

Tyrant 56

Chapter 56: The Gatekeeper's Domain

In the distance, nestled between rolling hills and scattered pine forests, a city rose from the snow like a jagged crown. Its rooftops shimmered beneath a soft winter sun, thick plumes of steam curling up from various towers and forges. The heavy mountain ranges of Morgain were far behind them now, replaced by plains dusted in white and patches of visible stone roads.

Trafalgar adjusted the fur-lined cloak tighter around his shoulders.

"Is that it? Have we arrived?"

Mordrek, seated in front of him atop the wyvern's saddle, gave a nod.

"Almost. That's Euclid—my territory. My city. I control the Gate to Velkaris."

Trafalgar raised an eyebrow. "You have an entire city to yourself?"

"I'm a Morgain," Mordrek replied with a snort. "Of course I own something. It comes with the name."

Trafalgar blinked once, then nodded. "...Fair enough."

The wyvern circled once, wind howling past their ears as it dipped lower. Below them was a sprawling villa with sharp spires and open gardens—a private estate nestled near the edge of the city. The manor's stone walls gleamed with polished sigils, and runed braziers lined the path toward the landing courtyard.

"Hold on tight. We're landing soon."

Trafalgar gripped the saddle handles firmly.

The wyvern beat its wings hard and began its descent. Within seconds, the beast landed with a thunderous impact in the center of the garden, snow scattering like mist as its claws dug into the frosted ground.

Mordrek hopped down effortlessly, his boots crunching against gravel.

"Let's go," he said, stretching. "You don't have to head to the academy just yet. After you pass through the Gate, you'll appear in Velkaris' central hub. From there, you'll take the steam train—mana-powered, smooth ride—to the academy gates. But that can wait."

Trafalgar jumped down behind him. "How long do I stay here, then?"

"Three weeks with me. The last one I'll let you go early to make sure you arrive on time."

'Why...' Trafalgar narrowed his eyes. "Why keep me here at all?"

Mordrek cracked his neck. "Because you're interesting. And because you'll help me kill my boredom."

'That doesn't sound reassuring at all.'

"And by that, you mean...?"

"I'm going to train you."

Trafalgar frowned. "Lysandra already trained me."

Mordrek clicked his tongue. "Don't start dodging. Trust me—it'll be good for you. Painful? Probably. But fun, too."

Trafalgar didn't reply immediately. His head ached just from remembering what it felt like watching Mordrek fight. The sheer pressure, the backlash of Sword Insight... it wasn't anything like watching

Lysandra spar against a few hundred soldiers. This pain had only ever matched one other moment—when Valtair split apart that thirty-meter monster with a single blow.

He swallowed hard.

Mordrek stepped forward and pushed open the villa's large door with ease.

"Come on, bastard. Welcome to my home."

Trafalgar followed him inside without another word.

The interior of the villa was warmer than expected.

Mana-powered lanterns floated near the ceiling, casting a soft amber glow across the stone walls. The halls were wide, clean, and tastefully decorated—fur-lined runners, banners with a dark silver crest, and polished armor stands placed every dozen meters. It wasn't extravagant, but everything exuded precision, strength, and control.

Mordrek led the way with practiced ease, his long coat swaying behind him.

"You've got a bath waiting for you. Leave your things with the maids and follow them. They'll get you cleaned up and properly dressed for dinner."

Trafalgar furrowed his brow. "Why are you treating me like this? Wouldn't it make more sense to despise me? Like everyone else in that house?"

Mordrek stopped walking.

He turned slightly, enough to look back over his shoulder.

"As I told you—I find you interesting. And unlike the rest of that rotten castle, I left that place when I turned eighteen. Gave my territory to capable hands and went out to see the world."

He smiled faintly, but there was steel behind it.

"I'm not like the others. I don't pretend to know someone just because of blood. I meet people. Then I decide what they're worth."

He resumed walking. "So far, you're not garbage. That already puts you ahead of most."

Trafalgar didn't respond.

They reached a side corridor, where three women waited in a line—two humans and one elven maid, all dressed in matching black uniforms trimmed with silver.

The elven maid stepped forward gracefully and curtsied. Her silver hair was tied into a braid, and her sharp blue eyes studied Trafalgar with gentle curiosity.

"Young master. We've prepared your quarters and bath. If you'll allow us, we'll take your belongings."

Trafalgar hesitated briefly, then handed over both bags. The elf took them with ease and bowed slightly.

"Thank you."

"It's our duty, young master," one of the human maids replied politely.

"Please, allow us to assist with anything you need," said the second, already turning to lead him forward.

"Your bath is ready," added the elven maid with a soft voice. "If you require help washing, we're trained to assist—just let us know."

Trafalgar blinked. "...I see. Thank you, but I'd rather relax alone this time."

The three bowed again in perfect unison.

"Of course. Once you're finished, we'll help you dress and escort you to Lord Mordrek's dining hall."

"Sounds good. See you in a bit, then."

He followed them into a side wing of the manor. The room they brought him to was spacious, warm, and quiet. A faint trace of lavender hung in the air.

As the maids bowed once more and took their leave, Trafalgar stood at the center of his new room—luxurious, yes, but not gaudy. Everything felt calm. Prepared.

He exhaled slowly and turned toward the door leading to the private bath.

