

## Oracle 579

### Chapter 579 - Saving A Tree

Jake didn't even have to do anything to get his answer. Besides the corpses and the tunnel entrance, there was only one thing out of place in this goblin camp:

The sapling.

This young tree was not very tall, about his height, and its trunk was not wider than his own neck, which all things considered was not actually that narrow. The bark was still a little green, but dull and crumbly as if the sapling was dying. Its wilted auburn leaves supported this statement.

If he had any doubt, several amber sap seeped out slowly from several gaps dotting the trunk and Jake finally found out where the sweet scent was coming from.

A quick scan told him the rest.

[Fyekrant Sapling: A plant life form that has evolved to the point of awakening its own Soul and subsequently forming its own humanoid avatar (the Dryad). Is currently in a critical state, the tree and its Spirit Body having been severely damaged. Because of its severe injuries, the tree was forced to devolve into this juvenile form to survive. In the absence of proper sunlight and soil, it will soon die.]

Under other circumstances, Jake might have missed out, but Crunch and the Orange Turkey made it so it wouldn't happen. These two guys had a way of slipping out of sight in times of danger, but always reappeared when they were not needed at all.

While Jake was still wondering why this sapling looked so familiar to him, Crunch had already pounced on it and was in the process of clawing at its young trunk. The Orange Turkey that was perched on his head had jumped onto one of the branches and had also begun to prick the trunk with its beak in the manner of a woodpecker, although this was closer to a jackhammer given the savagery of the action.

'Do you hate trees that much ?' Jake facepalmed as he saw the sheer relentlessness he was putting on this shrub that had done nothing to deserve it.

He was about to snap at them to make them stop when the shrub suddenly came to life, its flexible trunk suddenly spinning on itself to deliver a resounding slap to the turkey perched on one of its branches.

The pecking Orange Turkey lost his balance as the trunk gave way under his beak, and then was picked off in the face by one of the few remaining leafy branches. Jake followed the turkey's parabolic flight with utter indifference, then scowled at his cat.

Crunch immediately stopped clawing, but subconsciously raised one of his legs to relieve his bladder. The result was another resounding branching slap, the crack of which was akin to a whipping.

To Jake's great regret, however, Crunch was too heavy and the sapling too delicate to dislodge him from his position. His steel-roughened fur took the impact like a thick, impenetrable mattress, and the black cat swaggered away once the deed done.

'I've got to discipline this cat when I get back or he's only going to cause me trouble in the future.' Jake promised himself inwardly as he stared at his smug face.

Paying back the Orange Turkey and Crunch for their disrespect had clearly not been easy for this dying tree and it had lost what few leaves it had left during its revenge while the arm branch had snapped.

Jake walked serenely to the tree, examined it from top to bottom, circling it several times, then probed calmly,

"Melkree?"

The scan hadn't given him that information, but they were in Digestor territory and there was still the possibility that the female Evolver was ranked higher than him.

When Jake asked his question, the sapling shivered unknowingly, unable to guess his intentions. If he decided to attack at that moment, she was dead.

On the other hand, her reaction also told Jake that she was still conscious. He didn't think he could cure the damaged mind of a tree, but if Melkree was awake it was a lot easier.

"Was it Urul who did this?" Jake asked telepathically.

A short silence followed, then a rambling, barely audible female voice echoed in his head.

"Yes, he killed... everyone. Including... my subordinates..."

Jake didn't need to hear the obvious. He was smart enough to come to that conclusion on his own. What he really wanted to know was,

"Then, why are you still alive?" He asked bluntly. "It's not that I doubt you, but I could understand if you had run away, but you're still here. I doubt Urul didn't notice you in your condition. I want to know why he spared you?"

"He didn't... I had to die to convince him to leave me in peace."

"What do you mean?" Jake frowned, but he had a hunch about her answer.

