

Oracle 556

Chapter 556 - I Will Join With This Guy

This whale knew its stuff. Not trying to hide it, even Jake was tempted by the words of the huge cetacean. If it hadn't been his intention from the start to explore the dungeon, he might have considered himself seduced by these words.

Sweeping his eyes over the other refugees, he saw that he was not the only one who was convinced. From the most hardened Evolvers to the most cowardly of the refugees, they all had eyes that sparkled with fearless ambition. Even the expression of the hustler in his group, who had long been written off as the most wimpy of the bunch, was filled with a kind of fanatical resolve.

Jake was aware that something was wrong, for the promise of rewards would not have been enough to convince these men unanimously to risk their lives. Will, who had begun to sweet-talk a band of promising beasts, also paused and confirmed his doubts, his face tense with frustration,

"This whale is using a Charisma-based Spell." He spat out rancidly. "Its effects actually negate mine, I just checked."

The businessman then proceeded to explain to them with a dejected look the way Charisma Aether works.

This disclosure was like a cold shower for Jake, Kyle and Svava who were standing not far from the businessman. Even with 1,000 points of Charisma Aether, Will still needed to focus his efforts on a small group of creatures to hopefully tame them, and the more he spread his magic around, the longer it would take to get results.

In comparison, this giant whale was just talking telepathically in their heads, touching the minds of the entire crowd without showing the slightest sign of fatigue. Even worse, there was really no evidence of an Aether or Soul Spell being activated. If this monster wasn't an exceptional Aetherist, then perhaps the influence this whale's voice had over them was only from its Charisma or Charm Aether stat.

According to Will, these kinds of stats had little or no effect on a species too different from their own. Beauty or charm depended on definite physical characteristics such as symmetry, health or body proportion, but they were also subjective. A person with a fetish for black or Asian people would be hard pressed to be attracted to a white person, no matter how gorgeous, and vice versa.

The Charisma Aether passively amplified the natural charisma of the individual, but this was done by magnifying the emotional impact of concrete attributes such as their beauty, style, voice, or speech and body language. A person who was judged to be ugly would get little return, even with 1000,000 points.

Of course, this was only if they did nothing special to impress and win the affection of their audience. Even a disfigured person could be judged charismatic or eloquent, have friends and even be deemed an excellent leader. Any detail or deed that could generate positive feedback in an audience was invariably amplified by Charisma Aether.

The most glaring evidence of this was that most democratically elected politicians were rarely handsome. On the contrary, they were often of advanced age or overweight. It was clear that beauty alone was not the answer to determining an individual's charisma.

Accordingly, Will took great care in his appearance and attire to maximize his results. He was also an expert in negotiation and communication. His biggest regret was that he was, regrettably, at most above average physically. A model or a singer would have made much better use of this Aether than he did.

What many people didn't know was that Charisma Aether was a more dangerous energy than Charm Aether. If not controlled properly, it could even cause counterproductive reactions in the audience. If someone infused their vocal cords with Charisma Aether, but then used their voice to insult the crowd, the resulting hatred would probably be worse than if they had directly slit their parents' throats before their very eyes.

That's why most of the time Will would carefully control his Charisma Aether and channel it around one of his internal organs away from the public eye. This answered the mystery of why Jake hadn't felt the sting of his Charisma stat in a long time.

It also accounted for Will's helplessness against the beast horde a few moments earlier. Maybe he wasn't totally helpless, but placating all those creatures was definitely out of his reach.

Even if he could achieve that, it would still be venturing into the realm of Charisma-based Aether Spells. Will's reserved demeanor had already hinted that he knew at least one, but he clearly wasn't about to use it here.

In comparison, this whale was making no particular effort to beguile thousands of beasts and Evolvers of a different species from his own. There were no other whales here and that made this performance even more impressive.

As one would expect from a High-Ranked Evolver Beast, they could not be evaluated by their lower-ranked Evolvers criteria. Good thing for them, this whale wasn't the only high-rank beast.

"Hey Crygo! Don't tell me you've forgotten we were here? The venerable Crygo doesn't intend to hog all those Evolvers unfairly, does he?"

