

Tyrant 219

Chapter 219: Dinner

The smell of baked bread and stew drifted through the halls as Trafalgar stepped into the dining room. Wooden tables stretched from wall to wall, worn but polished with care. Dozens of plates clattered in quick rhythm, handled by the nuns and older children who moved like a well-practiced team.

Cynthia immediately rolled up her sleeves and joined them, smiling as she started laying out bread and cutlery. Bartholomew was already cornered by a group of kids.

Trafalgar stood by the doorway for a few seconds, watching the organized chaos. 'So this is what a real family dinner looks like, huh? Everyone moving, helping, laughing... not a servant in sight.'

"Come on," Cynthia called, noticing him. "You're not just standing there, are you? Grab those plates."

"Me?"

She raised an eyebrow. "Yes, you. Unless you're afraid of breaking them."

Trafalgar sighed quietly and stepped forward, picking up a small stack of dishes. They felt heavier than expected — not because of their weight, but because he was terrified of dropping even one. 'Fantastic. From dueling monsters, and mounting a wyvern to handling tableware. Truly, my greatest challenge yet.'

He tried to set them down neatly, only for one to wobble dangerously. A little girl nearby gasped and darted forward, steadying the edge before it fell.

Trafalgar blinked. "...Thanks."

The girl smiled shyly. "You're not very good at this, mister."

A quiet laugh rippled through the room. Even Cynthia tried — and failed — to hide her amusement. Trafalgar exhaled through his nose, forcing a crooked smile. "Guess I'm a little out of practice."

'University life didn't exactly prepare me for communal dinner setups. Unless you count microwaving ramen at 2 a.m.'

When they finally finished setting the last table, Sister Luneia clapped her hands. "Good work, everyone! Wash your hands, the stew's almost done!"

The children cheered, scattering toward the washbasins. Trafalgar leaned against the nearest wall, watching the scene unfold — the warmth, the chatter, the complete lack of tension.

For a moment, he almost forgot who he was supposed to be.

'It reminds me of my family on earth.'

The dining room buzzed with life. Wooden benches creaked under the weight of dozens of kids, all talking over one another. Sister Luneia stood at the head of the long table, smiling patiently as she said grace. When she finished, a joyful chaos erupted — spoons clinking, chairs scraping, laughter bouncing off the walls.

Trafalgar sat near the center, between Cynthia and a pair of wide-eyed children who kept sneaking glances at him between bites. He tried to keep a neutral expression, but it was hard to ignore how small everything felt compared to the polished halls he'd lived in this world. No crystal glasses, no gold, no maids—just wooden bowls and genuine smiles.

Steam rose from the stew in front of him, thick with herbs and small chunks of meat. He took a spoonful and paused mid-bite. It was simple... but somehow perfect.

'Alright, that's surprisingly good,' he admitted inwardly. 'Still doesn't beat Mayla's cooking, though. Nothing ever will. But this... this feels homemade in a way even she'd appreciate.'

Across the table, a boy no older than seven was staring at him openly. When Trafalgar met his gaze, the child's eyes widened. "Mister... are you a hero?"

The entire table went silent for a moment. Trafalgar blinked. "...A hero?"

The boy nodded seriously. "Cynthia said you fight bad people and protect others!"

Cynthia choked on her drink. "I—hey! I said he's good at fighting and making a mess, not that he's a hero!"

Trafalgar turned to her with mock suspicion. "So I'm not a hero now?"

She smirked, folding her arms. "You? You're just a trouble magnet."

The kids burst into laughter. Even Bartholomew, seated further down the table, was giggling. Trafalgar sighed in defeat but couldn't stop the corner of his mouth from curling upward. "Fine. Maybe I'll just retire early then."

A small girl leaned forward, eyes shining. "But heroes don't retire!"

Trafalgar gave her a mock-serious nod. "Then I'll reconsider once I finish this stew."

The laughter that followed was light, genuine — the kind that didn't come from power or politics. Just people being... people.

As the evening went on, conversation flowed easily. Cynthia shared small academy stories, the kids interrupted with questions about mana, and Trafalgar — somehow — found himself explaining how "mana channels" worked using bread rolls as visual aids.

When the bowls were finally empty and the last crumbs gone, Sister Luneia clapped her hands again. "All right, everyone. Dishes to the basin, then stories before bed!"

The children cheered, rushing to obey. Trafalgar stayed seated a moment longer, watching them scatter.

Sister Luneia approached their end of the table, wiping her hands on a linen cloth. Her smile was gentle but filled with purpose — the kind of expression that came from years of caring for others.

"I owe you a proper thank-you, Mister Morgain," she said warmly. "Your donation helped us repair the roof before the autumn storms came. The children sleep soundly now, without worrying about leaks or cold nights."

Trafalgar blinked, looking faintly uncomfortable. "It wasn't a big deal. I just... passed the money through Bartholomew. He deserved the credit more than I do."

Cynthia gave him a sidelong glance, a small smile curving her lips. "You downplay that."

He shrugged. "It's not charity. Just... what anyone should do if they can."

Sister Luneia chuckled softly, clearly unconvinced. "If everyone thought that way, my dear, I'd have far less gray hair."

Bartholomew, sitting nearby, smiled shyly and looked up from his empty bowl. "She's right, Trafalgar. You really helped us."

Trafalgar waved a hand dismissively, though the faintest trace of color touched his ears. "Just don't make a habit of thanking me. I'm not good at it."

Cynthia leaned her elbow on the table, her tone light but sincere. "You say that, but you look proud anyway."

He exhaled slowly through his nose, trying to hide the small smile tugging at his lips. 'Maybe I am. Just a little, even if all this has happened due to the money I gave Barth indirectly.'

His gaze drifted across the room — the soft chatter, the glowing lanterns, the faint creak of the old floorboards. For a moment, everything felt still.

When he turned back, Cynthia was still watching him — quiet, thoughtful, as if seeing a side of him she hadn't before.

He cleared his throat and stood. "You two should help the kids clean up before Sister Lune drafts me into it again."

Cynthia laughed softly. "That wouldn't be so bad, would it?"

He smirked. "For you? No. For me? Absolutely."

After the meal, the noise in the dining hall faded to a gentle hum. Most of the children had gone off to wash or prepare for bedtime, leaving behind the warm scent of stew and laughter. Cynthia turned to Trafalgar, brushing a strand of white hair behind her ear.

"Come on," she said softly. "There's someone who wants to meet you."

Trafalgar raised an eyebrow. "Someone?"

"The head of the orphanage," she replied. "She wanted to thank you personally for helping us."