

Oracle 601

Chapter 601 - Chaos

Traversing the sky with the swiftness of a shooting star, Jake chased the clock in the uncertain hope that Will's message was just a mistake, a nightmare stemming from his imagination.

At this speed, the sound waves generated by his flight could be heard for miles around. He was no longer pretending to hide.

On the plus side, it only took him about ten seconds to get to the supposed battle zone from which Will's cry had been heard.

When he got there, his eyes fell first on the huge central volcano towering over them, then on the battlefield below, witnessing unprecedented chaos and carnage.

Hundreds of Evolvers, creatures, and Digestors of all races and origins were fighting to the death against their sworn enemies, but unnervingly they were mostly murdering one another among their own allies.

It was as if the world had gone mad. People laughing and eating together just a few hours earlier were trying to tear each other's hearts out as if the other had just cuckolded them blatantly with their husband or wife.

Nawaii were killing other Nawaii, aliens were killing other aliens looking like them, animals were fighting their own pack or herd, bloodshot eyes and drooling lips as if they had been injected with a stimulant.

Myrtharian Digestors resembling Jake, but also other humans and even other humanoid species such as orcs, Nosks and goblins were slaughtering these uncooperative Evolvers, but they too had serious problems in their ranks. Some of these Elite Digestors had killed more Digestors than these Evolvers offering them a pathetic resistance.

Aether Spells and other enchantments of various kinds and descent rained down by the hundreds every second. Colorful explosions and other inexplicable physical phenomena were constantly erupting, the techniques employed so numerous and varied that Jake found it difficult to make sense of all the chaos.

One moment a streak of purple and crimson lightning split the battlefield in two, but the next a flash of black light plunged the valley into darkness, momentarily blinding everyone.

Titanic beasts were continually crashing into one another with deafening shockwaves, trampling other fighters and monsters below, and Jake believed he recognized the familiar mane of a huge lion among them.

Other Evolvers clashed with their weapons of choice. Some wielded swords, axes, spears, hammers or clubs of some sort, while others kept their distance by firing from the safety of an elevated point on the slope of the volcano or another hill.

More than once, Jake heard the ringing of cataclysmic gunfire from these positions. Whether it was the skill of these marksmen or the sniper rifle used, some of these shots were capable of blasting a hole in his body the size of a child's skull if he wasn't careful.

Evolvers or Digestors, many still warm corpses had suffered from this.

All the Evolvers present, to have reached the central volcano leading to the Fifth Floor were either extremely lucky and resourceful, or powerful enough to wander up to this place with impunity.

With the exception of Will, all had at least reached the power standard of a Fourth-Ordeal Evolver.

No wonder the businessman had been overpowered.

Anxiously scanning the barren valley for his friends, he eventually... found them.

Will, covered in blood that was not his own, was fighting alongside Fumdalf and several creatures. A passed-out Nawai warrior going on his twilight years hung on the back of the huge chimera fiercely protecting the summoner.

Speaking of the businessman, his face was swollen and his eyes red as if he had been crying, but now there was only a cold anger driven by a desire for revenge.

Every time he opened his mouth and barked a command, his opponents would either obey or flinch involuntarily, giving Fumdalf or the other creatures under his leadership time to finish them off.

Not far away, Jake recognized the sliced carcass of his baby dragon, as well as that of a huge brown vulture whose head had been broken off. Charizard wouldn't evolve further...

Terribly worried, Jake continued to search with growing nervousness for the one whose fate Will claimed was already sealed.

Before finding him, his attention was again caught by the familiar mane of the huge lion fighting furiously in the distance. Every ruffle of its mane, every swing of its tail, every roar, every claw invoked tornadoes, hurricanes and cyclones.

It was obviously Mufasa, but the reason Jake was so shocked was because he also recognized his opponent. Facing the lion, a monstrous tiger wrapped in a purple lightning halo moved effortlessly through these tornadoes, transmuting its body into lightning and reaching immeasurable speeds.

Dozens of times per second, the lightning struck the robust lion and he would respond with powerful wind blasts. Despite this, the tiger transformed into lightning was far too fast and seemed completely invulnerable to the gusts of wind passing through his body. The purple lightning only flickered indifferently, completely unaffected.

This tiger was Shere Khan.

'Why are they killing each other?!' Jake shouted in his head with complete incomprehension.

Despite the extreme urgency of the situation, the two felines were dueling? What kind of crap was this?

Jake was in the mood to insult them when he saw one by one the other Aristocats scattered on the battlefield. They too were fighting ferociously like degenerate beasts. The only reason they weren't killing each other was because they were too far apart to meet.

One of the lionesses appeared to be dead, but given her condition it could have been another creature.

Adding to the chaos, the corpses did not stay dead for long. Regularly, the dead who had become zombies would get up under the influence of the Death Mark and start attacking the other survivors with even more devotion.

Now truly distressed, Jake resumed his exploration of the battlefield and finally found the one he was interested in.

No doubt, Kyle was dead.

His half-eaten corpse lay lonely in a corner of the battlefield covered in blood and guts. His sword was still clutched in his hand, its blade dripping with blood. His head had been smashed like overripe fruit, while his torso was as flat as a sheet of paper after being hammered by an object of monumental weight or speed. If not for his sword, Jake would never have recognized him.

Beside him, another corpse of much smaller stature lay, her dainty little hand tightly entwined with his friend's other free hand. Her throat had been slit by a decisive sword cut. She had died bleeding to death.

Although she was also covered in blood and in an unrecognizable state, Jake still recognized her. It was Maeve, Kyle's little sister.

With a flash, Jake teleported to his friend's body, despite his exhaustion. Seeing a powerful Myrtharian Nosk charging at him, he immediately activated his Oracle Shield and vigilantly drew his sword.

Before coming, he had not forgotten to put on his new gauntlets.

He held his breath, almost expecting this Digestor to be able to teleport in as well, but his worst prediction did not come true.

After slamming into the energy barrier once, the Nosk roared furiously and then decisively turned away to attack another target. On this battlefield, there were plenty of choices...

Releasing his breath, Jake knelt down beside Kyle's corpse and examined it meticulously with his mental strength. His scrutiny confirmed what Will had already told him, and an Oracle Scan drove the final nail in.

Kyle was dead, fucking dead. He wasn't coming back.

Not one to give up, Jake looked around with his Soul Power for any stray Spirit, any spiritual fluctuation that might indicate his soul had survived, but to no avail.

He found many Souls drifting around him belonging to the deceased. Fourth-Ordeal Evolvers had long since solidified their Souls and could theoretically survive the death of their bodies.

Regrettably, getting a second life in this state was a difficult and challenging task. Ghosts were frightening to the uninformed and superstitious, but to other Evolvers and creatures capable of magic and other supernatural abilities, they were like a flickering flame in a blizzard. The tiniest flake could extinguish them.

[Even if Kyle is still alive, with the Oracle System not working in Digestor territory, I'm afraid it's a waste of time to try to find him.] Xi said hesitantly.

"I know..."

Jake was about to let go and store Kyle and his sister's remains in his Space Storage when his mental sense caught a tiny fluctuation. Peering down at the source of this feedback, he discovered that this surge of mental energy was coming from Maeve.

"This... She's alive?"

Even Jake could hardly believe it. After all, Maeve was just a normal human. However, Bhuzkoc seemed to value her quite a bit, unless Kyle was the one who saved her, as her body seemed to be able to withstand the hellish temperatures and vacuum of this floor.

Not surprisingly, he found that Kyle had invited her to join the Myrtharian Nerds. She was alive in part because of the Myrtharian Passive.

If Kyle was truly gone, he could at least make sure his sacrifice wasn't in vain.. Clinging to this lifeline, Jake quickly activated the Vitality Link to transfer her injuries to him.

[Chapter 602 - Pure Evil](#)

A slit throat was nothing to Jake. As soon as he activated the Vitality Link, Maeve's wounds were instantly transferred to him, but as before with Svava, he received only a milder version because of his high Constitution.

The deep gash that had sliced open her throat and severed muscles, arteries, thyroid and trachea became a simple incision only a few millimeters deep. Jake had thought at one time that the injury transfer was identical, but this Vitality Link obviously had his own way of quantifying vitality and damage.

His common sense dictated that it had to do with the law of conservation of energy. The energy required to slit or repair Maeve's throat was most likely insignificant compared to that required to achieve the same result on him.

Nor had the extensive blood loss had any substantial effect on his body. The scorching heat of this arid land compensated for the little bit of vitality lost, his bone marrow churning out new blood cells like a tireless factory.

Jake groaned as he felt his throat chafe, but his regeneration did its job and his skin soon healed to leave only a slight redness, then nothing. As for Maeve lying across from him, her heart was now beating normally and her breathing had become peaceful again.

Alas, he could not let her sleep. He needed answers. By observing the scene, he had already gathered some unsettling clues, and he didn't like where this was heading.

He wanted to hear the truth from her own mouth.

BANG!

Jake was startled and turning in the direction of the disturbance saw a Fourth-Ordeal Evolver pounding away at his Oracle Shield with a huge war hammer forged out of a mysterious metal. With each impact, space distorted in an unnatural way, twisting the Oracle Shield and whatever was around it.

The alien resembling a pale, hairless Minotaur seemed possessed, his bloodshot eyes filled with an unbridled rage that begged to be vented.

With a sneer, Jake beckoned to the warhammer's wielder with his right hand, but when he reeled his fingers in, the frenzied Evolver was forcibly pulled forward and his head smashed violently against the energy shield.

Giving him no respite, Jake lunged at him leaving an afterimage behind and withdrawing the Oracle Shield to his skin walloped him with a spectacular uppercut, which propelled him swiftly into the ceiling of the floor's cavern.

