

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 5: The Last Tutorial

### Chapter 533 - There Is Still Hope

‘Is it wise to light a campfire with this darkness?’ Kyle snickered without addressing anyone.

Svara and Will pursed their lips at his comment. This campfire was a blazing inferno, and it was hard to get it any more flashy in this pitch black ash forest. With no moon or stars in the sky, those flames would alert every Digestor within a dozen kilometers.

‘It’s pretty chilly out there...’ Secyone muttered as she exhaled the warm air in her lungs that everyone could see.

Checking his bracelet, Jake frowned as he confirmed the temperature. It had indeed dropped below freezing. Considering the large portion of raggedly clad refugees in the three factions, the campfire was practically a necessity to get through the night. Because their bodies were slowly being strengthened by the Myrtharian Body passive, his group was virtually unaffected by these climatic variations.

‘I hope we don’t get attacked because of them.’ Will tsked to the side as he began to set up his tent with his dragon and the felines’ help.

‘I hope so too, but still, even if we do, they will be the ones attacked first.’ Svara quipped with a devilish grin on her face. She almost seemed to welcome such a script.

‘If you have time to chitchat, use it to set up camp and get something to eat. Until proven otherwise, Digestors have excellent hearing.’

Jake cut their chatter short with a glare.

Seeing him raise his voice, the refugees who had been chatting about this and that while resting their legs fell silent and got down to business. No one was spared and everyone contributed to the group effort, including Will, Kyle and Svara.

The only ones who were exempt from this treatment were Jake, Grash, Mufasa and Shere Khan, who stood guard with the utmost vigilance. On the lion’s advice, the other felines were also dispatched to patrol around their makeshift camp. The felines were tough beasts with much sharper senses than most humans. Even if the Digestors did eventually attack, they would not be taken by surprise.

With the camp set up, they ate their rations in silence, straining their ears for any sign of enemy movement. The only source of light was the three factions’ campfire a few miles away, and because of that the mere rustle of a branch in the wind was enough to stir their imaginations. Even without Jake’s wake-up call, they were determined to keep their mouths shut until morning.

As the more frail and exhausted of the bunch gradually dozed off, Jake’s eyes widened when he heard gunshots in the distance. Hearing footsteps near him, he discovered that Kyle, Svara and the other felines resting in the camp were also on edge.

‘In the end, they still attacked.’ Kyle grumbled as he stroked the blade of his sword with a mixture of impatience and unrest. He wasn’t afraid to fight, but he still didn’t enjoy facing a number of unknown enemies in the dead of night.

‘We were prepared for this.’ Jake said apathetically. ‘Wake up the other refugees quietly and tell them to prepare for battle.’

Kyle and Svava nodded, while the felines present climbed the nearest trees to gain visibility and prepare an ambush. Will was startled awake by the breath of his baby dragon and could not help but call names at the Digestors for ruining his sleep.

The other refugees were then awakened one by one and soon began to panic. The fateful battle that would decide whether or not they would see the sun rise again was going to take place in the next few minutes.

Soaring like a ghost above the ground, Jake silently flew up before launching a maximum range scan. His pupils shining like stars, his sight pierced the darkness to peer at the fight raging in the campsite a few kilometers up ahead.

The campfire had long since been extinguished, leaving only a few smoldering embers as evidence of its existence. The cries of terror, rage and anguish were audible despite the distance, as were the gunshots. Every now and then an explosion or a flashy spell would push back the darkness and startle them, but it was mostly the omnipresent shrill cackling that gradually consumed the will and composure of the combatants.

Although the three factions’ camp was several kilometers away from theirs, for the Digestors it was an insignificant distance that they could bridge in no time. The cacophony of shrill cackling that fed the nightmares of every Evolver and refugee grew in volume rapidly, reminding them mercilessly that enemies were marching toward them too.

‘Bloody hell! We’ve been spotted!’ Kyle cursed as he saw thousands of Aether signatures appear out of nowhere before his Aether Vision.

‘MEOW! MEOW! ROAR!’

