

Tyrant 226

Chapter 226: Questions and Curiosities

The five of them stepped through the grand double doors and into what could only be described as a palace of light.

A ceiling of transparent crystal arched high above, the dark ocean pressing against it like an endless sky. Shoals of glowing fish drifted overhead, scattering ripples of blue and silver across tables carved from white coral. The air smelled faintly of salt and mana.

Cynthia froze, her mouth slightly open. "This can't be real..."

Barth nodded quickly, though he looked almost scared to touch anything. "I-I've read about places like this, but... seeing it—"

Xavier gave a low whistle. "Well, it's not bad at all."

Trafalgar raised an eyebrow, scanning the chandeliers of pearl and the servants in flowing aqua robes. "I'll admit, this is quite impressive. How do they even breathe down here?"

Barth blinked, then straightened a little, his shyness fading beneath excitement. "Ah—well, it's because of the Mana Circulation Field," he said, voice rising slightly as he spoke faster. "It keeps the pressure balanced and constantly converts ambient mana into breathable air! The Myrrhvale family invented it centuries ago to protect their underwater settlements."

Zafira smiled. "Not bad, Barth. You really do know your history."

Barth's face turned pink. "O-oh, sorry... I didn't mean to lecture. I just—"

"No, keep going," Xavier interrupted with a grin. "You sound like the tour guide we never knew we needed."

Cynthia laughed softly, and even Trafalgar gave a small approving nod. "I'll give you that, Barth. You explain things better than most professors."

Barth ducked his head in embarrassment but couldn't hide the pleased look on his face.

A waiter approached, leading them to a long table by the window where the ocean shimmered like molten sapphire. As they sat, the soft hum of mana filled the air, and faint motes of light danced across the glass surface.

"Lord Trafalgar du Morgain, Lady Zafira du Zar'khael," he said with flawless poise. "And accompanying students—welcome. May I offer you our selection of beverages?"

He presented five translucent menus made of mana-film, each floating a few centimeters above the table's surface.

Trafalgar inclined his head slightly, his tone calm but polite. "Appreciated."

Cynthia and Barth looked visibly overwhelmed by the elegance of it all, while Xavier leaned back with a grin that didn't quite hide his curiosity.

Zafira accepted her menu with an effortless nod. "Thank you. I'll have the best wine you have."

The waiter turned to Trafalgar. "And for you, my lord?"

"A glass of crystalline water will do," he replied evenly.

The servant bowed again and moved on to take the others' orders before gliding away.

Barth whispered as soon as the waiter was out of earshot, eyes wide. "They really called you Lord Trafalgar..."

Trafalgar gave a faint, amused smile. "That's my name, isn't it?"

Cynthia elbowed him gently. "You could at least pretend that doesn't happen every day."

Zafira let out a quiet laugh. "He's used to it. Nobility has a way of dulling surprises."

Trafalgar rested an elbow on the table, gaze drifting to the ocean beyond. "They called you Lady too, you know?"

Their drinks arrived swiftly, served in crystal glasses that shimmered faintly with traces of mana. The liquid inside glowed faintly blue, matching the soft rhythm of the dome above.

Cynthia took a cautious sip and blinked. "It's sweet... but not too much. This is amazing."

"Agreed," Xavier said, already halfway through his own.

Zafira chuckled. "The wine is also very good, although I prefer the one my family makes; it's a bit stronger."

Trafalgar tapped his glass thoughtfully. "Hmm. Still... living down here all your life must be different. No sun, no wind, just this endless blue glow."

Barth, sitting up slightly, nodded. "Yes, but for the Myrrhvale people, this is normal. They don't see the ocean as confinement — they see it as protection. It's part of their culture."

Cynthia rested her chin on one hand. "Protection? From what?"

"From outsiders," Barth replied quietly. "Historically, the Myrrhvale were attacked by surface kingdoms that wanted their alchemy and water magic. So they built this dome, deep enough that no one could reach them without permission."

Zafira folded her hands elegantly. "Smart. Isolation became their shield."

Trafalgar's gaze lingered on the glowing barrier beyond the glass, watching a cluster of luminous fish drift by. "It's impressive, honestly. Strategically they also have a huge advantage because their race lives in the water. They have the perfect home for them."

Barth nodded quickly, encouraged by his tone. "Exactly! The Myrrhvale adapted perfectly to the sea. Their magic and biology evolved together — it's why they can live at such depths without issue."

Cynthia tilted her head. "So most of them aren't even fully human?"

