

Tyrant 213

Chapter 213: Family Wars and Fragile Peace

The hallway was quiet again once Alfons stepped onto the circular platform and descended out of sight. Only the soft hum of mana crystals remained, pulsing faintly against the marble walls.

Zafira broke the silence first, her voice calm but carrying that usual curiosity of hers.

"How did it go... the funeral of your uncle Mordrek?"

Trafalgar turned toward her, exhaling slowly. "Fine, I guess. I'm not really sure what to tell you. Imagine over a hundred Morgains under one roof, all staring at me like I was the centerpiece."

He gave a humorless smile. "Let's just say I didn't enjoy it."

Zafira tilted her head slightly. "Hm. Let me guess — because of Euclid?"

"Exactly," he said. "It's one of our family's main territories, and the fact that they gave it to me still feels... strange."

She folded her arms, a faint grin playing on her lips. "You earned it. Besides, what other choice did they have?"

Trafalgar chuckled softly. "Anthera — Mordrek's wife — wanted nothing to do with it. So the decision fell to my father. Most of the family wanted one of the older heirs to take it, but in the end he picked me. So now I'm stuck with the mess."

Zafira's smile widened just enough to show amusement. "I see. Morgain responsibility — the kind of gift that comes with a hidden blade."

He nodded slowly. "That's one way to put it."

For a moment, silence lingered between them. The tension that usually followed talk of family faded into something quieter, steadier.

"At least you're back," Zafira finally said, her voice softer. "Euclid might be a burden... but it could also be your chance to make something of your own."

They began walking slowly down the corridor, the soft echo of their footsteps bouncing against the marble. The mana lamps along the wall dimly reflected in Zafira's eyes, giving them an almost ghostly glow.

"So," she said after a moment, "I also heard there was a big fight. Something about your father?"

Trafalgar nodded, his expression darkening slightly. "Yeah. My father fought the one who killed Mordrek. It was... something I'll never forget. I was there too, and honestly, I almost didn't make it back alive."

Zafira frowned, her voice lowering. "You're serious?"

"Serious enough," Trafalgar replied, crossing his arms. "The aftermath wasn't pretty either. But that's what happens when the Morgains get involved in things they can't control."

She gave a small sigh. "Sounds like politics as usual."

"Exactly," Trafalgar said. "That's why I wanted to ask you something. You're a Zar'Khael, so your family sees things from a different angle. How are things outside the Morgain circle?"

Zafira's expression turned thoughtful. "Honestly? The world's getting more unstable by the day. Everyone pretends we're at peace, but two wrong moves and the balance will break. The Eight Families might still be bound by pact, but everyone's watching everyone else."

"Typical," Trafalgar muttered.

She continued, voice steady but serious. "Euclid's the biggest concern. Your territory has a functioning Gate. That alone makes it a target. You know how valuable those are."

Trafalgar frowned. "What's so bad about the Gates? If things go sideways, can't they just be shut down?"

Zafira's head shook, slow and certain. "No. That's the problem. Gates aren't simple doors you flip off — they're anchors. Whole cities grew around them for generations because they're fixed points of travel and trade. If you control a Gate, you can move troops and supplies across regions in hours. That's why they're strategic targets."

"So you can just... bring an army through?" Trafalgar's voice was flat, the implication settling in.

"Exactly." Zafira's eyes went colder. "Armies, resources, mercenaries — anything you want to project power fast. And they aren't something any family can make or unmake. Only a handful of rare classes, maybe a single master in the world, can create a Gate. Deactivating one isn't an option unless you destroy it outright."

"And destroying one?" Trafalgar asked.

"It's ruinous," she said. "You'd have to physically tear it apart and then pay some impossible cost to have it rebuilt and reactivated. No family wants to waste that kind of time and resources unless they're desperate. That's why places with Gates become both bastions and bullseyes. Euclid isn't just land — it's a key. That's why you're exposed."

Trafalgar gave a small nod, the weight of her words sinking in.

"Thanks for the insight," he said quietly. "I didn't think of Euclid that way before."

Zafira crossed her arms with a small, knowing grin. "That's why I'm here."

He smiled faintly. "I'll keep that in mind."

For a moment, silence fell between them, broken only by the faint hum of mana flowing through the corridor's conduits. Then Trafalgar remembered something.

"By the way... when are you going to return my jacket? You've been holding it hostage since the last time we saw each other."

Zafira blinked, feigning surprise. "Oh, that. I washed it, but you disappeared before I could give it back."

She turned toward the corridor branching off to her left. "Come on, I'll grab it. It's in my room."

Trafalgar followed, curious. He hadn't been inside Zafira's dorm before. When the door opened, the image he had in mind—dark decor, runic symbols, something gothic—shattered instantly.

The room was... soft. Warm. Feminine.

Pastel curtains framed the window; the sheets on her bed were lilac, almost glowing under the soft mana light. A crystal lamp shaped like a crescent moon floated in the corner, casting gentle ripples of light across silver-trimmed furniture. A faint scent of lavender lingered in the air.

Trafalgar stood frozen for a second. "This is... not what I expected."

Zafira raised an eyebrow, a playful smirk forming. "What? Did you think I sleep in a dungeon full of bones and fire because I am a demon?"

"I didn't say that," Trafalgar muttered.

"You didn't have to." She brushed past him and opened a wardrobe, pulling out his black jacket neatly folded. "Here. Freshly washed."

He took it, glancing at her sideways. "Thanks... though now I'm not sure whether to be relieved or suspicious."

Zafira tilted her head, horns glinting faintly in the light. "I don't ruin things that belong to people I like."

Trafalgar raised an eyebrow, caught off guard for half a second, before she smirked again. "Relax, Morgain. It's just a figure of speech."

He chuckled under his breath. "Sure it is."

She crossed her arms, teasing. "Unlike you, some of us actually decorate our rooms. Yours probably still looks like a weapons storage, doesn't it?"

"Functional," Trafalgar replied simply.

"Exactly," she said, amused. "Functional and boring."

He gave a mock sigh. "You sound like you're auditioning to be my interior designer."

"Maybe I am," she said with a small grin as she opened the door again. "Now come on, we'll be late for Professor Rhaldrin's class. Apparently, he's got an 'important announcement' today."

Trafalgar slung the jacket over his shoulder. "Important, huh?"