Tyrant 55





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.

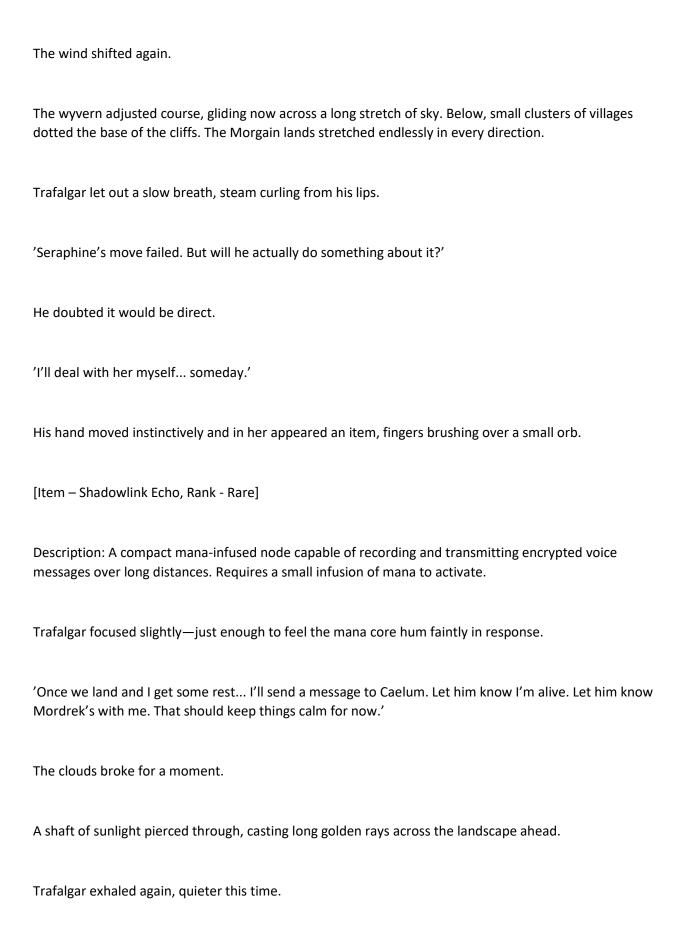


"Didn't know that," Trafalgar muttered. Mordrek paused, glancing over his shoulder. "Seriously? You really never left the castle?" Trafalgar shrugged. "Training. Surveillance. You know the drill." 'Not like I got to choose how Trafalgar spent his childhood...' Mordrek chuckled. "Damn. You're gonna hate 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.'

'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.'

His jaw clenched.



'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.