

The Oracle Paths

Volume 5: The Last Tutorial

Chapter 535 - Rank 9 Digestor

‘ For fučk’s sake, where did that fučkng idiot go ?!’ Jake cursed as he scanned the forest with his mental sense.

It didn’t take a genius to figure out where this sistercon had gone. Realizing the magnitude of the assault they were under, he could only imagine with trepidation what the three factions were facing. It should not be forgotten that unlike them, they had been so bold as to light a blazing campfire to signal their position to the enemy.

Without a doubt, Kyle had not been able to contain his anxiety. His paranoia had certainly made him forget all common sense and he had deserted his post to run over like the dependable big brother that he was. The problem was that in addition to being unreliable, he was also far from invincible!

Jake wanted to charge toward the three factions’ camp to stop his comrade in his tracks, but a demonic howl deeper than he was prepared for blared from below him. The perpetrator of this sound had an incredible resonance chamber and even he felt his organs vibrate and his teeth rattle as the lengthy sound wave passed through him.

If he was in this state, there was no need to even imagine what the other refugees were going through. Most were bleeding from their noses, eardrums or eyes, while those closest to it had lost consciousness. Will and his dragon, who were closest to the crater, were the hardest hit, and Jake was lucky enough to see his eyes roll

back, revealing the white in them before his dragon pet carried him away on his back.

Momentarily forgetting about Kyle's defection, Jake was forced to focus on this new foe.

The creature was humanoid with a short tail, and not all that massive. About 10 feet tall, its limbs were long and slender, with long arms that fell to its knees. It didn't have intimidating scythes or other sharp blades at the end of its limbs like the other Digestors. Instead... It had nothing. His hands and feet had no fingers or toes as if the expected separation had never happened. The only noticeable point was that his hands and feet were rather large, thin, and wide like a pair of palms or a fan. From this simple observation, one could already assume that this monster was a good swimmer.

But if that was the only thing that distinguished this Digestor, Jake would never have needed to treat this enemy so seriously. Because it wasn't just his limbs that were lacking in finish. His face wasn't finished either, nor was the rest of his body.

Having no eyes, no nose, no mouth, no ears, its face like the rest of the body was like a blank canvas on which one would have poured a pot of paint mixing several shades of blue. Staring at this creature was like observing a nebula, the ocean's depth or the vastness of the twilight sky. Its body was real, but seemed intangible, or rather covered with a kind of opaque liquid. Strange sparks and residual lights sometimes flashed on the surface of his body as one might expect from a rumbling thunderstorm.

Despite its strange morphology, it felt weak, but Jake knew all too well that this monster could not be underestimated or he would pay for it dearly. The Aether signature lurking inside this Digestor was

ghastly and turbid, but the sheer amount of power that oozed from it left no doubt as to the monster's might.

'A Rank 9 Digestor!'

Everyone gasped in terror as Grash spat it out, gritting his teeth in nervousness as if he were in front of his nemesis. Mufasa and Shere Khan were also snarling in defensive stance. The two huge felines were on the prowl, their posture slumped to the ground, gathering strength to leap explosively at the enemy.

Jake had never seen the two felines react so cautiously. Seeing the attitude of his three companions, his heart sank and he too began to take the hint of their plight. If he didn't manage the next step properly, they might be wiped out by this monster.

What should we do?' he asked telepathically, trying not to alert the enemy.

His breathing became labored as the Digestor looked up at him as if responding to his Spirit Body's fluctuations, but after that it went back to being static as if it didn't know what to do.

Grash gnashed his teeth in frustration, gauging the demonic creature staring at them with detachment. He was sweating profusely, proof of the intense anguish he was dealing with. Evolvers with weaker wills would have shat themselves if they knew what he knew.

'Even if we could kill this thing, it's not worth it.' The pig-like orc sighed as he accepted his fate.

'What do you mean?' Will retorted with confusion. 'A Rank 9 Digestor is indeed too much for me, but I reckon it should be fine for you, Mufasa and Shere Khan. Jake is with us too.'

