

Oracle 563

Chapter 563 - Something Has Gone Wrong

As the crowd's gaze fell on the lifeless bodies of those two sturdy Evolvers who were still bursting with vitality just seconds earlier, all the Fourth-Ordeal Evolvers who had just successfully returned fire from the balconies turned pale with fright. It could have been them.

The other refugees, already struggling to survive, stumbled away over the dead bodies of their comrades, leaving the capable Evolvers to hold the line. The irony was that they were supposed to be cannonfodders for these Evolvers, but none of them were actually paying any attention to the refugees who were currently trudging away.

It wasn't because they didn't want to, but because they couldn't. On the two unbroken balconies, several enemies were staring at them coldly with deep apathy: The culprits of those two murders.

One of them was a grey orc with pointed ears and slit pupils equipped with a long ashen wooden bow and a light armor made of silver chitin. Less than two meters tall, he was bald and not much more pleasing to the eye than the other goblins.

The other one looked like an old man, except that his mage's robe, skin and hair were also a batrachian gray, as if they had been molded from the same piece of clay. His pupils showed a faint silver glow, betraying his Digestor ancestry. His outstretched hand pointed a long silver stick at them, its top still sizzling with filaments of purple lightning.

Oblivious to what was happening on those balconies, Bhuzkoc and his bodyguard were savagely exterminating the army of goblin soldiers before them. Compared to the helpless archers on the balconies, these goblin digestors were quite tough, their strength approaching that of the Myrtharian Nerds refugees with their maxed out Aether stats, the Myrtharian Body passive and the United We Stand buff.

If they had been normal refugees, the casualties would have been catastrophically high, with the battle inevitably ending in a blowout defeat. They would have been lucky if a quarter of them had managed to escape with all their limbs.

Fortunately for them, the refugees in Bhuzkoc's service had been so terrified by the barrage of arrows and javelins that they had already fled to Shaktilar's army, which was taking great pleasure in blocking their path with its own men.

Yet, these goblin soldiers were still easy opponents for these Evolvers. Even at one against one hundred, their chance of winning was almost certain. The only downside to these creatures was that they shared the same irrational recklessness common to other Digestors.

When a normal Evolver would have chosen to avoid or protect itself from a deadly or maiming blow, these goblins didn't care about the consequences, going for broke to take their opponents down with them. Several Nawai Evolvers were taken by surprise by underestimating the fanaticism of these little aliens, suffering serious injuries. If not for their immense Constitution and Vitality, some might have died.

However, although victory seemed within reach, Bhuzkoc and his officers were growing more and more restless. Something weird was happening around them. When a goblin Digestor was about to die, another goblin Digestor would suddenly stab its heart, ending its life before an Evolver could do it.

Each time this happened, the criminal's attributes would increase dramatically. Its speed, strength, intelligence, and even the finesse of its martial skills would all receive a comprehensive boost.

Bhuzkoc saw clearly how after almost decapitating a goblin wielding a short sword, how a second goblin armed with an axe hacked it in half from behind. The next moment, this axe-wielding goblin picked up its dead comrade's sword with its free hand and began to expertly wield both weapons.

"Damn it!" Chief Nawai gritted his teeth in fury as he brought his axe down with all his might on the two-armed goblin.

Before impact, his body and weapon began to glow, emitting an intense reddish radiance, then the speed of that axe abruptly doubled before splitting its target in two, releasing a blinding explosion of Aether and guts.

As he revelled in the silvery blood of his victim raining down on him, Bhuzkoc gasped with indignation as a third goblin, having finished off three of its kinsmen, snuck into his blind spot to strike the jaded and helpless young woman he was fiercely protecting. Of course, this woman was none other than Maeve.

"You dare!"

Kyle, who was safely across the hall, was watching everything that was happening with growing anxiety, his gaze riveted on his sister and her protector. While he hated Bhuzkoc with all his soul, he couldn't help but pray that he could move just a little faster to intercept that Digestor.

Unable to remain indifferent, Jake extended an arm in front of him and gripped the air, snapping the neck of this sneaky goblin without even budging from his position. The playboy gave him a grateful look, while Bhuzkoc only snorted, refusing to admit that he had just been helped.

'So what if she dies? I have other slaves'

As he immersed himself again in the battle, a new twist broke his optimism. The ten Digestor goblin generals and their mounts, who had been observing the battle until then, suddenly sprang into action.

With breathtaking speed, they charged into the crowd, cooperating with uncanny efficiency to surround the weakest Evolver, who was standing far from his comrades. Although he hastily defended himself by erecting an energy barrier around him, it was no match for one of these aliens.

