

Tyrant 218

Chapter 218: Quiet Afternoon

The afternoon light bathed the academy grounds in a golden hue as Trafalgar walked toward the dormitories. His shoulders ached from the duel with Eryndor, the faint pain lingering like a reminder that he'd survived something far beyond his level.

'First class with him and I already learned an epic skill... not bad,' he thought, stretching his neck. '[Earthsplitter]—stagger and stun potential, perfect for breaking heavy defenses. I didn't expect to pull it off that fast, but I guess that's what happens when I push Sword Insight past its limit.'

His fingers flexed subconsciously, still remembering the motion of the strike. The feedback pain in his skull had finally started to fade, replaced by a dull throb that almost felt comforting. 'Guess I'm getting used to it. Still, most of my skills are barely level one or two... I should work on that soon.'

He climbed the dorm stairs, opening the door to his room. Everything looked the same—books piled up, a few training clothes on the chair. He exhaled deeply and headed for the shower.

The hot water ran over his skin, washing away the blood and sand from training. His thoughts wandered again. 'Maybe I'll take a mission from the board, bring Garrika with me. I can earn a bit of coin while I'm at it.'

He smirked. 'Not that I really need it anymore. Between Euclid and the shop, money's not a problem. I could stop doing anything from now on and just... well, do nothing for the rest of my life. Touch grass, drink, sleep, be with Mayla. Not a bad plan.'

After the shower, he changed into casual clothes — a loose white shirt, black trousers, and boots. Leaving the dorm, he walked through the courtyard until he found a bench beneath a broad tree. The shade felt cool against the fading warmth of the sun.

He sat down, closing his eyes for a moment as the wind brushed through his hair. For the first time in days, there was no pressure, no expectation — just silence.

Soon, he'd meet Cynthia and Bartholomew to visit the orphanage. But for now, Trafalgar just leaned back, resting his head against the bench. 'A calm evening for once... I'll take it.'

The wind stirred the leaves above the bench as footsteps echoed nearby. Trafalgar lifted his gaze just in time to see Cynthia and Bartholomew walking toward him.

They looked different — lighter somehow. Cynthia wore a simple summer dress, pale blue with a ribbon at the waist, and Bartholomew had chosen something more relaxed: a light shirt and dark pants, much like Trafalgar's. He was carrying two large bags that looked about to burst.

Trafalgar raised an eyebrow. "Went shopping?"

Bartholomew smiled awkwardly, clutching the bags. "Y-yeah. We thought... we could get something nice for ourselves for once. And, uh, for the kids too."

Cynthia adjusted the strap on her shoulder and nodded. "We wanted to bring everything together when you came. Easier that way."

Trafalgar gave a small nod, standing up from the bench. "Alright then. Let's get going before it gets dark."

They walked together to the academy's train platform. The golden light of the setting sun painted the rails in warm tones as the train approached with a metallic rumble. When the doors slid open, Trafalgar followed them into the regular passenger car instead of the first-class cabin.

Cynthia gave him a surprised look. "You're not sitting in the front car?"

He shrugged. "Not today, I'm with you."

Inside, the carriage was filled with families. Children peeked out the windows, laughing and pointing at the changing scenery. Trafalgar sat opposite Bartholomew and watched them quietly. 'Kids... I can handle babies and the quiet ones, but those loud little demons in the middle? No thanks.'

After a few minutes, Trafalgar leaned forward slightly. "So, Barth. Heard you've been learning new skills lately. Anything good?"

Bartholomew blinked. "Who told you that?"

Trafalgar smirked. "A little bird."

Barth froze for a second before nodding seriously, completely buying it. Cynthia couldn't hold back her laugh. "He's joking, Barth."

Bartholomew turned red instantly. "O-oh. Right..."

Cynthia leaned forward, teasing. "So? You gonna tell him?"

Barth sighed, defeated. "I... managed to learn [Piercing Shade Arrow]. Copied it from Cynthia."

Trafalgar raised a brow. "Oh? Not bad."

Cynthia crossed her arms. "Not bad? It took him a month. A whole month of me firing arrows for hours while he tried to figure it out. I nearly passed out half the time."

Bartholomew's shoulders sank. "Sorry for being... talentless."

Trafalgar waved a hand dismissively. "Don't say that. You learned something. That's what matters. Talent's just another word for time saved."

Cynthia smirked. "So you're saying my skill isn't strong enough to be worth it?"

Barth froze, sweating. "N-no! I mean—it's great! I just—uh—"

Trafalgar chuckled and leaned back in his seat. "Relax, Cynthia. He didn't mean it like that."

