

Tyrant 23

Chapter 23: Duel of Names

The air in the grand hall shifted.

Voices rose among nobles and guests.

"Did he just challenge him to a duel?"

"Isn't that Trafalgar du Morgain? The bastard one?"

"Didn't he fail to awaken his core for the last decade?"

"This'll be a disaster... again."

Trafalgar stood in place, lips slightly parted, eyes fixed on the white glove lying at his feet. A beat passed.

'Seriously? A duel? We're really doing this cliché? And of course it had to be this Blondie dickhead...'

With a slow exhale, he bent down and picked up the glove, holding it up between two fingers as if it were some foul-smelling fruit. He looked across the room at Alfons, then gave a tight nod.

"Fine. We'll duel."

That declaration seemed to ring louder than any trumpet. The crowd stirred. Gasps. Whispers. Eager eyes locked onto him like hawks circling a wounded hare.

Two powerful figures approached—one clad in a heavy black coat trimmed with silver, the other in a nobleman's golden attire marked with crimson patterns.

Valttair du Morgain stepped forward first, arms crossed, an amused smile on his severe face. Beside him, Lord Roderic au Vaelion—Alfons's father—stood tall and broad-shouldered. His hair was a darker shade of blond, slicked back, and his red eyes glowed with pride. In his early forties, perhaps, but his mana radiance was unmistakable. Even Trafalgar could feel the pressure emanating off him.

Valttair smirked. "It seems our sons wish to entertain us. Shall we make this more interesting?"

Roderic's lips curled upward. "Of course. Let's wager an item."

"Legendary grade," Valttair added without missing a beat.

Roderic didn't flinch. "Naturally."

Valttair turned, motioning toward one of the side corridors. "Follow me. The dueling chamber awaits."

Trafalgar followed, a dull throb forming behind his eyes. This wasn't part of the plan, he just wanted to chill after two months of training.

The dueling chamber was vast, circular, and lined with enchanted obsidian tiles that pulsed with a faint mana glow. Dozens of nobles watched from arched balconies, their hushed murmurs now turning to focused silence. At the far end, standing tall and sharp-eyed, was Lady Seraphine du Morgain, arms crossed, her expression unreadable.

Trafalgar entered behind his father, feeling the pressure of every gaze. His posture straightened on instinct.

"The rules are simple," he said. "The duel ends when one of you can no longer fight, yields, or is rendered unconscious. This is not to the death—though accidents will not be blamed."

He turned to the side. "Summon your items."

Trafalgar took a breath and extended his hand. A ripple of mana surrounded his hand as Maledicta materialized—its blade jagged, but lined with faint veins of navy blue, glowing softly with each pulse of mana.

Alfons scoffed as he raised his arm and conjured a sleek wand, carved from white wood and trimmed with golden symbols.

He looked Trafalgar's weapon up and down, then laughed aloud.

"What is that trash? It fits with a trash like you."

Trafalgar raised a brow, rotating Maledicta slightly for effect. "Thanks, is my sword. Don't you think it goes well with my eyes?"

Alfons's smirk dropped for half a second before he clenched his jaw and took position.

'There we go... A little ego shake goes a long way and now the icing on the cake.'

Trafalgar turned slightly, glancing at Valttair. "This doesn't seem fair, Father. I'm still at Origin Rank. In pure strength, I'm at a disadvantage."

Alfons clicked his tongue and grinned. "Don't worry. I'll limit myself to Origin Rank only. Wouldn't want this to end in ten seconds."

Trafalgar nodded. "Fine by me."

"Don't cry when you lose."

"I can say the same perhaps?"

Valttair raised his hand and sliced it downward.

"Begin."

Trafalgar advanced.

His stance changed in a blink—his feet glided into place with a sharp, fluid grace, arms following a pattern that seemed less like combat and more like a measured, ancient dance. His blade moved in rhythm with his breath, precise and intentional.

Valttair, watching from the edge, narrowed his eyes, and a smile appeared in his face.

'Hohoho, that movement... the Morgain Blade? If he learned that in a single day, then he lied to me about his talent... No—he might even have a talent like mine or higher...'

Above, Seraphine leaned forward ever so slightly, her golden eyes now locked on Trafalgar. Her lips tightened.

Meanwhile, Trafalgar could feel every eye in the room—judging, comparing, whispering.

'So much for laying low. Nothing's gone quietly since the first day. I guess it was foolish to expect peace while bearing the name of one of the Eight Great Families... I'll always have a spotlight, at this point I'll take advantage and leave a good impression, Valttair said to not embarrass him.'