"Have a good nap."

After this interruption, Jake knew that questioning Maeve was likely to be complicated. He would postpone her interrogation until later.

He hadn't given up hope of saving Kyle. As long as he didn't have confirmation from Maeve and Will that his soul had been wiped out, he would keep his faith. Coming from a man like him, that could be regarded as a rare display of optimism.

The reason Jake wouldn't give up was because Kyle had been challenging himself so much after his recent failures. If Will, Mufasa, and even Maeve were still alive, why not Kyle?

There had been many deaths, but the many wandering Souls around him vouched for the fact that there was a good chance his spirit still lingered somewhere.

Placing the unconscious young woman on his back. He fiddled with a piece of metal to form a steel wire which he used to tie her firmly to his body.

Then he turned off the Oracle Shield for good.

As soon as the protective force field disappeared, his presence flared up again for the other Evolvers and Digestors and a group of bloodthirsty beasts pounced on him.

Impassive, he drew his saber and calmly leapt off a few meters, bending his legs to avoid being tackled. Then he whirled around with a neat somersault as he swung his saber and heads and limbs rolled to the ground releasing multicolored sprays of blood.

Jake coolly let the blood rain down on him, as if he hoped to wash away his failures, but that was obviously impossible.

He sidestepped abruptly and a flash of green light liquefied the ground where he had been standing. Shifting his body from side to side, he dodged a volley of projectiles and other ammunition, parrying and throwing back with his saber what he could not avoid or withstand with his own body.

Activating his Myrtharian Eyes, the Evolvers' and Digestors' movements around him slowed to a crawl, and his figure waltzed like an ethereal shadow among the crazed brawlers, his fists and blade spreading death around him.

Jake tried to spare the Evolvers when possible, but soon noticed that every saved fighter was immediately finished off by nearby Digestors and creatures. Sometimes an alien who was supposed to be on the same side would deliver the final blow.

He also tried to communicate with the aliens and humans attacking him, but their aggressiveness knew no bounds. It was as if they couldn't hear him.

'This is a mindless fight. If I keep trying to reason with them, I'm the one who might lose my life.' Jake faced the facts.

[That thing making those roars could come at any second. Even if everyone else has to die because of it, you must survive.] Xi didn't mince her words, showing for the first time that she didn't care about the fate of the whole Mirror Universe as long as her protege was okay.

'I get it... But I have to at least try to save Will and the others.' Jake clenched his fists. When he was determined, he could be pretty damn stubborn.

[Of course...] His Oracle AI fell silent after that. Whatever she was going to say, she knew it wouldn't change his decision.

With one goal in mind, it wasn't hard for Jake to slash his way through all those crazed enemies. As long as he stayed especially careful of these clones and a few other Evolvers and Digestors with powerful Aether signatures he had little to fear.

A few finger snaps later, he stood in front of Will, who nearly had a heart attack when he popped out of nowhere.

The businessman was so freaked out that he cast his best Bewitching Spell, infusing his voice with all his Charisma Aether in an instant.

"STOP!"

The thunderous voice echoed straight to his face, shaking his skull and without even realizing it his body had momentarily stopped, subjugated against his will by this unnatural command.

Simultaneously, a Soul Spear shot by Fumdalf struck his mind from behind, and the little multicolored snake that Will was wearing as a scarf threw itself at him with its jaws wide open. The giant eight-legged Chimera protecting him also spat a jet of acid in his face.

Jake roared as he contracted all his muscles, his body and aura bursting with mighty power, and a telekinetic sphere stoically withstood all the attacks. The Soul Spear passed through the barrier intact but he was prepared for it and a Soul Beam radiated from the back of his skull, halting, and then dispersing the projectile condensed with Soul Energy to the Spirit Mage's great stupor.

A quarter of a second later, Jake took a step forward as if nothing had happened, but inside he was deeply shocked.

Any expert knew what a quarter of a second of immobility meant on the battlefield. It often meant the difference between life and death.

If Will had given a more specific order, such as "Don't resist," perhaps his remains would have been plastered over the ground, waiting to be spooned out.

As Jake had long suspected, he wasn't the only one harboring secrets. If he had some, so could the others. All the more reason to hope that Kyle was still alive somewhere.

"Jake what are you doing here?!" Will shouted with a hand soothing his racing heart. "I told you not to come!"

"Yeah, so what? Are you my leader?" Jake smiled sadly. "I saw your message. I know about Kyle, but I had to see it for myself."

The businessman's face went blank when his friend awakened this painful memory, but he quickly regained his composure.

"Mufasa and Shere Khan have lost their minds." He blurted out quickly.

"I know. I saw them fight." Jake cut him off when he saw that he had more to say, then declared, "We have to leave. Now."

Seeing the compunction in Jake's eyes, Will gave up his questions. Thinking fast, he synthesized the situation in his head and announced,

"I can bring Mufasa and Shere Khan to their senses, if you let me get close to them."

"Why didn't you try to placate the other Evolvers?" Jake asked.

"I already tried." Will shook his head. "It works, but none of them trust me. They haven't gone crazy, it looks like the Corruption of our Third Ordeal, but it's something else."

"The work of a Digestor?"

"I wish! No, it was the veiled woman. This girl is pure evil. She's the one who caused Kyle's death."

"You saw her kill him?" Jake inquired in suspicion.

Will paused for a second, fighting a chill as he replayed the event in his mind, then stated with certainty,

"No, but I'm sure she had a hand in it. The general chaos is her doing.. She has placed a spell on all of us."

[Chapter 603 - Reaching The Nexus](#)

Far from all this chaos, but in even more eerie abysses, the depths of the earth faced a slimy, black sky like a moonless night. It was as if this place was upside down, the black sea replacing the ceiling.

This cavern was different from the other floors. Although spacious, it was incomparably small compared to the latter. At most, it was the equivalent of two soccer stadiums.

This cavern was also plunged into a deep silence, devoid of any sign of life. The only source of light in this place cut off from the world was an enormous translucent gem whose surface counted several million facets. These reflected and amplified the silvery radiance pulsing from its interior, bathing the rest of the narrow cavern in a gentle light.

There were no Evolvers or Digestors in this place, but that was about to change.

Suddenly, the black sea rolling placidly over the magnificent gem began to swirl abruptly, as if a giant cook had just stirred his pot with a gigantic spoon. A whirlpool soon formed, which quickly evolved into a sort of vortex.

Soon a passageway wide enough for several airliners to pass through side by side tore this black sea in two and a first figure wearing a long, worn-out robe of the same color fell from the sky in slow motion with a smug expression on his face.

This old man wearing a dark magic staff was the necromancer Nelekai Molder.

Before he even set foot on the ground, other hooded shadows fell after him, landing soberly at his side. As they discovered the huge gem shining before them, their eyes began to sparkle with excitement.

"Is it the Nexus?!"

"It's beautiful..."

"I can't believe we found it so easily!"

Listening to the amazed comments of his partners, the old necromancer did not change his expression, but inwardly he could not help but sneer disdainfully.

'These guys are so arrogant. If it weren't for me, they'd still be wading through this sea of oil. But they're the ones paying and that's the condition set for joining Lost Divinities... What a shame... Maybe I should keep this Nexus to myself?'

Nelekai wasn't the only one entertaining these thoughts. Most of the hooded Evolvers were filled with egotistical, if not downright evil thoughts as they ogled this gem. Lost Divinities may have been a gigantic, sprawling organization, but they were just insignificant personalities in its service.

This Nexus could change their lives.

The captain of this hooded group knew full well what was going through their minds, and he took the lead in steering them back. Walking up to Nelekai, he asked in a deep and slightly impatient voice,

"Are you ready?"

Holding up his long dark wooden scepter ending in a cluster of small skulls cut from different gems, the necromancer chuckled in amusement, then replied more seriously,

"We can start anytime."

Raising his hand, the Lost Divinities captain was ready to give the order when several blood-curdling alien wails sounded from the vortex above them. Everyone, including Nelekai, wore alarmed expressions as they heard the noise.

"They already found this place? How is that possible?!" The old necromancer's face turned ugly and he immediately vented his rage on his temporary comrades.

"Don't tell me you didn't close the passageway when you came here! If this operation fails because of one of you and Lost Divinities makes me pay for it, I swear I will drag you down with me. As a Lich, I'm not afraid to die again, but I doubt you share that view..."

Some of the team drew their weapons as the old man lunged at them with a death threat, but a look from their captain made them put their weapons away.

"Calm down." Their leader placated him with a chilling tone. "We're not stupid. If they're here, it's because they found the entrance on their own."

Turning to his subordinates, he apathetically ordered,

"Prepare for battle. The plan doesn't change. We get the Nexus and we're out of here."

"Aye, sir!"

Nelekai grumbled under his breath without trying to hide his foul mood, but he did as the rest of them did, peering into the whirlpool and bracing himself for a major enemy.

Unexpectedly, it didn't turn out exactly as they had imagined. A huge creature did indeed emerge from the passage, its body so massive that the vortex was barely wide enough to let it slip through.

So far, it was within their predictions. To get this far, only a monstrously powerful beast or Evolver could do it. Where reality diverged from fiction was when the creature plummeted from the sky like a fat, limp larva, then collapsed to the ground with a resounding thud.

It didn't move again after that.

Inspecting the corpse, Nelekai recognized the huge flying whale. It was Crygo, the high-ranking beast who had convinced the newbies to explore the Dungeon despite the risks.

Sadly, the Dungeon Digestor had no eyes. This entity was not the type to pamper those who brought him new customers. The whale had paid the price for its overconfidence. It remained to be seen who or what was the cause of its demise.

