

Tyrant 22

Chapter 22: Zafira du Zar'khael

She stood in front of him, tall and composed.

The same girl from two months ago.

Back then, it had been dark, chaotic. He remembered her voice, the shape of her silhouette, and those horns... but now, under the warm chandelier lights of the banquet hall, she was fully visible.

Her long, purple hair fell in soft waves across her back. Two black horns curved elegantly from her forehead. Her skin was pale, almost porcelain-like, and her eyes—a soft, silvery grey—held a calm he couldn't quite read.

And the dress—violet, that did absolutely nothing to hide her confidence.

She raised one hand with quiet poise.

Trafalgar hesitated for half a second, then stepped forward.

'Noble etiquette. Right.'

He gently took her hand and kissed the back of it, mimicking what he'd seen others do. Her skin was cool to the touch.

"I've been... alright, I guess. Thanks for asking," he said, straightening up.

She smiled faintly. "I'm glad."

For a moment, neither of them spoke.

Trafalgar's gaze drifted. His eyes lingered where they shouldn't—on the soft curves of her chest, framed perfectly by the cut of her dress. In the moonlight two months ago, he hadn't noticed. Now, it was... noticeable.

Too noticeable.

Her voice came sharp and clear.

"My eyes are up here, Trafalgar."

He blinked, coughed, and looked away. "Sorry. I didn't mean to—uh..."

She waited.

"Can I ask you something?" he added quickly trying to change the subject.

"Go ahead," she replied, her tone amused.

"You said before that we're childhood friends. I do remember... something. A few moments, maybe. But—sorry for this—I don't actually remember your name."

The girl didn't look surprised. If anything, her smile widened just a bit.

"Oh, that. We were small, so I don't blame you."

She stepped back half a pace and gave a graceful curtsy.

"Let's start over, then."

Her voice softened, more formal now.

"I'm Zafira du Zar'khael. Fifth heir of the demon house Zar'khael, one of the Great Eight Families. It's a pleasure to meet you again."

Trafalgar stared at her for a moment, then blinked twice.

'Zar'khael... that's a hell of a surname. Sounds like something out of a boss fight. Definitely unique.'

Zafira tilted her head slightly, her silver earrings catching the light.

"Are you going to leave me hanging, or are you still admiring my beauty?"

Trafalgar cleared his throat again. "Right, sorry. My turn."

He placed a hand over his chest, just like she had.

"I'm Trafalgar du Morgain. Ninth heir of House Morgain. Nice to meet you... again."

Zafira gave a small, approving nod. "Likewise, Trafalgar. Even if you didn't remember my name, I'm glad you remembered something about me. Even if it was just a vague memory."

Zafira's smile lingered as she clasped her hands behind her back.

Trafalgar was quiet, he didn't know what to talk about, not because he wasn't good around women, but because in reality he didn't know her a bit.

She tilted her head. "Are you finally ready to talk?"

Trafalgar exhaled and gave a half-smile. "Alright, alright."

He picked up a small bite-sized snack from the tray beside him. "Want one?"

Zafira shook her head gently. "No, thank you."

He shrugged and popped it into his mouth. "So, last time you also said our families might make peace today. Why you think that?"

Zafira's tone turned slightly more serious. "Because of the mine."

Trafalgar blinked. "Mine?"

"A mana crystal mine," she clarified. "A new one was discovered recently. It's big, and it's located right on the border between Morgain and Zar'khael territory."

She crossed her arms, her expression cool.

"My family tried to arrange talks. We sent envoys, requested meetings. But your father kept delaying everything. Postponing or outright ignoring us."

Trafalgar nodded slowly, already seeing where this was going.

"And your father got tired of waiting?"

"Exactly. So he decided to... introduce himself another way."

He gave her a look. "That's what you call that? A polite introduction?"

Zafira smirked. "Not exactly polite, no. But direct. And just for the record, I greeted you properly."

"You didn't try to kill me, so yeah, I noticed," Trafalgar muttered.

Zafira gave a slight shrug. "But I also did tell the soldiers not to touch you."

"Some of them didn't get the memo."

"I noticed. Believe me, they were dealt with afterward."

She leaned slightly closer, lowering her voice.

"They were all criminals. Origin Rank at most—thieves, murderers, war deserters. People awaiting execution. We gave them a chance to earn freedom by volunteering. No one important was lost."

Trafalgar's gaze dropped for a moment.

Zafira tilted her head again. "And... I can tell you've awakened your mana core."

