

Tyrant 200

Chapter 200: Trail

The streets of Velkaris blurred past him as Trafalgar ran. The night air was cold, biting at his lungs, but he didn't slow. Each step echoed louder than the last until Arden and Marella's shop—came into view. The windows were dim, the lights inside faint.

He didn't bother knocking softly. His hand slammed against the door. "Garrika! Open up!"

After a tense few seconds, a shadow moved inside. The door creaked open, and Garrika appeared, her green eyes sharp even in the low light. She wore a loose shirt, her long black hair slightly tousled from tying it back hastily.

"Trafalgar? It's the middle of the night—what the hell are you—"

He cut her off, holding out a torn strip of brown fabric, still trembling slightly in his grasp. "Mayla. She's gone."

Her expression froze. The playful warmth she usually carried vanished in an instant. She took the fabric, brought it close to her nose, and inhaled deeply.

Her pupils narrowed, glowing faintly in the dark. "This is fresh. There's... another scent here. Four—no, five men. Sweat, iron, and..." She sniffed again, frowning. "Blood. Not much, but enough."

Trafalgar's voice tightened. "Can you track her?"

Garrika looked up at him. For a moment, her instinctive wildness softened. There was something in his eyes—fear, anger, something that stirred a spark of protectiveness in her. "Of course I can." Her lips curved into a small grin. "You're lucky you came to me. Stay close, noble boy."

He nodded. "Thank you."

"Don't thank me yet." She turned toward the door, grabbing a jacket from the wall. "Whoever took her, they'll regret it."

As she stepped outside, the faint moonlight caught her wolf ears and tail, swaying slightly with each step. She looked back once, smirking. "Try to keep up, Lord Morgain."

Trafalgar followed, his pulse quickening—not just from worry, but from the fierce determination that burned in Garrika's eyes.

'Please be safe, Mayla...'

And with that, they vanished into the labyrinth of Velkaris' night, chasing the faint scent of blood and fear.

Garrika moved like a shadow, slipping ahead with the ease of someone who belonged to the streets. Trafalgar kept pace behind her, the scrap of fabric clenched tight in his fist. She threaded between stalls and shuttered shops, nose down, ears twitching—every movement precise, predatory.

"Why do you think this happened?" Garrika asked without looking back, voice low. Her green eyes cut over her shoulder. The tail at the base of her spine flicked once—an impatient punctuation.

He ran a hand through his dark-blue hair, keeping his voice steady. "I don't know. I haven't made enemies in Velkaris that I know of. I certainly didn't think anyone cared enough about the 'bastard of the Morgain' to attack like this." He let a bitter half-smile ghost his lips. "No one respected me back home, and it seems the same here—until someone decided they could take advantage."

Garrika snorted softly. "People see you with a pretty girl and assume you're an easy mark. Newlyweds, lovers—an extortionist's daydream." She paused, sniffing the air. "Or maybe... Lucien. He's petty enough."

"Tried him before," Trafalgar said. "I told him the Morgains would end him if he ever touched me or the local." The memory of the old confrontation sat cold and distant. "He backed off then."

Garrika's grin was feral. "Backing off doesn't mean forgiving. Men like him keep score. He runs crooked houses and illegal games—those kinds hold grudges. Remember when you let me give him a lesson and left him half-broken. He could have wanted revenge then, or he might have been pushed by someone richer." Her tone sharpened. "Doesn't matter. If Lucien thought he could scare you with a stunt like this, he misjudged who he's pissing off."

They moved into the industrial quarter; the air grew heavier with oil and old smoke. The lane opened to a row of warehouses—metal doors dented and rusted, windows like black eyes. Garrika stopped at one with a sliver of light leaking from beneath. She crouched, pressing her palm to the frame, nostrils flaring.

"Here," she whispered. "The scent's strong. They were here recently—sweat, cheap tobacco, and the tang of fear." Her wolfish grin softened, brief and fierce.

They crept along the wall, the sound of their boots muffled by years of dust. The warehouse loomed like a beast in the dark—metal ribs and rotting wood, the scent of rust and oil thick in the air. Garrika's tail barely moved, her breathing measured and controlled.

"There," she whispered, pointing toward a faint light spilling from the cracks of a smaller room near the back. The flicker of a mana lamp cast shifting shadows across the walls. Trafalgar followed her gaze, crouching beside a broken panel.

