

Oracle 584

Chapter 584 - The Survivor

[Intermediate Aether Artifact: Bone Crushing Snowworm's Fang: The tooth of a Rank 7 Elite Snowworm transmuted into a saber upon its death. In addition to its extreme natural hardness, which allows it to crush ice and rock in its path, its cutting edge does not erode and can withstand chewing forces of several thousand tons. Weight: 650kg. Attributes: Strength: +5%, Constitution: +5%. Passive Skill: Repairs itself as long as the base (handle) remains intact.]

This saber had a very long, broad, barbed crystalline blade held by a grip wrapped in ordinary, silvery skin. Its length exceeded two meters, and approached the dimensions of a spear. With its sharp, dual-edged blade this weapon would slice, dice, stab and jab his enemies and shred whatever's left of them.

The blade also had a spiked, slightly curved cross-guard, which made sure the blade was both balanced and capable of protecting the owner's hands against any sliding sword. As for the handle, the design was functional and sleek, designed entirely for combat. For the finishing touch, a fairly large silver chitin pommel finished off the end of the grip, even serving as a stunner.

"Awesome!"

This Digestor Saber was good. Jake thought these Snowworms were incapable of dropping anything worthwhile, but he was wrong. They just hadn't been lucky enough to run into an Elite. The orc who had donated the helmet to him was the same, and it was clear that they were not too common in this Dungeon.

If so, what kind of rewards can these Floor Bosses bestow?" Jake wondered with a longing gaze.

[You chose to track down Urul to avoid unnecessary confrontations. If you want to fight a Digestor Boss, you'll have to choose another path.] Xi reminded him sternly. [Although if you ask me, he'll never reach the Nexus. This Dungeon Digestor might be young, but each of these floors is vast and structured. Seeing how those Rank 9 and 10 Digestors obeyed him, I'm afraid those high-ranked Evolvers overestimated their abilities.]

Then, should I choose another road?' Jake paused, staring at his brand new sword.

He was ambitious and sometimes a little too greedy, but he could still recognize a lousy plan when he saw one. At first it had seemed as good a plan as any to follow Urul on the sly, but as he delved deeper he began to realize that this Dungeon Digestor wasn't so simple.

Between the second and third floors where his group was, the average Aether levels of these Digestors had gone from 60-400 to 400-1500. This was the difference between Rank 4-5 and 5-6 Digestors and did not include the Digestor Bosses that Jake had never faced.

The second floor was the perfect playground for Second and Third Ordeal Evolvers, and even Civilians without any Ordeals under their belts had a fair shot by staying in the forest's periphery. The weather was mild and the Digestors one encountered there were often stupid, primitive and lost. While they were not immune to encountering a Taotie Digestor, an Orc Elite, or an organized squad, they could usually be heard coming from quite a distance.

The third floor was different. For starters, the climate was harsh. Too harsh. Without the right Bloodline, equipment, or skill set, this environment could even take out a Fourth-Ordeal Evolver. Melkree was a clear example of this. If the Orange Turkey had been left to fend for itself, it would have been an ice statue in less than two minutes, maybe ten with the Myrtharian Body Passive.

Second, the Snowworms, despite their flaws, were huge armored creatures impervious to ordinary missiles and Aether Spells. Not every Fourth-Ordeal Evolver had in their arsenal what it took to hunt one of these monsters.

Following this logic, the next floor promised to be even more dangerous and would house Rank 7 Digestors and perhaps even Rank 8s regarding Elites or Bosses. Xi had already warned him about this, and Jake was already feeling some trepidation.

Average Rank 7 Digestors had average Aether stats hovering around 2000 points, but Rank 8 Digestors were inching closer to 10,000. That was quite a jump in power, which would be difficult to compensate for with his Body Stats and other skills. This was beyond the standard of a Fifth-Ordeal Evolver that Jake placed at 5,000 points.

Again, this was assuming that these Fifth-Ordeal Evolvers had somehow managed to improve all their Aether stats to the same level. This was far from guaranteed. If an Evolver could accomplish that feat, that was already pretty good.

