

## Oracle 571

### Chapter 571 - Whoever It Is, Thank You

They all ignored her and she understood why the next second. The earthquake intensified and she heard the dull clatter of trees being violently felled by absolute force. The sounds of heavy footsteps came closer, getting louder and louder, and when one last tree shattered, she finally enjoyed the unwelcome privilege of meeting the creature that had been terrifying them.

Quadrupedal, about seven meters long and borrowing traits from tigers and dragons, its ferocity was matched only by its appetite. The beast had no lower jaw, but its dangling jaw sucked up trees, rocks, bushes and goblin digestors like a vacuum cleaner. Nothing escaped its suction power.

'A Taotie!' Svava drew a cold breath as she recognized the monster.

A Taotie Digestor! The scales of this one were not emerald green like the huge Taotie they had seen at the entrance to the Dungeon, and its four evil eyes were not golden either. However, its grayish scales and the silver glow in its eyes left no doubt as to its origins.

Even if this monster was a pale copy of the original, the potential was there. Svava especially noted that even though the Digestors seemed immune to fear, they were apparently capable of fearing some of their fellow monsters.

And rightly so!

This Taotie Digestor didn't care who its prey was. Its boundless gluttony prevented it from thinking of anything else but eating. Humanoids were its favorite food, and these goblins did the trick until it found something better to munch on.

Staring at the mythological monster rapidly approaching her hideout with the destructive momentum of a tank, Svava began to seriously freak out. Given the suction power of that nightmarish mouth, she and her bush would be devoured instantly as soon as they entered its range.

She was still badly hurt and unable to run, but if she stayed there, she didn't think she'd be safe. She tried to summon a Shadow Raven, but her face contorted in dismay as she found that her shadow was not responding. Looking down, she discovered that the shadow had already been swallowed by the monster!

This discovery chilled her blood, making her realize how ignorant she was. The powers of this thing were so mystical that they literally flouted the laws of physics.

The monster slowly nearing closer, she panicked, her forehead and hands sweaty, before going for broke.

"Faction Vitality Link."

She immediately paid the 600,000 Aether points and prayed that the other Myrtharian Nerds would agree to share their Vitality with her. A few agreed at once, but not nearly enough to heal her wounds in time. The other members were also facing great peril.

Steadfast, she gritted her teeth and hopped out of her bush, limping as best she could in the opposite direction of the monster. At the same time, she uncorked a precious canteen of Rank 7 Digestor Blood and gulped it down. The potent brew was effective and she managed to pick up her pace markedly without aggravating her fractures.

By channeling all of her Constitution, Strength and Vitality Aether into one leg, she could achieve some stupendous leaps, but it would have consequences that were hard to gauge for the rest of her body. It was rarely a good idea to lower the Aether stats of one part of her body below that of the Aether Density.

With her entire body damaged, if she shifted too much Aether, it was possible for her heart to give out or worse, she could pass out.

As the woman suddenly jumped out of the bush, the silvery gleam in the Taotie's eyes shimmered voraciously, and the monster suddenly galloped forth. In two strides, the beast was already on her.

'Shit, I'm dead !' She cursed, rummaging through her Space Storage, then the Faction Vault to pull out all the grenades in her possession.

With a few deft throws, they all disappeared into the monster's mouth and a series of muffled explosions detonated inside it. The Taotie Digestor stopped momentarily, giving her several precious seconds of respite, then coughed up a cloud of black smoke before starting moving again, this time staggering slightly.

Even stunned and injured, this monster was still able to catch up with her in a few strides. In fact, the gluttonous creature only staggered for a few seconds before trotting forward, then galloping again as if nothing had happened. If not for its slowness, she would have been in his stomach long ago.

Just when she thought she was really screwed, the miracle she had hoped for finally happened. Someone accepted the transfer of wounds. Instantly, the multiple fractures and lesions crippling her body vanished, her body regaining its former youthful beauty and perfection.

For Svava, who no longer had any faith, she was so overwhelmed that she tripped over a branch in front of her, rolling several meters before getting back on her feet, her face pink with joy.

