

Tyrant 131

Chapter 131: Conversations Before Class

The morning hallways of the academy were already buzzing when Trafalgar and Zafira entered the history class.

Professor Rhaldrin's class was one of the more crowded ones; despite his sharp tongue and reputation for demanding discipline, his lectures were famous for being both ruthless and brilliant. Trafalgar had learned quickly that history here wasn't just about dusty old names—it often came with lessons for survival.

He and Zafira slipped into their usual seats near the middle, side by side. She leaned back casually, her gray eyes scanning the room. Trafalgar adjusted his chair, glad to finally settle after the sparring and conversations of the morning.

A familiar voice interrupted his thoughts. "Mind if I sit here?"

Xavier stepped into view, the same scarf wrapped around his neck despite the rising heat of the day. Trafalgar raised a brow—he still couldn't figure out how the guy hadn't passed out during their spar wearing that thing. Still, he gave a nod, and Xavier settled into the seat close by.

Not long after, the door opened again and a pair of siblings entered: Cynthia and Bartholomew. Barth trailed slightly behind his sister, clutching a stack of books as though they were a shield. His timid eyes lit up when he spotted Trafalgar, though his shoulders stayed hunched, wary of the crowded class.

Cynthia, on the other hand, met Trafalgar's gaze with a colder expression. She hadn't entirely forgiven him for dragging her brother into something dangerous, even if everything had turned out fine. Without a word, the two siblings took the seats nearby.

The group was complete, just as the classroom began to settle into a hush.

Trafalgar leaned slightly toward Barth, giving him a reassuring nod. "Hey, Barth. Let me introduce you. This is Xavier."

Barth froze for a second, clutching his books tighter, before offering an awkward wave. "H-hello."

Xavier smiled warmly, his mismatched eyes softening. "Nice to meet you. Any friend of Trafalgar's is a friend of mine."

Barth relaxed at that, though he still ducked his head nervously. Cynthia, sitting beside him, crossed her arms. Her sharp eyes lingered on Trafalgar.

"The donation you gave for the orphanage," she said suddenly, her tone clipped, "we deliver it. The orphanage caretakers want to thank you personally. They asked me to pass the message along."

Trafalgar blinked. For a moment, he wasn't sure what to say. Then he nodded, his voice calm. "Alright. When I have some time, I'll go. Tell them I'll visit."

Cynthia gave a stiff nod, but her expression didn't soften.

Zafira tilted her head, curiosity gleaming in her gray eyes. "Donation? What are we talking about here?"

Trafalgar waved his hand casually, brushing it off. "Nothing big. Just helped out somewhere. Anyway—" he pivoted smoothly, unwilling to linger on the subject. "I met Xavier earlier today. We ended up sparring. He's strong."

Xavier chuckled at that, scratching the back of his head beneath the scarf. "Strong to you, maybe. But that's because I'm a core above you. Still... you made me work for it. I'd call you a rival already."

Barth's eyes widened a little at that praise. Cynthia glanced between them, clearly surprised as well.

Trafalgar smirked faintly. "I'm almost at my third core anyway."

Zafira's eyes shot wide. She leaned closer, whispering quickly, "Really? That's very fast, Trafalgar."

"I know," he replied simply.

Zafira pulled back slightly, still studying him with those sharp gray eyes of hers. "You're serious," she whispered, her voice carrying a mixture of disbelief and intrigue. "Most people take years to advance at that pace."

Trafalgar shrugged, leaning back in his chair. "What can I say? Circumstances pushed me harder than I wanted. Guess it paid off."

Xavier leaned his spear against the side of his desk and rested his chin on his hand, smirking. "Close to your third core already... Damn... That's why it cost me so much, well, although it ended in a tie. If you were to make that skill, I would probably become an Echo myself."

Trafalgar suppressed a laugh at the joke, Zafira and the two brothers stared at each other, unable to understand what had happened.

Trafalgar stretched his arms, the faintest of smiles tugging at his lips. 'If only they knew the real reason. If only they knew what I went through to push this far...' He dismissed the thought quickly; secrets were better kept locked inside.

Zafira leaned a little closer again, her voice softer this time. "Don't overdo it, Trafalgar. Strength gained too fast has its price."

He gave her a sidelong glance, catching a rare flicker of concern in her expression. "I know. But don't worry, I take good care of myself and I have to make myself strong." he said simply.

The group fell into a more comfortable quiet, the tension easing as conversations around the classroom dulled into background noise. The sound of chairs scraping and students shuffling into place filled the air.

That was when the door creaked open, and silence rolled over the room.

In walked a figure no taller than a child, his gait brisk, his crimson eyes sharp with a brilliance that demanded respect. Professor Rhaldrin's coarse gray fur bristled slightly as his gaze swept the room. Despite his size, his presence carried more authority than any giant knight Trafalgar had ever seen.

Without a word, Rhaldrin flicked a piece of chalk across the room. It sailed like a dart and struck Xavier squarely on the forehead.

"Even if you are Althea's son," Rhaldrin's voice cut through the silence like a blade, "you are expected to behave properly in my class."

Xavier froze, rubbing his forehead with an awkward grimace. "Yes, Professor," he muttered.

The room erupted in hushed murmurs. Barth nearly dropped his books, staring wide-eyed at Xavier. Cynthia's expression hardened in disbelief, while Zafira's brows arched high, her lips parting slightly. None of them had known—none had even guessed—that Xavier was connected to one of the academy's directors.

Trafalgar, sitting calmly, stretched and scratched the back of his neck. "Oh... right. Forgot to mention that."

Zafira snapped her gaze toward him, incredulous. "You knew?" she whispered fiercely.

"Yeah," Trafalgar said casually, lowering his hand back onto the desk. "Slipped my mind."

'What's so strange about that? Zafira and I each come from one of the Eight Great Families.'

Meanwhile, Xavier adjusted his scarf, trying to ignore the stares. Despite the heat and the unwanted attention, his mismatched eyes flickered with a faint amusement, as though he was used to carrying that kind of weight.

Professor Rhaldrin clapped his tiny claws together, commanding silence once more. "Open your books."