

Tyrant 34

Chapter 34: A Burning Surprise

Trafalgar gritted his teeth as the three crab-like creatures inched forward, their glossy black shells gleaming under the flickering torchlight. Each one was the size of a small cart, their jagged mana crystals pulsating faintly with energy.

He raised the torch in one hand, waving it toward them.

"Back off," he muttered, but they didn't flinch.

'Guess that was too optimistic.'

With a sharp breath, he lunged forward and slashed Maledicta at one of the creatures. The blade struck the mana crystal on its back—and bounced off with a loud clang. But something odd happened: the monster staggered backward from the sheer force of impact.

'Did it actually recoil from that? Is my strength that high now?'

A blur of motion.

One of the crab's massive pincers came crashing toward him.

Trafalgar jumped, boots slamming onto the wide claw. Without hesitation, he drove Maledicta into the creature's eye, twisting the blade deep.

A shriek—wet and raw.

The crab collapsed.

'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 stood and picked up the torch again.

But as he lifted it toward the water to examine the cliff height, something shimmered below the surface.

A shape.

An eye.

It surged out—fast, too fast.

A massive head burst from the pool, snapping at him like a catapult. Trafalgar barely dropped backward, the fangs missing his face by inches.

"What the—?!"

It landed with a splash behind him, revealing itself in full.

A serpent. At least eight meters long. Its black-green scales glistened with moisture, and its pupils were thin vertical slits glowing faintly.

Maledicta materialized into his right hand instantly.

'Do I seriously have to fight this now?'

The serpent lunged again.

Trafalgar rolled to the side, his boots skidding across wet stone as the creature slammed into the rocky floor where he'd just been. The impact sent a tremor through the chamber, and a cascade of rubble fell from above, blocking the narrow entrance he had used.

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.