

Tyrant 137

Chapter 137: The Flower

The restaurant stood tall among the glowing streets of Velkaris, its marble walls polished to perfection, its entrance lit by enchanted lanterns. As Trafalgar and Zafira stepped inside, the warmth of string music and the murmur of noble conversation washed over them. Tables dressed in white stretched across the hall, the air heavy with the scent of roasted meats and spiced wine.

At the podium near the door, a tall elf in a crisp uniform greeted them. His emerald eyes sharpened the moment he saw their faces. Recognition flashed instantly.

"Well," the elf said, voice smooth, though carrying a trace of amusement. "If it isn't Lady Zafira du Zar'khael... and Lord Trafalgar du Morgain. Few months since the Council, was it not?"

Zafira offered a small, composed smile, accustomed to the attention. "That's right."

The elf's gaze lingered on Trafalgar. "I recall quite vividly. The duel with Alfons au Vaelion. Few expected the outcome... especially from one who was once whispered about as the Morgain family's shadow."

Trafalgar's jaw tightened a fraction, but his eyes stayed steady. 'I don't recognize the guy, I guess he works as a waiter at the Council.'

Still, he inclined his head calmly. "Memories travel fast."

The elf bowed lightly, hiding a faint smile. "As they should. Please, allow me to escort you. I have a perfect table for you."

He led them past candlelit tables, where scattered whispers rose among diners who had recognized Zafira immediately and were still staring at Trafalgar with hushed curiosity.

Their corner table was set apart, the lanternlight soft around it. The elf pulled their chairs with elegant precision. "I will bring you the menu shortly."

The elf returned swiftly, carrying a pair of embossed menus bound in dark leather. He handed one to each of them with the same flawless courtesy as before.

"Our specials tonight include grilled steak with seasoned vegetables, and a fresh platter of river fish with bread and greens," he explained smoothly. "Take your time."

Trafalgar barely glanced at the menu before shutting it. "The steak," he said simply, passing it back.

"And for you, Lady Zar'khael?"

Zafira tapped her finger thoughtfully against the page, then smiled. "The river platter will do."

"Very well," the elf replied with a polite bow before heading toward the kitchens.

Their table was left in the gentle hum of the restaurant—music playing softly in the background, the muted conversations of nobles around them. Trafalgar leaned back slightly in his chair, looking far more relaxed than usual.

Zafira tilted her head, studying him. "You know... you've surprised me lately. You don't look half as tense as you used to."

He shrugged, resting an arm on the table. "No point in being tense over dinner."

That answer drew a soft laugh from her, but her expression quickly turned curious. "Then tell me something. What did you do last time? When you turned me down and said you couldn't go shopping for your room?"

Trafalgar met her eyes without hesitation. "I went to visit a friend. It took longer than I thought... and we forgot to buy the stuff we came for too."

Zafira waved her hand lightly. "Forget the last part. A friend, you say?"

"Yes," Trafalgar replied calmly. "I bought a small place recently. If you'd like, I can take you there one day."

Zafira's lips curved upward, satisfaction hidden behind her composed smile. "I'd like that."

Their meals arrived not long after. The elf placed a plate of grilled steak with roasted vegetables before Trafalgar, and set a tray of river fish, bread, and greens in front of Zafira. With a bow, he withdrew, leaving them in the soft glow of the lantern above their table.

For a while, they ate quietly, exchanging only small comments about the flavors. Trafalgar sliced through his steak with steady movements, while Zafira tasted the fish delicately, her eyes drifting toward him more often than the plate.

When she finished her meal, she set down her fork, her hand moving to the chain around her neck. The silver pendant slipped free, and she held it in her palm across the table. Inside the glass was a small, pressed white flower.

"Do you recognize this?" she asked softly, her gray eyes fixed on him.

Trafalgar glanced at it, ready to dismiss it with a shake of his head. But then something stirred—a sharp throb behind his eyes. His hand froze on the knife, his body stiffening slightly.

The restaurant's sounds dulled. The soft music and gentle chatter blurred into a distant hum. Images flickered in his mind—green hedges towering above him, the sound of a child crying, his own smaller hand reaching out.

He winced, pressing a hand briefly to his temple.

Zafira leaned forward immediately, her expression tightening with concern. "Trafalgar? Are you alright?" Her voice was low, careful not to draw attention.

He forced a breath, steadying himself. "I'm fine."

But his gaze fell back to the flower, and the words slipped out, barely above a whisper. "It's... the flower I gave you. In the labyrinth."

Zafira's eyes widened, her lips parting in shock. She had heard him clearly. "So you do remember."

Trafalgar held her gaze. "That was the secret?"

"Yes," she said, voice barely above a whisper. "Maybe it's something only a child would treasure. But it marked me."

He looked at the tiny pressed petal gleaming in its glass. "I see. It suits you."

Inside, thoughts uncoiled one after another. 'So that was Zafira's secret. Now I can understand why Trafalgar was so important to her. I wonder if this made her have feelings for the former Trafalgar. If so, that could be a problem.'

The elf returned with quiet timing. Trafalgar nodded, settled the bill without fuss, and rose from his chair. Zafira closed her fingers around the pendant, the chain catching a last spark of light as they stepped out.

Night met them with a sudden bite—clean, cold air rolling down the avenue of lanterns. Zafira drew in her shoulders on reflex. The motion lifted her chest beneath the dress, but Trafalgar's eyes moved past it; he was already shrugging out of his coat.

"Here," he said, setting the dark fabric over her shoulders before she could protest.

She blinked, then smiled—a small, unguarded smile that made the city's gold light seem warmer. "Thank you."

They fell into step toward the station, footsteps echoing on the stone.

A breeze slid between the buildings; Zafira tugged the coat a little tighter, matching his pace. He glanced at her, then ahead, the rails of the night train glinting in the distance.

"Let's catch the last train," he said.

"Lead the way," she answered, and they walked on beneath the lanterns, the city humming softly around them.