Tvu duiarul nfozmiiare mpolatu ovu hfqn qumjut, zmfzut, mz lrfziut tunurtare mr ovuaz rfopzfi ifrepfeu om lmpert ovu fifzq. Smmr fdouz, ovuaz jfzrare qumjl frt zmfzl hvfreut om ezmjil frt lqfii ufzovypfcu fl ovu ozuul fo ovuaz nmlaoamr juzu pnzmmout mru fdouz frmovuz gw ovu samiurhu md ovu hiflvul.

Jake, who had already received most of the information from his scan, turned gloomy as he received the echo of the clashes from the patrolling felines. They were ambushed from all sides. This was definitely no accident.

The Digestors had spotted them long ago and had prepared for this all-out assault.

‘Battle positions!’ Jake bellowed loudly.

He hesitated for a second to activate his Purgatory, but decided against it. With the Digestors’ obsessive appetite for Aether sources, he had no desire to goad them. He had no intention of becoming these monsters’ priority target after flaunting his newfound wealth for a short while...

An easy victory was not worth this price. After all, they were far from being out of the woods and there would surely be many battles like this in the hours and days to come.

The refugees didn’t know that he had these tricks up his sleeve, so they had little time to hold a grudge against him. They were far too busy thinking about how to survive the next five minutes.

Kkkkekekekekekkk!

‘They’re here!’ Everyone drew a cold breath as they heard this unnerving noise bursting out of the bushes all around them.

At the same time, a huge ball of compressed flame struck the area from which the beastly cackling originated and triggered a deafening explosion, vaporizing a dozen trees in the process. A shower of silvery blood and grayish guts scattered in all directions, painting over the leaves and branches of nearby trees. The cackling stopped dead in its tracks.

Budmzu ovu zudpeuul hmpit qfcu lurlu md oval hfifqaompl  
ouhvraypu, f lfism md dazugfiil guefr om dfii dzmq ovu lcu iacu f  
quoumz lvmjuz, mdduzare f lvmj ovfo jmpit vfsu guur jmrtuzdpi dmz  
ovu uwul ar frw movuz hazhpqllofrhul.

These tens, hundreds of incandescent projectiles like shooting stars bombarded the area, leveling the ground by several meters and raising the temperature of the mercury at a lightning speed. The earth, forest, and bombed-out monsters liquefied, emitting intense heat and light as the trapped Digestors shrieked in agony.

For these refugees who had never held a weapon before, they should have been terrorized by this apocalyptic scene, but instead they were seized with amazement as they realized that the blast of heat that should have made them sweat like crazy had instead given them a surge of vitality. In shock, they momentarily forgot their predicament.

Of course, the one who had produced the fireballs was Jake, who was still floating above them like a living god. As long as he lived, these refugees would not break down completely.

This bombardment had another merit and that was to provide a decent source of light for the group. Those Digestors from whom they could only see the Aetheric signatures were now visible and most had suffered heavy injuries after this aerial bombing.

However, this was only a brief interlude in the onset of a battle that was just beginning. A second wave of monsters flooded out of the undamaged stretch of forest, stepping over the corpses of their kin to fight their way through the flames. At the cost of some burns and sacrifices, the first flock managed to reach the camp.

Figuring it was his turn to show off, Mufasa shuffled regally before the horde and let out an otherworldly roar. This ferocious howl shook the earth, producing a supersonic blast with a huge spiritual charge that swept everything in its path.

When the roar ended, a cone-shaped trench a hundred meters long and several meters deep had split the earth in two. The Digestors at this location were nowhere in sight.

Shere Khan, not to be outdone, stomped the ground with his front paw and his fur began to vibrate, generating an overwhelming electric current. The air crackled as blinding purple lightning enveloped his massive body in a bright light.

Then, Shere Khan also roared and the lightning was discharged with a clap of thunder. All the Digestors within range of his mental sense were struck dead on the spot.

After only one big move from Jake, Mufasa and Shere Khan, the Digestor horde had already suffered a severe setback.. In the face of their leaders' mighty display, for the first time these refugees began to dream of victory. There was still hope!