

The Oracle Paths

Volume 5: The Last Tutorial

Chapter 528 - Chaos

‘I don’t like where it’s going.’ Kyle blurted out after a short silence.

‘Me neither...’ Svara chipped in with a wry smile.

The felines refrained from commenting, but from the intense discontent shining in their eyes, they fully shared this opinion.

Refusing to leave his fate in the hands of others, Jake scanned the Shelter again and his eyebrows narrowed even more.

‘I don’t think we’ll have a chance to bet on help coming. He said with a rueful look as he shared with them the results of the area scan.

As he read the report, each of his companions felt a sense of urgency. The number of Digestors in the Outer Shelter had nearly doubled since their arrival here while the number of refugees had decreased by the same amount. Despite these distinct changes, there had been no commotion or bustle to accompany these developments.

With the arrival of the three factions’ leaders trying to regroup their troops, skirmishes should logically have broken out everywhere. They did erupt, but they were in the minority. As long as these Digestors were not part of their men, these leaders would not care about these creatures.

‘I think we should take the opportunity to do the same.’ Will suggested hesitantly. He wasn’t a fan of the idea, but it was his job as a tactician to speak out.

Jfcu frt ovu movuzl aqquafouiw prtuzlommt jvfo vu jfl euooare fo. Aiovmpev ovuw cruj rmovare fgmpo ovu Dpreumr Daeulomzl, f zuifoasu ozpov md oval prasuzlu jfl ovfo ovuzu jfl lozureov ar rpqguzl. Esur ad ovu qfbmzaow md ovu zudpeuul juzu prfqgaoampl hmjftzl tmmqut om gu hfrmr dmttuz, ovuw hmpit zutphu ovu uruqw imft dmhplut mr ovuq frt nuzvfnl usur lfsu ovuaz iasul gw nzmsatare f tasuzlamr ar f hzaoahfi qmquro.

Ethically speaking, this was a questionable strategy, but by leaving these refugees to fend for themselves their chances of survival were zero anyway. By taking them under their wing, they were at least giving them a chance and it was an opportunity to recruit. Who knows? Some of them might find their balls during this ordeal and become valuable recruits... Well, they weren't really counting on it.

'You have a faction, Grosh?' Jake asked hopefully, remembering that the latter had not hesitated to temporarily join Bhuzkoc's to save his brother.

A Fifth-Ordeal Player would be most welcome among them. Their faction was in dire need of such a powerhouse.

'No thanks, I'm not interested at the moment. I'm fine on my own.' Grosh replied honestly, looking at him oddly.

'Oh, that's okay...' Jake didn't insist, but inwardly he was somewhat disappointed.

He quickly shook off that feeling of disappointment though, aware that the alien's attitude was completely normal. After all, they had only known each other for a few hours and did not fully trust each other. But above all, they were on the weak side. Without knowing the precise details of their faction, an Evolver of his level had no reason to join them.

If he knew how rich Jake was he might have reasoned differently...

‘Let’s go rescue those refugees then.’ Will refocused on the topic but didn’t try to convince the alien either. From experience, he knew better than to force this kind of thing.

Once they had made their decision, they wasted no time. Splitting up into groups again, they reformed the previous teams, this time leaving Kyle with Will and Shere Khan to give him time to heal. Mufasa, Duchess and Svava formed another team of their own.

As for Jake, Crunch and Thomas ‘O Malley, the cheetah, stayed with him, this time with the addition of Grosh. No one objected.

If the Outer Shelter looked peaceful behind the force field marking the border of the Inner Shelter, the reality was quite different once the barrier was crossed. While chaos had not yet erupted, the disappearance of the refugees and the presence of the Digestors had finally been noticed and panic was beginning to set in.

The faction leaders’ movements had not helped either, as they had made no real effort to conceal their intentions. The reason for their presence and the seriousness of their plight had already leaked out among the refugees.

As Jake walked through the same cluster of slums he had visited a few hours earlier, his vision repeatedly caught sight of some of the refugees whose features he had memorized earlier. With his absolute memory and extreme acuity, it was childishly simple to detect anomalies in their behavior.

In order not to cause a panic, Jake did not make any move to alarm these monsters, but unfortunately fate decided otherwise. Perhaps by coincidence or because these Digestors sensed his caution, but one of them acted out in front of a witness.

