

The Oracle Paths

Volume 5: The Last Tutorial

Chapter 525 – Trapped

It was hard for Jake to fathom how things could have gotten so out of hand so quickly. Just a few minutes earlier, the Oracle Playground was peaceful and perfectly safe. There was something unsettling about the timing of these monsters.

With the felines in tow, their group was one of the strongest around and they easily made their way to the huge skyscraper in the center of the city where the Yellow Cube stood at the top.

While at first the number and level of Digestors spawning around them was not alarming, Jake and the others soon noticed that the frequency of their appearance was rapidly increasing.

As they crossed another street, a shrill roar exploded from inside a store and several customers fled screaming, followed by a deafening explosion. The flames quickly subsided, but the smoke billowed up to the sky. Inside, shrill cackles of rage and agony chilled their blood.

‘Serves you right, you piece of trash!’ A guy with a crew cut spat contemptuously as he played with the pin of a grenade in his hand. His two buddies with AUG rifles were at his side, ready to open fire at his signal.

The guy with the pin was the one who had thrown the explosive.

The next second, several large dog-sized creatures emerged from the rubble, their bodies covered in flames. Quadrupedal, with a long forked tail, scythe-like front legs, and a small head with long teeth

mounted on a fragile neck. Although they were covered in burns and smelled like charcoal, their single silver bulging eye was still lucid and betrayed their identity as Digestors.

‘Rank 2 ? No, Rank 1 !’ The guy who threw the grenade gasped out in disbelief as he identified the mob of monsters.

He couldn’t believe he had just wasted a grenade on Rank 1 vermin. In the Outer Shelter, these Digestors would certainly have wreaked havoc, but in the Oracle Playground, no matter how ferocious they were, they posed no threat in such small numbers.

However, his joy was short-lived. The next moment, a thunderous roar erupted from inside the burning building, which completely blew out the flames and smoke drowning the building.

‘A Rank 5.’ Jake noted immediately as he continued on his way. This human’s fate was none of his concern.

TATATA!

After he left, a volley of heavy gunfire erupted from the building behind him, followed quickly by squeals of horror and agony. He didn’t know if these humans had made it out.

He could have stayed to save them, but he was acutely aware of the precariousness of their situation. If they lingered a second longer than necessary they were at risk of letting Bhuzkoc and Maeve escape, or worse: getting stuck here if the Yellow Cube was compromised.

While the chaos allowed them to avoid the attention of the Digestors for the first half of the journey, they were eventually forced to join the fray as they neared their final destination. They were only a couple of hundred meters from the skyscraper, but the number of Digestors had already reached a staggering number.

They had long since noticed that being ignored by Digestors had more than just to do with luck and the sacrifice of a few hapless people. The real reason was that the majority of the monsters were racing toward the same building as them like moths to a flame. Their powerful Aetheric signatures were obviously not enticing enough to divert them from their goal.

Likewise, the number of Digestors spawning in the city core was also considerably higher. By the time their group crossed the invisible 150 meter line, the density of creatures per square meter had become so great that each additional meter could only be gained at the cost of multiple severed heads and pierced hearts. The silver blood spilled over those few meters was enough to fill a small pool.

Even luck was no longer enough to avoid a fight and they were forced to put in the effort.

‘Damn it, where are all these creatures coming from!’ Will cursed as he stuck very close to his baby dragon.

His Charizard and the other felines were covered in silver blood as if they had dipped in a tub of paint and despite their innate talent for tearing apart their enemies, these predators couldn’t stop a Digestor from slipping through the cracks every now and then, forcing him to get his hands dirty too.

After creating his subfaction, Will had quickly grown accustomed to his status as head of logistics and his distaste for frontline combat had only intensified. Every time he found himself forced to fight in person, he couldn’t help but feel a slight sense of dread.

It wasn’t the panic fear that most fearful refugees felt. After all, he had passed the psychological tests of his Second Ordeal. Rather, it was a deep conviction that this life was not for him and that he hated being in this position. As a tactician relying on his summons, having

to fight in person was an admission of failure and he felt like he no longer had control over his life.

