

Tyrant 169

Chapter 169: The Sword in the Earth

The pale light of dawn crept through the narrow window, painting the stone walls in muted gray. Trafalgar stirred, sitting up on the stiff bed, the air colder than ice even inside the fortress. He rubbed his face with both hands before swinging his legs to the floor.

His black clothes were already laid out—a tunic, trousers, gloves, all trimmed with somber detail. Morgain custom demanded mourning attire, and for once, he didn't argue. He dressed quickly, the chill biting at his skin until the fabric settled around him.

Pulling on his boots, he paused for a moment, staring at the faint glimmer of the stars still visible through the window. The fortress was silent. No chatter, no heavy steps, only the occasional creak of wood or whisper of wind. Everyone was awake, but no one dared raise their voice today.

Trafalgar tugged the cloak tighter over his shoulders and stood, exhaling a cloud of white breath. 'Let's just hope the day goes by quickly.'

He left his room, boots tapping against the stone as he descended the corridor. Servants moved about in silence, carrying candles and trays, their faces stiff with grief. A few of them glanced at him, but none spoke.

At the lower hall, Morgains were already gathering. Black garments rustled as uncles, cousins, and distant kin assembled, each face carved into a mask of stone. The atmosphere was heavier than any court meeting Trafalgar had ever seen.

He blended into the crowd, adjusting his cloak again as he stepped outside. The cold hit him like a wall, but he pressed forward, following the solemn procession making its way toward the Cemetery of Swords.

The path to the Cemetery of Swords wound through the upper terraces of the fortress, and by the time they reached the courtyard the first glow of sunrise was brushing against the peaks. The stars still burned above, their silver light mixing with the faint orange of dawn, illuminating the sea of steel below.

One by one, the Morgains gathered in a solemn ring. Uncles, cousins, and distant branches of the family took their places, the crunch of boots on frost the only sound. Black garments rippled in the wind, cloaks snapping like banners under the bite of the mountain air.

Trafalgar stood among them, silent, his breath visible in short bursts. He glanced across the crowd, noting how even the strongest men carried shadows in their eyes. For once, there were no arguments, no raised voices—only the weight of loss binding them together.

Then they arrived.

Anthera stepped forward, her figure tall and composed in a flowing black gown. Her face was calm, but her eyes were rimmed with red, betraying a grief she kept locked inside. Beside her walked Syllis, pale and tight-lipped, her small hands clenched at her sides. The girl looked older than her years, already burdened by something no fifteen-year-old should have to bear.

Clinging to Anthera's dress were the twins, Mael and Eron, their identical faces lost, confused. They didn't fully understand why their father would never return, but they followed in silence, their little black tunics flapping in the wind.

The family parted as they passed, heads lowering in respect. Not a word was spoken.

Trafalgar's eyes lingered on them, memories of the weeks he had lived under the same roof flickering back. 'They don't deserve this.'

The Morgains closed ranks again, forming a circle around the heart of the cemetery. The ritual was about to begin.

The crowd fell utterly silent as Armand du Morgain stepped forward, the starlight and first rays of dawn spilling across his silver hair. His gray eyes swept the circle, heavy with grief, yet his voice when it came was steady, deep enough to reach every ear.

"Mordrek was a son, a brother, a husband, and a father," Armand began, his tone resonant in the cold air. "He was a man who carried the weight of this family with quiet strength. To his children, he was a

shield. To his wife, a partner. To his kin, an uncle and a friend. He lived as a Morgain should live—honor first, strength unyielding."

The words pressed into the silence, broken only by the sound of the wind rushing across the mountain.

"He gave his life fighting a dragon," Armand continued, "not for glory, but for duty. That is how he will be remembered. A great man, who met death with courage."

Armand stepped aside, his shoulders heavier for it. All eyes turned as Valtair moved forward. His platinum hair caught the morning light, and his gray eyes were as sharp as the blade he carried in both hands.

The sword of Mordrek was immense, its edge scarred from the final battle, its aura still heavy with the scent of blood and fire. Valtair held it high, the steel gleaming like a shard of the sun, then lowered it toward the earth at the center of the circle.

With a single motion, he drove it into the frozen ground.

The sound rang out like a thunderclap—metal against stone, echoing across the cemetery of countless blades.

A silence followed, deeper than before, as the weapon settled into its eternal place among the swords of the dead.

The sword stood planted in the frozen ground, its hilt gleaming in the pale light of dawn. No one moved for several heartbeats. Then, the sound of quiet sobs broke the silence.

Sylis had covered her face with both hands, her shoulders trembling. She tried to hold it in, tried to be strong like her mother beside her, but the weight was too much. Her muffled cries carried through the circle, raw and unguarded.

Anthera placed a hand gently on her daughter's back, holding the twins close with the other. Her face remained carved in stone, but her eyes glistened under the starlight. The family around them lowered their gazes, some in respect, others simply to look away.

Trafalgar's chest tightened. 'Damn it... she's just a kid. She shouldn't have to carry this.' His fists clenched at his sides, nails biting into his palms.

But then another voice echoed in his memory—Valttair's cold declaration during the hall: "There will be vengeance."

And layered atop it, the whisper of the Veiled Woman, sharper than the mountain wind: "Find Mordrek's killer. You must focus on becoming stronger, Trafalgar. Your destiny is written."

He drew in a long breath, eyes fixed on the sea of blades around him. He wasn't strong enough now. Not compared to Valttair, not compared to anyone else here. But that didn't matter. The path had already been set.

'Whether I like it or not, I'm involved. If finding the killer is what it takes to get stronger, then I'll go. I'll fight. I'll survive.'

The wind howled through the cemetery, carrying his silent vow across the endless forest of swords.