

Tyrant 220

Chapter 220: The One Who Raised Us

Trafalgar followed Cynthia through the narrow hallway, the wooden floor creaking under each step.

"The head of the orphanage?" he asked after a pause. "I thought that was Sister Luneia."

Cynthia shook her head. "No, she helps run things, but she didn't found it. The one who did is still here—Sister Alena. You'll meet her soon. She wanted to thank you... though you did everything indirectly."

Her voice carried a hint of sharpness, the same restrained annoyance he'd felt since they left the dining hall.

"—and," she added, "you put Barth in danger on the way."

Trafalgar groaned quietly. "You're still on that?"

She shot him a look over her shoulder. "Of course I am. I've always taken care of Barth. Finding out you dragged him into something dangerous wasn't exactly my favorite surprise."

"I already apologized," he said, raising his hands slightly. "I didn't force him into anything. I told him I needed help, and he volunteered. He wanted to, sort of."

Cynthia stopped halfway up the stairs and turned toward him. Her eyes softened, but her tone stayed firm. "That's what makes me angry. He trusts you too much."

Trafalgar's expression shifted—less defensive, more thoughtful. "Maybe that's not a bad thing."

"It is when that trust puts him at risk." She exhaled, then resumed climbing. "But... what's done is done. He got a new skill and some money out of it, so—thank you, I guess."

He smiled faintly. "See? Sounds like it turned out fine."

"Don't push your luck."

"I wasn't," he said with a mock-innocent shrug. "That's my natural charm."

"Mm-hmm." Cynthia didn't bother looking back, but he could hear the quiet amusement in her voice.

They reached the landing on the third floor. The corridor here was quieter, lined with doors leading to the children's rooms and a single one at the far end marked Office. Faint candlelight spilled from beneath it.

Trafalgar glanced around. "So this is where the boss lives?"

"She prefers 'caretaker,' " Cynthia replied. "And behave, please. She's kind, but she sees through people easily."

Trafalgar smirked, hands sliding into his pockets. "Sounds terrifying."

Cynthia gave a small, knowing smile. "You'll be fine. Just don't try to act like someone you're not."

'Easier said than done,' Trafalgar thought as they stopped before the door. 'I've been acting my whole second life.'

Cynthia raised her hand and knocked twice.

Tock, tock.

A calm, steady voice came from the other side. "You may come in."

Cynthia pushed the door open, and Trafalgar followed her inside.

The room was smaller than he expected — neat, modest, and brightened by the golden glow of an old mana lamp. Bookshelves lined the walls, stacked with records, handwritten letters, and children's drawings framed in uneven wood.

Behind the desk sat a woman who was clearly not human. Her skin was pale, her eyes crimson with faint warmth instead of malice, and two elegant black horns curved gently back from her temples. She looked refined, yet approachable — a strange blend of authority and kindness.

Cynthia's voice softened. "Sister Alena, this is Trafalgar du Morgain. He's the one I told you about."

The woman rose gracefully from her chair, smoothing the folds of her simple dark robe. "Cynthia! You've grown again, I see," she said with a warm smile before turning to Trafalgar. "And so this is the young man who's helped us without even stepping through our door."

Her tone wasn't mocking — just genuine curiosity. She extended both hands toward him.

Trafalgar hesitated for half a second, then took them. Her palms were cold but steady, her grip firm.

"I'm Sister Alena," she said. "Founder and caretaker of this orphanage. And you must be the famous Morgain heir."

Trafalgar gave a polite nod. "Just Trafalgar is fine. It's a pleasure to meet you, Sister Alena."

"The pleasure is mine," she replied, eyes glimmering faintly. "I wanted to thank you personally. The donation you sent through Bartholomew... it allowed us to repair the roof, buy new clothes, and restock food for months, perhaps years. You have no idea how much it helped."

He scratched his cheek awkwardly. "It wasn't really my doing. Barth handled everything."

Alena's smile deepened. "Yes, and he told me the same thing. But he also said you were the reason he could do it. So, I suppose I should thank you both."

Trafalgar lowered his gaze for a moment, unsure how to respond. 'Guess humility isn't that hard when the person in front of you actually means what they say.'

Alena gently released his hands and gestured for them to sit. "You know, I've seen many nobles over the years — some kind, others... less so. But it's rare to find one who gives without expecting recognition."

Trafalgar gave a faint smile. "Recognition's overrated. I've seen what people turn into when they crave it."

That earned a small, approving nod. "Spoken like someone older than his years."

Cynthia, sitting beside him, couldn't help but smile faintly. "That's Trafalgar for you — serious one moment, impossible the next."