Bartholomew nodded so fast his hair bounced. "Exactly!"

The siblings exchanged a glance and then laughed, and even Trafalgar found himself smiling faintly. The train rolled on, the rhythmic sound of the rails filling the air as the city passed by outside the window.

The train slowed to a gentle halt, the rhythmic hum of the rails fading into silence. The doors slid open with a hiss, releasing the faint scent of the city — iron, stone, and evening air.

Cynthia stepped out first, followed by Bartholomew, who still held the bags carefully. Trafalgar came last, glancing around the station. Compared to the academy, Velkaris felt alive in a different way — noisier, less polished, more human.

They followed the main road south. The cobblestones gave way to uneven stone, and the well-kept lamps and ornate balconies of the upper districts slowly disappeared. Shops turned smaller, streets narrower, until even the scent of perfume in the air was replaced by that of baked bread and dust.

Trafalgar's gaze swept over the scenery. 'So this is the south district... completely different from the north. No gold, no marble, no noise from nobles bragging about bloodlines, talent or money. Just... people.'

Children ran barefoot through the street, chasing a paper ball, laughing. A few merchants packed up their stands for the evening. Cynthia and Bartholomew walked ahead with ease, greeting faces they recognized.

Trafalgar's pace slowed slightly as he watched them. "You two seem to know everyone here."

Cynthia smiled over her shoulder. "We've lived here most of our lives. Everyone around knows the orphanage — it helps people whenever it can. Food, shelter, lessons..."

Bartholomew added quietly, "It's not just where we grew up. It's our family. The sisters raised us, taught us everything. Even when we were old enough to leave, we didn't want to."

Cynthia nodded. "We help the little ones now. Homework, skills, forming the core, anything we can do. They look up to us, even if we're not really adults yet."

Trafalgar glanced at her, then at Bartholomew, whose expression carried a quiet pride. 'They really mean it. For them, family is the people with whom they have made bonds, even if they are not related by blood.'

His jaw tightened slightly, memories of the Morgain estate flickering in his mind — Rivena's sneer, Valtair's voice, the cold marble halls. He pushed the thoughts away.

'They grew up with kindness... and Trafalgar quite the opposite.'

The three continued walking in silence for a moment. The streetlights flickered on one by one, bathing the road in a warm amber glow. The noise of the upper city felt far away now — replaced by laughter, by life.

They turned down a narrow street where the cobblestones ended in packed dirt. The houses here were small, old, and close together — some with cracked windows, others patched with mismatched wood. Yet the air was calm, almost peaceful.

At the end of the road stood a large, three-story building wrapped in ivy. Its paint had faded long ago, but the laughter of children spilling from the open windows made it feel alive.

Cynthia stopped in front of the iron gate and smiled faintly. "We're here. This is home."

Bartholomew's eyes softened. "It's not much to look at, but it's... everything to us."

Trafalgar crossed his arms, studying the place. The structure was old, sure — but there was warmth in it. 'So this is where they grew up. No luxury, no servants, but it feels alive. Guess that's more than I can say about my family's mansion.'

As they opened the gate, a group of children noticed them and shouted from the yard. "Cynthia! Barth!"

Tiny feet pattered across the courtyard. The two were instantly surrounded by cheerful voices. Cynthia knelt, ruffling the hair of a little girl, while Bartholomew smiled awkwardly as two boys tugged at his sleeves.

One of the older nuns looked up from the doorway, her eyes widening when she saw Trafalgar. "Oh my... visitors?"

Cynthia turned, her expression bright. "Sister Luneia! This is Trafalgar du Morgain — the one who helped us."

The nun's eyes widened further. "Oh, you're that young man! Please, come in. The children have wanted to thank you properly."

Before Trafalgar could say anything, several of the younger kids crowded around him, staring in awe. One boy whispered, "He's so tall..." Another tugged gently at his sleeve, eyes wide. "Mister, are you a knight?"

Trafalgar froze. 'I'm definitely not built for this.'

He raised a hand in a half-wave. "Uh... something like that."

The kids giggled, their excitement echoing through the courtyard. Cynthia laughed softly behind him. "They're just curious. Don't look so tense."

'I don't hate kids,' he thought, glancing at the smiling faces, 'just the loud ones that never stop running. But... these don't seem so bad.'

Sister Luneia gestured toward the door. "Come in, all of you. Dinner's almost ready. You can tell us all about the academy."

Trafalgar followed the siblings inside, his boots echoing softly on the worn wooden floor. Children's laughter filled every corner.