Fortunately, the Grade 2 Aether Encodings they had shared earlier had boosted his Aether Strength, Agility and Constitution to 1000 points and with the Myrtharian Body passive, he was definitely not as weak as he thought he was.

Those Rank 1 and 2 Digestors charging at him seemed to gallop in slow-motion and a simple flick of the wrist was enough to make their heads explode. It was exhilarating, but also terrifying!

Svara, on the other hand, had no trouble protecting herself and seemed to enjoy the fight. Her physical strength had increased significantly since the third Ordeal and she could now summon up to 4 shadow wolves, which were twice as massive as before.

As for Jake, he had long since gotten rid of Kyle, throwing the broken-boned cripple on Shere Khan's back to get his hands free. Digestors charging at him were stopped short by an invisible barrier, vaporized at once by a blast of scorching heat if they deigned to persist.

Low-level magic like this could now be spammed at will without exhausting his mind. Only stronger Digestors could force him to fight personally.

Thanks to his vitality, the playboy had passed the critical phase of his recovery and his raw skin had begun to form scabs. He was now focusing his Aether of Vitality on his leg bones to restore his ability to move.

In the end, it took them only two minutes to get through this sea of enemies, but this battle of attrition felt like hours. Other Evolvers had the same intentions as them, and from the air they all looked like tiny

ships tossed by the raging waves of a storm. Their presence drew some of the enemy horde, relieving somewhat the monster load concentrated on them.

The most annoying thing was that they not only had to deal with the Digestors on the ground, but also with all sorts of bird and avian-like Digestors that swarmed in the skies and obstructed their vision. If Jake had been alone, he might have tried to fly to the top of the skyscraper, but most of the felines didn't have that ability.

When they entered the Transportation Tower, the cacophony outside was substantially muffled, giving them a valuable respite, but the density and level of Digestors per square meter increased drastically. There, all the Digestors were at least Rank 3, and Rank 4s were not uncommon.

Nusuzovuiull, dmz Jfcu frt val hmqnframrl, Rfrc 1 mz Rfrc 4 rm imreuz qftu qphv tadduzurhu, fiovmpev ovuw vft om zuqfar saeaifro. Tvu qfbmz tadduzurhu jfl ovfo ovuw rmj vft om dmhpl vfzt. Tvuzu jfl rm qmzu zmmq dmz zuifkfoamr.

With the elevators long since destroyed, their group was forced to make their way bloodily up the stairs for the first time and it was nothing short of an ordeal. Their narrow, winding structure combined with the blood dripping from the Digestors that turned the stairs into a slide made the climb even more nightmarish than it already was.

Several times, Jake caught Svara and Will with his telekinesis to keep them from tumbling to the bottom. The felines were doing a little better with their claws, which they could dig into any rough spot to create a foothold.

On the stairs, Jake came across another group of Evolvers who were having an even harder time than they were. The alien at their head was a sort of bipedal pachyderm resembling what an elephant could

have looked like if evolution had allowed them to dominate the planet and found a civilization.

Wearing a colorful designer gown with lace and frills, he was not at all equipped to deal with such a scenario. Having to move his heavy body mass, he sweated profusely, but every Digestor approaching him was irreversibly turned into a block of ice. Despite his massive body, he was not a melee fighter by any means.

‘Shaktilar, Bhuzkoc’s competitor.’ Svara reminded him telepathically as she kept fighting.

Jake nodded and continued to slaughter his enemies. Working together with other groups of Evolvers, they managed to climb the tower to the top and when they did, their hearts all sank.

Bhuzkoc, Maeve and their group of followers and subordinates were already there, which should have delighted them, but at that very moment none of them were in the mood to rejoice.

For the Yellow Cube that was supposed to allow their extraction from this shithole was dim and crawling with thousands of centipede Digestors on its surface. A short time later, the Yellow Cube’s flickering ceased completely and a deathly silence settled at the top of the platform.

They were now trapped here.