A few seconds later, another much smaller figure descended from the vortex. After her appearance, the vortex closed above her and the black sea soon calmed down, becoming placid and smooth again.

As soon as the newcomer touched down, the hooded warriors recognized the veiled woman and all bowed low. The usually calm and undaunted captain was no exception.

"We welcome the return of Her Grace." The leader of the group smiled as he raised his head. "Did your adventure go well?"

Stroking the amber glass-walled lantern nestled against her bosom, Hecate ignored him outright, but his loving gesture toward the item answered his query.

It was not clear where the young woman came from, but they had been ordered by their superiors not to provoke her. She was not a member of Lost Divinities, but unlike Nelekai, who was trying hard to join them, Hecate had instead refused their invitation on multiple occasions.

The lantern she cherished was a mysterious artifact whose functionality remained a great mystery, but one thing was certain, there was life inside and not just one.

When the lantern began to flicker, hair-raising wails could be heard coming from within. Whatever was going on in there, the captain knew for a fact that whatever came out would be an unstoppable calamity.

"Was it your highness who killed Crygo?" Nelekai inquired rudely, showing his ignorance of protocol and the young woman's reputation.

"It was I." Hecate replied softly. "If I'm here, it's because we have no more time to waste. Something happened above that forced me to change my plans."

The Lost Divinity captain took her words very seriously. Motioning to one of his men, he immediately complied and strode toward the Nexus to retrieve it. At the same time, the other Evolvers, including Hecate and Nelekai, took up their fighting positions.

When the hooded warrior first touched the huge gem, he was surprised by its softness and thought for a moment that nothing horrible would happen. At first it seemed like it was all good, but as soon as he tried to dislodge the gem by force, the peaceful cavern turned into hell.

Pulling with all his might with his strong arms, the gem began to pull itself out of its natural base, until the other Dungeon Raiders realized that the ground was being uprooted with it.

Soon they realized that it wasn't just rock that the gem was embedded in, but a titanic head. The gem was inserted between its two eyes.

"Crap..."

All the fighters quickly took their distance in a leap, retreating to the edges of the cave. As for the poor warrior in charge of retrieving the Nexus, he was unfortunately not so lucky.

A blinding radiance suddenly burst from the gem and the high-rank Evolver was instantly disintegrated, its Soul completely snuffed out. Not even the Oracle would be able to resurrect him.

The next moment, the eyelids of the creature crawling out of the bedrock opened and two silver rays shot out, illuminating the entire cave with the sheer power of the sun. Because there was no real ground or rock, no tangible phenomenon occurred, but the walls of the floor began to ripple and beat to the rhythm of a thundering heartbeat, which made the souls of the spectators tremble.

In a fraction of a second the temperature rose above 50,000 degrees, and the cave instantly became a tomb.

The other members of Lost Divinities did not give up, however, and all those who could not resist activated their Oracle Shield. Nelekai furiously raised his magic staff and a golden door appeared above him, releasing a torrent of black smoke as it opened.

Hecate put away her lantern and her body became a momentary blur before reappearing in majestic armor. She was now like a sinister goddess, or maybe some kind of pretty devil.

The battle for the Nexus was just beginning.

[Chapter 604 - The Fourth Floor Boss](#)

Reasoning with Mufasa and Shere Khan was much easier than Jake had anticipated. Once Will's protection was ensured, the businessman made his way to the two felines and yelled,

"Calm down!"

This command was suffused with an enigmatic power, and the summoner's voice carried on unimpeded, shaking the eardrums of the two alpha beasts. The thunder stopped rumbling and the hurricane subsided to the relief of those nearby.

The lightning tiger descended from the clouds with a crack of thunder, resuming its solid form before them. Except for his slimmed down body, he was unharmed. The tornado obscuring the lion also dispersed, revealing a Mufasa in good shape, but with a scorched mane and fur.

Overall, it appeared to be a draw, but it was hard to know what the final outcome would have been if the fight had gone on a few more minutes.

Once the two Aristocats leaders were back to their old selves, softening up the other felines was a breeze. A few harsh growls sent a chill down their spines and they reined themselves in. Alas, Zira, one of the lionesses had indeed died during the conflict.

Mufasa and the other cats mourned her death with resounding growls, but they knew this was no time for wallowing. The chaos was far from over, and every second they were under attack from crazed Evolvers and Digestors.

ROOOOAAAARRRR!

Jake was about to urge them to get the hell out of there, but the foreboding roar he'd learned to dread echoed again, this time causing a landslide and rockslide that affected the entire battlefield.

"Fuck, we need to move. NOW!"

The group of survivors did not hesitate. Even the other Evolvers and creatures affected by Hecate's spell felt a jolt of clarity and trepidation when they heard this war declaration that heralded carnage.

But this did not last long, and they soon fell back into the killing frenzy. For Jake and his companions, however, it was no longer any of their concern.

Racing as fast as their legs would carry them, the group forced their way through, fleeing decisively in the opposite direction of the roar. The dilemma was that it was leading them straight to the central volcano.

Jake was soon plagued by a dilemma. Enter the volcano and descend to the next floor and face unknown risks? Or go straight ahead and bypass it to continue fleeing in the opposite direction of the Floor Boss.

In the first case, there was a high probability that the Floor Boss would not follow them, but based on the power-scaling of the previous floors, the slightest encounter down there would threaten their lives.

In the second case, they also had a good chance of escaping without incurring any additional risk, but this Digestor seemed to have lost his mind. Even its fellow creatures shunned it like the plague. If their

rescuers were late, he might find them again, and this time they would have no other scapegoat to suffer the consequences on their behalf.

What was the right choice? It was hard to say...

Biting his lip restlessly, Jake's face suddenly relaxed and uttered,

"Let's go down to the next floor."

ROOOAARR!

As if responding to Jake's determination, the Floor Boss' booming roar swept through the space around them, and the sheer magnitude of the blast was such that their vision became slightly blurred this time. Will was even bleeding out of his nose and ears. Maeve, still strapped to him, was in an even more alarming state, blood even dripping from her closed eyelids.

"Run faster!"

There was no need to turn around. They heard him barge in more than they saw him, but they knew right away in their hearts that the fate of the survivors slaughtering each other behind them was sealed.

Some of these warriors and monsters were undeniably formidable. If Jake had had to fight them one by one in a fair fight, he would probably have died before he saw the end of it. But against this abomination? It was hopeless.

Sinfully curious, Jake glanced behind him for a split second and what he saw scared the hell out of him. His eyes widened in stark horror as he witnessed a display that could only be described as divine retribution.

It was as if a bunch of ants were being smote by a god of war.

The humanoid creature swiped the air in front of it with two fingers and all the Evolvers who had been unaware of attacking it were cut in half. As their severed halves fell to the ground, the wound remained white-hot from the residual heat, consuming the rest of their flesh.

A fraction of a second later, the rest of their bodies caught fire, then turned to ash, instantly turning to dust.

The Myrtharian Digestors who recognized it had keen instincts and did not stupidly kill themselves like those moths running towards a flame, but their end was not much better.

Seeing these fellow creatures scurry away like terrified prey in front of some apex predator, the Floor Boss grabbed the air and the palm facing the monsters began to pulsate with an unspeakable aura of neither heat, radiation, nor Soul Energy.

Yet the fleeing Digestors, most of whom still were in their optimal fighting form, with their Silver Stone Skin activated and their blood glistening like lava, froze in their tracks as the elusive aura passed through them.

Before they could grasp what was happening to them, their lava veins lost their incandescence and the galactic glow in their silver eyes faded away. Before their brains could command their hearts to beat faster to resist this loss of heat, their bodies turned to ice and then shattered into pieces.

All in all, from the time the Floor Boss made his entrance to the death of all those Evolvers and Digesters, only five to six tenths of a second had passed. Not nearly enough time for Jake and his group to run far away.

Jake had witnessed the whole scene with his own eyes, and the moment Floor Boss had lifted his hand in front of him, he had seen the inherent heat of every living thing standing too close to him being stripped of all their thermal energy.

This heat had been reabsorbed by this pulsating hand in the form of invisible gamma rays, imperceptibly lighting up the nearby network of veins and arteries up to halfway up his forearm.

This kind of unfathomable feats... Jake was currently unable to do it!

A few Evolvers and Digestors had survived this first exchange, but not all the small fry had escaped. However, neither Jake nor these guys were fooled. Now that they were the only ones left, it would soon be their turn.

The Elite Digestors present strongly resembled the clone that Jake had defeated with tremendous difficulty, and they didn't even dare to breathe, their bodies quivering involuntarily despite their best efforts. Their subconscious obedience, though, satisfied the Floor Boss's innate vanity and gave them a brief respite.

Conversely, nearby Evolvers who chose to flee or attack became the object of his next attack. Jake and his group, who were about to flee, became the priority targets, much to their chagrin.

The Floor Boss waved his hand, blasting off the flies that deigned to target him, his gaze trained on the fugitives. When his starry eyes landed on Jake and his companions, they all understood immediately that they were screwed.

The Floor Boss was undoubtedly Jake's clone. But a clone that had evolved multiple times as a fucking Pokemon, becoming an absurdly overpowered and grotesque version of him to the point where it no longer bore much resemblance to him.

At over five meters tall, this Jake was already a giant, the original Jake only reaching his navel. His musculature was freakishly hypertrophied, his Silver Myrtharian Bloodline reverting to his Kintharian lineage.

His translucent canines protruded from his lips, more like an orc's face than a human's, and his claws were gleaming and sharp as the most precious of swords. His long silver hair with a few golden strands flowed down his back to his ankles, fluttering gracefully in the non-existent breeze.

