

## Tyrant 146

Chapter 146: Caelum vs Trafalgar

The ship cut smoothly through the frozen winds, its six wings spread wide as it soared above the Morgain Peaks. Snow whipped past the rails, carried by the endless gusts that poured from the mountains.

Caelum sat at the far side of the deck, silent as stone. His golden eyes never strayed from the jagged ridges ahead, as if measuring the weight of the peaks themselves.

Trafalgar approached, hands tucked into his coat pockets. For a while, he stood beside him, letting the silence drag. But the monotony gnawed at him.

"So," Trafalgar said at last, leaning against the railing. "Want to spar?"

Caelum's head turned slightly, his expression unchanged—but the flicker in his gaze betrayed his surprise. "A sparring match, young master? Here?"

"Why not?" Trafalgar shrugged. "We've got the space, the time, and I'm bored out of my mind."

Caelum studied him for a long moment, the hum of the engines filling the gap. Finally, he spoke. "The difference between us is vast. It would be like day against night. You know this."

"I know," Trafalgar said simply, his lips curling into a faint grin. "But I still want to try."

For the first time, Caelum's composure cracked into something resembling amusement. "You're serious."

"Dead serious."

Caelum exhaled through his nose, almost a sigh. "Very well. But do not complain when the outcome is swift."

Trafalgar straightened, the spark of challenge igniting in his chest. 'I don't care if it's hopeless. Every time I fight, I learn. And if it's Caelum... I'll learn more than anywhere else.'

The wind howled across the deck, scattering snowflakes over the polished steel floor. Trafalgar stepped into the open space, rolling his shoulders as he stretched his hands.

With a thought, his weapon materialized in a shimmer of violet light. Nightpiercer appeared in his grip—its sleek black hilt resting firm in his palm, the blade engraved with faint violet runes that pulsed softly, as if the sword itself were alive. He tightened his hold around it, testing the weight.

'Heavier than I expected... different balance, too. First time wielding it, and it's nothing like Maledicta. I'll have to adjust as I go.'

Across from him, Caelum summoned his own weapons. Two curved daggers slid into existence, the steel glinting pale under the snowy sky. His stance was low, sharp, predatory—every angle of his body tuned to kill with ruthless efficiency.

Trafalgar's eyes narrowed. 'So different from the styles I've seen.'

The older man tilted his head, golden eyes unblinking. "Begin whenever you like, young master."

Trafalgar inhaled sharply and lunged forward, swinging Nightpiercer in a broad horizontal sweep. [Arc Slash]—a ripple of violet-blue energy tore from the blade, cutting through the deck's frost as it surged toward Caelum.

Caelum slipped aside with effortless grace, the wave hissing past him. In the same instant, one dagger darted forward, its edge brushing close enough that Trafalgar felt the air split beside him.

Planting his foot, Trafalgar blurred. [Severance Step]—his form curved into a sudden arc, reappearing behind Caelum, blade flashing in a lethal sweep.

But Caelum was already there, his daggers intercepting in a cross of sparks. One angled for Trafalgar's chest, merciless in its precision.

'Fast. Too fast—'

Trafalgar twisted away, breath ragged.

'And that's why this is perfect.'

Steel clashed again, sparks bursting in the frozen air. Caelum's daggers moved like silver lightning—thrusts, feints, arcs so fast they blurred. Every motion was efficient, devoid of waste, designed to kill.

And every motion stabbed directly into Trafalgar's skull.

The moment Caelum shifted his stance, [Sword Insight] flared. Lines of movement, flows of energy, invisible trajectories—each carved itself violently into Trafalgar's mind. It wasn't learning. It was overwriting. His brain pulsed as though burning brands had been hammered into it, every instant rewriting him into something sharper, faster.

He staggered a half-step, biting back a groan. 'Dammit... every swing feels like a knife through my head. But I won't stop. I can't stop.'

Caelum's right dagger sliced upward in a crescent—Trafalgar's body moved instinctively, parrying just short of clean, but his mind screamed as the technique etched itself into memory. His skull felt like it might split apart.

Still, his eyes never wavered. His blade never faltered.

"Interesting," Caelum murmured, twisting low and snapping his other dagger in for a gut strike.

Trafalgar shifted, violet runes glowing faintly as Nightpiercer cut across in a diagonal arc. [Severing Fang]—a ripple of force exploded, splitting the snow at their feet in a clean line. Caelum slid back, boots skidding, expression faintly surprised.

He hadn't expected the boy to keep pace.

'His concentration... even through that pain, he doesn't flinch. He mirrors me, again and again. Just like... Mordrek. No—like Lysandra too.'

Trafalgar's lips pulled into a grin despite the pounding agony inside his skull. "That's just what a genius does."

Then Caelum vanished, his daggers blurring in a deadly weave. Trafalgar braced, knowing each strike would carve deeper into his mind.

And he welcomed it.

The storm of blades finally broke.

Caelum's daggers wove in a blur, faster than Trafalgar's eyes could fully follow. Every feint, every shift of weight seared into his skull through Sword Insight, until the pain felt like molten iron pouring through his veins. His vision blurred, his temples throbbed with every heartbeat—yet his grip on Nightpiercer never wavered.

He struck back again and again, each slash closer to Caelum's rhythm, each step more precise than the last. But the gap was too wide.

In a single fluid motion, Caelum twisted past his guard. The first dagger batted Nightpiercer aside; the second stopped just short of Trafalgar's throat.

The fight was over.

Trafalgar stood frozen, chest heaving, sweat dripping down his brow despite the cold. His lips curled into a crooked grin. "Guess that's my loss."

Caelum withdrew his blades, eyes studying him with quiet intensity. "Your loss, yes. But your progress..." He paused, his voice rare with something like respect. "Remarkable. You imitate at a rate I have only seen once before. Mordrek. And perhaps Lysandra."

Trafalgar exhaled hard, knees nearly buckling. His head felt ready to split in two, but inside, something shifted.

A familiar chime echoed in his mind.

[Passive Skill: Morgain Blade has leveled up – Lv.2]

Effect: All Morgain sword techniques deal +10% damage.

'FUCK YEAH!!!! THIS IS HUGE.'

He straightened slowly and made Nightpiercer disappear with a flicker of violet light. His gaze lifted toward the mountains ahead, the snowy peaks crowned in silver clouds.

'I may not win today. But each loss brings me closer. One day, even Caelum won't be untouchable.'

The ship sailed on, the Morgain Peaks looming ever larger.