

Tyrant 152

Chapter 152: Before the Vipers' Table

Trafalgar walked the long corridor beside Caelum, the echo of their footsteps bouncing against the cold stone. At the end of the hall, the massive double doors loomed—behind them, his family waited.

His jaw tightened. 'The first dinner, I stayed quiet. Back then, I didn't care about what the old Trafalgar felt. But now... it's different. Everything has piled up like a snowball rolling downhill. And sooner or later, it has to crash.'

His eyes darkened. Seraphine. Rivena. Maeron. The three names that festered in his mind like poison.

'Maeron... one day. One day, I'll carve your name into the list of the dead myself. Roland's words still ring clear—you're the one who did that to Mayla. And I promised her they'd all pay. Every last one of them. Not yet... but the time will come.'

He clenched his fist, but quickly forced his expression back to neutral. He knew the rules here. Any misstep meant death. For now, survival came first—growth, strength, allies, pawns. Revenge would wait.

Caelum's calm voice broke the silence. "Young master Trafalgar, Mayla is preparing as you asked. But you will not be leaving for a few days. Do not worry—a clone of mine remains to guard her. I won't betray the oath I swore."

"Good," Trafalgar replied flatly. "Keep it that way if you want me where you want me."

Caelum inclined his head. "Understood. I won't fail. You saw it yourself during the Roland incident. But still, be careful. I cannot intervene too much here. If I do, my identity could be compromised."

Trafalgar's lips curved into a humorless smirk. "Don't worry. No one here can lay a finger on me. Right now, I'm worth more than any of them, and Valtair knows it. He won't let anyone touch me. I'm too valuable."

Caelum's eyes narrowed faintly. "So you've already realized that."

The corridor stretched endlessly, lined with tall windows that let in slivers of moonlight. Beyond the glass, Trafalgar could see the sheer cliffside and the jagged Morgain Peaks, their crowns buried in snow. The landscape was beautiful in its own way—remote, harsh, impossible to reach without strength or wealth. A fortress and a prison all at once.

He let out a low whistle. "You know, I'd almost forgotten how damn long this hallway is. Whoever designed this place really wanted to show off. Great for intimidation, terrible for legs."

Caelum glanced at him, unamused. "The design serves a purpose. Distance creates security. And symbolism. Every step toward the great hall reminds you who holds power here."

Trafalgar smirked. "Yeah, yeah. Very poetic. Personally, I think it's just a good way to make sure people are too tired to argue by the time they arrive."

For a moment, the ghost of a smile threatened to crack Caelum's reserved expression, but it didn't last.

Trafalgar shifted his gaze back to the window. Snow swept across the cliffs in gusts. "Hard to imagine anyone storming this place. Perfect strategic location, huh? Remote as hell, dangerous terrain, mountains that make the Alps look like hiking trails."

Caelum's brow furrowed. "The... Alps?"

Trafalgar smirked, waving a hand dismissively. "Yeah, don't worry about it. Some mountain range I read about in the academy's history records. Ancient world stuff. Point is—they were supposed to be tall. These peaks make them look like bumps on a road."

"You're not wrong," Caelum admitted quietly. Then his tone sharpened. "But don't forget, young master—your enemies aren't outside these walls this time. They're already inside them."

Trafalgar's smirk faded, replaced by a dry laugh. "Trust me, I haven't forgotten. It's kind of hard when I've got assassination attempts as regular as meal breaks." He rolled his shoulders. "Relax, Caelum."

Valttair won't let anyone touch me. I'm worth too much to him right now. He even sent Mordrek once to babysit me, remember?"

"Yes. I remember."

Their steps echoed against the stone, the looming double doors now just ahead. Then a voice called softly from behind.

"Trafalgar..."

He turned, already recognizing it. Lysandra—her platinum-blond hair loose down her back, her green eyes steady, her silver dress catching the glow of the lanterns.

She stopped a few paces away, her tone quiet but sincere. "How have you been?"

Trafalgar's smirk was sharp, his reply immediate. "How have I been? Let's see... a couple of assassination attempts here and there, my maid almost killed, and now I get to sit down for family dinner. Honestly? Could've been better."

Her face froze, lips parting but no words coming out.

Trafalgar lifted a hand casually, cutting her off before she could speak. "Don't bother. You were away on missions. You couldn't have done anything even if you wanted to. Same as me. So don't waste energy blaming yourself."

For a moment, Lysandra's usual composure cracked. The older sister—ten years his senior—looked vulnerable, and only with him. To the rest of the family, she was always steel.

She looked at him with something almost like regret. "Just... be careful in there, Trafalgar. I'll try to help where I can."

Trafalgar tilted his head, sarcasm lacing his tone. "Careful, huh? I'll keep that in mind. But you know me—I've got a talent for attracting disasters. It's practically a family trait."

A faint smile tugged at her lips, though her eyes remained serious.

The guards standing by the great doors straightened when they saw Lysandra. Without hesitation, they pulled the heavy doors open.

She moved forward first, the air shifting colder as she entered.

Trafalgar lingered just long enough to watch Lysandra disappear through the doors. For a brief second, he almost envied how easily she could walk into that hall—like the weight of the family didn't crush her the way it did him.

Beside him, Caelum adjusted his cuffs, his expression unreadable.

Trafalgar muttered under his breath, just loud enough for Caelum to catch. "Guess this is where the circus begins."

Caelum's lips curved in the faintest suggestion of a frown. "Be cautious, young master. The hall is more dangerous than any battlefield. Words cut deeper than blades here."

"Yeah, yeah," Trafalgar replied, rolling his shoulders. "Don't worry. I'll keep my head down. At least until I decide to shove it in someone's face."

Caelum gave a short nod, the kind that said he'd already calculated ten possible disasters and had no intention of stopping any of them.

The two guards at the door stepped aside, their armor clinking softly. They bowed their heads as they spoke in unison. "Young master Trafalgar."

He smirked dryly. "Now that's new. Didn't expect a warm welcome."

The guards didn't answer, just pulled the massive doors wide. Warm light and muffled voices spilled out from within—the sound of polished silver against porcelain, the low murmur of the Morgain vipers already circling their meal.

Trafalgar glanced once more at Caelum. No words this time, just a look—a reminder of the promise to keep Mayla safe. Caelum inclined his head in return, silent as ever.

Taking a slow breath, Trafalgar stepped forward.

The hall swallowed him whole.