

Tyrant 55

Chapter 55: Wings Over Ice

Trafalgar wiped the blood from his nose with the back of his glove.

The cold still stung, but it was nothing compared to the pounding inside his skull. The fight had lasted less than a minute. A brutal clash of forces far beyond his level. If Mordrek hadn't arrived...

'That hunter would've killed me without breaking a sweat.'

He spat to the side, the snow tinting red for a moment.

A shadow stepped closer behind him.

"Hey, bastard. What was your name again?"

Trafalgar didn't turn around. He recognized the voice—calm, amused, and just a little smug.

"Trafalgar," he said quietly. Then, glancing over his shoulder, "You're Valtair's little brother, right?"

Mordrek froze mid-step.

A vein popped at his temple.

He walked over slowly and flicked Trafalgar's forehead with one sharp finger.

Flick!

"—Agh!"

"Don't call me that," Mordrek said, expression flat. "I've got a name, bastard. It's Mordrek."

He folded his arms.

"Your dear father sent me here to keep your ass alive. Personal request. I figured I'd watch how you handled yourself for a bit—see if the recent stories were worth anything. Not bad with the mercs earlier. Poison, clever. If you hadn't used that trick, I'd have had to step in earlier."

He tilted his head slightly, looking down at Trafalgar with something almost resembling approval.

"But against that soldier from Seraphine? Yeah, you had no chance. That guy was playing with you."

Trafalgar looked away, embarrassed. His fingers curled into fists in the snow.

Mordrek chuckled.

"Still, you didn't disappoint. You showed more guts than half the brats in this family. Only Spark-level, huh? Looks like I won't be bored this month with you around."

They started walking—slowly, heading in the direction where Trafalgar had tossed his bags earlier in his desperate run.

Trafalgar glanced at him sideways.

"Did Father really send you?"

Mordrek nodded, hands behind his head now.

"Yeah. He figured someone would try to kill you—either someone from outside, like Malakar sniffing around the mines... or someone from inside. Which," he paused, glancing at Trafalgar, "already happened, huh?"

Trafalgar's throat tightened.

'So it wasn't just a coincidence...'

Mordrek kept walking, snow crunching beneath his boots.

"Now I'm curious how Valttair will react. Someone tried to off his ninth son—after he started being useful. Not gonna be happy."

"Even if it's his first wife?"

Mordrek snorted.

"Yeah. Even if it's that viper Seraphine. I told him decades ago—he had better choices. The other three wives have actual brains. But nooo, he had to marry the dangerous one."

He rolled his eyes.

"Wonder what he'll do to her now that he knows."

They walked in silence a moment longer. The wind had picked up again—soft flakes brushing against their cloaks.

Far ahead, the black corpse of Trafalgar's horse came into view.

They stopped a few steps from the horse's carcass.

Its black fur was stiff with frost, legs twisted awkwardly beneath the weight of its collapsed body. What remained of its head was a mangled mess of blood and shattered bone—blown apart by one of the hunter's arrows. Beside it, Trafalgar's two bags were half-buried in snow, right where he'd thrown them in his desperate escape.

"Grab your stuff," Mordrek said, casually nudging the corpse with his boot. "We'll reach the city before nightfall."

Trafalgar had just fastened the last buckle on his second bag when he felt it.

The wind changed—colder, sharper. The treetops bent slightly to one side as a low, growing hum rolled through the forest.

WHUMP. WHUMP. WHUMP.

Trafalgar's eyes shot upward.

A massive shape pierced the clouds above, wings stretched wide as it began its descent. The force of its arrival sent flurries flying in every direction. A gray blur, almost draconic in silhouette, plummeted like a falling shadow toward the clearing.

Trafalgar's instincts flared.

Without thinking, he raised his right hand.

Maledicta materialized in his grip, humming softly with mana as he shifted into a guarded stance.

The wyvern landed a split second later with a quake-like thud, its claws carving into the snow as it folded its wings with a rustling snap. Its slate-gray scales shimmered in the dim light, and its long tail coiled behind it like a living whip.

Its glowing eyes locked onto the horse's mangled corpse—and it pounced without hesitation.

CHOMP.

A wet, meaty sound followed. Flesh tore. Bones cracked.

Trafalgar's grip on the hilt tightened.

Mordrek didn't even blink.

"Relax, kid," he said casually, walking past him toward the beast. "That's my ride."

