

Act II - Zach

The team stepped spread out as the boss charged at them. Zach used his **[Greater Evade]**, his body twisting out of the way as the molten golem's fist crashed into the ground where he had been standing just a moment before.

The boss was a **Greater Molten Golem (LVL 80-Peak Foundation)** a monster that was powerful enough to give them some difficulties. The third floor was a series of caverns filled with lava rivers and molten golems. Their bodies seemed to be made out of lava that had hardened and cooled, but was still hot enough that just touching it would scorch a person's skin. Zach was grateful for his new armor, the **Greater Armor of the Silver Sentinel**, it had protected him from the burns. Some of the others hadn't been as fortunate. Nyathulla didn't use armor, and one of the golem's managed to get close enough to her to hit her. Not only had she cracked a bone, the skin on her hand had been filled with blisters. Thankfully, they had Xallar as their healer, and their **[Minor Heal]** healed Nyathulla's wound quickly and they had continued through the floor. The third floor was the first floor where they had encountered a challenge. The monsters here were all golem types, and all were in the 60-80 level range. Close to their own levels. Coupled with the fact that the golems were extremely durable, the team had to proceed slowly and carefully.

Zach's attacks hadn't been as useful. Sure, he could kill the golems, but they were resistant to his type of attacks. Killing one required a bit of inventive avenues of attack. He would bind them with his **[Light Chains]** and then pierce through their tough bodies and break chunks off until they died. Edima and Griss were much more suited to dealing with the golems. It had taken them a better part of the day to get through the floor, and now they were at the end. Fighting the final boss. The golem was at least twice as tall as Edima, and three times as wide.

Its body seemed to be made out of black rock with glowing veins crisscrossing all over its surface. It was also extremely hot. Just getting near it was enough to give light burns. Zach could counter that a bit with his wind based powers, but it was still hard to get anywhere near it.

Xallar was standing at the back of the room with Nyhathulla, casting their heals from the distance every time one of them was hurt. Which were mostly Griss and Edima. The minoutaress hammer was their best weapon against the golem.

Zach danced around the golem, extending his left hand and using his **[Light Chains]** to tangle the boss' right hand. Griss closed the distance and smashed into the golem's other side, making it stumble right into Edima's hammer. She used an ability, and her weapon shone with pale light as it shot forward and smashed into the golem's shoulder, cracking the surface of the rock and sending a shower of shrapnel everywhere.

The golem tried to swipe at Edima, but Zach's chains slowed it down for a few moments, allowing Edima to jump out of range. As his chains cracked Griss smashed his mace into the Golem's back, and Nyathulla's barrage smashed into it.

The fight had already lasted for a while, and the golem was covered in cracks, so Zach ran forward. He got close to its back as it turned to attack Griss. He jumped on its back, the wind at his back pushing him slightly farther and as his feet landed on its back he activated **[White Wing]**.

A wing of white light appeared over his sword, and then Zach surged forward, his sword attacking the cracks that his **[Weakness Sense]** told him were sufficiently damaged. His sword flashed with white light, hitting several points in the boss' body as he dashed over its back and jumped over its head. Chunks of its body flew off, the cracks widened and the golem was staggered.

Edima charged from behind, intending on ending the fight, when the boss smashed both arms into the ground and the rock beneath it rippled and turned into melt. Zach's feet just hit the ground when he was forced to jump into the air again and avoid the wave of molten rock. He evaded the attack, and saw Griss smash his shield into the ground just as the wave reached him, the ground burst as he sent a wave of rippling rock toward that of the boss. The two waves met and an explosion of rock and melt showered everything around him. A translucent plate grew out of his shield and surrounded him, protecting him from it. Zach, used Mistral and his **Wind's Favorite** perk to block and push the smaller chunks that flew in his direction of course.

Edima was protected from the shower by the golem itself, but she had no way of evading the wave that came at her. She jumped evading the rolling ground, but then dropped onto the molten ground. Zach winced as he heard her scream as the melt burned her hooves. Nyathulla unleashed one of her perks, and a violet beam smashed into the golem's side, blowing apart one of its arms. Zach's [**Light Chains**] came off cooldown and he pointed his hand at the boss' head. The chains of light sprang into existence and Zach pulled himself with them, flying straight at the golem's head.