This unnaturally fast Digestor, shrouded in a red halo, burst through the barrier as if it didn't exist, and then lunged at him, biting fiercely at his carotid artery. Its silver eyes turned red and a swallowing sound was heard. The body of this Nawai warrior then began to wither away, becoming a dehydrated husk of skin in a matter of seconds.

With his experience and stats, this Fourth-Ordeal Evolver had not stopped resisting until the last moment. If those ten Digestors hadn't cooperated so perfectly, exploiting his blind spots to harass him and occupy his arms and legs, how could he have let a goblin suck all his blood out? Alas, it was too late for regrets.

After this first successful assassination, the ten goblin generals chose their second target, another spear-wielding Nawai warrior who had made the mistake of straying too far from the rest of the group. Before he could react, his body was dissected into a dozen pieces by one of the generals with long, scorching claws.

"I don't like this. Something has gone wrong." Will muttered as he nervously backed away toward the enemy-free tunnel behind them.

His dragon Charizard licked his face to reassure him, but the stench he breathed almost made him vomit instead. The baby dragon was now the proud captain of a squad of five beasts that Will had managed to convince to follow.

The first creature was a scale-covered calf without much potential, likely to be a liability in the future. The second was a huge brown vulture the size of a horse with two pairs of wings and two pairs of eyes. The third was an alien beast resembling a sort of red sea urchin floating in the air, its lack of orifices and facial muscles preventing it from being properly gauged.

The fourth was a chimerical creature worth looking at, the size of an adult elephant with an appearance borrowed from felines, ursids and spiders. Its numerous hairy and agile legs ending in six pads and claws, as well as its multiple eyes and mandibles made this monster quite terrifying.

Finally, the fifth creature was a large multicolored cobra the size of a python that Charizard had put on like a scarf. Apart from the first and third beasts whose usefulness seemed questionable, the other three clearly had decent fighting potential, especially the chimera.

Seeing that Will was cautiously retreating, they didn't hesitate for a second and gathered around him to prepare to flee. The Myrtharian Nerds refugees were baffled by their vice-leader's strange behavior, but they had learned to fully trust his instincts over the past few days.

Since Jake was letting Will retreat, they concluded that they had better do the same.

"Follow Will. He's right, something is wrong. On my signal, you run away into the tunnel from where we came here." Jake ordered telepathically with a tone of urgency.

It was the only confirmation they needed to abandon their reluctance. The refugees gathered in good order around Will and the tunnel entrance to prepare to leave.

As the battle with the goblin digestors on the balconies enjoyed a brief lull after their near eradication, the gray orc archer slowly lowered his bow and declared icily, his voice booming like a drum in their heads.

"You broke the rules! You must follow the rules!"

Jake and the other Evolvers reacted in various ways, but Urul Tak was dismayed to receive this call to order. A short-lived confusion appeared on his face, quickly replaced by understanding, then anger.

'If I find the fucker who did this, I swear I'll inflict one thousand and one orc punishments on him!'

"Good, if you know why we're here, I guess all these precautions have become useless." The black orc retorted solemnly with a sinister glint in his eyes. "A shame you're such poor copies. No matter how

talented this Nexus is, you can't prepare a counter measure in such a short time. I'll have to see if you have what it takes to stop me."

Jake couldn't make sense of the words, but he could sense the Black Orc's change of intent toward them. His hair bristling as he detected mortal danger, he yelled to his men,

"Run!"

It was the word they had been waiting for! Will, his creatures, and the other refugees immediately sprinted down the tunnel behind them, leaving the other factions to fend for themselves without looking back. Svava also followed them after exchanging a nod with Jake. Only Kyle remained behind with an infectious anguish on his face.

"What about my sister?" He asked anxiously.

"I'll take care of it." Jake promised.

His promise was rather simple. If he could wring the neck of one of those goblin digestors from a distance, snatching Maeve away in the heat of this chaotic battle was a cinch. In a tenth of a second, Jake used his new Teleportation Skill twice.

One to pop up next to a shocked Maeve, and another to return to his previous position. Bhuzkoc, who was battling three goblin generals, didn't notice any of this and by the time he did, Jake was long gone.

"When?!"

Bhuzkoc searched for the culprit with an all-consuming hatred, but it did not last, for he and his usually fearless men were suddenly seized by a spasm of inexplicable terror. When they turned to the cause of this unaccountable fright, their eyes locked on a familiar black figure.

Urul Tak!