

Tyrant 41

Chapter 41: Head or Duel?

Trafalgar sprinted down the marble corridors, boots thudding against the polished floors, breath sharp in his throat.

"Where's Mayla?" he demanded, grabbing a passing maid by the shoulder.

The girl blinked at him in confusion. "Mayla, young master? I... I don't believe I know anyone by that name."

He let go, heart pounding harder.

Another servant came around the corner—he stopped them too.

"Mayla. Brown hair. Brown eyes. Early twenties. Where is she?"

"I'm sorry, sir. I don't know who that is."

Trafalgar clenched his fists.

A third one. "Do you know Mayla?"

The answer was the same. A puzzled look. A polite denial. A blank spot in their memories.

'No. No, no, no. This isn't right. She's been here since forever. Always waiting. Always—damn it!'

His footsteps echoed like thunder as he darted through the central hall, up staircases, down corridors, past training rooms and storage wings. Every room he opened was empty. Every person he questioned shrugged or stared like he was speaking nonsense.

'Don't do this to me. Don't let this be my fault. She was the only one—damn it, she was the only one who gave a damn about the old Trafalgar.'

He skidded to a halt in front of a door he had hoped to avoid at all costs.

The infirmary.

Cold dread pooled in his stomach.

'I swear, if she's in there...'

He pushed the door open and stepped inside.

The sterile scent of herbs and healing potions hit him instantly. A woman in her thirties, dressed in a long white coat, turned toward him from behind a desk.

"Trafalgar? What are you doing here?"

He frowned. "Trafalgar? You're not even going to show respect to your young master?"

The woman stiffened. "Forgive me, young master."

"Good. Now, is Mayla here?"

"Mayla... I'm sorry, could you describe her?"

"A maid. Brown eyes. Brown hair. Looks like she's in her early twenties."

The healer's expression shifted. "Ah. Yes... she's here."

Trafalgar's chest tightened.

"Take me to her. Now."

The healer led him down a side hallway lined with empty beds.

Most of them were vacant... and in one.

There, lying still beneath a heavy blanket that reached her neck, was Mayla.

Trafalgar crossed the room in three steps, his eyes fixed on her unmoving face. Mayla looked pale—too pale—but peaceful, like she was merely asleep.

He stopped at her side.

"What happened to her?" he asked without turning.

The healer behind him hesitated. "Well..."

Trafalgar's voice rose. "What. Happened?"

"She's in better condition now than when she was brought in," the healer said quickly. "But... she hasn't regained consciousness. We've done what we can. Right now... she's in a coma."

Trafalgar didn't move.

Silence stretched between them.

"The only thing we can do now is wait," the healer added gently.

"...Who?"

The single word was low, sharp as a blade. The mana in the room shifted. The air seemed heavier.

The healer blinked, startled. "Pardon?"

"Who did this?" Trafalgar asked again, louder this time. His aura flared—cold, violent, overflowing with something the healer had never sensed from him before.

Rage.

Real, suffocating, unfiltered rage.

And beneath it... shame.

"This is the Morgain estate," he said through clenched teeth. "You're telling me someone beat a maid into a coma and nobody saw a fucking thing?"

"I—I don't know, young master," the healer stammered.

Trafalgar's eyes flashed.

With a sudden motion, he grabbed the nearest chair and hurled it against the door. The crash echoed through the room. The healer recoiled instinctively.

Then Trafalgar dropped to his knees beside Mayla's bed.

He reached out and took her hand—soft, warm, but lifeless.

"I'm sorry," he whispered. "This is my fault. I wasn't here. But I swear to you... I'll find who did this."

A quiet step echoed behind him.

From the doorway, a voice called out with irritation and amusement.

"Seriously? What's with all the noise? You're not the only patient in here, you know."

Trafalgar turned toward the voice, his expression still clouded with fury.

Elira stood at the doorway, arms crossed, her golden braids glinting with embedded jewels. Her tone was arrogant as always, but when she saw his clenched jaw and the way he held Mayla's hand, her smirk faltered.

"You?" she scoffed. "What are you doing here, bastard?"

She stepped further into the room, boots tapping softly on the cold stone floor. Her eyes flicked to Mayla, to Trafalgar's posture, to the faint trembling in his grip.

'He's... angry? Really angry?'

Elira tilted her head slightly, then let out a small "tch" sound and leaned against the wall.

"If you're looking for who did this, I might be able to help."

Trafalgar slowly looked up, his glare sharp and focused.

Elira continued, uncaring of the tension. "Two people entered your room the day it happened. No one knows who the first was. But the second? He was seen. A soldier. Looked to be in his forties. Black hair. Dark beard."

Trafalgar's entire body tensed.

That description...

One name surged forward in his mind.

'Roland.'

The same bastard whose hand he'd once cut off for touching Mayla.

Trafalgar gently placed Mayla's hand down on the bed, stood up, and without a word, began walking toward the door. His movements were quiet—but lethal.

Elira watched him go with a spark of curiosity in her eyes.

'Oh? Now this might get interesting.'

Trafalgar stormed through the hallways, eyes sharp, his boots pounding against marble with increasing speed. There was only one place someone like Roland would be this time of day: the training grounds.

The back courtyard of the Morgain estate stretched wide, covered in layers of frost and compact snow. Dozens—no, hundreds—of soldiers were out in formation, some sparring, some drilling, some simply watching.

As Trafalgar appeared at the edge of the field, heads turned.

"Hey, look. The young master's back," one soldier muttered.

"Young master? Since when do you call him that?"

"Hasn't missed a single training session for two months. He's been taking Lysandra's regimen head-on," the first said, tone almost impressed. "Guy's not the same weakling anymore. Say what you want, but he's earned some respect."

Trafalgar ignored the whispers.

His hand reached for his weapon—and with a flick of mana, Maledicta appeared in his grasp, the blade glowing with a cold, dark blue hue.

His gaze scanned the training field—until it locked onto one man.

Roland.

Mid-spar. Holding a wooden blade. Wearing the same expressionless discipline as always.

Trafalgar pointed the sword directly at him.

"You. Duel. Now."

Roland froze.

"...Why, young master?"

"You know why." Trafalgar's voice cut like ice. "For what you did to Mayla. Last time, I took your hand for touching what you shouldn't. And I told you then—next time, it wouldn't be just the hand."

A sharp intake of breath rippled through the soldiers.

Some recognized the name. Others recalled the incident.

From the side, a gruff, older man stepped forward. The captain of the guards. Broad-shouldered, with short blond hair and weathered brown eyes.

"Young master. What's going on here?"

"Your man, Roland, put my maid in a coma. I'm giving him a choice. A duel... or execution. Right here. Right now."

Gasps echoed from the ranks.

The captain turned to Roland, voice grim. "Is that true? What the hell did you do?"

Roland paled. "I-I didn't... I swear, I didn't—"

"Enough." Trafalgar raised Maledicta slightly. "I don't care for excuses. Choose, duel or the head."

A beat.

Then Roland straightened, his face twitching with a mix of fear and pride.

"...The duel."