He stabbed forward with mistral, piercing through the crack in the golem's chest and activated his **Consequence** perk. The kinetic energy he had stored ripped out of his sword and cracked the boss' chest open, wrenching Mistral out of his hand and sending him tumbling down over its back.

Then Griss was there and he smashed his mace into the golem's torso. The boss couldn't take any more damage and the rock crumbled to pieces. Zach summoned Mistral back, and used his **Wind's Favorite** perk to cool the ground in front of him as he dropped down. Immediately he made his way to where Edima was, and send the air over the already cooling ground, reducing the heat further. Her hooves were burned, and he helped her walk away from the still hot ground. He too felt the heat through his boots, even though the boss' attack had already cooled enough that the ground wasn't melted anymore.

Xallar and Nyathulla walked over to them. Xallar knelt next to the grimacing Edima and put their hands over her hooves. Edima smartly hadn't used any healing potions. It would've been a waste, since the boss had been almost dead and Xallar's heal was sufficient to heal her wounds. They used her main healing ability and Zach could visibly see the injury getting better. He left them there, trusting that Xallar would heal them up quickly and walked over to Griss who was standing near the chest that had just appeared. It was the largest chest that they had gotten so far, and Zach was excited to see what the loot was.

The golem had been the last boss of this floor, the first of the harder enemies that they would now face. It had been very close to their levels. Griss opened the chest as Zach reached him, and the two of them looked inside.

There was the usual assortment of items. A pile of Essence Crystals, larger than any reward they had gotten so far. Already they had looted Essence Crystals in the value of about 4,000 Greater Essence, that they had split among them. Zach checked his screen and saw how much Essence he had gained for the boss. He had around 16,000 Greater Essence, with what they had earned on the first three floors and what he had before they entered, plus what he had gained from using his dagger. And he knew that they were yet to really earn the bulk of the Essence that the dungeon could provide. So far they've only been killing enemies that were on a lower level than them, but the next floor was going to be different. All of them had enough Essence to level at least ten levels, but they were holding off on it. The higher leveled they were, the less Essence they would get as a reward. So they were taking a risk, trying to take on stronger floors without extra levels.

Zach glanced to the rest of the items in the chest. There was a bag with ingredients, several potions, and a set of armor, and two weapons, as well as a small box. He touched them each in turn and saw what they did.

Molten Armor	+5 to endurance and strength, +10% fire resistance. Repair.
Molten Hammer	+5 to strength and endurance, +5% fire resistance.
Molten Shield	+5 to endurance and strength, +5% fire resistance.

The items were solid, not the best, but certainly the best items they had gotten so far. All of the items appeared to be made out of the same substance at the golem had. The rock-like material with glowing cracks. They were even warm to the touch, but none were as hot as the golem had been. Zach saw Griss eyeing the shield. Zach didn't know how good Griss' shield was, so perhaps this one was an upgrade. The way that they distributed the items was simple. If more than one person was interested in the items they would roll a dice that would choose who would pick first, if no-one wanted anything,

then it went into the joint pile in order to be sold later, with all of them splitting the profits afterward.

Now, only Griss could use the shield, so there wasn't really even a need for them to roll. Griss had intentionally gathered a team where everyone used a different type of equipment, so that they wouldn't compete with each other for loot. While Griss tried out the shield, Zach grabbed the last item, the small box that was in the corner.

He opened it and found a ring inside, he touched it and then blinked as he read through the description.

Ring of Regeneration	+10 to vitality. The ring has seven charges that recharge on their own at a rate of one per three days. Using a charge will boost the wearer's vitality by 400% for three minutes and deplete one charge. Can only be used outside of combat.
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This was the first item that Zach felt was something that he could wear right at the moment.

"What is it?" Griss asked as he noticed Zach staring at the ring.

Zach showed it to him and Griss' eyes widened. "Well, that is useful," Griss added.

"Should we roll for it now?" Zach asked.

Griss grimaced. "No, we should give it to whoever would find it most useful for the dungeon run, then we can roll once we are out. Better to have it help us now."

Zach thought about it, and then nodded agreeing. They walked over to the others and showed them the loot. Most of the loot they placed in storage since no one wanted it. But the ring they decided to give to Edima, since she was the least mobile one of them and was a front-line fighter. Griss had his defenses, and Zach was more mobile than her. Xallar and Nyathulla didn't really need it.

