

Tyrant 153

Chapter 153: At the Vipers' Table

The heavy doors closed behind Trafalgar with a dull echo. His eyes swept across the hall, a place he hadn't seen in years yet remembered too well.

The dining hall stretched wide, dominated by the long blackwood table that gleamed under the chandelier's pale glow. Every seat was filled. Every gaze turned toward him.

At the center sat Valtair. His once long, unkempt hair had been cut short and combed neatly for the occasion. Even on the eve of his brother's funeral, the head of House Morgain couldn't afford to appear anything less than pristine.

To Valtair's right sat Maeron—a towering wall of muscle, 2.22 meters of cold presence. Trafalgar met his stare without flinching, his jaw tightening. 'The bastard who put Mayla in that state. I won't look away.'

On Valtair's left was Lysandra. Earlier, she had warned him to be careful. Now, seated so close to their father.

Around the table, the familiar figures of venom and disdain:

Seraphine, the first wife, with her platinum hair and golden eyes that once ordered blades against him.

Lady Verena, the second wife, formal and cold, who treated him as if he didn't exist.

Beside her, Rivena—her smile sharp, her eyes predatory. Trafalgar averted his gaze, disgust curdling in his chest. 'I can't even look at her without remembering what she did.'

Naevia, the third wife, calmer, serene... yet still indifferent. Her children, Sylvar and Nym, sat close, the boy fragile-looking but with a sharpness in his eyes.

Last, Lady Ysolde, darker of skin than the others, flanked by Darion and Elira. Elira's faint smirk reminded Trafalgar of the "hint" she'd given him long ago—not out of kindness, but out of boredom.

And at the far end of the table, directly opposite Valtair, was an empty chair. His chair.

With measured steps, Trafalgar crossed the hall and sat down.

The silence broke as Valtair's gray eyes settled on him. His voice, steady and heavy with authority, carried across the table. "You've grown, son."

Trafalgar met his gaze evenly, his reply smooth, practiced. "That's right, Father. Thanks to your last... gift, I was able to grow well."

Inside, his thoughts were colder. 'Calling me son, as if the word fits you. You only remember it when it suits your image.'

The air shifted as Lady Ysolde leaned forward, her tone dripping with disdain. "Gift? And what exactly did you give the bastard?"

Valtair's eyes cut toward her, sharp as a blade. "The bastard has a name, Ysolde. Use it. And it was nothing more than a pill I gave him before he departed for the academy."

Ysolde scoffed, unfazed. "A pill? Then I expect you'll be giving the same to Elira and Darion. Or is this favoritism now? Favoritism for a child that isn't even worth—"

Her words were interrupted as Lady Naevia finally raised her voice, calm but edged. "Perhaps your children simply haven't achieved anything worth rewarding. Maybe that's why they haven't received more than the items given years ago."

Ysolde's eyes narrowed dangerously. "And what exactly are you insinuating, Naevia?"

The tension crackled across the table, threatening to boil over.

Valttair's palm struck the table once, the sound cutting through their voices like thunder. "Enough. We are here to share a meal before Mordrek's funeral. I will not have this devolve into petty squabbling."

The wives fell into silence, though their eyes still burned with quiet fury.

The tension lingered even after Valttair's command, the air thick with unspoken venom. It was Sylvar, fragile in appearance but sharp in tongue, who broke the silence.

"Don't worry, Mother," he said softly to Naevia, his voice carrying nonetheless. "There's no need to let their words trouble you."

Trafalgar raised an eyebrow, hiding a quiet laugh. 'Looks like the guy might have the body of a ghost, he resembles the old Trafalgar a lot, but he knows how to use his tongue. A sharp one too.'

Before the mood could settle, Rivena leaned forward, her smile warm enough to fool anyone but him. Her eyes glittered. "It's true, Father was right. You've grown so much, Trafalgar. Tell me—what have you been doing at the academy to change so quickly?"

The words dripped with poison.

Trafalgar's jaw flexed. Memories flickered—her hand gripping him years ago, the attempts to break him even after. Old scars burned in silence.

He clicked his tongue sharply. "Tch."

The sound echoed across the table like a slap.

Rivena's smile only widened, satisfied at his reaction, but it was Lady Verena who snapped. The second wife's voice was cold and cutting, her glare pinning him like a dagger.

"How dare you click your tongue at your sister? Do you think such insolence is tolerated here? You may have grown taller, but you are still the same worthless bastard."

Trafalgar leaned back in his chair, his eyes narrowing, his smirk tugging just enough to make it clear he wasn't intimidated. 'Here we go. Patience is something I had little of already.'

The silence after Verena's words pressed down like ice. All eyes shifted to Trafalgar, waiting for him to fold, to apologize, to play the obedient bastard he had once been.

Instead, he leaned forward, resting one elbow casually on the table, his blue eyes glinting. "Worthless bastard, huh? Funny. I don't recall a worthless bastard surviving assassination attempts, killing in the mines, and walking back here alive. Meanwhile, others can't even keep their own house in order without begging Father for scraps."

The words landed like daggers.

Rivena's smile faltered for a heartbeat before returning, thinner this time. Verena's face flushed, her jaw tightening as if she'd been slapped in public—because she had.

Trafalgar clicked his tongue again deliberately, slow this time, his smirk widening. "But sure, go ahead. Keep telling yourselves I'm worthless. At least I don't hide behind Father's name or send assassins to do the work I'm too weak to finish."

The table stiffened. Several pairs of eyes darted toward Seraphine. She kept her chin high, golden eyes glowing with false serenity.

Trafalgar's smirk turned razor-sharp. "And speaking of strength—or the lack of it—seems that hunger strike finally paid off. You actually look better now. Almost like you lost that little double chin you were carrying around."

The jab struck home. For a fraction of a second, Seraphine's mask cracked, her lips pressing tightly as whispers flitted down the table.

Valttair said nothing, only watching with that cold, unreadable gaze. Lysandra's lips pressed into a thin line, though her eyes lingered on him with the faintest trace of pride. She only suppressed her laughter because the one who was affected was her mother.

The hall had fallen quiet, but the storm beneath the surface only grew heavier.

The vipers were restless.