"Right," Barth said, enthusiasm creeping into his voice. "Many are half-aquatic — like merfolk, naga, or siren descendants. The mana here strengthens them instead of crushing them. It's beautiful when you think about it."

Xavier grinned. "Look at you, Barth, sounding like a professor already."

Barth's cheeks flushed. "S-sorry, I didn't mean to ramble again—"

Trafalgar cut him off with a faint smile. "Don't. You're the only one here actually teaching us something useful."

That drew a laugh from Zafira and even a small one from Cynthia. The mood stayed light.

The laughter faded naturally as servers began placing dishes in front of them — plates of grilled sea fish, delicate rolls of green algae, and bowls of clear soup that shimmered faintly under the crystal lamps. The aromas were rich but unfamiliar, filled with salt and spices that seemed to come straight from the ocean itself.

Zafira swirled the last drops of her wine and lifted a hand slightly. "Another glass, please," she said softly, her tone calm but commanding. The waiter bowed and refilled it instantly before retreating.

Xavier let out a small chuckle. "You really live like royalty, huh?"

Zafira gave him a side glance, the faintest smirk on her lips. "I'm one."

Barth picked up his fork hesitantly, eyes darting between the others before he finally began eating. "It's... actually really good," he said, surprised. "Not as strong as I expected."

Cynthia nodded in agreement. "It tastes clean. Fresh. Not bad for underwater food."

Trafalgar leaned back slightly, resting one elbow on the table. "Barth, you've read about this place more than anyone here. What are their customs like? Anything we should avoid doing?"

Barth froze for a second at the attention but straightened, trying to sound confident. "Ah—well... the Myrrhvale value hierarchy and discipline. The higher your bloodline affinity, the higher your standing. Servants and commoners are expected to obey completely. It's all very... structured."

Cynthia frowned faintly. "You mean they still keep slaves."

Barth hesitated. "Technically... yes. It's common here. But it's not considered cruel — it's just part of their culture. Servants are raised into it from birth."

Xavier's smile thinned. "Still sounds cruel to me. Doesn't matter what name you give it."

Zafira took a quiet sip of wine before speaking. "Different worlds, different orders. In Lirantis, this system has existed for centuries. It's how their society functions."

Cynthia's voice sharpened slightly. "Doesn't make it right."

The table went silent for a moment.

Trafalgar broke it with a calm, almost indifferent tone. "It's not our world to fix."

That earned him a few looks — Xavier's brow furrowed, Cynthia's expression unreadable — but Trafalgar didn't elaborate. He simply picked up his fork again, as if the topic didn't warrant more discussion.

Zafira studied him quietly before turning back to her drink, her violet eyes thoughtful.

The conversation shifted soon after, the tension fading as they returned to lighter topics — the food, the ocean view, and the soft hum of the dome above them that never stopped.

Barth set down his glass and looked toward the others. "Professor Rhaldrin said we'll be visiting the Primordial Ruins first thing tomorrow morning," he said, excitement sneaking into his usually quiet voice. "They're supposed to be one of the oldest sites in the world — maybe even older than the Age of Formation!"

Trafalgar frowned. 'Age of Formation? What is that? I've never heard of anything like it in this world.'

Cynthia smiled. "I can tell you've been waiting for that since we got here."

Barth rubbed the back of his neck, embarrassed but pleased. "Maybe a little... But since we're free for the rest of the day, I thought we could go out now. There's a market district nearby—I wanted to buy something for the kids back home."

Cynthia nodded. "Let's do that before it gets crowded."

Xavier stretched, pushing his chair back with a groan. "You two enjoy the shopping trip. I'm going back to the room—need a proper nap before we go exploring ruins."

Trafalgar gave him a small smirk. "You and discipline don't usually mix."

"Trying something new," Xavier shot back with a grin.

Zafira set her empty glass on the table, the faint click drawing Trafalgar's attention. "And what about you?"

He shrugged. "No plans."

"In that case," she said smoothly, "come with me. Lyren invited us to join him for a drink. It would be rude to decline."

Trafalgar blinked once, expression unreadable. 'What a chore. Probably just another noble meet-and-greet because I'm a Morgain. But fine... it's expected.'

He gave a short nod. "Alright. Lead the way."

Barth stood, gathering his things. "Then it's settled. See you all later."

The group left the restaurant together, parting at the main hall: Barth and Cynthia heading toward the glowing market corridors, Xavier turning back toward the dorms, and Trafalgar following Zafira through the coral-lit streets toward wherever Lyren awaited.