Noteworthy, but enough to make their blood run cold, this Digester was only wearing plain grey clothes. No silver chitin exoskeletons, no weapons forged out of his own body, no monstrous pieces of armor of which these creatures had the secret.

Instead, there was something else, something much more terrifying: A Bracelet. This thing had its own Oracle Device. Or at least, something very similar.

'So in the end, a Dungeon Digestor can even emulate this kind of advanced technology.' Jake's heart became sullen as he stared at the bracelet.

He could see it in the eyes of this monster. This creature was frighteningly intelligent. It wasn't hunting sadistically for fun, but for a specific purpose.

This Digestor would never let them escape.

Bracing themselves for death, Jake, Will, Fumdalf and the other felines gave up trying to run and got into a fighting stance, drawing their weapons when they had any. At that moment, Jake wondered where Crunch and Lord Phenix might be, but was relieved not to see them around. At least those two oddballs would survive a little longer.

Then, just as Jake and the others thought they were doomed, an overwhelming spiritual pressure descended upon them and they were all, without exception, slammed to the ground, Jake included. He could barely lift his head without fainting to check out who or what they were dealing with.

Astonishingly, this Soul Power did not belong to the Floor Boss.. The Digestor was not about to black out like them, but he was also on his knees, roaring pitifully but hatefully at something floating in the sky.

[Chapter 605 - Kokoon](#)

"Hmm?"

A hissing, discordant hum exploded in all of their heads, momentarily making them dizzy and causing the more feeble-minded to faint. The inhuman droning sound was enough to make one break out in a cold sweat, instilling in the few survivors a primal fear.

Struggling to hold the creature's gaze as it oppressed them indiscriminately, Jake managed to squint and put a name to the overpowering alien levitating like an indifferent god above them.

It was an insect. More precisely, a kind of spider, but with more legs.

The thing had a span of less than two meters and twelve hairy legs, but its shiny black abdomen was completely hairless. From the mandibles, to the multiple pairs of eyes, this thing looked like some kind of alien spider, although genetically speaking it most likely had no common DNA with its Earth counterparts.

Where the creature differed from a classic spider was that it had a long neck in proportion to the rest of its body, straightened vertically like that of a giraffe or diplodocus, making its head and mandibles much more flexible. Its foremost pair of legs, curled up against its thorax, were also distinguished by their seven opposable fingers, a condition conducive to the development and handling of tools.

Jake was at first certain that this monster was an enemy, but he began to doubt it when he recognized the equipment the creature was wearing. It was a kind of futuristic armor made of shining metal, but its surface was covered with lines of bluish light drawing multiple symbols and runes. One of its prehensile front legs held a large rectangular energy shield, while the other leg held a long scythe dripping with blue blood.

Its head was concealed under a helmet whose visor had a total opacity. If the alien had not voluntarily deactivated it when he arrived, Jake would never have been able to see what was underneath.

All this gear bore too much resemblance to the regular Oracle Guardians' outfit to be just a coincidence. Its arrival coincided with that of the impending rescue.

So why was this fucking spider attacking them? Was it just sheer arrogance, or a poor control of its powers?

As much as Jake was dying to question the creature, to scream out his resentment, there was nothing he could do. Resisting this mental pressure was already taking all his energy.

Oblivious to their plight, the alien swept his gaze over the survivors with scrutiny as if it were looking for something, then shook his head with a disappointed look.

"It is not here. They're not here either. The Nexus should be further down..."

Everyone could hear it grumbling in an annoyed tone, and the pressure pressing them to the ground seemed to subside for a brief moment as the spider lost interest in them before suddenly flaring up.

The alien fluttered hastily to the Floor Boss, its attention suddenly caught by the bracelet on its wrist.

"Oh my... What do we have here?" The spider lovingly caressed the silver bracelet as if he were courting an unnaturally shy damsel... Or rather, justifiably terrified.

Jake's clone was obviously not pleased with this "promiscuity" and he began to roar ferociously, struggling with all his might to break his spiritual chains. His huge muscles swelled to an extreme level, and for a second the other survivors thought the Digestor would manage to escape, but a gentle poke of one of the spider's pointy legs made him lose all his fighting ability.

The lava veins went out instantly as a black, corrosive substance rapidly circulated through his bloodstream. Soon, the mighty Digestor was using all his strength and abilities not to free himself, but simply to stay alive...

Continuing to examine the bracelet as if the Floor Boss' hateful roar did not exist, the spider at some point decided to grab the bracelet with one of its prehensile legs and gently tug on it.

The metal bracelet was neatly torn off, hand and wrist along with it. Weighing the object in his shiny black hand with amusement, the alien smiled fondly.

"About six tons. That's unexpected. Ahem, thanks for the gift." Patting the Digestor's shoulder in thanks, the spider turned to the other paralyzed survivors and said,

"Pretend I'm not here and best of luck to you all. You may carry on with your discussion as you wish. I won't interfere, I promise."

The alien mockingly apologized with an ungainly bow before disappearing in the direction of the central volcano. Eventually, it returned to inspect the other unconscious or immobilized Digestors, and ripped off their arms too, to see if they were hiding a bracelet somewhere.

The shrill grunts and groans of pain were laden with resentment and a deep sense of injustice, but that didn't stop the alien from mutilating them for a few grams of alloy liquid.

It turned out that this was not an irrational act. Several of the Digestors were powerful clones of Jake, whose evolution was similar to the one he had defeated earlier. Some of them actually carried some amounts of the precious alloy with them. They just hadn't figured out or decided what to do with it yet.

Once its harvest was complete, the greedy, sociopathic alien flew off again, this time disappearing for good into the magma chamber of the volcano.

When the spiritual pressure eased and they could move again, they heard the spider sigh in the distance,

"Why is it that the Nexus of these Dungeon Digestors is always on the top floor? Can't they put it on the first floor? That would save everyone time..."

The Evolvers and the other Digestors stayed frozen in disbelief after the alien left, exchanging confused looks.

What the hell has just happened?

Jake was one of the first to jump to his feet, but most had not yet regained consciousness. Yet his reaction was not the shell-shocked blankness that transfixed most.

On the contrary, it was a reaction of utmost lucidity and cold bloodedness: He struck out, and he was not the only one.

In less than a third of a second, all the unconscious or still stunned Digestors were mercilessly chopped down. Without any qualms, Jake took their lives, his Aether and Soul Tribute forcibly sucking out a significant percentage of what once made them powerful.

Those that Jake could not execute in time were eliminated by other Evolvers with an equally keen survival instinct. Mufasa killed a few, Shere Khan a few others. Fumdalf and the chimera protecting Will took out another.

However, no one dared attack the Floor Boss, even though he too was wounded. They were brave, not suicidal.

Everyone understood that.

Help would not come. Not right away. Not as planned.

Something had happened that changed the game. Jake had no one to turn to but himself to get out of this mess.

These Digestors were not weak. They were weakened by their long fight and the abuse inflicted by this cruel spider, but in the end they carried his Myrtharian Bloodline. Their Aether stats were often higher than his and the environment guaranteed them a quick and perfect regeneration in no time.

Any one of them could have faced Jake in a duel without being at a disadvantage and some of them were even stronger. If the spider hadn't hurt them badly, they would never have suffered such a devastating defeat. Their death was absolutely unfair.

But that's the way of the world. Life was unfair. Some were born rich, beautiful and healthy, while others started at the bottom, poor, ugly, and sometimes disabled or retarded.

All they could do was seize the opportunities when they presented themselves.

That was what Jake and the other Evolvers did.

This succession of flawless kills satisfied his Myrtharian ego and his bloodline was greatly stimulated. Jake felt something stir inside him and the Aether flow in his cells increased by over 50% in a fraction of a second.

His Spirit Body also gained two levels, bringing him to a new level of mental clarity.

Without taking the time to look around, Jake also rushed to collect the loot condensed from his victims. Each of these Digestors was an elite among elites and the majority dropped at least one piece of equipment, accessory or Aether Skill.

By the time he and the other survivors finished collecting their rewards, the Floor Boss had fully recovered and was staring at them coldly, a magma ocean of seething fury swirling in his shimmering eyes. The torn off hand had already been replaced by a brand new limb.

Wary, the Digestor did not immediately attack, nor did it let out its signature roar. Against all odds, he glanced at the central volcano, then at the ceiling of the cave above him, apprehension flashing fleetingly across his face before turning his attention back to the survivors.

Not yet attacking, he checked them one by one, his gaze lingering a little longer on some of them before settling on Jake. When the tension became unbearable, the Digestor opened his mouth and declared in a deep voice,

"I'm dying to destroy you, you know."

Those were his first words.

"But I'm scared." He confessed right after without the slightest shame. It was as if he were talking about the weather or his breakfast. "For that reason... I'll let you live. Just for today. We will meet again."

The next moment, the Digestor was gone, teleported far away.

At the same time on the surface, an Oracle Guardian with six arms lay in a pool of his own blue blood. His armor seemed to be intact, but on his back, at a certain point the chest plate had been pierced. A black liquid was seeping out of it.

Grunting in pain with a disgruntled look, the alien muttered,

"Kokoon... That bastard got me good."

As he seemed destined to be stuck here rotting in this state, the clatter of a cane was heard, growing closer and closer, and another voice, aged and malicious, but devoid of hostility, pierced the silence,

"Who would have thought that the valiant Citro would ever be bullied by a new recruit. The Oracle Guardians nowadays are not what they used to be...."

[Chapter 606 - Rescue](#)

Recognizing that whiny, drawling voice, the Oracle Guardian, lying motionless in his own blood, burst into a thunderous laugh before quickly breaking off into a painful coughing fit that caused him to spit out a gush of dark, partially clotted fluid.

