

## Oracle 565

### Chapter 565 - Imp Spirits

Back to Jake's group, although they had shown the foresight to flee first, the threat they were currently facing was in no way inferior.

"What-what the heck is that?" Will cursed as he saw the walls of the tunnel they were running through begin to contract and convulse erratically.

It was like the peristalsis of a digesting intestine, slowly pushing its food towards its ineluctable destination. Needless to say, Jake and the others had no desire to end up as Dungeon Digestor turds.

"Someone disobeyed the rules." Grash growled as he slurred the culprit's ten generations with all sorts of orcish expletives that bore a resemblance pig oinking.

Still running, Jake's and the others' curiosity was piqued and he asked in earnest,

"Grash, you finished your Fourth Ordeal, right? You should know something about that, no?"

The pig-like orc's face grew solemn upon receiving this question. His forehead creased with concentration, the alien finally shook his head in chagrin.

"I'm afraid I don't know much. We wild boar orcs are not the smartest of our species and I'm afraid I fell asleep during class..."

Will facepalmed at this admission, while Kyle and Jake's faces turned ugly from annoyance. 'Is it even possible to fall asleep during such an important lecture?'

Xi whispered something to him and Jake's face lit up again.

"What does your Oracle AI know, Grash?" He asked impatiently. "Don't tell me it was sleeping too?"

"Aah?" The alien's eyes widened in astonishment.

"What, don't tell me I got it right?" Jake was almost about crying now. If that was the case, then this was the most incompetent AI he'd ever had the misfortune to come across.

"No, no, it was awake. I just forgot to ask him all this time." Grash confessed, twiddling his fingers together guiltily.

A little girl or teenager would have looked cute doing that. But that same shy, introverted gesture from a four-meter tall orc pig just made them all want to throw up.

Jake didn't comment on their relationship, but according to him his AI Oracle should have informed him long ago on his own initiative. Clearly, these two were a good pair and hadn't been matched together for nothing.

"Then ask him now!" Will urged him tersely in exasperation.

"I'm just doing it..." Grash grumbled in a low voice.

Tragically, they didn't get a chance to hear this response, as the tunnel's contractions intensified, the ripples in the ground acting like waves propelling them forward. Unexpectedly, this anomaly was actually assisting their escape, giving them a significant boost in speed.

Alas, they soon understood why. Despite their considerable lead over the other factions, the refugees at the end of the formation suddenly felt an insidious pull on their Spirit Body, literally trying to drag it off their body. Those affected by this intangible energy collapsed one after the other, their eyes rolling back and foaming at the mouth.

"Diccon, hold on!" Nicolet lifted his comrade who had just lost consciousness, while other refugees rushed to do the same with their other companions, but in doing so they also exposed themselves to this invisible spectral energy.

Likewise, Kelly felt the grip of Khal, the orphaned child she was holding, loosen, and when she turned around, he too had passed out with the others. Overcome by a surge of panic, she made the same mistake as Nicolet and ran into the danger zone.

Unable to see or detect this invisible threat, as they turned around and entered the active zone of the spell, they too lost consciousness. Because of the contracting and undulating tunnel, the other refugees who had not paused had already outrun their fainting comrades by a hundred meters in that brief moment.

"I'll take care of it!" Svava shouted, her limpid turquoise eyes animated by a ghostly whitish glow. The Aether around her was instantly sucked into her glabella and four huge Shadow Wolves and eight Ravens the size of full-grown eagles shot out of her shadow.

Before anyone could stop her, she sprinted in the opposite direction toward those passed out comrades. Alarmed, Jake and Kyle activated their own Myrtharian and Golden Eyes, and they too saw the immense Soul Energy hurtling toward them at terrifying speed.

Zooming in closer, his Myrtharian Eyes picked up something else. This cluster of spiritual energy was not completely shapeless and even though he could not distinguish any runes from this Soul Spell, he could observe its manifestation.

