

## Tyrant 123

### Chapter 123: A Fat Man's Pride

The guest hall was quiet, save for the faint ticking of a golden clock on the wall. A pair of servants entered, carrying a silver tray polished enough to reflect their nervous faces. They placed it carefully on the table before Trafalgar and Garrika: a steaming pot of tea, delicate porcelain cups, and a neat arrangement of cookies stacked like little towers.

"Please enjoy while you wait," one servant murmured before bowing and retreating with the other.

Garrika wasted no time. She plucked a cookie between her claws and bit down, her ears twitching as the sweetness melted on her tongue. "Mmm. These are actually good," she said with her mouth half-full, already reaching for another.

Trafalgar, by contrast, leaned back in his chair and picked one up lazily. He took a small bite, chewing slowly. 'Damn, it is really good indeed.' He set the cookie down, and poured himself tea with the calmness of a man who owned the place.

"You're too relaxed," Garrika teased, licking a few crumbs from her fingers. "Most people would be sweating buckets waiting for a fat noble to storm in."

Trafalgar smiled a bit, raising the cup to his lips. "Let him take his time. I'm not the one with something to lose here."

Garrika tilted her head, studying him. His voice carried no nerves, no hesitation. Just steady confidence that made her chest tighten again. She leaned closer, eyes gleaming. "You're dangerous, you know that?"

Trafalgar didn't answer her. 'I just do what I can to survive.'

The room fell into silence again, broken only by Garrika's crunching as she finished off yet another cookie.

The double doors creaked open with a heavy groan, and the ground itself seemed to tremble with each step that followed. Andrew von Mariven entered the hall like a storm. His shirt clung tightly to his round frame, riding just high enough to reveal a pale curve of stomach. The resemblance to the hedge sculpture outside was uncanny—except this version breathed heavily with each stride.

He didn't bother with greetings. His small eyes narrowed at Trafalgar and Garrika as if they were insects trespassing on his carpet.

"So," Andrew began, his voice booming, "this is the guest my son dares to bring home? The infamous bastard of House Morgain?" He barked out a laugh, cruel and dismissive. "I expected a monster, or at least a man. Instead, I see a boy who should never have left his castle."

Trafalgar remained seated, tea cup still in hand, his expression unbothered. Garrika, however, leaned back slightly, her eyes flicking between the two men.

Andrew's chin wobbled as he turned toward Leon, who hovered near the door, head lowered like a condemned man. "And you! My son, humiliated! Attacked in his own house's name. Who gave you permission to be treated so disgracefully?"

Leon flinched but said nothing, too terrified to respond.

Andrew turned back to Trafalgar, his face reddening with anger. "I don't care whose blood you carry. Morgain or not, you are nothing here. Do you think your name means anything in Mariven? You will explain yourself—or crawl back to the hole you came from."

The air grew thick with tension, Andrew's arrogance filling every corner of the hall. Yet Trafalgar simply set his cup down with a quiet clink, his calm gaze never leaving the bloated noble before him.

"You seem awfully confident," Trafalgar said at last, his tone calm, almost bored. "So let me ask you something: why exactly does Augusto's shop pay fifty percent in taxes? A ridiculous figure, considering the normal rate is ten."

Andrew puffed out his chest and smirked, as if the question was beneath him. "That fool disrespected me," he said, chin raised high. "He mocked my... appearance. No one insults a Mariven and walks away

without consequences. I doubled his dues, and then doubled them again, and then I doubled them again once more. That is the price for insolence."

For a moment there was silence. Then Trafalgar burst out laughing. A genuine laugh, sharp and cutting, echoing through the hall. He clutched his stomach and shook his head as if he'd just heard the funniest joke of his second life.

Andrew's face turned crimson. "What, exactly, do you find so amusing, boy?"

Trafalgar's laughter stopped instantly. His expression hardened, eyes dark and cold, the sudden shift in aura pressing down on the room like a blade at Andrew's throat.

"What's funny," Trafalgar said quietly, "is that you think your bruised ego justifies stealing from others. That your belly is so fragile it needs to be protected by taxes."

Andrew froze. A chill crept down his spine, sweat prickling at his neck. The man who only moments ago seemed so small and insignificant now radiated the presence of someone used to giving orders, not receiving them.

Trafalgar leaned forward, his voice steady, unshaken. "Let me make this clear. You don't try to corner me. Ever."

The silence stretched heavy, broken only by the faint clatter of Garrika placing another cookie back onto the tray. Andrew shifted under it, sweat gathering along his temples.

"Here's how this is going to work," Trafalgar said, his voice calm but carrying the weight of command. He raised his hand, making a small gesture as though rolling a coin between his fingers. "The tax on Augusto's shop will return to the standard ten percent. Immediately."

Andrew's eyes widened. His face turned purple with outrage. "You dare dictate terms in my house? Who do you think you are?"

Trafalgar smirked. "I'm the one still sitting comfortably while you huff and puff like a boar." He tilted his head, tone dropping to a sharper edge. "And since you've inconvenienced me, I require compensation. Money. Enough to remind you that wasting my time is expensive."

Andrew slammed a hand against the armrest of his chair, the wood creaking beneath his bulk. "Compensation? For what possible reason would you need it?"

Trafalgar's eyes narrowed, his smirk fading into a dangerous calm. "Because your son tried to kill me." His words cut through the air like steel. He leaned forward slightly, voice dripping with mockery. "If you want me to forget this little incident, you'd better pay up... like a good little dog."

The insult landed with the weight of a hammer. Andrew's hands clenched into fists, his whole body trembling with suppressed rage. His pride screamed to lash out, but the oppressive certainty in Trafalgar's tone chained him in place.

Garrika sat back, watching silently, a faint grin tugging at her lips. To her, there was no mistaking it: in this room, Trafalgar wasn't the guest. He was the master of this little puppy.