Trafalgar blinked. "...Your what?"

Mordrek turned with a grin. "Transportation. Mount. Airborne death machine. Whatever you wanna call it."

He gestured to the wyvern as it devoured what remained of the horse's body.

"Picked him up during a mission a few years back. He's not as big as Valttair's monster, but he flies faster and bites harder. Good boy."

Trafalgar lowered Maledicta slowly, then dispelled it with a quiet exhale. The weight in his hand vanished.

"You could've warned me first."

"And ruin the fun? Please." Mordrek inspected the wyvern's saddle harness while speaking. "Anyway, the Gate we're heading to links straight to Velkaris. It's in Morgain territory—close enough to make it by evening if the wind's good."

"Didn't know that," Trafalgar muttered.

Mordrek paused, glancing over his shoulder. "Seriously? You really never left the castle?"

Trafalgar shrugged. "Training. Surveillance. You know the drill."

'Not like I got to choose how Trafalgar spent his childhood...'

Mordrek chuckled. "Damn. You're gonna hate how big the world actually is."

The wyvern stepped away from the now-headless horse, blood dripping from its jaws. It let out a deep growl of satisfaction, stretching its wings again.

"Alright, saddle up," Mordrek said, motioning toward the beast. "And strap in tight. He doesn't slow down for passengers. Also—put on something warm. That altitude wind will rip your skin off."

Trafalgar opened his bag, pulled out a heavy fur-lined cloak, and threw it over his shoulders. He climbed onto the seat behind Mordrek, fastening the thick leather straps around his waist and chest.

"You sure this thing won't toss me mid-flight?"

"Only if you keep talking that much," Mordrek said with a smirk, climbing up front.

The wyvern crouched low—then launched skyward with a roar, wings slicing through the air like blades.

The wyvern climbed swiftly, wings slicing through the wind with each beat. Within seconds, they had cleared the tree line and were rising toward the snow-capped peaks.

Trafalgar gripped the side handles tightly, his fingers numb even beneath the gloves. The cold bit at his face despite the thick cloak. The higher they climbed, the thinner the air became, but Mordrek didn't slow down.

Below, the forest spread like a shattered quilt—trees splintered from arrow blasts, entire patches scorched black from Mordrek's final technique.

Trafalgar leaned slightly to the side, looking down at the aftermath.

'Those were just the remains of a warm-up. If he hadn't stepped in... I'd be dead.'

The wyvern tilted forward—and then surged.

A sudden drop in altitude came first, followed by a gut-wrenching acceleration as the creature launched through the mountain pass like a living missile. The wind screamed past them, and Trafalgar's breath caught in his throat.

He hunched lower, clutching the saddle straps tighter.

'Fast. Way faster than any horse.'

Snow blasted across his vision, blurring the edges of the peaks. The entire world became a rush of white, gray, and shadow.

'Valttair could've did something earlier. Could've avoided this whole thing... but he let it happen. Just to see how far I'd make it on my own.'

His jaw clenched.

'He enjoys pushing me. Watching. Measuring every step. And now that I've awakened, I'm no longer disposable—I'm valuable. That makes more interesting to test... He is truly a motherfucker.'

The wind shifted again.

The wyvern adjusted course, gliding now across a long stretch of sky. Below, small clusters of villages dotted the base of the cliffs. The Morgain lands stretched endlessly in every direction.

Trafalgar let out a slow breath, steam curling from his lips.

'Seraphine's move failed. But will he actually do something about it?'

He doubted it would be direct.

'I'll deal with her myself... someday.'

His hand moved instinctively and in her appeared an item, fingers brushing over a small orb.

[Item – Shadowlink Echo, Rank - Rare]

Description: A compact mana-infused node capable of recording and transmitting encrypted voice messages over long distances. Requires a small infusion of mana to activate.

Trafalgar focused slightly—just enough to feel the mana core hum faintly in response.

'Once we land and I get some rest... I'll send a message to Caelum. Let him know I'm alive. Let him know Mordrek's with me. That should keep things calm for now.'

The clouds broke for a moment.

A shaft of sunlight pierced through, casting long golden rays across the landscape ahead.

Trafalgar exhaled again, quieter this time.

'A month left before the academy begins. That's long enough to recover, train, and plan.'

The wyvern let out a guttural cry—and soared into the open sky, vanishing into the clouds.