'You're too optimistic.' Jake grimaced after scanning the monster with his bracelet. 'The average Aether stats of this Digestor is around 30,000. If this creature were a huge behemoth, we might have a chance with our speed and other means by forcing a long attrition battle, but it is a small one. Whether this monster is balanced or specialized in strength, agility, endurance or intelligence, it will be an almost impossible opponent to outperform. Digestor bodies also evolve with each promotion in rank. It's not just their Aether stats that grow. This Rank 9 Digestor is a weird one. His humanoid appearance is not that scary, but his spirit power is extraordinary. The weirdest thing is that this Digestor is not aggressive. This is the first time I've seen this since Nylreg.'

Will gulped when he heard this. He was not a fool, he understood his insinuations. Even with incredible Aether Strength, a behemoth weighing thousands of tons would still be slow as fućk, but if that same enemy weighed the same as them that was another story... It was better for them to fight a titanic Rank 10 Digestor than a human-sized Rank 9 like this one.

Al ovuw jfohvut ovuaz iuftuzl nfrac, ovu hmqnmlpzu md ovu movuz zudpeuul rufzgw guefr om jfru fl juui. Fmz ovu qmquro, ovu Rfrc 9 Daeulomz jfl gfovare ar ovu gimmt md ovu prdmzoprfoe numniu ao vft ozfqniut arom aol hzfouz, gpo ovfo gimmt jfl ypahciw zuhutare fl ad ao juzu guare lpćcět pn gw lmquovare.

As it resorbed, one of the victims' faces was exposed for all to see, and a young woman let out a heart-rending scream as she recognized who it belonged to. That face, frozen in an expression of disbelief, was that of the balding man who was too cowardly to fight but was loving and protective towards his companions.

The one who had just shouted was Kelly, the young woman bårèly of age who had left her former group because she was tired of their

cowardice. At this moment, she was sitting on her buttocks at the edge of the crater, having escaped a fatal death. The crushed arm of the balding guy was stuck in a certain posture, palm outstretched as if he had pushed someone out before he died.

The scene was not difficult to reconstruct. At the cost of his life, he had saved the young woman and the little boy in her arms. While he had been a wimp all his life, he had found his courage when he needed it most.

Human nature was fascinating. People could be cowardly, lazy, selfish, and even cruel to the point of doubting their own worth as human beings, but all it took was for him to have his back against the wall for that to change. In some ways, Jake was no different from this man.

On Earth, he was at best average if judged by the standards of a society that valued effort and discipline. If you had to bet on him before his first Ordeal, no one in their right mind would have bet on him. And yet here he was, alive and kicking, outperforming most of his peers, most of whom were long dead.

‘I-I’m going to kill you!’ Kelly wailed, brandishing the saber Jake had made for her.

With tears streaming down her face, she charged at the invincible foe, summoning and channeling all her rage into that single thrust. Jake, Will and Grash froze in fear of the impending disaster.

‘Don’t!’

Too late. No matter how hard Jake tried to stop her with his telekinesis, he was shocked when he realized that his powers had no hold around the Rank 9 Digestor. The psychic waves in his Spirit

Body were like a Faraday cage dispelling any magic inside. It was its own domain.

Jfcu uknuhout om luu ovu wmpre jmqfr tau naoadpiiw, gpo vu jfl ofcur fgfhc jvur ovu qmrlouz lvmjut rm zufhoamr, iuooare ovu giftu larc arom aol vufzo. Al aol čvèlo jfl lofggut, ovu iaypat, himptw lpzdfhu md aol gmtw luuqut om zusasu. Sptturiw, aol tuun gipu lcar diflvut jaov fr uuzw iaevo frt ovu giftu jfl urepidut arlatu aol ovmzfk.

Transfixed, Kelly understood the absurdity of her action. Backing up hastily, she stumbled on the corpse of the balding man and fell backwards.

‘What-what kind of abomination are you?’ She stammered before blacking out.

She fainted?! Jake exclaimed inwardly with surprise. She didn’t seem like the type to lose her temper like that.

Inspecting her carefully, he noticed her deathly pallor and sensed that things weren’t that simple.

‘She’s still alive.’ Grash affirmed, forgetting about telepathy. Gritting his teeth, he sighed and said, ‘We have no choice, trust me on this one. If you want to live, hit this monster hard at least once. Don’t fake it or you’ll regret it.’

‘Why?’ Will asked suspiciously.

‘Because this thing needs us for its Dungeon.’ The large orc snorted hatefully.. ‘More accurately, it needs monsters.’