Trafalgar shot her a sideways glance.

Alena laughed softly — a clear, soothing sound that seemed to lighten the whole room. "I can see why Barth and Cynthia trust you."

Trafalgar tilted his head slightly, unsure how to respond to that. "Trust me? That's a dangerous thing to do."

Alena smiled knowingly. "Dangerous, perhaps. But rare—and precious, nonetheless."

For a moment, silence settled between them. Only the faint rustle of paper filled the room as a soft breeze from the window stirred the curtains. Cynthia sat quietly beside them, her expression softer than usual, listening rather than interrupting.

Alena gestured toward the stack of papers on her desk. "We've been using the funds you sent to repair most of the main hall and replace the damaged beds. The rest will cover food and supplies. We don't get much help from the Council, only the bare minimum."

Trafalgar frowned slightly. "The Council of Velkaris can afford a dozen banquets a week but can't keep a roof over children's heads?"

Her smile turned bittersweet. "That's the way of the world. Power often looks downward only when it's convenient."

He leaned back slightly, arms crossed. "That's a polite way of saying they don't care."

Cynthia shot him a look, but Alena merely chuckled. "I admire your bluntness. You speak like someone who's lived it."

"Because I have," Trafalgar said quietly. His gaze drifted to the window, where the dim lanterns outside cast their soft glow across the street. "You mentioned powerful people, nobles... yeah, I've seen them. The ones who smile at dinner and tear each other apart afterward."

Alena watched him carefully. "And which one are you?"

He hesitated, then met her eyes. "Neither, I think and hope. I was born into their world, but I don't belong there."

'Well I'm a uni student truthfully, so I'm not lying.'

The words slipped out before he could stop them. Even Cynthia looked taken aback.

He continued, voice steady but distant. "The Morgain estate is big, full of servants, guards, and rooms no one uses. There's always food, warmth, gold—but not family. No one speaks unless it's to command or obey. Here, you have less of everything... and yet it feels fuller."

Cynthia's lips parted slightly, her usual composure cracking for a moment.

Trafalgar gave a faint, tired smile. "If I'm honest, I envy this place."

That made Alena pause. For a few seconds, she simply looked at him—really looked, as if weighing every word. Then she rose slowly and walked to the window.

"Do you know what makes this place special?" she asked softly, her back to them. "It's not the walls or the food. It's the people. Kindness given freely doesn't depend on status, only choice."

She turned back to him with a faint smile. "And you chose to help, without asking for anything. That tells me enough."

Alena clasped her hands in front of her desk again. "I'm glad you came today. It's easy to forget that even the powerful can feel alone."

Cynthia glanced sideways at him, her tone gentle but curious. "I didn't think someone like you could envy anyone, let alone us."

He smirked faintly. "Well, surprise. Turns out money doesn't buy peace of mind."

That made Alena laugh again, soft and sincere. "I'll remember that the next time the Council sends another 'generous' letter."

Alena's laughter softened into a smile. "You remind me of someone," she said gently. "Quiet at first, but always thinking, always watching. Bartholomew was the same when he was little — timid, shy, afraid to speak up unless Cynthia was beside him."

Cynthia's eyes softened. "He's still like that sometimes."

Alena nodded. "Yes... but he's grown. I'm glad he's found friends who help him take steps forward."

Her gaze lingered briefly on Trafalgar. "And I'm thankful one of them is you."

Trafalgar blinked, caught off guard by the sincerity. "You give me too much credit."

"Not at all," Alena said, shaking her head. "Some people lift others just by standing beside them. You seem to be one of those."

Then, after a pause, she straightened her robe and smiled.

Alena smiled warmly. "Well, I should go check on Barth. He's probably helping the little ones get to bed again — he never knows when to rest."

She turned to them both. "Would you like to come with me? I'm sure the children would be happy to see you again, Cynthia... and you too, Trafalgar."

Before Trafalgar could answer, Cynthia shook her head politely. "You go ahead, Sister Alena. There's something I want to show Trafalgar first."

Alena's gaze shifted between them, then softened into understanding. "Very well. Take your time, you two."

With that, she left the room, the door closing softly behind her.

For a few moments, silence lingered. The faint laughter of children echoed through the wooden halls below.

Trafalgar exhaled and leaned back against the desk. "So... what did you want to show me?" He raised an eyebrow, half curious, half cautious. "You're not planning to murder me for using your brother, right?"

Cynthia crossed her arms with a sigh that almost sounded like a laugh. "You really think I'd do that here?"

"Honestly? I wouldn't be surprised."

"Relax," she said, brushing a strand of white hair from her face. "I just wanted you to see what this place truly is. What we call home."