

## Oracle 581

### Chapter 581 - Fear

'Did I miss it?!' Jake couldn't believe it.

Those were some of the fastest Air Bullets he had ever fired! If this creature moving under snow could avoid that, then his other techniques had no better chance of succeeding unless he took it up a notch. In this blizzard that was sapping his stamina, that was the very scenario he wanted to avoid.

From a Fifth-Ordeal Evolver or even a talented Fourth-Ordeal Evolver, Jake could accept his failure, but not from a Rank 4 or 5 Digestor. It was too soon to meet a Dungeon Boss. They had only just arrived!

Instead of losing his temper, Jake activated his Myrtharian Sight and focused intently on the Aether signature emitting from beneath that snowy bulge. As soon as his pupils caught the Aether Aura's fluctuations under the snow, he felt a deep sense of relief.

"That immediately makes more sense." He chuckled sinisterly. Inwardly, he thought, 'You deserve to die for scaring the shit out of me and making me doubt myself.'

Whatever this creature was, it was slow. Maybe not for a normal refugee, but for him it was painfully obvious. Its Aether levels were in line with its predictions.

It was a Rank 5 Digestor.

Rank 5 Digestors had, assuming their stats were balanced, Aether stats around 400 points. Based on what he saw, this one was a variant, having chosen to highly specialize in one specific stat: Constitution.

And how did he know that? Simply because his Air Bullets had hit the mark.

Despite the velocity and penetration potential of his wind bullets, it wasn't enough to take down the creature. With his Myrtharian Eyes, Jake had a rough outline of its morphology in mind, and he could already tell that this thing was a bit of a shell type.

Where his Air Bullets had struck, he could discern a trail of light coming off of it and blending into the snow much like the tail of a comet. If it was Aether he was seeing, then he could already surmise that it was Digestor Blood.

However, the bleeding didn't last long and about two seconds later, the light discharge stopped and the creature's Aether Signature returned to normal.

"If this is not enough, let's see if you can take this."

Admiring his creepy face, Crunch, Melkree and the turkey looked at him with a somewhat uneasy expression, but refused to join in at the risk of spoiling his fun. For Melkree it was also an opportunity to see what this faction leader was capable of.

This time Jake took his time aiming, coolly monitoring the creature's movements like a predator on the prowl.

He crossed his arms out in front of him, his palms facing each other, one down, the other facing the sky, and the air a dozen meters around him abruptly converged on him to form an almost solid ball of air in

his hands. Anyone standing too close to him at that moment would have started to suffocate, and Jake himself was holding his breath.

As he channeled his telekinesis and mental strength into his hands, his palms slowly began to press together and the ball of air became thinner and flatter until it resembled a disk. Meanwhile, the foe under the snow was still barreling toward him, unaware of the doom that lay ahead.

Then, when he was ready, Jake uncrossed his hands in one swift sweep, his palms brushing against each other but never touching. A shrill, low thunder-like sound was heard, but was immediately muffled as an extremely thin, but almost solid, compressed blade of air stretched out in front of him like a silk ribbon until it reached a good two meters, then five and finally almost ten.

"It should be enough." He muttered in a satisfied tone.

Jake didn't shoot immediately, choosing instead to wait patiently for the monster to get as close as possible in case it had hidden its game. The bulge beneath the snow became more and more impressive as the Digestor drew closer, almost forming a small hill, and he began to seriously wonder if this Air Blade would be enough.

[Don't doubt yourself, it's just a Rank 5 Digestor.] Xi snarled sternly, which immediately put his mind at ease.

When the snowy bulge finally broke through the snow less than a meter away, Jake concentrated harder than ever, as the wind blade in front of him began to whirr at an extreme frequency.

Several grayish filaments of Sharpening Aether oozed out of his Aether Core under the effect of Aether Conversion and the sharpness of this already formidable Air Blade was multiplied by almost 2 in an instant. Because of the increased Aether density, the effectiveness of the Grey Aether had weakened, but it was still a decisive asset in crucial moments like this.

VRRROUSH!

A huge, nightmare-inducing head suddenly popped out of the ground as Jake was beginning to lose patience. A wide-open maw ringed by thousands of long, sharp, inward-pointing teeth voraciously tried to engulf him as the thick layer of icy snow shattered into pieces to make way for the monster.

Jake was ready. He had seen the inside of its mouth, he didn't want to know the rest.

The Air Blade was released.

There was no sound on impact, just silence. The blade of air passed horizontally through the monster's mouth, then its head and the rest of its body buried under the snow before continuing its way towards the Dungeon's depths until it exhausted all its inertia.

BRRRRM!

The deafening rumble that followed was only the landslide, or rather snow slide that broke the stillness as the two perfectly identical severed halves of the monster crashed into the dune.

At the same time, the Air Blade, pursuing its course, rent the sea of snow asunder, causing a residual void, which absolutely had to be filled. It was the subsequent avalanche that caused most of the commotion.

"You were right, Xi. I probably overestimated that monster." Jake apologized sheepishly, while scratching his chin with his index finger.

Next time, an Air Blade a tenth as powerful would be more than enough for the task. In the end, this thing was really just a Rank 5 Digestor.

When the snow slides stopped, Jake and the others finally had a chance to see what the monstrosity he had just slayed really looked like.

It was a hideous alien, but of colossal proportions. It was hard to tell if it was a giant worm or a fish, but what was certain was that its spherical, tooth-filled jaw was distinctly reminiscent of a lamprey.

The creature was obviously blind and had no visible appendages or external sensory organs to suggest that this thing was capable of orienting itself under the snow. Compared to its enormous body of a good fifty meters, its multiple pairs of fins were ridiculously small, almost atrophied. Based on his common sense and even taking into account its hypothetical Aether stats, Jake refused to believe that these were enough to move such a mass.

At that moment, he became aware of the ring structure of the monster's muscles, noticing that its long body was separated into hundreds of segments. He then remembered that the worms moved with a peristaltic movement by contracting these muscles and the rest made sense. He also found large amounts of snow in its digestive system, filling the tract up to its anus. The monster's tail resembled that of a whale, and he figured the creature was probably using a combination of all its assets to move through the snow at a decent speed.

On its surface, the entire body was covered with the thickest layer of silver chitin he had ever seen. Compared to higher ranked Digestors, the quality was much lower, but this creature made up for it in sheer quantity.

It was a terrifying abomination, but alas, from Jake's perspective this thing was a failure, or at least an evolutionary dead end. Aside from its cruelly specific adaptation to this snowy environment that was not so easy to find, any reasonably experienced Evolver had a chance to outrun it.

In fact, with the right military weaponry, it was even possible to hunt this monster using only normal humans. As long as the weapon used was accurate and powerful enough, drilling through the chitin of this Digestor was no challenge.

There was one thing Jake had underestimated, however, and that was the smell. That kind of stench could restore a covid patient's nose and that was definitely not a compliment.

Still, Jake searched the corpse assiduously in hopes of finding a valuable Aether Skill, or better yet, an Aether Equipment. No luck, besides stinking, this Digestor gave him nothing.

Jake took the opportunity to refill his Digestor Blood canteens and the group set off again. Staring at his broad back brimming with confidence and masculinity, Melkree felt something strange but her usual apathy soon took over.

"So strong..."

That feeling that had nagged at her fleetingly before disappearing was neither love nor admiration.. It was fear.