He looked up, blinking. "You noticed?"

She smiled, genuinely impressed.

"Yeah, you've awakened your core... just shy of sixteen. That's impressive, Trafalgar, I mean it in a good way, it's strange for someone to awaken this late."

He raised an eyebrow. "How do you know when I turn sixteen?"

Zafira's tone didn't change. "The last time the Council gathered, it was your birthday. You told me back then."

Trafalgar stared at her for a moment.

'...She remembered that?'

Trafalgar looked at her carefully, still processing what she'd said.

She didn't seem to be mocking him. There was no arrogance in her tone. Just... calm certainty.

"Can I ask you something else?" he said, voice lower now.

Zafira blinked once, curious. "You may."

He hesitated for a second, then met her eyes.

"Why are you nice to me?"

Zafira raised an eyebrow slightly.

He continued, "I mean... most of my family acts like I don't exist. Other nobles barely even acknowledge me. You're the only one who's treated me like a person since I got here."

She didn't answer right away. Instead, her smile returned—subtle, but playful.

"That's a good question."

She stepped closer, just enough to lower her voice slightly.

"But... it's a secret."

Trafalgar frowned. "Seriously?"

"If you remember, you'll know," she said, tilting her head. "And if not... well, then you'll live with the mystery."

He let out a soft chuckle. "That's not fair."

"Most truths aren't," she replied, unfazed.

Zafira then glanced sideways, her expression shifting.

A slight sigh escaped her lips. "Ugh... be careful, Trafalgar."

He tilted his head. "Why?"

"The one heading this way doesn't hold you in the same regard I do."

Trafalgar turned slightly.

Footsteps.

A boy was approaching their table with a self-satisfied smirk. His blonde hair was slicked back, his red eyes sharp and condescending. He wore a bright yellow noble suit that somehow managed to look expensive and gaudy at the same time.

Trafalgar immediately got a bad feeling.

"Who is that?"

Zafira crossed her arms, lips tight.

"Alfons," she said simply. "Another heir. Loud. Arrogant. Useless and he likes me but I rejected him."

Alfons walked up to the table with a confident stride and an arrogant smile.

"Well, well," he said loudly. "What a lovely surprise. The bastard and his demon whore, sitting together like it means something."

Zafira didn't flinch. "What do you want, Alfons?"

Alfons narrowed his eyes, stepping closer. "Nothing, I just came to greet the other heirs of the eight great families. I especially just wanted to check on my dear friend Trafalgar.

Trafalgar didn't even flinch. He casually reached for another snack from the table and popped it into his mouth.

Alfons stepped closer, chest puffed and chin high, clearly enjoying the spotlight. His voice rose slightly as he began his barrage.

"The disgrace of the Morgain house."

Trafalgar nodded. "Absolutely."

"A stain on the Morgain bloodline."

He shrugged lightly, arms relaxed at his sides. "Correct again."

"A failed heir."

Trafalgar tilted his head just a little, eyes half-lidded. "Not gonna argue."

"A pathetic, forgotten mistake."

He brought a hand to his chin, pretending to ponder. "Harsh, but accurate."

Zafira turned her head, hiding her mouth behind her fingers—her shoulders shaking slightly as a quiet snort escaped her.

Alfons clenched his jaw, pushing forward.

"You don't even belong at this Council."

Trafalgar gave a half-smile, gesturing lazily toward the crowd. "True. I was hoping no one would notice."

Her snort turned into a short laugh.

Alfons's expression twisted.

He had expected defensiveness. Rage. Maybe even begging. But Trafalgar's indifference—and Zafira's amusement—was like a slap to the face.

His pride snapped.

With a sharp motion, Alfons pulled off one of his gloves and threw it straight at Trafalgar's chest.

It hit him lightly and fell to the floor.

Trafalgar looked down at it... then back at Alfons.

"...What the hell was that?"

Zafira grinned. "That, dear Trafalgar, was a challenge. You've just been formally invited to a duel."

He blinked. "Wait, seriously?"

She nodded, fully enjoying this. "Quite seriously."

Trafalgar sighed, rubbing the bridge of his nose.

"Okay... and how do I politely decline this kind of invitation?"

Zafira glanced around the hall.

Dozens of eyes were watching. Nobles, guards, servants—even some other heirs had turned toward them.

"You don't," she said with a soft smile.

Trafalgar exhaled, his shoulders dropping.

'Fuck... why do you have to be a spoiled noble cliché? I just a quiet night... I guess my luck run out after two months.'