

Tyrant 183

Chapter 183: Return to Euclid

Days had passed since the battle. Valttair had forced Trafalgar to remain within Morgain Castle, insisting he recover fully from the nosebleeds and strain caused by Sword Insight. The boy had no choice but to comply.

During that time, Trafalgar rested... though not entirely. More than once, he slipped away to practice his newest prize: [Morgain's Final Crescent]. The first time he conjured that inverted crescent slash, even in its incomplete form, his eyes lit up like a child playing with a brand-new toy car. The weight of the blade, the afterimage it left in the air—it made him grin despite the pounding headaches.

Everything else was already set in motion. Arthur, the veteran Valttair had hand-picked, had been stationed in Euclid and placed under Trafalgar's banner. Caelum had confirmed in person that Mayla was safe and under Marella and Arden's care. The city itself was under reconstruction. The blood, the dragon, the chaos—they felt like a distant nightmare. For the first time in weeks, things seemed... stable.

Now Trafalgar sat in a carriage, one hand lazily resting on the window frame as the snowy landscape rolled by. This time, no assassins lurked in the shadows, no sudden ambushes threatened to split the sky. Only the rhythmic crunch of wheels on frost.

Caelum was the one driving the carriage, silent as always, which allowed Trafalgar to relax more than usual. His mind wandered. 'Two weeks away from the academy... not much, but enough to fall behind.' He imagined Zafira's unimpressed face if he asked her to help catch up on theory, and thought of Barth and Cynthia, still waiting for him to visit the orphanage. Arden and Marella had even sent word that the mithril payment had arrived.

"Too many things to do," he muttered under his breath, "and so little time in my hands."

The steady rhythm of hooves against the frozen ground was almost hypnotic. Trafalgar leaned back against the padded seat, his eyes half-lidded as he watched the world blur past. White peaks stretched endlessly into the horizon, jagged like broken teeth, their tips glowing faintly under the pale sun. Every so often, he spotted the faint outlines of workers cutting stone from the mountainsides or wagons hauling timber down toward Euclid.

It was oddly peaceful. Too peaceful, considering the last time he traveled these roads he had nearly died.

He exhaled, his breath fogging the glass of the carriage window. 'This feels unreal. No assassins, no ambush, no blood painting the snow. Just... silence. And Caelum at the reins. I guess even my father knows better than to leave me unattended after everything.'

A jolt in the road made him sit upright. He glanced forward; Caelum didn't even flinch, guiding the horses with mechanical precision. Trafalgar almost smirked. 'That guy could probably drive straight through a battlefield without blinking.'

His mind, however, refused to stay calm. He started sorting through the mountain of obligations waiting for him: classes to catch up on, reports to deliver, questions about the Veiled Woman, Euclid's reconstruction, and Arthur. Arthur would be key—Valttair hadn't chosen him randomly. The man was older, seasoned, and sharp enough to make an impression on someone like Valttair. If anyone could hold Euclid together in Trafalgar's absence, it was him.

Still, it was strange to think of himself as "lord" of anything. He scratched his head and gave a humorless laugh. "Six months ago I was stressing over university deadlines. Now I'm stressing over a city."

The carriage rocked forward again, pulling him out of his thoughts. Euclid was just beginning to appear in the distance.

The carriage rattled over uneven stones, slowing as the path narrowed. Trafalgar leaned forward, knocking gently on the wooden frame that separated him from the front seat.

"Hey," he called, his voice low but clear. "Caelum. You've been quiet the whole ride."

The reins didn't waver, nor did Caelum turn his head. "I speak when necessary, young master." His tone was calm, clipped, almost detached.

Trafalgar sighed, resting his chin on his hand. "Still cold as ever. You know, you could at least pretend to enjoy the company. I mean, you've sworn loyalty to me and all that."

For a moment, silence stretched. The horses' breaths fogged the air, and the crunch of snow beneath their hooves filled the gap. Then Caelum answered, "My duty is not enjoyment. It is ensuring that a Morgain does not fall. That is why I am here."

The words were delivered flatly, but Trafalgar could feel the weight behind them. He leaned back, staring at the ceiling of the carriage. 'This guy's more machine than man sometimes. But at least he's on my side.'

"You picked me," Trafalgar said finally. "Of all the Morgains, you chose me. Why?"

Caelum's shoulders shifted slightly—barely noticeable, but there. "Because you are not your father. Nor your brothers. You carry something they do not. I saw it when you first fought. That was enough."

Trafalgar blinked, caught off guard by the answer. His mouth twisted into a crooked grin. "Huh. Guess that's your way of saying I'm special. Thanks, I guess."

"Do not mistake it for affection," Caelum replied, his voice as cold as the wind. "It is simply truth. And truth is all I serve."

By the time the carriage crested the final hill, Euclid came into view.

It wasn't the image of utter devastation Trafalgar had once feared. Mordrek's last stand had pulled most of the fight away from the city, sparing it from complete ruin. Still, scars remained. Portions of the outer wall bore fresh stone where chunks had been blasted apart. A few districts near the southern side were darkened, roofs collapsed and timbers scorched. But the damage was contained, no more than a fraction of the whole.

Even so, the place was alive with movement. Dozens of workers swarmed across scaffolds, hammering new supports into place. Mana-powered lifts carried heavy beams through the air like they weighed nothing. The sharp bite of fresh-cut wood and molten iron filled the winter air. Euclid wasn't broken—it was healing.

The carriage slowed at the main gate, now reinforced with plates of mithril-threaded steel. Caelum stepped down first, opened the door, and glanced at Trafalgar. The boy ignored the gesture and jumped down on his own, boots crunching against the snow-packed ground.

He let his eyes roam over the workers, the wagons of stone and lumber, the banners of the Morgain crest snapping in the wind. 'So this is mine now. A city, a gate, a responsibility.'

Whispers ran through the workers as their gazes landed on him. Not fear, but curiosity—murmurs that traveled fast.

"Efficient," Caelum said behind him, his tone flat, appraising.

Trafalgar smirked faintly. "Efficient, yeah. But costly. My father doesn't rebuild for free. Time to see Arthur."