He was a wizened, dirty, and severely gaunt man, like thousands of others in these slums, and he was just hugging his sick wife. Yet, when he brought his mouth to her lips, perhaps by instinct, she resisted weakly and pushed him back with her slender arms.

In the midst of the action, a long grayish tongue resembling a lamprey was exposed for all to see while the nightmarish appendage pooped a few weird black eggs not bigger than small pearls.

If the witness had been an alien unfamiliar with human anatomy, perhaps no one would have noticed, but no luck, it was his son. Upon seeing this horrific scene, the child immediately began to bawl, drawing the attention of other humans in the vicinity.

Like a series of falling dominoes, the ensuing chain reaction degenerated into total chaos in a matter of seconds. The child responsible for this was mauled mercilessly by his own 'father' while his mother became one of the monsters by being forced to ingest one of those black eggs.

Familiar with this type of scenario after his third Ordeal, Jake didn't panic like the others, quite the opposite. Instead, it removed the few qualms he had about taking action.

With a few well-placed blows, he and Grosh smashed the brains of the possessed. A mush of brains and blood painted the place, but they didn't flinch. Crouching down next to their victims, they inspected the mush for the parasites. Finding their remains squashed as expected, Jake finally relaxed.

Scanning these mini Digestors that looked like large fleas with tentacles, Jake confirmed that they were indeed Brain-Eaters, the Digestors having compromised his First Ordeal and reduced a glorious hero like Myrmid to a helpless food pantry.

Of course, these Brain-Eaters were not the same ones he had encountered in the past. As with Space Digestors, they could take many forms and appearances and their abilities varied accordingly.

These monsters were not yet a serious threat. They might become one if given a few more days to evolve.

At the same time, Jake heard gunshots and screams erupting far from the neighborhood where they were and realized that similar incidents were occurring throughout the Outer Shelter. Soon there would be utter chaos, playing right into the hands of the Digestors.

With no time to waste, Jake and Grosh ruthlessly eliminated all humans, animals and possessed aliens in front of the stunned refugees. After clearing the area of the monsters within 200 meters, Jake channeled his Strength Aether into his vocal chords and formed a megaphone with his telekinesis to amplify his voice.

‘Don’t panic!’ He shouted as he released the aura of his Apex Predator Glyph. He immediately got the desired quiet and attention. ‘The Shelter has been overrun by Digestors and the Yellow Cube has been temporarily disabled. There will be no rescue for the time being so if you want to survive I urge you to cooperate. If you have factions, family members or friends to protect, please join them in a calm manner. If you have no one to rely on, you can follow me. Anyone who helps spread panic will be executed on the spot by my own hands. Choose your executioner, the Digestors or me!’

Jake himself cringed as he pronounced these threats of third-rate villains, but it was for the greater good. After his speech, the panic subsided noticeably and most of the refugees regained their composure as they realized that they were not left to suffer on their own.

A few of them, who were a little more clever and quick-witted than the others, ran up to him and greeted him with an oath of allegiance. It remained to be seen if their oath had any shred of authenticity in it, but it was certainly a better move than remaining undecided. At least on the surface they had chosen a side.

‘I didn’t think you were that charismatic...’ Grosh grumbled as he admired the audacity of this human. With a few sentences and a few kills, he had managed to pacify these fearful dimwits.

Adouz ovfo, Jfcu zunufout ovu nzmhutupzu frt qmsut dzmq mru fzuf md ovu Opouz Svuiouz om frmovuz proai vu darfiiw zufhvut ovu Rut Dalozaho vu vft fizuftw salaout. Adouz uiaqarfoare frmovuz jfsu md Daeulomzl jvm juzu rm imreuz ozware om vatu, vu jfl lpznzalut om gpqn arom ovu zutvuftut dmzquz ifjwuz nzòloìopoè vu vft arouzsaujut ufziauz. Tval oaqu lvu jfl jaov vuz ojm hvaitzur, vmitare f imre caohvur cradu oaevoiw frt lvfcaiw fl lvu lofzut ar ouzzmz fo ovu qfr fnnzmfhvare ovuq jaov f lftaloah immc.

‘Don’t come any closer!’ She screamed in terror, stepping in front of her small children.

When the monster was about to attack, she screamed reluctantly as she raised her dagger in front of her with her eyes closed, but was startled to feel no impact. When she opened her eyes again, she was pleasantly shocked to find the human who had made a strong impression on her a few hours earlier.

The corpse of her àssailant lay in six parts a few feet before her.