

Tyrant 127

Chapter 127: Back to Velkaris

Velkaris's evening sky glowed faintly with the soft shimmer of mana-lamps lighting the streets. Trafalgar and Garrika walked side by side, the large backpack strapped across Trafalgar's shoulders heavy with its contents. Their steps soon brought them to the street where his shop stood.

The difference was immediate. The scaffolding and noise of laborers were gone, replaced by the clean lines of a finished storefront. Fresh paint still carried a faint smell, and polished windows reflected the lantern light. The renovations had ended—more than two dozen workers over the past days had seen to that.

Trafalgar's gaze lingered on the sign above the entrance. 'Finally. A place ready to run on its own. It's not like I was going to do much, I was going to leave everything to Marella and Arden, they know more about this than I do.'

He pushed open the door, the small bell chiming softly. Inside, the shop smelled of varnish and new wood. Behind the counter stood Marella. Her gray hair was tied neatly into a low bun, her light brown eyes warming instantly as she spotted them. Short and slim, her posture carried the air of someone who'd lived long years.

"Welcome back," she said, her voice a mix of relief and sternness. "Thank the stars you're both in one piece."

Garrika smiled faintly, her ears perking at the sound of Marella's voice. The older woman's worry was palpable—ever since Garrika's kidnapping, Marella fretted over her every mission, no matter who accompanied her.

Marella's gaze dropped to the oversized backpack Trafalgar carried. "And from the look of it, you found what you were after."

Trafalgar adjusted the strap, his voice calm. "Yeah. There were complications, but in the end, everything is ready."

Marella leaned forward slightly, her hands resting on the counter. "Complications?" she pressed, her tone carrying that familiar mix of worry and authority that only someone who'd raised Garrika could muster.

Before Trafalgar could respond, Garrika stepped in, her tail flicking behind her as she spoke with a spark of pride. "Just a few, grandmother. Dangerous, yes, but only a few."

Marella's eyes narrowed. "Define dangerous."

Garrika's grin widened as she launched into the story. "We had to descend into a mine because the merchant didn't have the rare mineral Trafalgar wanted. Mythril. Of course, the place was crawling with monsters. We cleared them out, but—just like last time—we got cornered." She gestured animatedly with her hands, her ears twitching as she grew more excited. "One of the mercenaries tried to take Trafalgar's head with a crossbow. He would have done it too... but Trafalgar was ready. He threw a dagger straight through the man before the bolt could fly."

Marella's eyes widened, her lips parting in shock.

"And," Garrika continued, tail swishing faster, "at the same time he was standing on top of a spider. Not just any spider—one nearly eight meters tall. I helped finish it off, of course, but if Trafalgar hadn't acted when he did, things could have gone very badly."

Her eyes softened slightly as she turned to Trafalgar, her voice quieting just a little. "He really saved me, again."

Marella turned her gaze to Trafalgar, her expression a mixture of surprise and something like respect.

Trafalgar only shrugged, adjusting the strap of his backpack. "That's about right. Anyway, I came here to drop Garrika off and to tell you something important. Soon, a large sum of money will arrive. Half of it should be saved for the future, in case I need it. The other half, reinvest into this place."

Garrika's tail gave an annoyed flick at Trafalgar's words. "So that's it? You drop me off like a child and run off again?"

Trafalgar blinked at her, unamused. "That's not what I said. I just wanted to leave the message about the money. Nothing more."

She crossed her arms, ears twitching with irritation. "You know I'm older than you, right? I don't need an escort to come home. I can manage on my own."

That earned her a sidelong glance from Trafalgar. "Older? How old are you, exactly?"

"Twenty-one," Garrika said without hesitation, her green eyes challenging him to doubt it.

Trafalgar froze for a moment, his brow furrowing. 'Twenty-one? Same as me... well, technically. Back on Earth I was twenty-one, just about to start my final year of university. But here, I'm only sixteen. What a strange mess—one body, two lives. Which number even counts anymore?'

"Why are you so quiet all of a sudden?" Garrika pressed, narrowing her eyes.

He shook his head quickly. "Nothing. Just thinking. For the record, I'm sixteen. You probably already knew—I said it myself when I first came here, that I'd be entering the academy."

Garrika smirked faintly, her irritation giving way to a small grin. "So you admit I'm your big sis."

"Don't push it," Trafalgar muttered, though there was no bite in his tone.

He shifted the weight of the backpack on his shoulders and looked back at Marella. "That's all from me. If anything new happens, you can find me at the academy. If you ask at the dormitories, someone will point you to me. I'll be busy most of the time, but I'll come when needed. Oh, and—send Arden my regards."

With that, he turned toward the door.

The station was busy as always, the steady hiss of mana engines filling the air. Trafalgar purchased his ticket and boarded the most prestigious carriage, finding a seat by the window.

He rested one hand on the large backpack, the weight of it grounding him. Inside lay everything he had bargained, fought, and bled for in Mariven Port.

'Good. With this, Director Selara will have what she needs. Mythril, refined powders, rare stones... everything. She should be able to craft the device to track the Veiled Woman. They call her a genius alchemist for a reason. If I can, I'll stay close and observe—there's always something to learn.'

His lips tugged faintly as another thought crossed his mind. 'And the last three days on her class... cooking for her. Paella, dessert, a good cut of meat. She said she'd never tasted anything like it. When I reminded her of our deal, she agreed immediately—just keep cooking, and she'll do her part.'

The scenery blurred outside the window: forests lit by mana-lamps, distant rooftops glowing faintly under the night sky.

Trafalgar leaned his head against the glass, eyes half-lidded. 'Three days of negotiations, fights, and politics. Now classes again. My second academic life was supposed to be peaceful...'

The train slowed as it neared Velkaris station. Trafalgar straightened, gripping the strap of his backpack.