Garrika pressed her fingers against one of the gaps and peered through. Her eyes widened slightly. "She's inside," she murmured.

Trafalgar leaned closer. Through the jagged hole in the wood, he saw her—Mayla, tied to a chair, wrists bound with coarse rope. Her face was pale but composed, her chest rising and falling slowly. Two men stood guard nearby, one with a dagger, the other pacing aimlessly.

For a long moment, Trafalgar didn't move. His eyes, normally calm and dark as midnight, began to narrow, the faintest glow of mana flickering behind them. The air around him stirred.

Garrika felt it immediately. "Careful," she whispered, gripping his arm. "You're leaking mana. If they sense it—"

"I see them," Trafalgar muttered through clenched teeth. His voice trembled—not from fear, but from fury barely contained. "She's shaking. They've hit her."

Garrika's grip tightened. "Listen to me. You go in now, and they'll use her as a shield. You're not stupid, so don't act like it. Wait."

He forced himself to look at her, jaw tense. The rational part of his mind clawed its way through the anger. She was right. Logic first, rage later.

"We take them clean," he said finally, breathing through his nose. "No noise until I say."

"Good boy," she murmured, a ghost of a grin crossing her lips. "I'll circle behind. When I move, you strike."

Trafalgar nodded once, his hand hovering over the hilt of his sword. He turned back toward the crack in the wall, eyes fixed on Mayla.

'Hold on. Just a little longer.'

They crouched low behind a pile of crates, the dim light of a flickering mana lamp spilling through the gaps. Garrika's nose twitched—the scent in the air was enough to turn her blood cold. She didn't need to look to know who was inside.

"Trafalgar," she murmured, her voice sharp with disgust. "It's him."

Trafalgar leaned closer to the wooden crack, peering into the room beyond.

Five men occupied the space—four grunts leaning against walls or cleaning their weapons, and one seated in the center like he owned the place. His charcoal-gray suit shimmered faintly under the light, a half-empty glass of amber liquor in one hand and a silver chain glinting at his wrist.

Lucien.

He was speaking casually to one of his men, voice smooth and amused. "You see, that's why I pay my people to keep their eyes open. One of the waiters at that fancy place uptown, calls me, says there's this new girl dining there. Real beauty, quiet type, the kind that makes the room turn to look."

He took a slow sip from his glass, smiling. "So, I had the boys check her out when she left. Thought she might be looking for work. Didn't know she was already under some spoiled noble's wing."

Garrika's claws flexed against the floor, her teeth showing in a restrained snarl. "So that's it... He didn't even know who she was. He just wanted another pretty face for his 'business.'"

Trafalgar's hands trembled slightly, his knuckles whitening as mana began to hum under his skin. "He took her because she was beautiful?"

Lucien chuckled, oblivious. "The worker said she was polite, soft-spoken, and worth a fortune to the right crowd. I figured I'd meet her myself, maybe recruit her for the upper district houses. Didn't even ask who she was with—just thought she looked like easy profit." He swirled the amber drink, unconcerned. "Who'd have guessed she had someone protecting her?"

A quiet snap echoed as the piece of wood under Trafalgar's fingers cracked. His dark-blue eyes flared faintly, the calm in his expression giving way to silent rage.

Garrika noticed instantly, resting a hand on his shoulder. "Breathe. Not yet." Her voice was calm but edged with her own fury. "We get Mayla out first. Then you can tear his heart out if you want."

Trafalgar exhaled through his nose, forcing his mana to settle. "Fine. You make the noise—I'll take her."

A vicious grin curved Garrika's lips. "Gladly."

She slipped away, her tail brushing the floor soundlessly as she moved toward the far side of the warehouse.

Seconds later—

CRASH!

A crate slammed to the ground, splintering open. Garrika's voice cut through the chaos like a whip.

"Hey, Lucien! Miss me? You never learned to stop stealing what's not yours!"

The room erupted. Chairs scraped, blades drew, and Lucien shot up from his seat, fury flashing in his eyes. "You!"

Trafalgar didn't wait. He darted through the side passage, boots silent against the dusty floor.

In the next room, Mayla sat bound to a chair, her eyes widening as he burst in. "Trafalgar—!"

He cut through her ropes with one clean stroke, steadying her gently. "I'm here. Stay behind me."