

Oracle 544

Chapter 544 - Frantic Escape

At this very moment, their camp was one of the most outlying. This distance had been a precaution against the three factions, but now it might spell their doom.

Jake had no time for hesitation. If they just stood there, they would be the first to suffer the wrath of this huge horde. If these highly evolved Digestors caught up with them, even he doubted he could protect himself. Let alone taking care of these refugees...

It went without saying that if they didn't get the hell out of there, the most optimistic amount of survivors after their arrival would be counted on the fingers of one hand.

Perhaps it was because animals have keener senses than humans, but the felines' fur bristled in unison as their usually placid gaze turned westward. Mufasa and Shere Khan were no exception, and they subconsciously snarled westward in warning.

Crunch didn't even hide his fright and had already trotted hurriedly to his master with his short legs (in proportion to his size). Cuddling up to Jake in search of comfort, he received only a vigorous kick in return for his affection. This had the desired effect, though, and the big black cat stopped sticking to him like a sissy.

"Can't you show a little courage?" Jake lectured him, as he firmly pressed his palm against his whisker to keep him at bay. "Duchess is watching you, you know?"

Upon understanding his last remark, Crunch's ears perked up in panic and he turned his head in all directions looking for his crush. Unfortunately, what he feared was true and the female leopard had witnessed his cowardly display.

"Meow..."

Disappointed, Crunch stopped begging for attention and got into a fighting stance alongside the other felines. Seeing the felines form the rear guard, posture prostrate and staring westward, even the slowest refugees caught on and realized something was wrong. Their bombastic confidence immediately waned and they remembered the command their leader had just issued.

"Oh my god..."

"I think this time we're screwed..."

"Speak for yourself... I'm sure with my new powers I can take out a thousand monsters by myself!"

"Yeah... I remember you said the same thing during the last attack, but in the end you almost died after killing 13 of them..."

"Shit, you've seen that ?! I thought I could take that secret to my grave..."

All sorts of murmurs and comments erupted among the refugees, but it was obvious from their tone that many had not yet taken the threat in full. With large veins twitching on his forehead, Jake felt his anger rising and he shouted harshly to the crowd,

"Shut up and move your ass! I'm leaving now. Those who are late will be left to their own devices and trust me you don't want to run into what's coming!"

These refugees were a little slow on the uptake, but they weren't complete idiots. When they saw their leader lose his cool and turn his back on them without hesitation they abandoned their last misgivings and shoved everything they could into the Faction Vault. It was a good thing they hadn't set up camp or they would have been forced to leave most of their belongings behind.

If there was one refugee even more responsive than Crunch, it was the scammer. The con man hadn't questioned his order once, and had already bolted off in the opposite direction from the felines. At least regarding his survival instinct, it could be considered top notch.

Jake held back an exasperated sigh as this unpredictable human beat him to it and took off again. Launching a full range scan, a strange light flashed behind his pupils as he interpreted the immense data influx and he shouted loudly again,

"The horde will be here in 48 seconds. We must reach the three factions before then. Follow this trajectory."

Each refugee then received a notification with a highly realistic three-dimensional map of the surrounding area and a path of light showing them the way. Augmented reality light arrows appeared before their eyes, temporarily replacing their disabled Shadow Guides to point the way.

Mufasa and Shere Khan maintained their tough stance, but inwardly they felt a deep relief knowing that they did not have to watch the refugees' backs. They too were not confident of defeating the coming enemies.

With an earth-shaking roar, Mufasa gave a final warning to the fast-approaching horde, and then by unspoken agreement he and the other felines galloped off to the east, overtaking the refugees already running as fast as they could in the blink of an eye.

Seconds later, hundreds of thousands of birds flying in from the west darkened the sky, and the ground shook as tens of thousands of ruminants and creatures of various kinds rushed towards them.

Among these animals were huge alien predators, insects as big as cars, and giant snakes long and wide enough to wrap themselves around a skyscraper.

To survive in Digestor territory for so long, each of these creatures, whether carnivorous, herbivorous, warlike or peaceful, had to have excellent qualities and dispositions. Even if these beasts were not exceptionally strong, they must have had at least one unique skill that ensured their survival, such as lightning speed, supernatural stealth, or perhaps their flesh tasted so foul that even the Digestors did not want it.

Whatever the case, what they all had in common at that moment was that these beasts were stampeding towards them with tongues hanging out and desperate eyes with the horde of Digestors at their heels. Both predators and preys were galloping side by side with the same objective: to flee.

From the air, Jake got the ugly impression that these Digestors were fishermen who had decided to reel in their nets, or shepherds gathering their flocks in one place to better kill them.

He wasn't the only one who thought so, but unlike him, these high-level Evolvers knew what was going on. Giving their series of orders calmly, their troops set off in an orderly fashion and marched toward the huge spiral rocky prominence.

Seeing them do so, Jake needed no more to imitate them. If human civilization had been able to go so far, it was by relying on the shoulders of giants and wise men who had marked history. Otherwise, it had to be said that the majority of humans did not even know how to light a fire or explain how a light bulb works.

Although he was ignorant and subject to the censorship of the Oracle System, he could depend on those people who were better informed than he was to carve a way out.

[Shameless...] Xi huffed in a low-voice.

' Hmm? Tell me if you want me to die, okay?' Jake snapped in vexation, too tense wondering how they were going to survive the next ten minutes to care about the method and feelings of his AI Oracle.

Having just been rebuffed, Xi felt the urge to retaliate, but she remembered their situation and refrained. She would deal with him later.

Luckily, Jake had overestimated the difficulty of the task. Racing toward the rocky prominence without alarming the three factions or any of the other groups hiding in the forest proved incredibly simple.

Each of the refugees was obedient and much stronger and enduring than before, and without having to worry about the noise they were making they could finally give free rein to their newfound strength.

For many, this was the first time they had been given the opportunity to sprint at 100% capacity and the feeling was just too exhilarating to pass up. The gratifying rush of adrenaline that went through their heads almost made them forget about the horde of Digestors chasing them.

The few kilometers of distance were crossed in a few dozen seconds, but in the meantime the Digestors had gotten dangerously close. They were only a few hundred meters away, a gap that these monsters could close in a few seconds.

Fortuitously, and unfortunately for the creatures behind them, the first scapegoats were the animals that were running amok. Howls, bellowing and roars of agony echoed from the back of the herd and it felt like a whiplash to the remaining animals. Realizing that it was now or never, their muscles surged with renewed energy and they suddenly sped up as if they had gone into a frenzy.

Forget the Digestors, when these refugees saw the huge beasts catching up to them at a great pace, some with teeth as long as their swords, they experienced the same surge of terror and their running speed also picked up markedly.

Grateful, Jake was almost moved to compassion by the noble gesture of these beasts, but he quickly dismissed this thought. Right now, it was his faction or them.

Ten seconds later, the bulk of the horde caught up with the faster Digestors and finally collided fully with the rear of the calvacading herd of beasts. Thousands of creatures were slaughtered and eviscerated in an instant and thousands of Aetheric signatures were extinguished in one fell swoop.

Nevertheless, it was enough. Jake and his group reached the three factions' campground and without skipping a beat pushed past it before their stunned eyes. The black orc was not so bossy and unlike Jake, the three leaders had given the order to set up camp a little earlier.

They thought they had some time to spare, but because of this they were caught off guard when they saw millions of beasts and digestors bursting out of the forest. In a panic, they were forced to abandon all their possessions on the spot and immediately started running in the same direction as Jake and his group.

Now it was four factions and a herd of assorted beasts fleeing in the same direction.