

Tyrant 9

Chapter 9: The Snake in Silk

"You're awfully quiet. Cat got your tongue?"

Trafalgar's eyes narrowed as he stepped further into the room, shutting the door behind him with quiet deliberation. His quarters, which had felt cold before, now seemed suffocating.

Rivena sat at the edge of his bed like it belonged to her. But it wasn't just her presence that turned his stomach—it was what she was wearing.

Gone was the formal noble attire from earlier. In its place, she wore a black silk robe, thin and translucent in the candlelight, loosely tied at the waist, hanging from her shoulders with obscene elegance. Her bare legs crossed lazily, one foot dangling, her platinum blonde hair falling over one eye like a veil.

The robe parted slightly when she leaned forward, revealing pale skin and the teasing curve of her inner thigh.

Trafalgar didn't flinch.

But inside?

His chest tightened.

'What the fuck is she doing here dressed like that...? She's not going to try it again, is she?'

He spoke, his voice colder than steel. "What are you doing here, Rivena?"

She twirled a lock of her hair around one finger, lips curled into a half-smile. "Hmm? Can't a sister visit her sweet little brother whenever she likes?"

"I don't remember us being that kind of siblings."

Her expression shifted—only slightly. Then she rose to her feet.

She walked toward him slowly, deliberately, bare feet brushing against the carpet with the grace of a cat. The silk of her robe swayed with each step, revealing more than it concealed. She looked... ethereal. Seductive. Dangerous.

But to Trafalgar?

She looked repulsive.

His breath quickened—not out of desire, but instinctive disgust. His body remembered what it had suffered. The memories weren't his, but the revulsion they stirred was real.

'Every time she moves, I want to throw up.'

Rivena stopped just in front of him, her perfume sharp in the air, honeyed and poisonous.

"I came to see how you were doing," she said, voice soft and smooth. "It seems even Father finds you interesting now... Just like I do."

"You think so?" Trafalgar kept his tone steady, emotionless.

"Mmhmm. And that only makes me want you all to myself, even more."

Her hand rose slowly, aiming for his face—gentle, affectionate.

Trafalgar grabbed her wrist midair, fingers tightening like a vice.

"Don't," he said firmly.

Rivena tilted her head with mock surprise. "Oh? Resisting me now? That's new. It makes you look even more adorable."

Trafalgar's heart pounded as he tried to pull mana into his limbs. His Core was barely awakened, his control clumsy—but something stirred.

A flicker of pressure.

A tightening of muscle.

A ripple under the skin.

Rivena's eyes sparkled, amused. "Oh? You've awakened your Mana Core. I knew it. You're full of surprises." She leaned closer, whispering now. "But since you're probably still in Origin, you can't actually stop me, can you?"

With a subtle pulse of her own mana, she pushed back. His fingers trembled.

Still, he held on.

And with her free hand, she gently brushed the side of his cheek.

"There. See? Even when you try... you can't resist me."

Trafalgar gritted his teeth.

'No. Not this time. Never again.'

He focused, eyes locked on hers.

And in his off-hand—a flash of system light.

A simple iron sword materialized into existence.

The sword materialized in Trafalgar's left hand with a pulse of pale light. It wasn't elegant—just a standard iron blade.

Rivena blinked once, then let out a sultry laugh. "You summoned a sword? Adorable."

Without hesitation, Trafalgar thrust it forward, aiming for her side. His movements were unrefined, clumsy even—but fueled by instinct and fury.

Steel rang against steel.

Rivena's hand moved in a blur. Her own sword—a slim, curved blade—seemed to appear from thin air, catching his strike with effortless precision. The sound of impact echoed through the room, sharp and clear.

"Still so weak," she cooed, pushing him back with ease. Her blade remained steady while his arm trembled.

"A common-ranked sword, dear little brother? That won't even scratch me."

Trafalgar stumbled a step but didn't drop the weapon. He tried to pull in more mana, force it into his limbs. His breathing was harsh now, sweat clinging to his brow.

'Come on, move—give me something—!'

But the pressure was already fading. The surge he'd summoned moments ago was gone.

Rivena approached again, her sword lazily tracing a half-circle in the air.

"I think that's enough of this little game," she whispered. "You've struggled enough, haven't you? Just accept that you're mine."

She raised her hand again, ready to touch his face a second time—

The door to the room slammed open.

"Am I interrupting something, Rivena?"

Both turned.

Standing in the doorway, armor still dusted with snow, was Lysandra.

Her voice was calm. Her expression was not.

The cold in her eyes could've frozen blood.

Rivena's smile didn't falter. "Oh? What a surprise. What brings you here, Lysandra?"

"I was making my rounds. Greeting the people I actually care about after returning from a long mission." Lysandra stepped inside. Her tone sharpened. "And then I heard a whisper that someone was creeping where they shouldn't be."

Rivena's eyes flicked toward the hallway. "A whisper? From who, I wonder?"

Lysandra ignored the bait. "Why are you here, Rivena?"

"Just checking on our precious baby brother. After all, he's going to be at dinner tonight. I was curious." Her eyes flicked toward Trafalgar, the hunger in them unabated. "He's changing. I can feel it."