Still, it wouldn't be as useful in combat, but it would let Edima heal up outside of it and spare Xallar the cooldown in case that they got into a real trouble.

Once they finished up and rested up a bit, they headed up to the door and the next floor. The dark stone doors shone with the same symbols as the entrance to the dungeon, only it was smaller. They pushed the doors open and stepped into darkness.

After the doors closed behind them, they took a step forward and stepped out into the light. The fourth floor was a frozen tunnel, a light coming in from something behind the ice that softly illuminated everything. Zach was glad that his armor had enough padding that the cold didn't bother him much, but he could still feel the cold air as it passed through his helmet.

They walked forward slowly, keeping their attention on their surroundings. This was the floor where they would encounter monsters around their level. Suddenly, as they were passing a wider section of the tunnel Griss bellowed and raised his shield above him, a dome of translucent plates appearing around the team. Zach looked up and saw horse sized spiders with white hair and gray chitin drop down on their heads from the ceiling.

Ice Spider (LVL 88-Peak Foundation)

The spiders weren't stronger than them, but there were eight of them. With Griss's dome they had the chance to regroup and Edima moved back with Xallar and Nyathulla to the edge of Griss's protective dome, while Zach stayed with the drake. Zach activated his **{Charged Focus}** technique and felt his awareness increase. Then, Griss dropped the dome and the battle started.

Zach used **[Winged Leap]** and **[White Wing]** in tandem, getting up into the air and flashing through the group of three spiders. His sword zoomed through the air, cutting up the spider's weak spots as told to him by his **|Weakness Sense|**. A gust of wind blasting out with every strike. One of the spiders died immediately, while he wounded the other two.

Zach used his **Wind's Favorite** perk to twist himself in the air and levitate for a moment as he looked at the battle below them. Griss kept two of the spiders off balance, while Nyathulla threw her bolts at another and Xallar threw one of their alchemy concoctions that exploded when it hit one of the spiders. Edima stood next to the two of them, waiting and protecting them in case that some of the spiders decided to go after them.

Zach dropped to the ground next to the two wounded spiders and one of them shot something at him. He used **|Greater Evade|** to side step what appeared to be spider web, and then he dashed forward, his lightning Qi moving through his body as he changed his breathing form.

The spider tried to jump attack, but he shot out with his left hand and **[Light Chains]** grabbed hold of the spider mid air as he stabbed the spider with Mistral through the eyes and released a **{Lightning Strike}**. The spider died as the lightning Qi discharged through its body, and because of the sword through the head.

The second spider jumped over the corpse of the first before Zach could pull Mistral out of the dead one's body. Zach let go of his sword and used **|Greater Evade|** to roll back as he dismissed and then summoned back his sword. The spider swiped at him with its legs and he blocked, allowing the spider's leg to brush by his forearm. As he got hit he activated **Riposte**, and swung to the side unleashing a lightning fast attack that cleaved through the spider's chitin and nearly split it in half. The wind that followed his attack pushed the injured spider off his sword, and Zach stepped closer and stabbed the injured monster through the head, killing it.

Immediately he turned around, looking if anyone else needed help but saw that they had taken care of the other spiders. One was smoking in the corner, probably Xallar's work, another had scorching holes that Zach now associated with Nyathulla's powers. The last three were smashed to death by Edima and Griss.

They gathered around and looked through the chest that had appeared. The loot was better than it had been in the ordinary chests on the last floor. They got more Essence Crystals, and a few more potions. As well as a small buckler that none of them could use and which they would probably sell.

As soon as they were done, they continued, moving through the floor at a slower and more careful pace. They encountered a few more monsters, another spider group and then something that resembled polar bears but slimmer and was saber-toothed. The monster was called **Frost Venur** and according by Griss it was a monster from the drake homeworld that lived in cold areas. It was tough to deal with, but thankfully, these venurs didn't seem to run in packs, so they only ever had to deal with one of them at a time.

Finally, they reached a large cavern and the first boss.

It sat in the center of the round cave, and they immediately stopped at the entrance and backed away so not to alarm it. Zach glanced at the monster and grimaced.

Alpha Frost Venur (LVL 98-Early Lord)

The monster was massive, around the same size as the last boss from the first floor, the size of a small school bus. And it was powerful, the most powerful monster that they had encountered yet.

"That is going to be tough," Edima said.

