

Tyrant 82

Chapter 82: Bang!

Trafalgar leaned against one of the cold iron pillars of the station, the faint morning mist curling around his boots. The place was quiet, save for the occasional hiss of steam escaping from a nearby train. He glanced up at the clock — still early.

A few minutes later, Bartholomew appeared, walking with a slightly hurried pace. His glasses were faintly fogged from the cold air, and his shoulders were hunched, as if trying to take up as little space as possible.

"Uh... good morning," Barth said softly.

Trafalgar straightened up. "You're early."

"Uh... you too," Barth replied, eyes flicking away almost immediately.

As they made their way to the platform, Trafalgar asked, "So... what did you tell your sister?"

Barth reached up to adjust his glasses, visibly nervous. "I... I told her that... I was going out with you... like... like friends."

Trafalgar raised an eyebrow. "And she believed it?"

"Yeah... well... I think... she was actually happy about it," Barth murmured, a faint timid smile appearing.

Trafalgar looked ahead, hiding a satisfied smirk. 'Perfect... this works for both of us.'

The train's whistle echoed through the station. They boarded, and the doors shut with a metallic thud. Soon, the rhythmic clatter of the tracks carried them toward Velkaris.

The train slowed as it approached Velkaris, the hiss of steam filling the cabin. When the doors opened, a rush of warmer air swept in from the bustling city outside. The streets beyond the station were alive with merchants calling out prices, carriages rattling by, and the smell of fresh bread mixing with smoke from nearby chimneys.

Bartholomew followed close behind Trafalgar, his hands buried in the pockets of his coat, eyes darting at the crowds. "S-so... what kind of skill did you want me to learn again?" he asked, almost tripping over a cobblestone.

"Something that can put people to sleep," Trafalgar replied, glancing at him with a faint grin. "Not exactly flashy, but useful. Think you can handle that?"

Barth nodded slowly. "If... if I can see it enough times, sure. I can probably learn it."

"Good," Trafalgar said, stepping aside to let a cart pass. "Once you've got it down, we'll have one more trick up our sleeve. Who knows when we might need to knock someone out quietly."

Barth fidgeted with the strap of his satchel. "Y-you talk like we're partners or something..."

Trafalgar smirked. "That's the idea. We are colleagues now, right? And colleagues look out for each other."

Barth gave a faint smile, though his eyes quickly flicked to the ground. "I... I guess so."

They wove through the busy streets, passing potion shops, blacksmiths, and taverns. Trafalgar kept up a steady stream of small talk—pointing out odd street performers, commenting on overpriced food stalls—just to keep Barth from retreating too far into his shell.

After a few turns, a faint scent of old parchment and mana ink drifted from a narrow alley. A weathered wooden sign hung above a shop door, its faded letters reading: Arcane Scrolls & Tomes.

Trafalgar stopped and pointed toward it. "Looks like we found our place."

Barth adjusted his glasses and gave a tiny nod. "Y-yeah... looks like it."

A faint chime rang as Trafalgar pushed open the door, the warm air inside carrying the smell of ink, aged parchment, and faint traces of mana. Shelves lined every wall, stacked high with scrolls of varying colors and seals. Behind the counter, an elderly man with thin spectacles glanced up from his ledger.

Bartholomew followed in, his eyes wandering over the neatly arranged displays. After a moment, he adjusted his glasses and asked quietly, "About what you said earlier... that 'who knows when we might need to knock someone out quietly' thing. W-what did you mean by that?"

Trafalgar glanced over his shoulder, a smirk tugging at his lips. "If I want you to learn something, it's because I plan on using it."

Barth's brow furrowed. "B-but... it won't be dangerous, right?"

"Hmm..." Trafalgar pretended to think for a moment, then shrugged casually. "No, don't worry about it. Just... don't tell your sister."

Barth's lips pressed into a thin line, but he didn't argue.

