stone, the only rhythm alongside the muffled grunts of mercenaries carrying sacks of mythrill and the corpse of their fallen comrade. Torchlight flickered against the jagged walls, shadows dancing like silent witnesses.

Trafalgar walked at the front, Garrika at his side, and Leon just a step behind them, pale and tense. The silence stretched until Trafalgar's voice broke it, cold and deliberate.

"Why does Mariven demand half of Augusto's profits?"

Leon blinked, caught off guard. "What?"

"You heard me," Trafalgar said, not even turning to face him. "Ten percent is the standard tax. Augusto pays more than fifty. Explain."

Leon's throat tightened. "... I don't know. That was my father's decision."

Trafalgar slowed his steps just enough to let his gaze cut across him. "Convenient, isn't it? Why are you lying to me if you know perfectly well the situation with Augusto? Or have you lied to me and you don't know him?"

"I'm not lying!" Leon's voice cracked, echoing against the stone walls. "My father doesn't tell me everything. I only know what he orders me to enforce."

Behind them, Augusto's tail lashed once, his tone bitter. "Orders that nearly bled me dry. Orders that left me half-dead last time."

Trafalgar kept walking, but his presence was like a blade at Leon's throat. "Then either you're lying, or your father hides something from his own son. Which one is worse, Leon?"

The boy clenched his fists, his jaw tight, but he said nothing.

From her place beside Trafalgar, Garrika smirked faintly, her green eyes glinting in the dim light. "Looks like he's just as powerless as the guys that he has hired."

Leon didn't dare respond.

The first touch of daylight struck like a hammer after the hours spent underground. The group emerged from the mouth of the mine, boots crunching against gravel as the chill air carried away the heavy stench of blood and venom.

Outside, dozens of figures lingered—adventurers, miners, and mercenary bands preparing to enter. They turned at once, chatter dying into stunned silence as they saw what came out.

Two mercenaries staggered beneath the weight of a wrapped corpse. Others carried sacks stuffed to the brim with violet-black ore, mythril shards glinting faintly where the cloth bulged. At their center walked Trafalgar, Garrika, and Leon, flanked by Augusto's imposing presence.

Murmurs erupted immediately.

"Is that... all mythril?"

"Gods, how much did they pull out in one trip?"

"Look at that carcass—no, wait... that's a body."

But it wasn't just the ore or the corpse that drew stares. It was Trafalgar himself. He walked with the calm stride of a predator, expression unreadable, his low ponytail immaculate despite the grime of battle. To the crowd, he looked untouchable.

The whispers grew louder.

"They must've cleared the way... even the spider brood retreated."

"Who is he?"

"He looks like that bastard, doesn't he? The one from House Morgain?"

"Morgain? One of the Eight Great Families?"

The weight of the name rippled outward like fire across dry grass. Those who had been curious now stepped back, their expressions paling. To cross paths with a Morgain was rare. To see one emerge victorious from a mine drenched in mythril? That was a story that would spread before sunset.

Trafalgar ignored the stares. His gaze didn't waver, his stride never slowed. To him, they were nothing more than noise. Survival was all that mattered to him.

The arrival at Mariven Port wasn't on foot. Four mana-driven carts waited near the mine's staging grounds, their crystal engines humming faintly with a soft azure glow. Each cart was loaded heavily: sacks of mythril stacked to the brim, and one carrying the cloth-wrapped corpse of the fallen mercenary. The convoy rolled steadily across the trade roads, their wheels gliding smoother than any horse-drawn carriage.

The journey took roughly an hour, the countryside shifting gradually into the bustling port city. By the time they reached the merchant quarter, the group had already drawn enough stares to ignite a storm of rumors.

They stopped at Augusto's storehouse, a sturdy stone building with reinforced shutters and heavy locks. The mercenaries unloaded the carts quickly, stacking sack after sack until the wooden floor groaned beneath the weight. The corpse was set aside respectfully in the shade, ready to be delivered to the man's family.

Augusto stepped forward, inspecting the haul with sharp amber eyes. "Good. At least it's secure here. I'll stay and keep watch—no one touches this until I say so."

Trafalgar gave a curt nod, then turned toward Leon's mercenaries. His voice was flat, commanding. "You've done your part. Return to your homes. Your pay will come from him."

The men exchanged uneasy looks, but none spoke out.

Leon's jaw clenched before he forced the words through gritted teeth. "Yes... I'll handle their payment."

Trafalgar's eyes lingered on him for a heartbeat longer before turning away. Garrika smirked, her tail swishing behind her, clearly savoring Leon's humiliation.

With the last cart emptied, Augusto crossed his arms, taking his post beside the stacked ore. "Go on ahead. I'll stay here."

Trafalgar already stepped onto one of the waiting carts. "Then let's hear what your father has to say for himself, Leon."