Zach could only agree. He had seen how fast the regular venur monsters were, he assumed that this one was going to be even faster.

"We need to hit it fast, and hit it hard," Griss said. "Nyathulla can you use one of your more powerful perks?"

"My **Arcane Beam** is back from cooldown, but if I use it now we won't be able to use it for half a day at least," the Cthul answered.

"We can always wait for the cooldown. Better that you use it immediately. Xallar, can you drop your prison on it? Nyathulla you might want to do it too. That way it can be immobilized while you prepare your perk. The three of us will spread around it in case that it breaks free before you are ready."

"I can do that," Nyathulla added.

They finalized the plan and then entered the cave. Immediately, Zach and Edima split to the sides while Griss walked in front Nyathulla and Xallar in order to protect them. The monster noticed them and stood up, roaring a challenge.

Nyathulla and Xallar dropped their prison abilities. A box of glowing yellow light snapped into place around the boss, and then Nyathulla's violet prison came down around it. The monster roared and snapped at the prison walls. Zach saw Xallar's prison shatter and he pulled his sword back, charging his **Razor Wind**. The monster smashed its pawns into Nyathulla's prison and he saw it crack. Zach glanced back and saw that Nyathulla wasn't ready for her beam yet, and he prepared to fire a powerful blade of wind.

The monster broke the prison and Zach let his wind blade fly. A crescent of razor sharp air flew at the monster as it prepared to leap and then it somehow saw the attack. Zach saw it move to the side to evade, but the crescent caught its back, cutting a shallow wound in its skin. The monster turned to look at him and growled, then leaped forward.

Zach's eyes widened at its speed. In just a moment it was in front of him, its mouth open wide enough to swallow him whole. Zach threw himself to the side with **Greater Evade** his body twisting faster than he himself could throw his body to the side. The monster's head came down and its body flashed by him as its momentum carried it behind him.

Zach dropped to the ground and rolled, pained flashing through his arm. He got to his feet and looked down, blinking at the stump of his left hand, blood spilling down to the icy floor. The boss turned around, its mouth opening again, even as its claws dug deep into the ground.

And then a violet beam of arcane energy flashed and hit it in the side. The venur yelped and jumped away, a bleeding wound in its side. Zach managed to get to his feet and dismiss Mistral, putting his right hand over the stump of his left and trying to stop the bleeding. In the next moment, Griss and Edima had arrived and pushed the boss, and Zach used his **Winged Leap**. He flew across the room and landed next to Xallar who immediately reached for his hand and started using their abilities. A warm sensation filled him and he saw the wound shifting as flesh started to grow back.

"Damn, I just got this armor," Zach grimaced.

Xallar smiled with the corner of their mouth, but kept their focus on the hand. Zach glanced back and saw Griss and Edima trying to keep the boss occupied enough for Nyathulla's arcane barrage to hit. But he saw that it

wasn't going well. Griss was thrown back by a swipe of its paw and Edima was thrown back as the monster roared and a blast of cold air exploded out of its body.

Just as his hand finished regenerating, the monster turned toward the three of them.

"Fuck," Zach said and summoned back his sword as he activated **{Charged Focu}**.

The venur leapt forward, and Zach ran at it meeting it half way as his sword shone with white light. He dashed through its attack, his **[White Wing]** opening up more wounds along the injured side of its body. The monster roared in anguish and turned around, giving Nyathulla a chance to send a powerful attack at its back. Xallar threw a bottle that exploded and started burning on its back. The monster growled and turned around to look at the two of them.

Zach sent a few weaker blades of wind at its head, barely scratching its skin, but making it focus on him instead of Xallar and Nyathulla. It leapt at him, faster than he could move, but he didn't try to escape. Instead, his breathing changed and he snapped forward with his **{Lightning Strike}** aiming and hitting the boss' eye. It whined and turned its head around, right into Edima's charge and a skill attack. Her smash hit it over the head, driving it into the ground and cracking the ice.

Zach dashed forward, pulling out his dagger and focusing. He stabbed forward with a **|Greater Strike|** and pushed the dagger through its other eye and into its brain. Executing the boss and taking its Essence. He closed his eyes as it filled him, and then sighed, dropping down to his knees.

The others gathered around the boss and him. "Good job," Nyathulla said. The chest appeared in the center of the room, but Zach stayed near the boss to catch his breath.

That had been one tough monster.