"I'm a Dryad. My real body is a tree. I let it destroy my avatar, then my real body and consume the Spirit Energy powering it and I put the rest of my strength into a seed that I didn't let germinate until after Urul was gone. Unfortunately, the seed was also damaged during the battle. Once sprouted I thought I would be able to grow quite quickly, but this soil is barren, as is this light. I will well and truly die within a few hours if nothing is done."

"That's because you need ultraviolet light for your photosynthesis." Jake explained with a wide-eyed look of astonishment. "So you don't know what a tree needs to thrive?"

At her silence, he could almost imagine Melkree blinking dumbly.

"Light, air and soil." She answered in a hesitant voice after a long moment.

"Yeah... but no." Jake shook his head before correcting himself in a fit of pity. "I mean yes, but your answer is at an elementary school level. To grow up, you need this... and this."

As he said this, Jake threw a handful of crushed rocks at the root of the tree like someone would throw seed at pigeons, while raising a palm wrapped in a bright halo toward the decrepit shrub. Rays of pure white light struck Melkree, but there was also something more in it that her plant body was craving for.

Melkree was confused and gloomy at first, but as soon as she was bathed in the light, her leaves began to hum with joy as her roots greedily absorbed the minerals from the pile of fertilizer he had thrown at her.

In the end, Melkree was still a Fourth-Ordeal Evolver, and her Bloodline was no ordinary tree. Once the ideal growing conditions were met, the Fyekrant sapling began to grow rapidly, and its sap stopped flowing as the gaps closed in a matter of minutes.

Seeing that her body was responding well, Jake threw in some more soil and sped up the rotation of her Aether Core to produce more sunlight. The growth of the sapling accelerated even more and it soon returned to its original size.

Jake didn't see what the tree looked like at first, so he assumed it was fully regenerated, but only Melkree knew it was a long way off. However, it was mature enough to generate a new avatar.

The Fyekrant Tree was suddenly enveloped in a radiant green light and the next thing he knew a naked woman with long, wavy pale green hair and pointed ears was lying on the ground in front of Jake in the fetal position.

Jake would have gladly admired her beauty if he wasn't in such a hurry. Not knowing if she had anything to wear, he briefly considered lending her his clothes, but she was almost a meter shorter than him...

Fortunately, he was worrying for nothing, and patches of bark quickly covered her body in the sensitive areas. Melkree was unaware of the concept of modesty and embarrassment, so it was clearly something she had learned to do by mimicry after discovering that it caused unpredictable and often deleterious reactions in other humans, especially those with a trunk between their legs...

And his savior... Yep, no doubt, he had a trunk too.

Jake had looked away to let her get dressed, but he suddenly realized something as he recalled his previous scan that he hadn't been paying attention to. Now that Melkree was in human form again, it hit him in the eye.

"Where is your Oracle Device?"

Even a First-Ordeal Evolver knew how to hide his bracelet under his skin, but Jake could easily sense the presence and energy of the liquid alloy with his mental sense if the Evolver in front didn't try to stop him.

Earlier, Melkree was on the verge of death and her mind was functioning in slow motion, unable to operate normally. His scan, as well as his mind, should have detected her Oracle Device, but he hadn't noticed. That was the main reason he had almost missed the true nature of this tree in the first place.

Melkree froze as she mulled over his question. Her eyes went blank as she tried to communicate with her Oracle AI, and intense relief appeared on her face when she got a response. Alas, it wasn't long before she was depressed again as she read its report.

"So?" Jake prodded her gently.

A tear of sweet sap rolled down the corner of one of her eyelids for the first time and he knew he had guessed right. It was the first time Melkree had felt overwhelmed by such a sense of loss and frustration. Finally, she took a deep breath and disclosed with her once again placid and apathetic face,

"I don't have an Oracle Device anymore except for a few miligrams of liquid alloy that I was able to save in my seed.. My Oracle Rank is retained, but all its features are suspended until the lost liquid alloy and energy is made up."