"Okay, I decided. I'll take a look at the next floor, but I'm not following Urul anymore." Jake stated aloud, as if to better convince himself that this was the right decision.

"Wh-what? You were planning to follow that crazy orc who almost killed us all?!" Crunch hissed as he ruffled all his hair in fright, which shattered the accumulated stalactites on his back.

"Idiot, you've been with me the whole time and you didn't realize it?" Jake rolled his eyes as he saw his cat's comical reaction.

Melkree didn't say anything, but her brow knotted with concern spoke volumes about what she thought of his previous plan. Why was it that those who didn't want to run into Urul had all run into him, while this human who was stalking him of his own free will had been completely ignored? Life was unfair.

"Because I'm good." Jake calmly boasted as he poked his thumb at his chest.

From her expression and what she had been through, it wasn't hard to guess what was going through her mind.

The group then set off again and like the previous time, Jake cremated the bodies to spare them the fate of ending up as nutrients for the Dungeon or one of those Snowworms. The orange glow they had seen in the blizzard was not far away and they reached it a few moments later.

As they had anticipated, it was a campfire and there was someone leaning against it. Unlike the other snow-covered dunes, this one clearly had a rocky base, making it a genuine hill, and the side was hollowed out, opening into a spacious cave. The glow came from inside.

Jake and his group went in without hesitation, but only after scanning the surroundings. Even if the scan didn't work well in the Dungeon, it was only if there were obstacles interfering with spiritual energy like the Dungeon walls, or strong enough Digestors, whether plant or animal based.

"Only one person, and his Aether Fluctuations are just slightly above ours. We should be fine. If there's any trouble, we can always run away." Jake warned them in a whisper.

Melkree, Crunch and the Orange Turkey nodded seriously and tiptoed behind him. Jake, on the other hand, made no attempt to hide his presence. If the Evolver present had any survival instincts at all, it would have spotted them as soon as it sensed their Oracle Scan.

When Jake and Melkree found out who the Evolver inside was, they were dumbstruck.

"Shaktilar!"

Shyril was in bad shape. He was still alive, but his lavish aquamarine robe embroidered with gold clouds, lace and frills had burned away, revealing his thick gray, parchment-like skin beneath. The Ice Mage was covered in festering wounds and burns and was missing his left leg cut off at the thigh and his right arm blown off along with a portion of his torso and one of his lungs.

His scholarly elephant face was no better off. In addition to the swelling, his ivory tusks had been ripped from his mouth while deep scars plowing through his skull had nearly gouged out his brain.

But what was most shocking was the reaction Shaktilar had when he saw them. When his deadened gaze landed on Jake, his once vile and shifty eyes bulged with pure terror and his body began to shake like a leaf.

"De-de-de-devil! Leave, leave me alone! I, I don't want to die!"

Despite his severe injuries, Shaktilar immediately materialized his Magic Wand and pointed it straight at them. Noticing that Jake was the target, Crunch and the others quickly moved away from him and left him to bear the spell alone.

A radiant blue light briefly blinded him, forcing him to shield his eyes with his arm, and the next thing he knew, ice spears were springing from the floor, walls and ceiling of the cave around him with the intent of skewering him.

With a swipe of his hand, a Wind Blade shattered half of them while a heat blast suddenly burst forth from his body, vaporizing the rest. Yet, there was a different Ice Spear from the others hidden in the middle of these feints. A faint cobalt blue radiance shimmered inside and its velocity was at least ten times faster and comparable to his air blades.

Jake couldn't dodge his own spells at close range, but that didn't mean he didn't have countermeasures in place. When this Ice Spear was about to impale him, he disappeared and it went into the stone wall behind.

Jake reappeared immediately afterwards in front of Shaktilar and delivered a heavy uppercut to his stomach, which made him vomit what was left of his bile. Already at the end of his rope, Shyril let himself be grabbed by the neck and his head was smashed into the nearest wall, his teeth ploughing its surface for several meters until his torturer finally decided to let him go.

Having lost the last of his teeth and his jaw broken, Jake wiped his hands with a satisfied smile and smiled sadistically,

"Now I assume I have the right to know what I did to deserve this attack, don't I?"