

Tyrant 58

Chapter 58: Steel in the Snow

The sun was barely up.

Soft, pale light filtered through the frosted edges of the window, casting silver streaks across the wooden floor. A thin fog still clung to the outside glass.

Trafalgar opened his eyes slowly.

For a moment, he simply lay there—arms behind his head, gaze on the ceiling, breathing steady.

'That was... good sleep.'

He rolled onto his side, then pushed himself up with a small exhale.

'It's been a long time since I've felt this relaxed.'

He swung his legs off the side of the bed and sat for a second, letting his body wake up fully. Then, without hesitation, he moved to dress—dark training trousers, a fitted tunic, boots laced tight. The clothes were simple, but sturdy.

He tied his hair back into a loose, low tail.

Just as he fastened the last strap on his bracer, a quiet knock came from the door.

He stood and opened it.

Sylis was waiting outside, already dressed in dark combat wear. Her scarf hung loosely around her neck, and a faint breath of cold mist escaped her lips as she looked him over with neutral eyes.

She didn't say anything.

Neither did he.

Trafalgar stepped outside, shutting the door behind him with a quiet click, and followed her down the hall.

The training courtyard shimmered beneath a thin layer of frost.

It wasn't a grand battlefield or a polished arena—just a flat expanse of stone behind the villa, circled by leafless trees and low walls. Beyond them, the snow-covered rooftops of Euclid peeked through the mist.

Trafalgar and Syllis stood across from each other, both holding mana-reinforced practice swords. Blunt, but heavy—and painful enough to bruise pride and skin alike.

Mordrek sat off to the side on a stone bench, one leg crossed casually over the other.

"Start whenever," he said, voice steady, unreadable.

Syllis moved first.

A clean thrust.

Trafalgar tilted his blade and knocked it aside, pivoting on his back foot. His return swing came in low, aiming for her ribs—but Syllis spun fluidly, dodging with practiced ease. Her cloak flared around her as she countered with a high strike.

For the first few exchanges, Trafalgar stayed on the defensive—silent, calculating.

Her form was solid. Disciplined. But a little too rigid.

He waited until she lunged again—then swept her blade away in a sharp parry, twisting past her shoulder with speed that caught her off guard.

Their swords clashed, echoed by a soft crackle of mana. Frost from the courtyard broke beneath their shifting feet. The cold air steamed faintly from their bodies, warming under effort.

Sylis gritted her teeth. "You're better than you look."

Trafalgar didn't answer.

He pressed forward—two strikes, one feint, then a sweeping slash meant to test her stance. She barely caught it.

Mordrek chuckled quietly from the bench. "Not bad, kid."

Trafalgar shifted his stance, letting Sylis circle.

From the very first exchange, Sword Insight had already activated.

A quiet throb pulsed behind his eyes—not overwhelming, but present. It was always there when watching someone wield a sword. A subtle hum in the back of his mind, parsing her footwork, analyzing her balance, breaking down every motion.

But the pain wasn't sharp. Not like before.

'Her form is decent... but it lacks precision. That's why it doesn't hurt much.'

Each clash sent a muted vibration through his skull.

Unlike the time he'd watched Valtair. Or the time Mordrek had gone all out.

This... he could endure.

He let Syllis press the offensive again, eyes narrowing as Sword Insight continued to map her style in real time—block, pivot, open stance, overextension. Her foundation was there, but her instincts were still green. Too much weight on the front foot. Too slow on recovery.

He moved through the flow with growing calm.

Like a wolf watching a younger hunter misstep.

He let her strike again.

A diagonal slash aimed at his shoulder—predictable. He parried with minimal movement, tilting his blade just enough to deflect it and step inside her guard.

Syllis gritted her teeth and retreated two steps, eyes flashing with frustration.

"You're toying with me," she said, breath quickening.

"I'm analyzing you," Trafalgar replied calmly, sword still held at shoulder height.

'She relies too much on momentum. One sharp feint and she'd be wide open.'

Syllis lunged forward with a renewed burst of speed. Her blade came low this time, a sweeping cut meant to trip or disorient.

Trafalgar stepped over it smoothly and countered with a clean thrust—not meant to strike, just to test her reaction.

She barely dodged it.

From the sidelines, Mordrek chuckled softly. "Not bad, boy."

Sylis was already charging again.

Their blades clashed repeatedly in a quick succession of strikes—parry, cut, parry, retreat. The tempo was hers, but the precision was his.

Every movement of hers was readable.

Every angle—predictable.

Trafalgar began pressing forward.

Sylis's eyes widened. She hadn't expected him to switch to offense.

One strike came close to her shoulder. Another grazed her waist. He wasn't trying to win—he was proving a point.

That's when Mordrek stood.

And took a single step forward like that's what he would do in that moment in he was Trafalgar.

He didn't speak.

But that one step sent Sword Insight surging inside Trafalgar like a piercing migraine. His knees buckled slightly, and he stumbled back, barely keeping his guard up.

"Shit—" he whispered under his breath, blinking hard.

The room spun for half a second.

Sylis saw the opening and lunged.

A clean hit—blunt, controlled, and aimed at his chest. Trafalgar took it and fell to one knee, sword still gripped tightly in his hand.

"Match over," Mordrek called.

Sylis lowered her blade, panting slightly.

Trafalgar exhaled through clenched teeth, raising his eyes.

"I lost."

Mordrek approached with a grin. "You lost in strength. Not in form."

Sylis frowned. "He was reading me like a book. What was that?"

"I imagine it's his talent, you see my dear daughter, the world is not fair," Mordrek said, folding his arms. "Tomorrow, we start serious drills."

Trafalgar nodded, still kneeling.

His mind, however, was already racing.

'Sword Insight... if just his presence can trigger this much pain, then what'll happen when I face someone who fights like him?'

He pushed himself to his feet.

"I'm ready."

The sun had risen higher, casting a pale gold hue over the city of Euclid. Snow still blanketed the rooftops and streets, but the paths were mostly cleared—soft, crunchy underfoot rather than slippery.

Trafalgar walked with his hands in his coat pockets, the air nipping at his face. Sylis strode beside him, a few steps ahead, scarf pulled tight around her neck. Neither spoke at first.

The city had a quiet rhythm to it—less chaotic than the capital, more grounded. Lanterns floated overhead, flickering gently with contained mana, casting warm glows on shop signs and stone alleys. Children ran past with snowballs, their laughter distant and harmless.

Trafalgar took it all in with steady eyes.

'Peaceful.'

Sylis slowed as they approached the door of the library.

"I still don't get why you care about the primordial bloodline."

Trafalgar kept his gaze forward.

"It just sounds interesting," he replied flatly. "I figured I should know more about it."

She glanced sideways at him, skeptical.

"You're weird."

"Thanks," he muttered without missing a beat.

They stood in silence for a few seconds more as snowflakes began to drift again—quiet and slow, settling over rooftops and shoulders alike.

Without another word, Syllis stepped forward and pushed the door open.

Trafalgar followed her inside, the warmth of candlelight and old parchment wrapping around him like a faint, distant memory.

'Step by step. That's how I'll figure it out.'