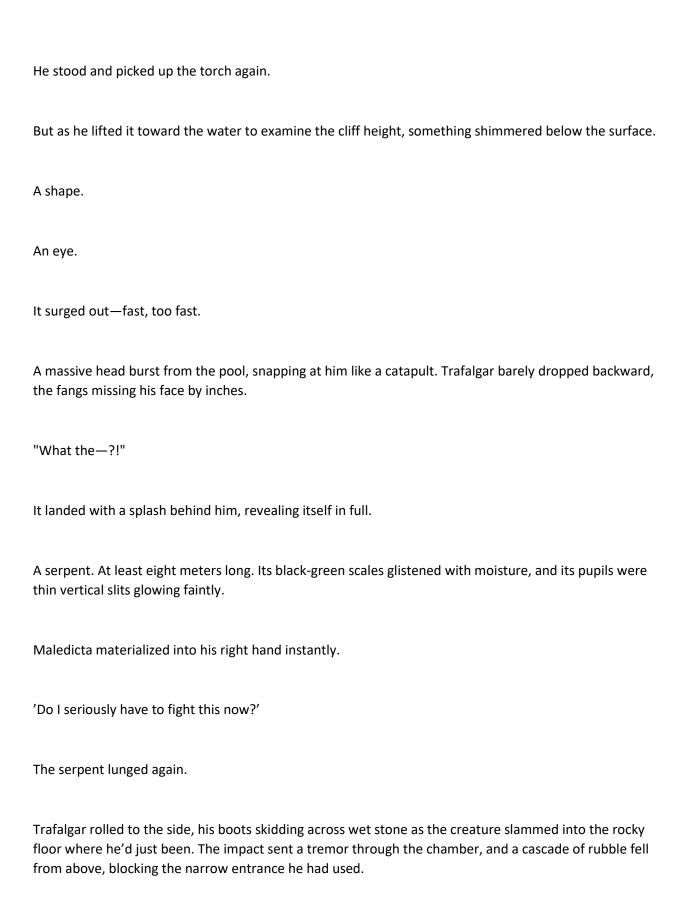
Tyrant 34



'Okay that's doable.'
The other two lunged forward. Trafalgar dashed sideways, forcing them into a narrow passage where they couldn't attack him together. He turned, eyes locking onto the first.
"[Arc Slash]"
A sweeping wave of energy burst from Maledicta, slicing clean through the second crab. As its body dropped, Trafalgar sprinted up its back and vaulted toward the third. The beast never saw it coming.
He dropped onto it from above, ducking under the slicing claw, and shoved his sword straight into the soft spot near its jaw.
The last crab let out a gurgled screech before collapsing.
Trafalgar panted, blood pumping.
"Phew That was close. I get no experience by killing, so it's not like a game at the 100% lame. But damn—this Primordial Body skill is cracked. I feel lighter than ever."
Then he turned.
From the shadows ahead more skittering.
He lifted the torch.
At least fifteen more crabs were crawling from the tunnel walls.
'Oh come on I'm not sticking around for that.'

He dismissed Maledicta, the sword vanishing into thin air, and turned to flee deeper into the cave. As he glanced back, he saw the monsters swarming the fallen, tearing into their own kind.
'Cannibals? Or just starving?'
He didn't wait to find out.
Trafalgar pushed forward, torch in hand, disappearing into the dark.
The deeper Trafalgar went, the quieter the cavern became.
His footsteps echoed against the jagged walls, and the soft crackle of his torch was the only sound accompanying him. Mana crystals embedded along the stone glimmered faintly, casting eerie reflections in the dancing light.
He stopped near a split in the tunnel, chest rising and falling as he caught his breath.
'Should've tried to loot some food shit. No idea if monster meat is edible and water's gonna be a problem too.'
Trafalgar pressed forward. The path narrowed, then gradually widened into a chamber with a low slope. At the far end, he spotted water—still and clear—gathering at the bottom like a natural pool. Beyond it rose a sheer cliff wall, disappearing into darkness.
He exhaled slowly.
'Well water from caves is usually pure, right? I don't exactly have a choice.'
Trafalgar crouched, set the torch carefully down beside him, and joined his hands to scoop some water.
It was cold, but not freezing. He took several sips, letting the chill run through him.



He turned his head.
The tunnel was completely sealed.
'Oh come on'
There was no exit. Just him and the eight-meter-long problem coiling between him and any chance of survival.
"I guess it's you or me, huh?"
The serpent hissed and reared back, its maw opening wide—then sprayed a stream of green venom toward him.
"Shit—!"
Trafalgar threw himself to the left, tucking into a slide across the cavern floor. The venom hissed on impact, melting the stone it touched with terrifying ease.
He coughed. The fumes were sharp and sour.
'Okay, so don't get hit by that.'
Then an idea sparked.
He rushed past the puddle of venom, blade held tight, and dragged Maledicta's edge through the bubbling sludge. A fine layer of toxin clung to the steel.
He grinned.

'I hope you don't melt.'
Torch in one hand, he brought the flame to the slick-coated blade.
Whoosh.
Maledicta ignited.
A streak of fire raced along the sword's edge, crackling with sickly green flame where venom met heat.
'It worked. Fuck yeah!'
He turned toward the serpent as it surged again, jaws wide and eyes wild.
And this time—
He met it head-on.