

Tyrant 187

Chapter 187: Vincent's Legacy

The cold night pressed gently against Trafalgar's back as he searched for somewhere to sit. His eyes fell on the elderly man's makeshift stall—little more than a crate with a thin blanket over it, stacked with the few books that had survived.

"Here," the old man said, noticing him. He shifted a wooden chair closer with deliberate slowness. "Take a seat. No sense standing in the snow."

Trafalgar nodded and lowered himself into the chair. The silence between them lingered for a moment, broken only by the faint crackle of torches along the street.

"Forgive me for asking so late," Trafalgar said at last, his tone steady but curious. "What is your name?"

The old man raised a brow, lips twitching faintly as if amused. "Vincent. But really, who cares about the name of an old man?"

"It matters," Trafalgar replied firmly. "When you meet someone, the least you can do is learn their name. It's a small sign of respect. To me, it's mandatory."

Vincent blinked at him, then chuckled softly, a dry sound that carried no mockery. "Mandatory, hm? You're a strange young man."

Trafalgar shrugged lightly. "Maybe. But I think it's the right way."

"Very well then," the old man said, inclining his head. "Call me Vincent. No need for anything else."

The two of them sat there, snow drifting lazily from the sky, each flake catching the faint moonlight. For Trafalgar, it felt like the beginning of a conversation that might mean more than he first imagined.

Vincent shifted uncomfortably in his seat, the weight of silence settling between them until he sighed and tugged at his trouser leg. The fabric lifted to reveal the truth—his left leg ended just above the knee, replaced with a simple wooden prosthetic bound tightly with leather straps.

Trafalgar's eyes lingered on it, not out of pity but out of the blunt reality it represented.

"So that's how you survived," Trafalgar said quietly.

Vincent gave a crooked smile, worn with age but edged with pride. "Yes. The dragon brought down the roof of the library. I was pinned, thought it was over. But there was a pocket in the rubble—just enough space to breathe. When they pulled me out, well..." He tapped the wooden leg against the floor. "This was the price I paid for my life."

For a moment, the old man's eyes clouded with something distant, but it wasn't despair. "At my age, bones are fragile. Death would've been easier. But I endured. I'm proud of that much."

Trafalgar leaned back, arms folded. "I see... My apologies. Still, I'm glad you're alive. Euclid needs people like you."

Vincent chuckled, shaking his head. "This city has always been my home. I don't care how small it is compared to Velkaris the capital or other cities—it's where I'll live, and where I'll die."

Vincent leaned forward, resting his hands on the walking stick balanced against his chair. His eyes swept over the small stack of books arranged neatly on the cart beside him—barely a dozen volumes, all weathered and scorched at the edges.

"This," he said, voice low but steady, "is all I have left. The rest were burned by the dragon's lightning, or crushed under the stones when the roof collapsed. The library... my home... both gone in a single night."

Trafalgar's gaze followed the battered spines. Some were missing covers, others had pages torn or half-blackened. They looked like survivors themselves.

"You plan to stay here with that little stall?" Trafalgar asked, tilting his head.

Vincent exhaled, a dry laugh slipping past his lips. "I have no money, no roof of my own. What you see here is all I can keep alive. A merchant wouldn't touch these scraps, but knowledge doesn't vanish as easily as stone and timber. As long as someone reads them, the library still breathes."

Trafalgar studied him, fingers drumming against his armrest. "Do you want to rebuild it?"

The old man's eyes widened a fraction, though he quickly lowered them again. "I would love to. But dreams don't build walls. Without coin, it's impossible."

Trafalgar's expression didn't soften, but there was a weight in his tone when he replied. "I think everything has a solution. Euclid may be recovering, but a city without knowledge is crippled. A library is more than a building—it's a pillar. And since I'm the one overseeing this territory, it's something I can provide."

Vincent blinked at him, stunned. "...You're offering me a new library?"

"Not a gift," Trafalgar corrected. "A responsibility. You'll teach. Especially the children—history, bloodlines, whatever you can. You said people rarely came before? Then we'll make sure they do."

Vincent's lips parted, but no words came. For the first time since the rubble, hope lit his tired eyes.

Vincent finally found his voice, though it trembled slightly. "And what if... what if the dragon returns? What happens then?"

Trafalgar leaned back, his expression firm. "No need to worry about that. My father, Valtair, already killed it. I was there. The Gluttony Dragon is dead—it paid for what it did. Euclid is safe."

The old man's shoulders sagged, as though a great weight had been lifted. He closed his eyes briefly, whispering, "So it's over..."

When he opened them again, Trafalgar was watching him intently. "I'd also like information. History. Especially about bloodlines. You mentioned before that you studied them. Dragons in particular interest me."

Vincent arched a brow, curiosity replacing his earlier gloom. "Dragons? Ah... now that is a subject with no end. Their bloodlines are... peculiar, layered with secrets that most men wouldn't dare approach. If you truly want to learn, we'll need time."

"I have the whole night," Trafalgar replied simply.

A faint smile tugged at Vincent's lips. "In that case, let's not sit out here in the cold. Snow may fall gently, but it still bites the bones of an old man like me. Come to my home. It's small, but warmer, and I can make tea. We'll talk there."

Trafalgar gave a short nod, rising to his feet. "Lead the way, Vincent."

The two of them moved through the quiet streets of Euclid, the snowfall drifting lazily around them. Stars glittered above, and the moonlight painted the ruins silver. Trafalgar walked in silence, his mind sharp, already anticipating what he might hear.