Alfons moved first.

"[Blazing Arc]!" A whip of fire lashed toward Trafalgar's feet. He shifted to the side effortlessly, barely adjusting his stance—his cloak dancing with the movement.

'Predictable, after watching for two months the three-hundred soldiers daily this is child's play.'

"[Hydro Burst]!" A torrent of water surged from above. Trafalgar raised Maledicta with one hand, splitting the cascade in two. The blast soaked his shoulder, but he kept going.

Alfons frowned. His fingers clenched around his wand. "[Stone Spike]!" The earth beneath Trafalgar cracked—then burst upward with a jagged spear.

This time, Trafalgar didn't just dodge. He launched forward. His foot tapped the tip of the forming spike—then used it as leverage to spring ahead.

Alfons had no time to breathe.

Maledicta came down. Once. Twice. The first strike scraped against Alfons's barrier, sending sparks. The second shattered it.

Alfons stumbled back. "[Firebolt]!" Too slow.

Trafalgar was already behind him. The hilt of Maledicta slammed into Alfons's side. Then his ribs. Then his thigh.

Each strike landed with cold precision—not to kill, but to teach him of the difference, Trafalgar made it clear, if they were the same rank in reality this will be the difference of power.

Alfons gasped. He swung wildly—desperation taking over. Trafalgar stepped aside, dragging his blade lightly across Alfons's chest—not deep, but enough to tear cloth and pride.

"[Arc Slash]." A crescent wave of force exploded from his sword, stopping an inch from Alfons's neck.

The noble's wand slipped from his fingers and clattered to the ground.

Trafalgar was ready to continue, he might even engrave a little respect on that little head of his.

But Valttair clapped once. "Enough."

The chamber was silent. Dozens of gazes focused solely on the tip of Trafalgar's sword—now lowering slowly.

Valttair stepped forward, eyes flicking briefly toward the loser.

"You lost," he told Alfons.

A heavy silence hung in the air as Trafalgar lowered his sword. Alfons remained frozen, staring at the blade that had nearly touched his neck. Murmurs rippled through the crowd—some confused, others impressed.

Alfons took a shaky step back, sweat trailing down his temple. His wand trembled in his grip.

Descending from the upper rows with slow, composed steps came a tall man—broad-shouldered, blond like Alfons, with sharp red eyes and the aura of someone who had seen many battles.

Lord Roderic au Vaelion.

He studied Trafalgar for a moment, then let out a quiet chuckle.

"Well then. It seems your son has some skill after all, Valttair."

Valttair approached with a smirk. "I told you not to underestimate him."

Roderic reached into his coat and retrieved a small box. With a flick of his hand, he opened it to reveal a shimmering, silver ring glowing faintly with magical energy. He extended it toward Valttair.

"A deal is a deal. A legendary-grade item, as promised."

Valttair took it without hesitation. "It will be put to good use."

Some nobles clapped lightly. Others exchanged glances, as if reassessing Trafalgar altogether.

Valttair turned toward the group. "Now that this little show is over, I believe the Council meeting is about to begin."

Roderic nodded. "Let's go."

The two patriarchs left the hall together.

Trafalgar, meanwhile, exhaled deeply. His hands dropped to his sides as he turned toward the nearest exit. He didn't care for the whispers or the glances.

'I just wanted a quiet evening... Damn it. Can't even avoid clichés in this world, I also won because the idiot was confident and thought he could beat me if he limited his strength.'

He walked down a narrow corridor, boots echoing against polished stone, and pushed open the door at the end.

Trafalgar stepped onto the stone balcony, letting the cool breeze hit his face. The air was crisp and clear at this altitude, and the floating island offered a breathtaking view of the clouds drifting below, tinted orange by the setting sun.

He leaned against the railing, hands resting on the cold marble, his breath slowly steadying.

'I imagine Valttair knows something about my little lie, I imagine I will need to talk to him soon before the academy. Argh, what a pain, it is what it is, I wonder if that title of mine makes my life harder...'

He closed his eyes for a moment, letting the silence wash over him.

But he wasn't alone.

From the far end of the balcony, a quiet rustle of fabric drew his attention. Trafalgar turned his head.

A figure stood there—tall and poised, wrapped in a flowing black dress. A veil of the same color obscured her face, draped delicately over her head and shoulders. She looked as if she had been waiting, or simply watching.

Her presence felt... strange. Calm, yet unsettling.

The woman slowly turned to face him. Though he couldn't see her expression, something about the way she stood sent a chill down his spine.

Trafalgar blinked.

'...The hell is this now?'