This ethereal gas was made up of thousands of clawed arms belonging to some sort of unstable devilish bodies. Devoid of lower limbs, there was instead only a long trail of endless spiritual smoke melting into the darkness of the tunnel. The Souls or rather the Spirit Bodies of their fainting comrades were in their hands and they were slowly devouring them.

His Myrtharian Eyes amplified his visual acuity and extrasensory perception, while having the unique attribute of being able to discern the smallest details and weak points of an opponent or technique. Jake immediately understood that these long trails of smoke were like umbilical cords providing the Soul Energy that these imp spirits needed to keep this Soul Spell going. Logically, the one to whom these umbilical cords were attached and providing the energy could only be the Spellcaster.

These umbilical cords had a double function here, though, being able to absorb the energy harvested by these imp spirits as well. The Spirit Bodies of his subordinates being devoured provided a continuous stream of Soul Energy that these smoke trails were absorbing without missing a beat.

Once their Spirit Bodies dissipated, it would be their Soul's turn. Sadly, this scenario was only for experienced Evolvers like Jake or Svara. For these newbies who had barely awakened their Extrasensory Perception for a few days, Soul, Consciousness and Spirit Body were essentially synonymous, the three being permanently fused together and virtually indistinguishable at their level.

The direct consequence was that for every portion of Spirit Body ripped away, these refugees were losing a piece of their soul and with it their memories, their intelligence, their personality and everything that defined their existence.

Svara was a Valkyrie capable of safeguarding and transporting the heroic souls of the deceased and naturally understood this. In addition to remaining unaffected by this Soul Spell, her Shadow Wolves and Ravens howled and croaked in delight as they encountered these thousands of imp spirits, as if they had just met their favorite met.

Conversely, those greedy clawed arms froze nervously as their owners shuddered with fear as if they had just met their nemesis. With plaintive wails that only Svara, Jake, Grash, Kyle and Will could hear, they immediately began to wander off, scurrying in the direction they came from.

But they also took the souls of their friends with them. Svara had no intention of giving up and her Shadow Wolves and Ravens went after them, catching up within seconds. Starving and ruthless, these Shadow Predators pounced on them, tearing through a dozen imp spirits in the blink of an eye.

Jake also entrusted Maeve to Mufasa, then ran to Svara's aid, conjuring up huge fireballs. Careful not to damage the souls of his comrades, he fired directly at the source of the umbilical cords. A hundred fireballs disappeared into the darkness of the tunnel, briefly revealing its walls and those running inside at breakneck speed.

Kyle, who was standing next to him with his Golden Sight active, was surprised when one of the fireballs lit up the face of Shaktilar and a few of his men, followed by Melkree and the remnants of her faction.

Shaktilar, who was beginning to despair that they had not yet left the area of influence of Urul Tak's Soul Spell, was suddenly blinded by huge balls of searing heat and let out a terrified roar before throwing himself to the ground. His subordinates did the same, but many whose minds had been greatly weakened by these imp spirits did not react in time and were struck by one of these fiery projectiles.

At this speed and temperature, there was no explosion, but their bodies were instantly vaporized, slowing the blazing balls of flame ever so slightly. Their intact legs remained anchored in place in the same stance, while their upper bodies had long since melted away.

With the example of Shaktilar and his men, Melkree and her underlings reacted in time, diving to the ground in unison. The balls of flame passed over them, heating the back of their heads and spines, and several of them had to roll on the ground afterwards to extinguish the flames on their clothes and hair.

The flaming projectiles then continued on their way, followed by a huge series of chain explosions.

The Soul Spell dissipated instantly, the trails of smoke that served as umbilical cords to the imp spirits dispersing as if they had never existed. The imp spirits evaporated a few seconds later with a resentful whimper.

The souls carried away by these intangible creatures were left behind, floating unresponsive in the air a few feet above the ground. Svara then joined her hands in a sign of prayer and uttered distinctly,

"Reverse life and death! Soul Stabilization."

These Spirit Bodies, on the verge of dissolving forever, regained their stability, and then converged on their respective fleshly bodies.. As the body entered the Spirit Bodies, their chests rose as if receiving an electric shock, and they all took a sudden breath, miraculously coming back to life.