When the cough subsided, Citro inquired with a snort of sarcasm,

"To what do I owe the pleasure of a Rank 3 Aetherist's visit? I do not believe you are here to enjoy the scenery."

The Rank 3 Aetherist giggled happily in response, then with a somersault landed squarely onto Citro's chest. Looking up, the Oracle Guardian was able to confirm who he was dealing with.

The humanoid creature using his armor as a welcome mat was a small alien reminiscent of a gremlin. An ungainly mix between a koala, an imp and a lizard, its bulging yellow eyes and large elephant ears gave it a funny look. Greenish, wrinkled and wearing only a worn-out toga, this thing was not exactly a model of elegance and loveliness in the Mirror Universe.

The good thing was that there were no two creatures like this one on B842. Wendoks were a species that was virtually extinct in the Mirror Universe.

Identifying it was a breeze, especially since this wasn't the first time they faced each other.

"I see your manners haven't changed Cekt. You're still as well behaved as ever..." The Oracle Guardian snarled with displeasure.

Ignoring his whining, the alien patted Citro with the tip of his wand, which also served as a cane. Because he was too small, the role of this accessory had deviated from its primary function.

Legend had it that the wand had once belonged to a powerful wizard somewhere in the Mirror Universe, or that Cekt had made it himself for a customer, but for some reason the customer had never come to pick up his order.

Surprisingly, the usually proud and gruff Oracle Guardian let himself be patted without protest, letting the Wendok grope him as he pleased. When the little alien stopped examining him, Citro probed anxiously,

"How is it?"

"You're a lucky one. This poison is unnaturally potent, but it's still within my capabilities. I'm still curious as to who could have poisoned you like this."

Citro raised an eyebrow under his helmet.

"I thought you already knew it was a rookie that got me into this state..."

"Hehe, I just heard you whimpering to yourself, thinking no one could hear you." Shrugging his narrow shoulders, Cekt explained more earnestly, "I just arrived. So... Who did this?"

"Kokoon..."

The Oracle Guardian repeated what had just happened on the Oros mothership and the purge that had just taken place there, then the orders he had received to destroy the many Dungeon Digestors popping out all over the place and to rescue any survivors inside.

Cekt Mogusar listened intently, interrupting him just when he needed a clarification. Meanwhile, the alien also attended to his wounds.

Raising his staff, a concentrated stream of Green Aether spilled out of the artifact, then with the expert strokes of a conductor condensed a complex Aether Symbol of millions of Aether Runes whose brilliance soon enveloped the body of the poisoned warrior with benevolence.

As this comforting light washed over his cells, Citro let out an involuntary groan of pleasure as the poison corroding his insides melted from his system.

"Grade 6 Vitality Aether..." Citro commented enviously. "You Aetherists don't know how lucky you are."

Indifferent to his fluster, the Wendok retorted nonchalantly,

"There is no luck in the Mirror Universe, only survivors. If you survive as long as I have, obviously anything I can do will sound unfair and lucky to the ignorant and envious neophytes. Grade 6 Vitality Aether, you should be more than clear about the difficulties involved in making it, even if it comes from a renowned Aetherist like me."

Letting out a long, dejected sigh, Citro replied with a crooked smile,

"Sure, but complaining is good for my mental health. What can you do about it?"

Considering the question very seriously, Cekt stroked his chin thoughtfully before spouting off,

"An amnesia spell would definitely work, giving you the opportunity to start over. A spell of debility is not bad either. As the saying goes, happy are the simpletons, right? I can also use a calming or mental stability spell to keep you from being impulsive. I can also..."

A vein of annoyance soon swelled on Citro's forehead, but knowing the little alien's temperament he forced himself to keep his sharp thoughts to himself. At a certain point, he couldn't take it anymore and shouted,

"Okay, okay! I get it. Now, can you please finish the healing?"

Looking falsely surprised, Cekt tapped his breastplate with his cane and revealed with a blank face,

"Oh, I finished a minute ago."

Jumping to the side to let the Oracle Guardian stand up, Cekt gradually looked up to maintain the eye contact with the warrior. It wasn't until he was on his feet that Citro became aware that the Aetherist who had just healed him was barely larger than a fat rat.

Returning to the main topic, the Oracle Guardian asked more sternly,

"Thank you for the care, but you still haven't answered my question. What are you doing here?"

After being betrayed by Kokoon, he was now wary of this kind of reinforcement, even if his savior's reputation preceded him.

Having nothing to hide, Cekt explained simply,

"I heard what had happened and ran to save my disciples."

It was only then that Citro noticed that the Wendok was not alone. A little farther away, at a distance of several hundred meters, stood a horned alien with articulated mechanical arms protruding from his back and a bizarre young woman with white skin, but in the literal sense.

If Jake had been present, he would certainly have recognized the two individuals standing just behind.

The first one was a square-faced, hyper-muscular human measuring almost 3 meters, with dark bronze skin and a long silver mane hanging freely down his back. His jaw and translucent fangs protruding from his lips were impressive, leaving no doubt about his diet.

The second person was an elegant young woman in her early twenties with tanned skin and long, wavy Venetian blonde hair that fell to the middle of her back. Her golden eyes gleamed with a mysterious wisdom and the blood-red sword at her belt emitted an unusual murderous and sinister aura.

These two individuals were indeed Gerulf and Lucia, old friends from his first Ordeal that had changed his future. For better or for worse, Jake had also changed theirs forever and they had done everything to find him since their arrival on B842.

Not being stingy with explanations, Cekt succinctly introduced the four individuals.

"The first two are my disciples, the other two I met by chance. They had just come out of a Yellow Cube and the magic of fate had it that we were looking for the same person. Now that you are here, I am much more serene."

Abandoning his light-hearted, prankster tone, the Aetherist flashed a certain badge in his possession and solemnly ordered,

"I'll take it from here. I charge you to protect these four people until I return."

"But, I have orders from-"

"I'll explain the situation to Oros. He will understand."

The sturdy warrior instantly cringed at these words.

"As you wish, Master Mogusar..." He obeyed with a distressed look.

"Good!" The gremlin clapped his hands cheerfully, beckoning his disciples to come closer. Not knowing what to do, Gerulf and Lucia followed the other two.

The next thing they knew, Cekt was shooting off inside the mountain, his little lizard body flying through all the Dungeon Digestor walls as if they didn't exist.

This was not brute force or matter manipulation like most Evolvers were capable of, but a real phasing. He was genuinely passing through.

At his level, scanning the floor of a dungeon like this one was child's play and tracing the trail took only a moment. Within seconds, he identified the traces of Jake's passage, then using some mysterious techniques that only he had the secret of, he set off after him.

Five seconds later, he reached the room where the four factions under Urul's leadership had been ambushed by an army of goblin and orc Digestors and he frowned disapprovingly. Still, as an optimist he persisted in his search for clues and discovered that his disciple had survived.

Like a homing head, he flew through the galleries at lightning speed, but the strangest thing about it was that there was no sound or air movement after he passed. Despite its insane speed, the alien was as silent as a ghost.

When he reached the Second Floor' forest, Cekt detected signs of life and expanded his vast consciousness to encompass them all. Finding physical characteristics in some of them similar to his own disciple, he flew to the one with the most powerful Aether signature and met Svava.

The Valkyrie hadn't wasted her time and had managed to gather about twenty refugees during this period. By protecting them, most of them had made good progress even if it was at the expense of her own.

Cekt asked her some questions, then gave her the position of the other survivors to help her regroup everyone. To eliminate any risk, he cleared all the Digestors on the floor with a snap of his fingers before continuing on his way.

The alien did the same on the third floor, then trying to repeat the feat on the fourth floor, he soon realized that there were no monsters left to kill.. Detecting several large Aether signatures in the distance, he headed in their direction.

[Chapter 607 - Original Spell: Inference](#)

Jake sensed the approaching supernatural aura more than he saw it. When he considered drawing his sword, a small, wrinkled, turd-green alien was already standing in front of him, staring at him with gloomy yellow eyes.

Master and disciple stared into each other's eyes with an unnerving poignancy until...

"What's up?"

Cekt Mogusar broke the silence with a shamelessness befitting his image.

Jake was dumbfounded and rubbed his eyes twice to make sure he hadn't imagined the alien opposite him. Finally convinced that he was not dreaming, he probed curiously,

"What are you doing here, master?"

" So what?! I don't even have the right to come and save my disciple now?" The little creature took offense, brandishing his cane grandly.

Jake broke out in a cold sweat as he saw the alien's outburst and quickly corrected himself.

"Of course not, master. You are free to do as you please..."

Thinking of something, Jake suddenly made sense of what had just happened and asked more politely,

"You didn't happen to come across a Digestor on your way here that strongly resembled me?"

This was not Cekt's first Dungeon run and he immediately understood the underlying meaning. His conscience spread again to the far reaches of the floor and he swept through it with a concentrated frown before eventually shaking his head.

"I regret to say no. If there is such a Digestor it has slipped through. Perhaps he fled to the lower floors..."

The Aetherist didn't sound convinced of his hypothesis as he voiced it, but he couldn't think of a better reason. He found it hard to conceive that a measly low-ranked Digestor could have gotten past him, but even if it did it wouldn't be a tragedy, nor would it be the first time such miscellaneous feats had occurred.

"You said he looked like you?" Cekt picked up sharply. "Don't tell me you seriously whacked that Punching-bag Digestor, huh?"

Jake felt subconsciously like a young maiden whose skirt had just been lifted. Deeply embarrassed. However, this embarrassment was short-lived and the built-up overflow of emotions immediately erupted with verve and vehemence.

