

Tyrant 93

Chapter 93: The Maze of Trials

Trafalgar stood at a crossroads, surrounded by endless passages. In front of him, behind him, and to both sides—nothing but corridors twisting into the unknown. He exhaled slowly, realizing he had no real sense of direction.

A familiar voice echoed through the labyrinth, clear and authoritative.

"It slipped my mind to mention the rules, forgive me," Kaelen, the mage from earlier, announced. "Here is the situation and your objective. From where we are, we can see you directly. What we want to observe is how you endure against monsters and unexpected situations. Do not worry—none of the creatures here exceed the Flow Core rank. If you are weaker, you will have to form teams or avoid them. Of course, you may also fight each other. Everything is permitted."

The voice carried a slight amusement.

"You will not die. If I see any of you in true danger, you will be removed immediately. Additionally, every one of you has an invisible shield around your body that prevents fatal wounds. So, enjoy yourselves. Your goal is simple: reach the center of the labyrinth. Once there, you will be teleported back. You have eight hours to complete the trial. This entire place is my creation, so you need not worry about its nature. Depending on your performance, we will assign you auxiliary classes beyond the one you chose. Naturally, some will be basic—what is the point of a mage learning swordsmanship, after all? Good luck."

'Good luck, yes... thanks a lot,' Trafalgar thought dryly. 'Eight hours of wandering around and fighting monsters. What a joy.'

With nothing else to go on, he decided to head straight ahead. Why not? He had no clue where he was, so blind exploration was all he had.

He raised his hand and invoked an item. A warm glow materialized instantly. [Blazewick Torch – Common Rank]

The torch appeared in his grip, its flame brighter than the dim, half-dead torches embedded into the walls.

'Better than stumbling in the dark,' he muttered inwardly, adjusting his grip.

But there was something else he wanted to check. He focused, and another item's information appeared in his vision:

[Shadowhide Leather Armor – Rare Rank]

— +25% chance to blend into surrounding darkness

— +10% damage protection against monsters

'Not bad for something the academy provides... does it have a proper description like the others?'

He scrolled the text.

[Item forged specifically for Velkaris Academy.]

'...That's it? Nothing fancy.'

The torch flickered as he began to walk deeper into the maze.

The sound of footsteps echoed faintly down the corridor. They weren't heavy like a beast's lumbering gait, humanlike.

Trafalgar halted, lowering the torch slightly. His eyes narrowed.

The figure came into view: a Lycan. From the look of his movements, he had the ability to shift into something far larger, far more dangerous.

Trafalgar stayed quiet, watching. He knew better than to trust strangers here. But the glow of his torch betrayed him—the Lycan caught sight of his shadow stretching along the stone.

A rough voice broke the silence. "I can see you."

'Shit.'

Without hesitation, Trafalgar made the torch vanish, summoning Maledicta into his hand. The blade shimmered faintly, eager to bite.

"Why don't you come out and greet me properly?" the Lycan pressed, his tone gruff.

Trafalgar kept his silence. He had no interest in small talk.

The man's patience thinned quickly. His steps grew louder as he closed in, eyes narrowing with irritation.

In that moment, Trafalgar shifted. [Severance Step.]

The air cracked faintly as he reappeared behind the Lycan, Maledicta poised. His strike came fast, angling toward the man's side.

But claws burst forth in an instant—the Lycan's arm reshaping mid-motion. He caught the blade, deflecting it with a harsh parry. His form began to swell, bones cracking, fur sprouting as the beast inside him forced its way out.

Trafalgar's eyes sharpened. 'Transforming right in front of me? Idiot.'

Before the shift could complete, Trafalgar swung again. [Severing Fang.]

A diagonal arc tore through the half-changed body, Maledicta cleaving through light itself. The Lycan didn't bleed—his body shimmered and dissolved into radiant fragments, scattering before vanishing entirely.

Trafalgar lowered his blade.

'I never understood that mindset. Why leave yourself vulnerable in front of an enemy? And why would I let him transform completely for honor? Ha, it makes me laugh.'

With no trace of blood left behind, it was as if the fight hadn't happened at all. Trafalgar simply kept walking, Maledicta still in hand, his steps echoing deeper into the labyrinth.

Trafalgar wandered deeper into the maze. The air felt dense, rich with energy, and the silence was broken only by the occasional growl or screech.

From the shadows, a group of goblins scurried out, weapons no more than rusted daggers and crude clubs. A pair of wolves padded close behind them, teeth bared.

Trafalgar didn't bother with his skills. One swing, one thrust, and the creatures fell one after another. They dissolved into light just like the Lycan had, vanishing without a trace.

He dismissed Maledicta, resting the blade back into nothingness. His eyes scanned the dim corridor. The flicker of mana here was almost tangible—it brushed against his skin like static.

'This labyrinth... it's saturated. If I sit here and pull in enough mana, it'll be more useful than wasting time killing weaklings.'

He found a dark corner, the shadows hugging the walls. With the [Shadowhide Leather Armor] boosting his concealment, he felt confident enough to stay hidden.

Lowering himself to the floor, he crossed his legs and closed his eyes. His breathing slowed, deliberate. The energy in the air bent toward him, threads of mana flowing steadily into his core.

His Primordial Body absorbed it eagerly, refining it, channeling it into strength.

'Training by fighting might polish my skills, but this... this is efficiency. If I want to catch up to the nobles—those who awaken at three years old—I need every advantage I can take. Most of them are already at the third or even fourth core. I can't afford to trail behind.'

The silence stretched. Hours slipped by as Trafalgar remained in meditation, submerged in the pull of mana, his body drinking from the labyrinth's abundance.

Only when a strange sound reached his ears did his eyes snap open.

It wasn't footsteps.

It wasn't growls.

It was sharper.

Metal clashing against metal.

Trafalgar's brows furrowed. 'No... not quite. That doesn't sound like steel at all.'

He rose quietly, brushing the dust from his clothes, and let the shadows peel away from him.

He moved toward the source of the sound.