The creature that had just spoken, with a voice as deep and booming as a thunderous rumbling, had the morphology of a large horned lizard about fifty meters long covered in gleaming white scales with silver highlights. Its muscular legs were stocky with long curved claws and the top of its skull, shoulders, spine and tail were reinforced by thick natural armor all made of horns and natural bumps. Its long tail ended in a three-pronged staked mass weighing at least a ton, truly making this beast a predatory apex in any environment.

If one were to stretch the point, this lizard could be given the embarrassing title of wingless dragon. Although disparaging, such a label was not to be taken lightly. Even if this beast was unable to fly, it was undoubtedly capable of slaughtering them all in an instant at the first bit of impertinence.

Besides, the whale named Crygo seemed to be aware of it because it went silent immediately after. The two monsters then stood still, glaring at each other, and many Evolvers perceived an intense spiritual flow connecting the minds of the two beasts.

Seeing her two rivals secretly conspiring, the High-Rank Beast, who had been silent until then, cawed scornfully,

"Crygo, White Drake, I don't like it when people conspire in front of my eyes. Whatever you say to each other, I will be very unhappy if I learn that you have deliberately kept me out of the loop."

Backing up her rebuke with a quick flap of her wings and an incisive scowl, a hurricane blew violently through the cavern, the ceiling even threatening to collapse. The refugees and normal creatures, who had learned their lesson with the Taotie, had long since distanced themselves from these humongous creatures and this time they escaped with only a few scratches.

At least this third creature could be considered a wonder of nature. It was a large peacock-like bird with wings spread out to forty meters in span and feathers of sapphire and lapis lazuli hues. Its egret fluttered hypnotically with the lingering breeze of its own wind, while the dark gold ocelli of its fan-shaped tail was so engrossing it would swallow their souls if they were to peer into them for too long. Even her voice was pleasant to hear, reminiscent of the sultry, whimsical voice of a young, still somewhat immature seductress.

This bird may have been much smaller than the other two beasts, but when they perceived its bad mood, they chuckled uncomfortably and stopped their suspicious interaction. In any case, Crygo had already achieved his goal with his speech.

With a little more time, he could have recruited them all, but he knew from the start that the other high-rank Evolvers wouldn't let him. His real plan was just to convince them to explore the dungeon. It was easy once that step was accomplished to share those recruits equally with his other competitors.

"Don't worry Darkplume, I had no intention of forcing anyone to follow me." The whale apologized melodramatically before addressing the crowd again. "We don't have any more time to waste, the Oracle Guardians could arrive at any moment. If you want to explore this Dungeon Digestor, it's now or never. DarkPlume, White Drake, and I will each form a group that you are free to join. While I do not pledge to protect you, nor do I prioritize your survival over mine, keep in mind that there are enemies you are obviously not in a position to fight."

The huge Crygo then turned to the two remaining High-Rank Evolvers and swore respectfully at the Black Orc,

"Urul Tak, your faction will form a fourth group. Those who wish to join you are obviously free to do so."

As he said these last words, the whale's gaze fell on the Shaktiak and Melkree factions, attributing the physical proximity of their members to their close diplomatic ties. Then he turned to the remaining High-Rank Evolver who had not spoken a word since the beginning:

The mysterious veiled woman.

"As for you... Forgive me for my rudeness, but I don't know who you are. Without a good reason, I am afraid I am not willing to let you lead a fifth group. You are of course more than welcome to join one of us. A High-Rank Evolver like yourself would be a valuable addition."

Despite her muteness, Crygo could recognize a competitor. Her Aether fluctuations left no doubt as to her true power. This demure woman was undoubtedly a formidable opponent.

His politeness was sincere, but that didn't mean he feared her. The huge whale was not a commonplace creature and wanted to at least know what this humanoid female was capable of before depriving themselves of some of the refugees.

At that moment, a leaden silence fell in the cave and the energy level surged around both the whale and the veiled woman, foreshadowing an apocalyptic fight. Eventually, the mysterious young woman withdrew her aura first, defusing the oppressive tension with a giggle.

"I'm fine with your suggestion.. I will join with this guy."