"What was I supposed to do?! Refuse politely? This thing was a fucking Rank 9, damn it!"

"Oh... Just a Rank 9... I'll be ashamed to say that in public with such condescension. Don't tell anyone you're my disciple." Cekt scorned him while picking his nose nonchalantly without paying the slightest attention to his diatribe.

Disregarding the heavy-hearted young man, the gremlin hopped from one survivor to the next, mechanically smoothing his goatee to check their wounds and their psychological state. He also took a cursory look at the corpses before bouncing back to Jake.

"Alright, I was joking. You did well for a first run." Cekt patted his knee to comfort him. It wasn't by choice, but because his arm didn't reach higher. "Compared to your other two co-disciples, you did pretty well."

"My co-disciples?" Jake repeated the word with confusion.

"Yes, before I came to rescue you and your faction, I had to stop at two other Oracle Shelters first to take care of other disciples. With you, there are seven of your generation. By that I mean selected on B842. The others operate on other planets or systems."

"I see..." Jake nodded as he understood the situation.

He had never thought himself exceptional. He owed his status as a disciple to a simple deal. If he hadn't boldly negotiated the price of the blood samples obtained during his First Ordeal, Jake wouldn't have even been qualified to speak to him.

Whether these other disciples owed their positions to daring deals like his or whether their talents had really caught the eye of the capricious Aetherist remained to be seen.

Suddenly, a monumental earthquake shook the entire cave they were in. The cause was clearly an explosion emanating from someplace below them.

As the earth cracked open and then gave way to anarchic lava eruptions, Cekt Mogusar stopped swaggering and turned professional. The alien rose swiftly into the air above the small crowd and without explaining anything pointed his cane directly at the ceiling of the cavern.

A torrent of inexhaustible energy surged forth from his small body, accompanied by an insane psychic aura. His bracelet informed him that this exceptionally pure energy was primarily Aether, but his senses were telling him a different story.

The endless stream of multicolored light organized itself into a myriad of incredibly complex and cryptic runes and symbols until it formed a kind of formation resembling an incomprehensible constellation.

Balls of lights were orbiting around other balls of lights, orbiting themselves around other balls of lights, orbiting around other balls of lights... This cycle repeated itself seventeen times, giving to the whole an incredible and indecipherable density, forming a kind of tentacular network resembling millions of entangled rings from afar.

Paying closer attention to these light bulbs, Jake realized that they were Aether Cores or at least something similar. Each of these Aether Cores was more developed than his own and had something unique that set it apart from the others, but he couldn't quite tell what.

"Watch and learn, Jake." Cekt suddenly spoke in his head. "As a disciple, this is your first lesson. Aetherists are feared and revered for many reasons, but one has always been remembered: Aetherists are first and foremost Designers. We design everything, and that includes our own spells and techniques.

"No one is an Aetherist until they have created a unique spell that belongs to them alone, yet that they could teach or sell to others if they wished. This is the spell I created after a lifetime of research and development. I have named this spell Inference."

At that very moment, several Aether Cores within the formation began to glow intensely and beams of energy shot out from them, striking one or more other stars. These beams of light struck the other stars and in turn began to emit energy, targeting one or more of the other Aether Cores.

The process repeated rapidly in an infinitesimal fraction of time, until the amplified rays fed by the formation reached the Aether Core at the center. Once hit, the Aether Core did not emit any rays, but a change of nature took place within the ball of light.

The Aether Core formation shrank to the size of his palm and all that was left was the blinding light of the Aether Core, which clamped itself to the tip of his wand.

Cekt then waved his cane, which was still pointing at the ceiling of the cave, and after muttering some unintelligible incantation the spectral glow of the moon shone on their gobsmacked faces.

All the layers of rock and walls that the Dungeon Digestor had painstakingly erected to imprison them were gone. Above them, there was only a huge cylindrical hole 100 meters in diameter. Even the black clouds had disappeared, which explained the moonlight shimmering on them.

"This..."

Jake and the others were speechless. Jake had seen powerful Evolvers use terrifying spells before his eyes. Spells that he was not qualified to comprehend the level of complexity and power.

Such was the case with the Green Lightfield protecting the residence of the Ancient Designer Xion Zolvhur, or the mind-boggling magic based on Oracle Cubes that the humanoid Brachiosaurus-like Oracle Guardian had used to resist that invincible Seraphim Digestor.

But this original spell was in an entirely different dimension. The mysteries behind its workings seemed endless while the instantaneousness and magnitude of the consequences once the spell was cast was just unfathomable.

While Jake and the others were frozen in shock, Cekt had become concerned when he received no feedback from the Dungeon Digestor. After all, each of these walls was like its own flesh. Normally, a high-pitched, resentful wail was the minimum expected.

So why was the monster so silent. Was it already dead? The gremlin's already bulging eyes abruptly bulged out as he realized that some bastard might have already gotten the Nexus.

"Jake, I have to go." Cekt declared with some urgency in his voice. "Wait for me here or go back up to the surface. Citro and some friends of yours are waiting for you there."

Jake didn't think much more about who these friends were, since he had already deduced that his master had saved his other comrades on the way. Then he saw the little alien pointing his cane at the ground and he broke out in a sudden cold sweat.

"WAIT! There may be survivors below, including the soul of a friend of mine."

Jake and Will quickly explained to him what had happened to Kyle and the Aetherist pursed his lips in annoyance.

"Fine... We'll take the long way, but it'll probably be too late by then."

Cekt refrained from telling them that the only reason he was being so accommodating was because he was already convinced that rushing wouldn't help. At his level, there were plenty of ways to get out of a Dungeon Digestor without being noticed.

Because Jake and Will were so insistent, Cekt agreed to let them accompany him. In fact, he was the one who would escort them down. Neither of them could survive the lower floors without his help.

Like an elder taking his two little children to the park, the trio then set off, fearlessly jumping into the central volcano chamber to discover new lands.

[Chapter 608 - Fifth Floor](#)

SPLASH!

After a lengthy freefall, the trio crashed into a huge body of water with a resounding splash. At their speed, the landing created a small tidal wave, but the force field released by Cekt Mogusar neutralized any residual energy. The waves violently lapped at the invisible shield as if it were a steady, rock-like cliff.

Under the small Aetherist's protection, they then visited the Fifth Floor, an ocean world of storms, tempests and tsunamis. Except for a few patches of land that were frequently flooded and struck by lightning, there was no place to set down.

Underwater, they picked up gigantic presences, but fortunately the old alien was there to rid of them. As with the previous floors, he purged the floor of its monsters with a flick of his finger.

On the Fifth Floor, the ordinary Digestors were at Rank 8, while the Elites and the Floor Boss were above Rank 9. At Rank 9, even the most incapable Digestors had average Aether stats of around 34,000 points, enough to rival and outperform an average Sixth-Ordeal Evolver.

If they were anything like these successful Jake-based clones... their actual fighting ability would become much trickier to gauge. According to Cekt, many factors affected the power of Evolvers and Digestors beyond a certain level, and there could be drastic gaps between Digestors and Evolvers of equal rank.

Listening intently to their report regarding the Fourth Floor's Boss, Cekt thoughtfully smoothed his goatee while still looking for the entrance to the Sixth Floor.

"Hmm, weird..." Cekt huffed as he stopped yet another kilometer-high tsunami about to engulf them. "I've already scanned the entire floor, but I can't find the entrance to the next floor."

The huge wave parted in two, rolling on to either side of the trio, safely tucked under the shield. Somewhat awed, Will hesitantly suggested,

"Since we have to go down anyway, wouldn't it make sense that the entrance to the next floor is at the bottom of this ocean?"

"Of course, it is..." The little alien sneered vexedly, "But there's nothing down there but sand. If I were a pessimist, I'd say the entrance was sealed off by someone..."

Jake and Will exchanged a dispirited look, then asked,

"What do we do now?"

"We ask the survivor." Cekt crooned playfully as the intangible shield carrying them shot out of control like a cannonball aimed at the ocean itself.

As with the tsunami, the ocean split in two to clear the way for them and it wasn't long before they could see the bottom of this massive pool. Jake and Will were appalled at the real depth of this ocean.

This expanse of water was at least fifty kilometers deep! This Dungeon Digestor had literally created its own watery domain.

On the way down, they also had the chance to check out some of the local Digestor corpses and noticed that there were many whale-like creatures that shared many similarities with Crygo.

There were also hybrid aliens resembling large prehistoric lizards, but also other monsters with more familiar features. Drifting through the storm clouds, they had seen several flashes of lightning blur into the outline of huge felines, while in each tornado lurked the shadow of a lion or a titanic dragon.

Jake and Will didn't need to be geniuses to understand that this floor was based on Evolvers and beasts capable of manipulating the climate or thriving in this aquatic and inhospitable habitat. The sky and these islands would have been perfect for Mufasa, and Shere Khan, but there were more than just felines on this floor before Cekt wiped them out.

When they reached the ocean floor, they met the survivor Cekt was talking about. It was the arrogant White Drake from the second floor, who looked like a fifty-meter-long horned dragon stripped of its wings.

The huge reptile was still breathing, but its abdomen had been gutted from the genitals to the chin and its internal organs had spilled out onto the floor. Its situation was extremely critical but because of its formidable vitality, the beast was still alive.

This kind of huge creature was usually much tougher than other Evolvers with similar Aether stats, but healing from a serious injury required an incomparably greater amount of energy than for a human. In this case, the blood loss alone was measured in tons.

"Hey can you hear me?" Cekt gently sat down on the monster's nose.