"Then I assume you've satisfied your curiosity."

"Indeed," Rivena said smoothly, lowering her sword. "Congratulations on your awakening, little brother. It really does suit you."

She turned without another word and walked toward the door.

Just as she stepped into the hallway, Mayla was standing there—still and composed.

Rivena paused.

Her smile returned, thin and venomous. She leaned in and whispered loud enough for Trafalgar and Lysandra to hear.

"You've chosen poorly, maid. I'd advise you to remember your place. Don't meddle in matters that don't concern you."

And with that, she vanished into the corridor, footsteps fading like the hiss of a snake.

As soon as Rivena disappeared, the tension in the room began to ease—but only slightly.

Trafalgar dropped the sword to his side and fell to one knee, wincing. His breath came in uneven pulls, and his right hand clutched his left wrist, where the strain of holding her back had left a dull, burning ache.

'Fucking hell... I couldn't even land a hit.'

He squeezed his eyes shut for a moment, then visualized the command in his mind.

With a shimmer of system light, the iron sword vanished from his hand.

He looked up—and saw Lysandra already inside, her eyes on him. Mayla followed right behind her, quickly closing the door behind them.

Lysandra raised an eyebrow. "Oh? So you really did awaken your Mana Core. Congratulations, Trafalgar."

He let out a bitter breath. "Thanks... and thanks for saving me."

Lysandra walked toward him and offered her hand.

"I didn't do much. But someone had to cut off that snake before she wrapped herself around your neck again."

Mayla hurried to his other side, kneeling. She gently examined his wrist, checking for damage without a word.

Trafalgar glanced between the two of them.

"Why did you come?" he asked Lysandra.

She crossed her arms. "Your maid ran to me. Said Rivena entered your room dressed like... well, like Rivena. She suspected something was wrong, and she wasn't wrong."

Mayla didn't speak, but her expression was filled with guilt.

Trafalgar exhaled. "I see. Thank you, Mayla."

Mayla bowed her head slightly. "Forgive me for not intervening directly, young master. I... feared making it worse."

"You did enough," he muttered.

Lysandra looked him over again, more seriously this time. "When did you awaken your Core?"

"Yesterday."

"That fast?" Her brows lifted, impressed. "How long were you meditating?"

He scratched the back of his head. "I don't know... maybe an hour? Could've been less."

There was a long pause.

And then—Lysandra laughed.

Not mockingly. Genuinely.

"Now it makes sense. That's why Father called you to dinner tonight. I see now... Well done, little brother."

Trafalgar blinked. He wasn't used to praise from anyone—let alone her.

Lysandra's tone sharpened again. "And if that bitch ever pulls something like this again, tell me. I'll deal with it properly."

He nodded. "I will... thanks."

She stretched her arms. "Alright. I'm going to get some rest before dinner. I just got back from gutting wyverns—I didn't think I'd have to deal with family venom on the same day."

She turned to leave.

But Trafalgar hesitated.

"Lysandra... wait."

She looked back over her shoulder. "Hm?"

"Can I ask you something?"

"Depends. What is it?"

"I need someone to train me. My class... is Swordsman."

Lysandra's expression shifted slightly.

"Oh? So the same basic class most of us get. Later you will probably awaken a deeper class. Still, it fits you. Not bad."

She stood in silence for a moment, eyes thoughtful.

Then she gave a short nod.

"Alright. If you survive tonight's dinner—training begins tomorrow."

Lysandra stood by the door, her hand already on the handle, when Trafalgar's voice stopped her.

"Before you go... I want to ask something."

She turned her head slightly. "You already did. You asked for training."

"No, I mean—" he paused, steadying his breath, "I want to ask why."

Lysandra raised a brow. "Why what?"

"Why did you really come?" he asked. "You could've ignored Mayla. You could've walked away. But you didn't."

Lysandra leaned against the doorframe now, arms crossed.

"Because I remember what it's like to be treated like a pawn," she said quietly. "And unlike the rest of this fucking house, I don't see power as a license to torment the weak."

Trafalgar blinked.

'That... sounded a bit badass.'

Lysandra looked at him again, more carefully this time.

"You're not like the others, Trafalgar. You grew up in this blood-soaked palace, just like we did—but you were never treated like family. You were the one everyone chose to kick, mock, or ignore."

Her tone didn't soften, but it wasn't cruel either.

"And yet, here you are. Still standing. Still trying to move forward."

He swallowed hard.

'She doesn't know I'm not even from this world... but she's not wrong.'

A silence stretched between them.

Then, finally, Lysandra stood straight again and gave him a half-smile.

"You've got guts, and now you've got a Core. That's a start."

He nodded, still gripping his wrist, which pulsed with a dull ache.

"I'll be there," he said. "For the training."

"Then rest up," she said, already stepping into the hallway. "You'll need all the strength you can get."

As she vanished into the corridor, Mayla remained behind, carefully adjusting the bedsheets and pouring a fresh glass of water at his bedside.

Trafalgar stared at the door Lysandra had closed behind her.

'Tomorrow, training. Tonight... dinner with a den of wolves.'

He looked down at his trembling hands.

'Just keep going. No matter how fucked this place gets—just keep going.'