The bath was carved from dark stone, polished smooth and faintly warm to the touch. Steam drifted lazily across the surface of the water, infused with faint traces of herbal essence. A mana-lantern floated near the ceiling, casting dim golden light through the mist.

Trafalgar slipped into the bath slowly, wincing as the heat reached the bruises under his skin. The pain faded quickly into comfort.

He leaned back, exhaling.

Then, with a flick of his wrist, he summoned the item into his palm.

[Item – Shadowlink Echo, Rank - Rare]

The orb pulsed gently in his hand, flickering with silver light.

Trafalgar pressed two fingers to it and focused a trickle of mana into the core.

"Caelum," he began, voice low but steady. "When I said I'd handled the situation... I didn't mean the soldier. That one nearly killed me."

He paused for a breath.

"My uncle—Mordrek—showed up and dealt with him. Said Father sent him, though he never told anyone. Apparently, he's been watching me from a distance the whole time. Figures."

Trafalgar tapped the orb again, letting it pulse as the message sealed.

"Mordrek says he'll train me for the next few weeks before I head to the academy. Doesn't seem like a bad person... but I'll keep my guard up. Let me know if anything happens back home."

The message disappeared into the orb with a soft pulse.

He didn't even have time to relax before the response came.

Trafalgar smirked faintly.

'Quick as always. I like that.'

He poured a small stream of mana into the item again.

The orb glowed.

Caelum's voice echoed through the bath—calm, clear, efficient.

"Lord Valtair already acted regarding his wife. He gave her a clear warning long ago not to touch you. She broke that. The consequences... weren't pretty. But due to her position as First Wife, he couldn't do much."

Trafalgar's brows furrowed slightly.

"Mayla is still in a coma," Caelum continued, "but my clone remains with her. There's been no change. Nothing to worry about on that front."

A pause.

"As for Lord Mordrek—yes, he's an unusual one. Tried to run away from the family at sixteen but failed. Succeeded at eighteen, just after being forced into marriage. Took his wife and vanished."

The message ended with a small chime.

Trafalgar leaned deeper into the water, his body finally starting to relax, muscles unwinding one by one. The heat worked into his skin, washing away grime, sweat, and blood.

He closed his eyes.

'So Mordrek really is someone different...'

The memory of the battle flashed behind his eyes—the sheer speed, the pressure, the unbearable headache Sword Insight had triggered.

'It'll probably feel like my head is exploding again when he starts training me... But if I want to improve quickly, I'll need that pain. He's way beyond my current level of comprehension. But that's exactly why I need to push through.'

The bathwater rippled gently as he sat up and began washing himself.

Clean, focused, and oddly calm, Trafalgar stood, wrapped a towel around his waist, and walked back into the room. He approached the mirror near the dresser and began tying his long black hair into a familiar low ponytail.

Trafalgar stepped out of the bathroom, steam still clinging to his skin. A white towel hung loosely around his waist, his dark hair now tied neatly behind his head.

He looked around.

No clothes.

"...Huh."

He walked to the door and opened it.

Standing just outside, perfectly poised, was the elven maid.

She smiled softly.

"Are you ready, young master?"

"Yes, though... there weren't any clothes prepared."

The elven maid bowed slightly. "Forgive us. They're on the way."

Trafalgar nodded. "Alright."

He stepped back inside and sat on the edge of the bed, towel still secured. A few minutes passed before the door opened gently.

"With your permission," came a soft chorus.

All three maids entered—two humans and the elf—carrying folded garments atop silver trays.

The outfit they brought was dignified: a noble ensemble of navy blue and black, tailored to complement Trafalgar's pale skin, dark hair, and deep blue eyes. High collar. Fitted sleeves. Silver embroidery.

"Excuse us," said one of the human maids, stepping forward.

Another unfastened his towel.

Trafalgar stood still.

He didn't flinch—but for a split second, a strange tension stirred in the back of his mind.

'This version of me doesn't mind. Honestly, any guy would've dreamed of this.'

His posture was calm. His expression composed.

But somewhere, buried under layers of new instinct and rising confidence, a faint memory still pulsed.

'But the one before me... the original Trafalgar—he remembers the sexual abuse Rivena did.'

But the new Trafalgar—the one who stood here, bathed in light, watched by three women—wasn't trembling.

The elven maid's eyes lingered for a moment longer than the others. Her gaze lowered—then quickly flicked away with a faint tint of red in her cheeks.

"...Young master," she said in a near-whisper. "If you ever require assistance... with this... please don't hesitate to call for me."

Trafalgar blinked once.

Her voice was sincere.

Still, the words tightened something in his chest.

He forced a small smile, voice calm.

"If I ever feel like it... I'll let you know."

'I don't think I have time for relations right now, first I need to be stronger and get answers, when I have them maybe I could relax more.'

She nodded once, flustered but composed, and resumed helping him dress.

Piece by piece, the outfit came together—elegant, noble, dignified. Buttons fastened, cuffs aligned, cloak draped. The transformation was seamless.

Once finished, one of the human maids stepped forward and gestured toward the door.

"If you're ready, young master, I'll escort you to Lord Mordrek. Dinner is being served."

Trafalgar glanced in the mirror once.

Dark hair. Deep eyes. Perfect collar.

"Let's go."

He followed the maid out of the room, the door closing gently behind him.

The other two remained behind, silently tidying up the space.