

Tyrant 91

Chapter 91: My Place

The tavern was quiet, its shutters drawn against the first pale hints of dawn. Arden and Marella settled across the table. Ronan and Sylven stood off to the side, unwilling to leave entirely but wise enough to know their words held little weight in what was about to be discussed. Garrika lingered at her grandparents' side.

Trafalgar dropped into the chair opposite them, fatigue heavy in his movements. He had been running on edge for hours, and though his body cried out for rest, his mind demanded he finish this business first. A deal was a deal—and if he let it drag, there was no telling what complications might arise.

"Well," Trafalgar began, his tone even, "a promise is a promise. I brought her back, just as I said I would."

Marella's expression softened. "That you did. We owe you more than words can say."

Arden leaned forward, his brows furrowed. "I'll admit, I didn't expect you to succeed. How did you manage it?"

Trafalgar allowed a faint smirk, though it was more tired than smug. "With a good name like Morgain, and a good friend. I won't give details, but Lucien won't trouble anyone here again—especially not this business. That much, I can guarantee... provided the place is under my name."

A silence stretched across the table. Arden's frown deepened as his gaze wandered briefly toward the shuttered windows, as if weighing the risks. "And why," he asked slowly, "would you insist on buying a tavern buried in a forgotten alley? You've seen the state of it. It's hardly worth the effort."

Trafalgar rested an elbow on the table, chin leaning into his palm. His eyes were cool, unreadable. "Let's just say it's a hunch. Something tells me this place is worth investing in."

Marella rose from her chair, placing a hand lightly on Arden's arm. Without a word, she tugged him toward the kitchen, leaving Trafalgar alone at the table with Garrika. The wolf girl hesitated for a moment, then slowly lowered herself into the seat her grandmother had vacated. The loose jacket

slipped slightly from her shoulders, but she didn't fix it—her sharp gaze was focused entirely on Trafalgar.

"Why are you really doing this?" she asked quietly, her voice carrying a note of suspicion. "It can't just be about a hunch."

Trafalgar leaned back in his chair, arms crossed. "I already told you. The place interests me. The business, too."

Garrika narrowed her eyes, lips curling faintly as if she could see through the half-truth. "You're hiding something. I don't know what it is, but..." She exhaled slowly, then looked away. "I won't press you. You saved me. That's reason enough to let you keep your secrets."

For a fleeting second, Trafalgar's expression softened. "Don't make it sound like charity. I needed to bring you back if I wanted any chance to negotiate. Saving you was... necessary."

Her eyes flicked back to him, sharp and defiant. "Necessary or not, you still did it."

Neither spoke after that. The silence stretched, filled only by the faint creak of the tavern's wood and the distant sound of the city stirring awake. Trafalgar's gaze drifted toward the shuttered windows, but his thoughts were elsewhere.

The door to the kitchen creaked open, snapping him back. Arden and Marella returned, their faces set with the kind of quiet resolve that made Trafalgar sit a little straighter.

Marella carried a folded piece of parchment, her fingers tapping it against her palm. Arden met Trafalgar's gaze directly, the weight of a decision clear in his eyes.

"Well?" Trafalgar asked, his voice low but steady. "What's the price?"

"None," he said simply.

Trafalgar blinked. "None? What do you mean? We agreed on a sale. I even have the contract signed." He pulled the folded sheet from his coat, laying it flat on the table as proof.

Marella shook her head, her expression calm but firm. "Not none as in refusing. None as in free. We'll transfer the rights without taking your gold."

Trafalgar leaned forward, narrowing his eyes. "That's a drastic change. What aren't you telling me?"

Arden rested his elbows on the table, his weathered hands clasped together. "You brought Garrika back to us. That alone outweighs any gold you could offer. You've proven your words hold weight, young Morgain. We're not blind—our years are catching up with us. One day soon, this place will no longer be ours to run. Better it pass into hands we can trust now, while we can still guide it, than leave it drifting."

Marella's lips curved in a faint smile. "If not you, it would have been Garrika inheriting it. But she's... not the best at negotiating." Her tone carried both warmth and exasperation.

Trafalgar bit back a groan. 'Am I any better? I barely know how this world's economy works, and they're leaving me with a business?' He rubbed his forehead, then sighed. "Fine. Where do I sign?"

Arden retrieved a fresh sheet of parchment from the counter and sat again. He began writing slowly, every stroke deliberate, while Marella watched Trafalgar with the patient gaze of someone who had already decided.

"I'll be starting at the academy in a few days," Trafalgar explained, his voice more controlled now. "So nothing changes for you two. You keep managing things as before. The only difference is the name on the papers."

He reached into his pouch and tossed a small bag onto the table. The heavy clink of coins echoed in the quiet room. "A hundred gold. Use it to repair the place, hire more hands, make Ronan step back from dangerous work. You'll need more people anyway. And one more thing..." His gaze sharpened. "I want information. If you hear anything about a woman in black, face hidden by a veil, I want to know."

Arden nodded solemnly. "Consider it done."

Arden sealed the parchment with a heavy hand, sliding it across the table toward Trafalgar. The deal was done. The local would now bear the name of Trafalgar du Morgain.

"Then it's settled," Arden said with quiet finality.

Trafalgar leaned back in his chair, exhaustion finally showing in the slump of his shoulders. "Good. Now at least I can breathe for a day or two before classes start."

Marella clapped her hands together softly. "A contract should be sealed properly. Arden, fetch the mugs. Garrika, come with me."

The two women disappeared into the kitchen, leaving Trafalgar with Arden and the others. Ronan sat silently, his one arm resting across his knee, watching the exchange with faint admiration. Sylven leaned back against the wall, his sharp eyes never leaving Trafalgar.

Soon enough, Marella and Garrika returned, each carrying a tray loaded with heavy clay mugs filled with frothy beer. They placed them around the table, the rich smell of malt filling the air.

"Here," Marella said warmly, setting one down in front of Trafalgar. "A toast—for what was lost, for what was gained, and for what lies ahead."

Trafalgar wrapped his hand around the mug, the cool ceramic grounding him for a moment. Arden raised his drink first.

"To survival," the old man said.

Ronan lifted his mug with a faint smile. "To family."

Sylven followed. "To debts repaid."

Garrika's golden eyes glimmered as she added, "To beginnings."

Trafalgar picked up the mug following the others, 'I wish everything were as smooth as these negotiations.'