Trafalgar began scanning the shelves until his eyes landed on a section marked Sleep Spells. He pulled one of the scrolls free and unrolled it slightly, reading the neat arcane script. "This looks like the one," he murmured. "Simple, clean, and not too flashy."

Carrying it to the counter, he asked, "What's the price for this scroll?"

"Twenty-five silver," the shopkeeper replied without looking up from his ledger.

Trafalgar leaned on the counter, his tone casual but probing. "Twenty-five, huh? That's a bit steep for something so... basic, don't you think?"

The man finally glanced up, arching a brow. "Basic or not, casting magic that affects the mind isn't cheap to produce."

"Sure, but I might be buying more than one," Trafalgar said, giving him a pointed look. "How about you make it worth my while?"

The shopkeeper sighed, clearly used to such attempts. "Price stays. Twenty-five per scroll. If you want quantity, you can pay in gold."

Trafalgar clicked his tongue but didn't push further. "Fine. I'll take... quite a few of these."

Barth blinked. "Q-quite a few...?"

Barth tilted his head, realizing Trafalgar's intent.

Trafalgar turned to him. "Rough estimate—how many tries would it take for you to learn this?"

Barth adjusted his glasses, thinking. "Since it's a rare-grade skill... I'd say around a hundred times. M-maybe a little less if I focus."

Trafalgar's gaze slid back to the shopkeeper, his smirk returning. "You heard him. A hundred tries. That's a hundred scrolls. Now, doesn't that sound like enough for us to make a deal?"

The old man's eyes flickered with interest. "A hundred, you say?" He tapped the counter lightly. "That's quite the purchase..."

"Yeah, it is," Trafalgar said smoothly. "So how about you shave that price down a bit for me, and I walk out of here with your stock cleaned out? Everyone wins."

The shopkeeper leaned back in his chair, clearly weighing the profit against the discount. "Hmm... perhaps there's room to talk."

Trafalgar rested an elbow on the counter, knowing he had him hooked. 'Got him. No way he'll let a bulk sale like this walk away.'

After a few more minutes of back-and-forth, the shopkeeper finally relented, scribbling down the order and having his assistant fetch armfuls of scrolls from the back. Silver coins clinked onto the counter, and soon enough, Trafalgar and Barth stepped back into the bustling streets, their satchels bulging with tightly sealed parchment.

The rest of the afternoon passed in a blur of travel and preparation—until...

The sun was dipping low, casting long shadows across the academy's training fields. Dozens of empty scroll cases lay scattered around them, the last one clutched in Barth's slightly trembling hands. His face lit up with pure excitement.

"I... I got it!" he said, adjusting his glasses as if he couldn't quite believe it. "I really... learned a new skill!"

Trafalgar smirked. "Good. Took you long enough." He crossed his arms, clearly satisfied. "So, can you use it?"

"I... I think so," Barth replied, still smiling.

"Then show me."

Barth nodded—and in his eagerness, cast the spell without thinking twice. A faint shimmer spread from his hand, a ripple of mana passing through the air.

Trafalgar's eyes widened for a fraction of a second.

BANG!

It wasn't an actual explosion—just the sharp, comical thump of his body hitting the dirt as if someone had flipped an off-switch. His legs gave out instantly, arms going limp, and he toppled forward like a sack of potatoes.

THUD!

The impact sent a little puff of dust into the air. For a moment, he looked like a tragic war hero who'd just been taken out... except for the faint snore escaping his lips.

Barth froze, mouth hanging open. "T-Trafalgar!? Oh no, oh no, oh no—!" He rushed forward, glasses slipping down his nose as he knelt beside him. "I... I think I just killed him..."

After a frantic check for breathing and a whole lot of pacing, twenty minutes later, Trafalgar groaned awake. "Ugh... my head feels like I got run over by a wagon..."

Barth pushed his glasses up nervously. "S-sorry... I didn't mean to—"

"Next time," Trafalgar muttered, rubbing his temple, "give me a warning before you BANG me into the ground, alright?"

Barth managed a sheepish smile. "R-right..."