Improvising as a doctor, the alien lifted the creature's heavy eyelid and flashed the tip of his cane like a flashlight to check the beast's ocular reflexes. Seeing the vertical pupil reflexively constrict, the gremlin clapped ecstatically.

"Great! It's not dead."

Jake and Will were speechless. 'Can't you just heal the poor dude?'

The wingless dragon was so vigorous that its heartbeat was generating ripples on the surface of the frozen water around them. It was impossible not to notice that the wretched beast was still alive. Clearly, the little alien was just having some fun.

As with Citro, a filament of Green Aether burst from the end of his cane and entered the body of the beast after forming strange symbols. The gaping wound that had nearly eviscerated the White Drake closed with a snap like a zipper being pulled up in one go.

The intestines and other organs that were spread out on the ground but still connected together were sliced clean off by this new layer of flesh and skin, but new organs inside had already replaced them.

"Thank you." The White Drake growled gratefully as it regained consciousness. To prolong its survival, it had voluntarily placed itself in a state of stasis.

Although the beast was usually arrogant, it knew how to be indebted and answered the trio's questions honestly. When the wingless dragon told them that it owed its injuries to a veiled young woman, Will hollered in rage,

"Damn it! I should have known! She's the one who caused Kyle's death! This woman has screwed us all up!"

Jake shared his hatred, but the businessman had yet to explain exactly what the circumstances of the incident were. His choice of words implied that she hadn't killed Kyle directly and he wanted to know the whole truth before passing judgment.

Having no particular connection to the Playboy, Cekt had other considerations in mind and he proceeded to ask the necessary questions.

"What? You say there was another Evolver armed with a sword chasing her?"

Will's eyes widened in surprise, then he slammed his fist into his other palm as he recognized the individual.

"It's that guy! You know the one who got into a fight with the necromancer at the Dungeon entrance." Will clarified as he saw Jake's confused expression, "He's the reason we're still alive. He forced the veiled woman to flee, but it was too late for Kyle by then."

Unfortunately, the White Drake didn't know any better. Crygo and the Taotie named Gargasos had snuck into the underwater tunnel leading to the sixth floor before him and he was already in bad shape after a fight with the Taotie.

It was only after exploring this Dungeon that he realized his inabilities. Compared to these prodigies, this Sixth-Ordeal Beast was mediocre at best.

Like other Evolvers and beasts, White Drake had first been beaten badly by the Fourth Floor Boss and had been left to wait for an opportunity to sneak further down.

From what he had seen, Gargasos and Crygo were the two bullies of the Fifth Floor, but while Crygo was diligently searching for the entrance to the Sixth Floor, the Taotie was devouring every monster he came across, including Digestors and Evolvers.

Except for him, all the other opportunists who had taken advantage of the departure of the Fourth Floor Boss had been devoured by the Taotie. The White Drake ironically owed his life to the arrival of the young woman who had precipitated things.

The funniest part of the whole story was that neither the whale nor the Taotie had noticed the group of hooded individuals that had blithely passed under their noses.

"Who killed the Floor Boss of the Fifth Floor?" Cekt inquired next.

"I don't know. It was gone when I got there." The lizard answered truthfully.

"Last question. Who sealed the entrance to the next floor?"

"No one... The tunnel collapsed on itself a few seconds after the swordsman passed through."

The trio frowned upon hearing this. Whatever the case, they now knew where the entrance was. They thanked White Drake and set off again. The lizard offered to accompany them, but Cekt refused, advising him to join the others with Citro on the surface.

The trio then rushed to the theoretical entrance, which was now just smooth sand, but it wasn't enough to fool the Aetherist's alert senses. He lazily waved his wand and the sand began to swirl, the tunnel rebuilding itself before their eyes.

"Let's go." Cekt said with a frustrated expression that began to betray his impatience.

This tunnel was as twisted and dark as the others, but it was originally a tunnel submerged in water. When they saw the end of it, Cekt released his control over the water above them and they fell from the sky followed by a pressurized waterfall.

This new place was pitch black and Will shivered involuntarily as he landed and felt a warm, viscous liquid engulf his legs up to his knees.. Before he could react, he was already drowning.

[Chapter 609 - Sixth Floor](#)

Jake reacted immediately by sending out a blast of heat to vaporize the compact liquid flowing around him and grabbed his comrade by the scruff of his neck to keep him from sinking.

When he found after a moment that neither of them were sinking beyond mid-thigh, he let go and let the dark liquid encase his legs again.

This was not good news, though, because it was taking a lot of effort to move through the thick, heavy mixture. It was as if they were wading through liquid lead.

"What the hell is this water?" Will cursed at the side.

Jake didn't answer, but he was just as confused. In addition to the dark, opaque liquid, there was also something heavy about the atmosphere. There was a sort of corrupting, evil miasma in the air that aroused irrational primal urges in them.

Despite their limited experience, Jake and Will considered themselves tough-minded people, yet their minds were plagued by anxiety whose symptoms bordered dangerously on panic attacks.

Their hair bristled with fear and their hearts pounded at the slightest sound, which was none other than their footsteps in the water. Their eyes were also playing tricks on them and their brain was making them see sinister shapes in the miasma that they were unable to interpret.

In addition to the growing panic, these miasmas had something dangerous in them that had already started to attack their exposed tissues. Where the miasma had touched their bodies, the skin had darkened and begun to decay as if it were aging at an accelerated rate or a poison was rotting their flesh.

If Jake was feeling increasingly painful tingling after a few seconds, then it went without saying that Will was enduring such torture that he would soon pass out if this punishment went on for a few more seconds.

Then Cekt clapped his hands and the intangible shield that protected them was doubled with a sacred and benevolent aura that immediately dispersed the surrounding miasma and the accompanying symptoms.

"Be careful. Despite the darkness, this floor is not a natural environment and is not suitable for nocturnal species, but for those supernatural creatures that are inherently evil or have an affinity for related elements like the Dark or Death Element. The Myrtharian Bloodline will not give you any advantage here. A normal light spell would be of no use against this type of energy."

Jake didn't need that warning. This brief experience had already made him realize that he didn't belong here. As much as surviving the Fifth Floor might have been possible if he had taken plenty of precautions and avoided getting into a fight, this Sixth Floor was likely to get him killed before he could even meet anyone or anything.

The blackness in this place was different from a simple absence of light. The miasma and opaque smoke billowing around them was unbreathable and charged with a tainted energy that their bodies and minds were unable to harness. If they stayed here too long, Jake was convinced that they would either go insane or become intoxicated with uncertain, but undoubtedly lethal consequences.

After doing a quick test by inhaling the dark smoke and directing it to his stomach, Jake nonetheless received confirmation that his digestive system was not completely helpless. Able to dissolve most metals and even a Soul Stone with enough time, these miasmas were no exception.

The only problem was that the digestive process was relatively long and he would quickly feel bloated. Unless he drastically improved his stomach's performance or became able to tolerate these miasmas, staying here for the long haul was simply out of question.

Noting that Jake and Will had regained their equanimity, the old Aetherist still felt it necessary to fill in their ignorance for their own good.

"Just because my spell protects us from this miasma doesn't mean we're safe." Cekt explained dispassionately. "This adventure is a good thing to expand your horizons. A Dungeon Digester doesn't create its floors randomly. Each floor has its own ecosystem and it exists only to accelerate and optimize the growth of the variants it has decided to implant there.

"The abilities of these Digestors are based on those of the Evolvers that served as a reference, and under the right circumstances, the Dungeon will take the time to create dozens, if not hundreds, of structured and original floors. To ensure that its existence is tolerated and that it has time to grow, the Dungeon Digester will make sure that it creates monsters that are neither too strong nor too weak by offering enticing rewards so that Evolvers who venture in will not be frightened and will instead be encouraged and determined to return.

"To do this, the difficulty must be reasonable, as must the power-scaling of the Digestors that adventurers encounter. Because this Dungeon Digester is too young and has been given no choice, it has been forced to abandon this more permanent and safe method and concentrate on ensuring its own survival. The moment one of the Evolvers failed to follow the meticulously laid out plan by attempting to raid the Nexus, the Dungeon became hostile.

"Each of these floors is therefore no longer a way to challenge and motivate the Evolvers, but to train its troops. Because of its immaturity and lack of imagination, this Digester has focused on a few simple, but proven methods. It is not for nothing that these Digestors bear a striking resemblance to some of you. Be aware that in a well-established Dungeon Digester, the monsters inside are not supposed to look like

the Evolvers that enter. What happened here is the worst possible scenario. There are also teleporters of sorts in the form of small white crystalline cubes that you can use to move between floors visited and even return to floor 0 to recover. But most importantly, you are free to leave whenever you want."

Jake and Will were taken aback, but when they thought back over the course of events they concluded that the little alien was indeed right. In other words, from the moment Crygo had used his speech to recruit them and convince them to get the Nexus, the Dungeon Digestor's "benevolence" toward them had disappeared.

"Fuck!" Will was infuriated. "Does this mean that if it weren't for the fucking whale, we could have quietly killed those Digestors and taken our time and even gotten the hell out of here?"

Jake briefly echoed his friend's thoughts, but changed his mind when he remembered how the Digestor horde had brought them here.

"The Digestors forced us into this Dungeon, so I doubt they would have let us out freely." Jake shrugged. "Besides, Crygo wasn't the only one with bad intentions. I'm sure Nelekai and those other high-rank Evolvers had the same goal."

"Ahem, right... Even the White Drake was there for that."

Cekt smiled as he listened to the two men discuss, but eventually cleared his throat to recapture their attention and continue his explanation.

