

Tyrant 42

Chapter 42: The Duel

The tension in the air could be carved with a blade.

Trafalgar stepped forward, his eyes locked onto the one man he wanted dead more than anything else right now.

"You," he said coldly, pointing. "You're the referee."

The captain, a seasoned veteran in his fifties with short blond hair and sharp brown eyes, looked between him and Roland. After a moment, he gave a firm nod.

"So be it."

He turned to the soldiers around them, barking the order: "Clear the ground! A duel is about to commence!"

The courtyard burst into motion. Nearly three hundred soldiers—many still holding training weapons—quickly parted to form a wide ring. The snow crunched underfoot as boots shuffled back, leaving a perfect circle of open space between the two men.

Roland stood on one end, his expression was one of fear. He rolled his shoulder, adjusting the grip on his longsword. Opposite him stood Trafalgar, hands loose at his sides, eyes narrowed. Maledicta hadn't yet been summoned—but the silence of the weapon's absence was heavier than steel.

The captain glanced at Roland. "Ready?"

Roland nodded. "Yes."

Then to Trafalgar. "Young master?"

Trafalgar didn't speak. He just nodded once.

The captain raised his arm.

"Begin."

The word fell like a stone into a still lake.

Roland charged immediately, sword drawn, opting for raw aggression—his style honed by decades of training. His first strike came from overhead, fast and heavy.

CLANG!

A flash of silver-black steel.

Maledicta had appeared in Trafalgar's hand in the blink of an eye—materialized mid-swing to block the incoming blow. Sparks danced off the collision.

Trafalgar didn't move a step.

Instead, his wrist twisted slightly, redirecting the strike with mechanical precision. His counter came like a whisper—a rising slash aimed at Roland's arm.

Roland backed off in time, but the tip of the blade kissed his bicep, drawing blood.

A murmur swept through the crowd.

"What the—?"

"He's faster than before..."

Roland gritted his teeth and dashed in again, this time with a flurry of diagonal strikes. Trafalgar sidestepped one, parried another, pivoted away from the third. He moved with such efficiency it was unnatural—no wasted motion, no hesitation.

Inside his mind, patterns unfolded.

Trafalgar lunged, slicing a shallow cut across Roland's ribs before retreating again. Every step he took, every deflection, was the result of hours of silent observation—months of memorizing every soldier's footwork, swing tempo, body posture.

All catalogued. All analyzed. All his. Thanks to Sword Insight, also having a legendary ring and the Primordial Body was an amazing boost too.

A powerful downward slash came at him again. Trafalgar ducked to the side, rolled, and came up inside Roland's guard—too fast for the man to react.

"[Slash Arc]."

A sweeping horizontal cut exploded from Maledicta, trailing a ripple of dark-blue energy. It struck Roland square in the chest, throwing him backward with a heavy thud, the force sending him sliding through the snow.

Gasps rippled around them.

Blood splattered the pristine white ground.

Roland coughed, staggering to his feet, eyes wide. "What... the hell was that?"

Trafalgar didn't answer.

He simply raised Maledicta again, his breathing calm, his stance unchanged.

He hadn't moved a step.

But the soldiers watching all shared the same thought:

'This isn't the same Trafalgar we knew.'

The cold mountain wind couldn't explain the sweat dripping from Roland's brow.

Three slashes—one across the chest, one slicing through his left thigh, and a bleeding gash on his shoulder. His breath came ragged, his arms growing heavier with each exchange.

Across from him, Trafalgar advanced.

Slow. Silent. Dark blue eyes locked on him.

'What the hell is going on...?'

Roland gritted his teeth and charged again—this time with a faint step to the right followed by a spiraling slash aimed at the ribs. Fast. Sharp.

But Trafalgar had already moved.

A side-step. A flick of the wrist.

Steel kissed flesh.

Roland recoiled with a hiss as pain bloomed across his wrist. Blood trickled down to his palm, his grip faltering.

'I can't hit him. I... I can't even touch him.'

Still, Trafalgar said nothing. His expression was calm, almost cold. No anger or excitement in this situation.

Roland tried a series of jabs, rapid and unpredictable, hoping to find a gap.

Trafalgar parried the first.

Sidestepped the second.

The third—he punished, burying Maledicta into the crook of Roland's elbow with a crunch.

"AAAGH!"

Roland stumbled backward, dropping to one knee. His blade clattered to the ground, but he forced himself up, hand trembling as he retrieved it.

'This isn't normal... He's a lower core rank. He should be slower, weaker! How is he—?!'

The crowd of soldiers watched in silence now. The disbelief was universal.

Trafalgar walked forward again, measured steps, his coat fluttering behind him. He stopped five meters away.

Lifted his sword. One hand.

His voice cut the air.

"[Morgain's Requiem]."

A pulse of black mana surged from his body—cold, elegant, merciless.

Slash.

The first arc sliced the snow, a crescent of shadow flying outward with a howling hiss. Roland raised his blade, barely deflecting it.

Slash.

A rising curve carved up from the ground, slicing into his hip and spinning him around.

Slash.

A third wave slammed into his side, opening flesh just beneath his ribs. Blood splashed onto the frosted ground.

'How is it possible, years, decades of non-stop training to make a name for myself only for someone who only awakened his Mana Core a few months ago to do this to me? It's not fair... no... this isn't a duel anymore... it's an execution, my execution.'

Roland staggered.

Slash.

The fourth arc came low, sweeping his legs out from beneath him and sending him crashing to the ground. His weapon flew from his grasp.

He tried to crawl—one arm dragging uselessly.

Slash.

The fifth strike landed straight through his shoulder.

He screamed.

And lay still.

Trafalgar stepped forward slowly, Maledicta dripping crimson. He looked down at the man twitching at his feet—every joint bleeding.

Roland's voice was hoarse.

"P-please... mercy..."

Trafalgar's blade hovered.

But his thoughts were not clouded.

'Before the duel... this motherfucker said he didn't do it. That another person entered my room that night too, it's what Elira said...'

His gaze sharpened.

'Fuck, maybe I let emotions get the better of me. If I want to do everything right I must think clearly, it's the only way I can survive here. I could kill him right now, but he might still be useful, I need to know who this other guy was if I really want to undercover stuff.'

He leaned down, crouching beside Roland's broken body.

Whispered close to his ear.

"Tonight. Training hall. The one they leave open inside the castle."

His voice was ice.

"You better show."

Roland didn't answer—too busy holding in his breath. His blood soaked the snow beneath him.

Trafalgar rose without another word. He turned, facing the shocked crowd of soldiers.

The captain blinked out of his daze, then raised his hand.

"Winner... Trafalgar du Morgain!"

Chaos resumed. Several soldiers rushed toward Roland.

Trafalgar cleaned Maledicta against his coat and dismissed it into thin air. He walked past the commotion without a glance.

Down the path, he crossed eyes briefly with Elira and the healer—both having rushed out after the noise.

He didn't say a word.

Elira smirked, tilting her head.

'He really went that far... hihhi. This just got interesting.'