"Whoever it is, thank you!"

Among the Myrtharian Nerds, there were only Jake, Sigmar, Drastan, and possibly Kevin capable of immediately accepting an injury transfer without even knowing the severity of those injuries. Besides these members, Mufasa and Shere Khan were also possible candidates.

Sigmar and Kevin were not familiar with her and Drastan had no real reason to sacrifice himself for her. The felines barely used their Oracle Device, so whether Mufasa or Shere Khan saved her was even less likely.

By deduction, it could only be Jake. Her wounds healed, she dashed off, escaping the monster's suction range in a flash.

Without looking back, she bolted into the tall grass to hide her presence, then changed direction again to let the Taotie continue its chase back toward the goblins.

Out of the woods, she thought back to the cozy feeling the Vitality Link gave her and realized they had underestimated this Skill Faction. When they had connected their vitality to hers, the Vitality Aether flow had told her their position. She could also roughly tell which direction Jake was headed.

Weighing the pros and cons, she finally decided to head toward one of the other refugees who had transferred their Vitality to her. If Jake could accept her injuries without batting an eyelid, he wasn't in any danger at the moment.

She was more concerned about these new members. If she could find Ingranus, Kelly and Khal in the process, that would be great.

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Will frowned as he received the notification that Svara had activated the Vitality Link. Unlike the other refugees, he had handled the roller-coaster through the tunnels beautifully. In addition to riding his Charizard dragon, four of the five creatures he had tamed were positioned in tight formation around him.

Funnily enough, the scale-covered calf didn't make it. Wherever it was in the Dungeon, it was most likely dead.

If his beasts were Myrtharian Nerds, he could have sacrificed one to save Svara, but his taming had not yet reached that stage. As for his dragon, it was far too precious to risk his life. After all, it wasn't necessarily safe here either. Whatever it was that had threatened the Valkyrie, he wasn't safe from meeting it either.

"All right, Vulture, you go fly over. Chimera, you will scout. Red Urchin, you assist them with your mental sense."

Will gave a series of orders, keeping only the multicolored cobra at his side, then the group set off. His choices were not arbitrary, but carefully considered.

The names, though, were not his responsibility... These beasts had named themselves. Their originality was matched only by their simple-mindedness...

The Red Urchin could drift in the air with its telekinesis and had a powerful mental sense, making it perfect for exploration. It could serve as a relay antenna and radar, relaying in real time what the two scouts, Chimera and Vulture saw.

Vulture, despite its size, was a raptor of great speed, whose Body Stats put it neck and neck with a Rank 5 Digestor with a similar build. A Rank 5 Digestor dropped between 165 and 657 Aether points when compressed by the Oracle Device, this sum rarely exceeding 5% of the creature's original Aether.

Assuming its Aether stats were balanced and limited to the standard seven, an average Rank 5 Digestor would have Aether stats around 411 points. As creatures born of Aether, these tended to be balanced with pure Aether, but many low-rank Digestors focused on their Strength, Constitution and Vitality Aether.

Pure Aether was the same Aether as the Aether density. Because of its energy-amplifying properties, it affected Strength, Constitution and all other stats to some extent, but had little impact on physics

constants, reflexes, reaction time, perception or metabolism. Certain physical and biological processes simply could not go faster, even if energy was abundant.

The Variants were the ones to really watch out for. They could cram all their Aether into one stat or awaken other kinds of Aether such as Aether of Luck or Charisma. Any Irregular Digestor should be treated with extreme caution.

A sufficient Aether level was only one of the requirements for a Digestor to evolve. Some Ranks 1 could yield more Aether than some Ranks 6, but this was very rare. The one thing that was certain, however, was that each advancement in Rank of a Digestor brought it closer to its final evolutionary form. If the evolution was considered successful, Body Stats, Aether Skills, Spirit Level and other attributes would usually be greatly enhanced.

The fact that Vulture could compete with a normal Rank 5 winged-Digestor made it superior to most Third-Ordeal Evolvers, while the worst Fourth-Ordeal Evolvers were not immune to defeat.. If Will was honest, this raptor was much stronger than he was.