"To get back to the structure of these floors here is my theory. First of all, the labyrinth on the first level was used to better understand and observe you. It also saved time to prepare and complete the layout of the following floors. The Second Floor served to keep the small fry busy, while the Third also had no other purpose than to reduce your numbers and slow you down with the blizzard.

"If I'm not mistaken, the Dungeon got serious from the Fourth Floor and choosing your Bloodline as a foundation was a big hit. The Floor Boss was more than helpful in eliminating and blocking intruders, but his performance was not perfect. A few mice managed to fool the cat.

"The Fifth Floor was also intended by its ocean environment to weed out all the unfit Evolvers. Fifty kilometers deep is more than enough to stop a high-ranked Evolver if it doesn't have proper equipment or technique. In creating this floor and the monsters that are supposed to live there, the Dungeon Digestor obviously knew that some Evolvers or beasts would be in their element here, but he was smart to notice that the sole inherently aquatic species present was Crygo. The other lizards and sea beasts we came across were poorly optimized hybrids based on other creatures like the White Drake. In its original plan, I think it was planning to stop everyone at this stage except for the high-rank whale.

"So that brings us to this Sixth Floor where darkness and evil reigns supreme. The water is too slimy and toxic for a whale like Krygo to swim in properly, while the air is simply poisonous and reeks of death. The environment itself is enough to overcome a lone whale, no matter how tough it is, and the ocean above makes sure that the Evolvers and creatures that inspired this place are unable to make their way here.

"But therein lies the problem. This floor still exists to promote the development of a bloodline, which means that there was at least one Evolver among you all whose powers would benefit greatly from the

miasma of this place. Based on the information gleaned here and there, there is only one that vaguely fits: the Necromancer. But the atmosphere and the Digestors I detect here... are nothing like him.

"The monsters I detect here are Demons."

[Chapter 610 - Demons](#)

"Demons?" Jake and Will stammered in unison.

"Demons, fiends, devils, call them by any name you like." Cekt spouted imperturbably. "You wouldn't know the difference between the three anyway."

Jake was dying to retort that he had memorized the entire Oraclean dictionary, but hardly tempted by a sterile debate he wisely held his tongue while smacking his lips. Will, alas, dove headlong into the honey trap.

"Devils are generally above demons and fiends are... monsters?"

An expression of pure gloating suddenly distorted the little alien's face, as if he was already savoring what was to come.

"Wrong! Outrageous simplification! And partially misleading by the way." The Aetherist tsked as he wagged his finger no with a know-it-all look. "Demons, fiends and devils can all be monsters, but they can also look just like you... or pretty close. Traditionally, a demon is an evil spirit or fallen angel, but when it is used to describe a monster or creature the connotation is not necessarily negative. Strong mythological beasts can be seen as demons too. But a demon can also have a more metaphorical meaning as when we speak of an inner demon gnawing at the mind of an individual such as an obsessive fear or a desire for unfulfilled revenge. If the conditions are met, sometimes these demons will come to life in a literal sense. These are the evil spirits born and feeding off our negative emotions."

Glancing absentmindedly at the corrosive, dark energy-laden smoke swamping his shield, Cekt conjured up a small orb of light in the palm of his hands, which floated under his wrinkled face, to reveal a devilish grin with yellowed teeth.

Resuming his lecturing, the alien chuckled,

"There are many different kinds of demons, like the Demons of Fear, Anger, Envy, Lust, Pride and so on. When I was talking about demons swarming around this floor, I was talking about this kind... You don't see them, but there are tens of thousands of them around us. They blend in with the miasma and dark smoke surrounding us, hoping to feed on your distress and agitation until they drive you to suicide."

Gulp!

Will shuddered with fright as the small alien dropped his bomb and he couldn't help but nervously look at the opaque smoke swirling around them. Even with active concentration, he felt nothing. If that old fart wasn't pranking them, then this was downright terrifying.

Jake was calmer, but by his furrowed brow he was clearly not as collected as he appeared. He couldn't detect anything either. Even when he activated his Myrtharian Eyes, he could only perceive a diffuse aura. It was as if thousands of energies of different natures had blended together, making it impossible to identify them clearly.

If there really were demons evolving in this miasma, then he was indeed helpless against them.

"How do we fight them?" Jake asked sullenly.

Cekt smiled approvingly and answered,

"Against a few low-level demons, a resolute and steady mind is enough and you can just ignore them. What is folklore or fantasy in inferior worlds becomes the norm in a world with high Aether Density. These phenomena are commonplace wherever the Aether Density exceeds 100,000. At this level, the Aether starts to have tangible effects on matter and mind whether we like it or not. Take a walk through the slums of an Oracle Shelter in System A1 and you'll see these spirit demons spawn before your very eyes... There, the Digestors are only one aspect of the problem..."

The old alien was an inexhaustible mine of information, but so far he had revealed only unpleasant secrets. Still, Will read between the lines and remarked,

"If Evil Spirits can be born from people's minds in this way, couldn't Good Spirits be born in the same way?"

Cekt nodded in approval again, but he offered no explanation this time.

"You missed the point. To birth these demons, the Dungeon Digestor was inspired by someone or something. Think carefully, is there anyone you've found suspicious?"

Jake shook his head apologetically. Shady Evolvers were a dime a dozen. Urul was clearly an evil creature, but he was the template for the orcs on the first and second floors, and his remains were probably rotting somewhere on the fourth floor, since the Floor Boss had indeed shown up completely unscathed. It didn't look like he was running from anyone...

Will, on the other hand, had a completely different reaction. After receiving Cekt's question, his eyes widened in understanding and he gritted his teeth in fury.

"This bitch! It can only be her."

Jake immediately understood who he was talking about. It could only be the veiled woman. Since no one had seen her face, it supported that assumption. Will hadn't told them yet how Kyle had lost his life, but he had seen how she had driven all the Evolvers crazy.

It sounded like the kinds of abilities a demon might have.

Will was about to ask a few more questions when Maeve started wriggling on Jake's back. Because of what had happened to Kyle, he had refused to leave her behind with Mufasa and the others. The real reason, especially, was that he hadn't seen Bhuzkoc's corpse anywhere.

Cekt frowned when he saw the young woman stir and with a telekinetic flick sent her back into the arms of Morpheus.

"We don't have any more time to waste." The alien scowled stiffly. "We've been here too long already. We need to help this Nosk."

'A Nosk?' Jake and Will thought with bewilderment before remembering the alien with an imposing ice aura that even his Bloodline struggled to fend off.

This Nosk had made an impression on him because he had mastered to a high degree an element that was the weak point of his species. In theory, this alien had no flaws that his foes could exploit.

"This Nosk is able to fight here?" Jake marveled. If that was the case, then this wasn't just a belligerent brute like the rest of its kind.

The trio then began to fly in a certain direction under the guidance of Cekt. The Aetherist's powers spared them a long and arduous walk through the thick, slimy substance, but the two humans were still disoriented.

Seeing no further than the tip of their noses, they had to rely on the tiny alien and the omnipresent darkness was mentally taxing. They couldn't wait for all this to end so they could go home and rest.

Sooner, but also later than they had hoped, the shield carrying them decelerated abruptly and the trio landed soundlessly. For Jake and Will, they might as well not have moved at all. The black sea and the opaque miasma were their only landmarks, and if they had been left to their own devices they could have roamed these waters until the end of time.

"Are you sure the Nosk is here?" Will raised a suspicious eyebrow.

From inside the shield, they couldn't hear a sound.

"I forgot to tell you, but this miasma also absorbs sound. If you want to soundproof your Floating Island, you know where to get it..." Cekt joked cheerfully, but he snorted with a vexed look when he didn't get the expected laughter. "Hmph, not funny."

Jake activated his Myrtharian Sight and by channeling all of his Perception Aether into one eye he was able to discern two fighting auras with great difficulty. It wasn't that he had gotten stronger in a few minutes, but that the two entities fighting each other possessed incredibly powerful Aether signatures. Because of their proximity, the miasma didn't seem to be able to completely smother them.

Cekt waved his hand and the miasma obstructing their vision dispersed as if by a strong breeze. Stunned and resentful, Jake and Will glared at the old alien. If a look could kill, the Aetherist would have been vaporized instantly.

'If you could do that from the start, why leave us anguished in the dark all this time?'

Once the miasma had dissipated, the reality of the situation was unsurprisingly laid bare before their eyes. As expected, they recognized the Nosk they had briefly seen at the entrance to the Dungeon engaged in a fierce battle with a nightmarish creature.

It was funny how reality sometimes exceeded fiction. This demon was pretty much exactly as the legends and stories described them: horned, monstrous, dark with membranous demonic wings.

Going into more detail, it was a humanoid monster about three meters tall that looked like condensed dark energy. A silvery red glow pulsed where its two eyes had been and a cloud of miasma draped its body, forming a long spectral mantle connected to and feeding off the surrounding corrupted energy.

The creature exhibited tremendous physical power and dexterity, despite its ethereal state. Its body could be as solid and heavy as a train, but in the next moment become a cloud of poisonous gas paralyzing the senses and the mind. The dark energy forming its body could also be harnessed and shaped into the weapons and projectiles of its choosing, which then beamed the same reddish light as its evil eyes.

What was most unbelievable was his unparalleled combat expertise. The demon displayed an unreal martial proficiency that Jake hadn't even seen on TV. The most shocking part was that the Nosk had no trouble keeping up and didn't yield an inch to its opponent.

Jake and Will could only see the unimaginable speed and transformation abilities of the demon, but Cekt made sure to remind them that the true talent of a demon lay elsewhere. It was only then that they noticed the faint reddish glow growing in the Nosk's eyes.

This duel seemed balanced, but the Nosk was slowly losing his mind.