

Tyrant 80

Chapter 80: Offers on the Table

Trafalgar stepped onto the familiar street, his eyes settling on the small but sturdy building where Marella and Arden ran their local. The late afternoon sun cast long shadows across the cobblestones, giving the place an oddly calm atmosphere despite the tension lingering from his last visit.

Pushing the door open, he found Marella wiping down a table near the front. Her eyes lifted, and recognition lit her expression.

"Good afternoon, Trafalgar."

"Good afternoon."

"So, it's true you'd come back," she said, a faint smile on her lips. "And it seems last time didn't scare you off."

"That's right," he replied evenly. "In fact, I'm a little concerned for you both, and I'd like to help with your situation."

Her brow arched. "And how exactly do you plan on helping us, Trafalgar?"

"I want to buy your shop," he said plainly. "If it's under my family name, Lucien won't be able to touch it."

Her eyes narrowed slightly. "Lucien? You even know his name."

"I do. Let's just say I happened to run into him," Trafalgar continued. "I'd rather make you an offer before he does. You'd benefit from the deal—I'd only take a small percentage of the profits. In return, I want information."

Her expression tightened. "Information?"

"Last time I was here, Arden took that group of three aside for a private talk. It wasn't hard to put two and two together."

Marella fell silent, her gaze fixed on him as if weighing each word. After a pause, she spoke. "The shop isn't for sale, no matter the price. We've been here for over five decades, and it's precious to us."

'I figured as much,' Trafalgar thought, though he didn't let the disappointment show. 'Not the exact number of years, but I knew they are way older than they looked in the first game.'

"And besides," Marella added, "this isn't something I can decide without my husband."

"I can wait for him," Trafalgar said with a shrug. "No problem. In the meantime, I'll take your food recommendation this time."

Her lips curved slightly. "Alright, I'll prepare today's special. And don't worry about paying—the gold coin you left yesterday is enough for you to eat here as many times as you like without charge."

As she moved toward the kitchen, Trafalgar leaned back in his seat. 'Looks like buying it outright isn't an option... which means things just got more complicated. I have no idea how far Lucien will go, but anyone running casinos and brothels isn't short on resources.'

The door to the shop swung open, and Arden stepped inside carrying several paper-wrapped bundles in both arms. From the way he moved, they weren't heavy—but there were enough of them to make it awkward.

He set them down on the floor with a quiet grunt. "Huf."

Trafalgar pushed himself up from his chair. "Need a hand?"

Arden blinked at him in surprise. "The Morgain boy, here again? I thought what happened last time would've scared you off."

"I've seen worse," Trafalgar replied simply.

A faint smirk touched Arden's face. "Well, enjoy the food. My wife's cooking is the best."

Moments later, Marella emerged from the kitchen, carrying a plate of steaming meat. The aroma was rich and savory, far more appetizing than the demonic cuisine Trafalgar had been forced to endure elsewhere. She set it on the table where Trafalgar had been sitting.

"Perfect timing," he said, glancing at Arden. "Actually, I was waiting for you. There's something I wanted to discuss—something that could help you both. I mentioned it to your wife already, but she said she couldn't decide without you."

Arden gestured toward a table in the corner. "Alright. Let's sit down, then."

They took their seats, Marella placing the plate in front of Trafalgar before sitting beside her husband.

"So," Arden said, "what is it you want?"

Trafalgar didn't waste time. "I'll get straight to the point—just like I told Marella, I want to buy this place. I'm not asking you to close it. In fact, I'd like to use it for my own purposes, and I won't lie about that. I know this isn't just a shop—it's also a hub for information, and a place where adventurers and mercenaries pick up contracts. The storefront is just the cover. If it's under a Morgain name, Lucien won't be able to touch it, no matter how much he wants to."

Arden leaned back slightly, eyebrows raised. "Well now... that's impressive. I don't know how you gathered that much information, especially when only a select few know the truth. And it seems you've met the man who came here last time."

"So? Did I convince you?" Trafalgar asked.

Arden glanced at Marella, then shook his head. "Sorry, but my answer's the same as hers. I can't do it."

Trafalgar leaned back in his chair, letting out a quiet breath. "I see... nothing to be done, then. In that case, let me give you some piece of information—Lucien is planning to make a move soon. I don't know the details, but it's coming. Be careful."

Arden's gaze sharpened. "How do you know that?"

"Ran into him at the casino," Trafalgar said casually. "Bit of small talk, and he let a few things slip."

'If I tell them the truth right away, they won't suspect me later. Earning their trust now is the smarter play.'

Marella's eyes narrowed slightly, studying him. "I see... thank you for letting us know, though we've been expecting something like this for a while."

Trafalgar tilted his head. "Any reason why he wants this place so badly?"

"Profit and influence," Arden replied without hesitation. "That's what men like him are after. This shop might look small, but it's the only one in this alley—and it's right next to one of Velkaris's main streets. The location alone can pull in a lot of traffic."

Trafalgar finished the last bite of his meal and stood. "Well, my offer stands. I won't force you to sell, but if you do, my only conditions are exactly what I said before."

"Sorry, kid," Arden said, his tone still polite but firm. "Our stance isn't changing. But you're welcome back here anytime."

"Alright. See you around." Trafalgar gave a short nod before heading for the door.

By the time he stepped out, the sun had already vanished behind the buildings, leaving the streets bathed in the glow of lamplight. He made his way through the city, took the train and he eventually stepped onto the circular platform that served as the building's lift.

When it reached his floor, Trafalgar stepped off into the quiet hallway. A familiar figure was there—Bartholomew—standing awkwardly, glancing from one door to another like he was trying to guess which one belonged to someone.

Trafalgar called out from behind him, his voice carrying a hint of amusement. "Looks like you're looking for someone. Interested?"