

Oracle 588

Chapter 588 - Mysterious Woman

"I'm sorry about your subordinates, but this gives me renewed optimism for the rest of my companions." Jake blurted out tactlessly.

Inwardly, however, his thoughts were quite different,

'I hope none of them are stupid enough to explore that fourth floor...'

[Even if they do, help should be on the way. We've been in this dungeon for almost a day now. Maybe they're even here already.]

Alas, Jake wasn't the only one whose curiosity and the promise of power and juicy rewards could drive to do foolish things against all common sense. Elsewhere in the snowy dunes, where an endless blizzard was raging, another group was also about to cross the point of no return.

Across a snow-covered hillside similar to the one where Jake and his group were standing, three humans and a huge lion stared at the dark entrance to a cavern leading into the Dungeon's depths. Because this grotto had been buried by an avalanche, they could only detect it with their other senses, but an unexpected clue tipped them off.

"These blood trails...are you sure they belong to Bhuzkoc?" Kyle inquired suspiciously.

Indeed, the snow in front of them was strewn with purple bloodstains and that was their only tangible proof that they were not on the wrong track. The problem was that it was neither Kyle nor Mufasa and his keen sense of smell that had picked up this trail, but the veiled woman traveling along with them.

Furthermore, these bloodstains did not belong to just one person. There were many stains and they had found several frozen corpses along the way.

After the scuffle where she had temporarily "snatched" the spherical crystal containing the Aether Skill Devour, the tension and distrust in the group towards her had reached its peak. This was in addition to the caution Kyle already had to exercise toward his own sister who kept trying to murder him.

For a while, they had continued to hunt quietly on the second floor, hunting Elite Goblins, Orcs and other Taoties, until they finally realized that the drop rate was just awful. But more importantly, these Elite Digestors were hard to come by and unlike the other monsters their ranks were not replenished as easily.

Wanting to find out where these Digestors came from, Kyle and his group had gone so far as to spy on a group of goblins without killing them and when they were about to give up the tailing they had finally witnessed a spawn. The goblin had simply popped out of nowhere, totally naked. They then had followed him and watched his behavior covertly to see how they evolved.

At first, the goblin seemed lost and haggard as a newborn, but make no mistake. It was no baby.

After only a few minutes, the Digestor's movements had become seamless and he could already generate a certain amount of silver chitin. Emulating his comrades, he soon started wearing a loincloth and carrying a short sword.

A few newly spawned goblins swelled their ranks until they came upon another squad of slightly different looking goblins. A skirmish ensued where the goblin they were watching made his first kill.

His size had grown slightly and his strength, agility and intelligence had increased markedly. The following battles became easier and Kyle saw him quickly rise through the ranks. Their group gave him a few helping hands by secretly eliminating dangerous enemies. Soon, there was no need for that anymore.

In less than an hour, this newborn goblin evolved into an Elite hobgoblin. It was an incredibly fast evolutionary cycle, but this power gain came at the cost of many lives of his brethren. Even after his power-up, this hobgoblin was not invincible, and they watched him get chomped to death when their small army ran into a Taotie Digestor.

Ironically, Kyle and Mufasa felt almost sad to see their protégé get eaten so miserably, but it also brought their little Darwinian experiment to an abrupt end.

The group went back to hunting, deciding to head for the lower level, until a deforested area covered in Digestors' guts and blood told them that a terrible fight had just taken place. Slightly fluorescent purple blood mixed with the silver liquid and the scan revealed the following information.

[Nawai- Vuurag Ogre Blood. Belongs to Bhuzkoc.]

Because Kyle had openly scanned Bhuzkoc in his mansion, his bracelet could easily compare the report on this sample to his previous data to authenticate the person. Even though the Oracle System was malfunctioning, the Scans and their Oracle Devices were still functional.

For the young man, this revelation had been like a shot of adrenaline and it had immediately stirred up the rage that he was barely able to keep under control. His plans had immediately changed and his goal of wiping out the Digestors on the third floor had turned into a personal vendetta.

Fortunately, Mufasa and the veiled woman did not object. Against all odds, the mysterious female Evolver had even supported him in his endeavor, suddenly becoming more outgoing and talkative.

"You should go for it. It's not healthy to bottle up your hate. My name is Hecate. I won't help you kill him, but I can guide you to him."

"And why should I trust you? You're not helping us, you're acting suspicious, you're trying to steal our rewards and all of a sudden with no warning you act generous? If you had acted like this from the beginning it would be different, but we know how strong you are. You don't belong with us. For all I know, you could be another Urul! At least if you want us to trust you, show us your face!" Kyle had become justifiably peeved.

"Fine, as you wish." She complied, stumping him.

Then, she slowly lowered her hood with her long gloved fingers, revealing a cascade of jet-black hair swaying in the non-existent wind. She then removed her mask and a blemish-free, but extremely pale, baby face was revealed to them.

She had delicate features, a graceful jaw and radiant green eyes filled with an inexplicable melancholy. Her eyelids were half closed, giving the impression that she was either jaded or sleep-deprived. Her dark circles accentuated this impression, but it could just as well have been makeup because she had no wrinkles. Her lips were a sickly purplish color, as if they were poorly oxygenated, but the most discouraging thing was their natural angle giving the illusion of a perpetual sneer.

An unpatterned gold tiara hugged her forehead, bringing some flavor to this graveyard beauty, but the ornament wasn't flashy enough to distract from her short, pointed ears protruding from her hair.

Upon seeing her face, Kyle and Maeve were transfixed on the spot but for different reasons. The former Playboy was suffering from a crush the likes of which he hadn't experienced since his college days, while his sister couldn't believe that a woman could be both beautiful and sickening at the same time.

"Seen enough?" Hecate asked with a slight smirk that was at times teasing, at times dismissive. Her eyes however, remained icy and dead.

Kyle forced himself to stop gawking at her and cleared his throat to cover his embarrassment,

"Cough, it's enough. I accept your offer."

And that was where they currently stood. As promised, Hecate had shown them the way by miraculously picking up the trail. Bhuzkoc wasn't the sharpest knife in the drawer, but he wasn't senile either.

Although Kyle didn't know that he had been spiritually injured by Svava, it wouldn't be enough to make him forget basic survival precautions. His fight with a Taotie Elite Digestor while his Soul was still wounded was an accident, but he had been careful after his victory not to leave any clues behind that could lead to him.

Neither Kyle nor Mufasa had spotted any trace of dried blood or footprints, and they had followed Hecate blindly without any guarantee that the trail existed. They had gone through the entire third floor and fought against those calamitous Snowworms with only a verbal promise from a shady outsider as a guarantee, and this new blood evidence was a huge relief.

"He went down to the Fourth Floor." Mufasa growled as he shook himself to get rid of the snow embedded in his fur. "That's dangerous. Are you sure you want to pursue your revenge? Given his condition, there's a good chance he'll die without your help..."

The lion had a point, but Kyle shook his head reluctantly after giving a tender look in his sister's direction. The hateful glare he got in return had broken his heart...

"I have to kill him with my own hands. If he is killed by a Digestor, Maeve will be free, but she will keep trying to kill me because of the indoctrination she has undergone. The only way to correct this is to get her Slave Contract back. If he is really hurt, it is also likely that another Evolver will take the opportunity to finish him off and if that happens it will become a never ending nightmare. I absolutely must go down to prevent this scenario."

"Then, let's go down together." Mufasa decided matter-of-factly. "I hope we have better luck than those corpses around us down there."

Even though the lion hadn't said anything, they could see that some of them hadn't died of frostbite. If it wasn't the work of another Evolver, it promised to be a piping hot place downstairs....