

Oracle 580

Chapter 580 - Third Floor

Jake felt bad when he saw her helplessness, but not so bad as to offer her a fraction of his precious supply of alloy liquid. Maybe if the two of them had a good relationship and he was sure he could trust her he would have made a kind gesture, but right now it was just a futile effort to expect any altruism from him.

What this made him realize, instead, was that it was in his best interest not to put all his eggs in one basket.

Instead of carrying around all his liquid alloy to keep his Oracle Device at peak performance, he would now store the bulk of it in several places, including his Oracle Cabin, the Faction Vault, and his Floating Island for starters. If there was also a universal bank established in the Mirror Universe or even B842, he intended to open an account there.

"I'm going now." Jake looked away to avoid being gripped by compassion for this total stranger.

Jake did not invite Melkree to follow him. There was strength in numbers, but he already had too many problems with just a cat and a turkey in tow.

Yet, there was no need to, because the young woman began to follow him on her own accord like an abandoned puppy. Jake turned his head towards her, and thank god, she was still sporting her deadpan face. If she knew how to handle human expressions to execute a tearful pout, he might have fallen for it.

Fortunately for him, Melkree was just a tree originally. Her avatar was just an artificial body stripped of the instincts a human should have. At least, that was the impression he got from the young woman's behavior.

The truth was that a Dryad had a perfectly functional human body with some differences. After all, a tree was still a living being. Some vegan extremists might even tell you they could feel pain and other feelings and in Melkree's case, it was true.

The only nuance was that a tree did not perceive reality as a human does. To begin with, a tree was born, grew and died in the same place. Its existence consisted of growing, flowering, giving fruit, and repeating these cycles with the seasons until it died.

Melkree had been a tree for much longer than a Dryad and her character was naturally affected by this. Besides an infinite patience and quietude, she was totally detached from what was going on around her as long as she was not directly involved.

The emotions she felt after losing her subordinates and her bracelet were all new to her and she had a hard time sorting through it all. For Jake, she was factually grateful, but it couldn't be said this feeling really came from the heart. It was more of an appreciation that made her want to reciprocate.

So the trio gained a new member and following Jake they entered the tunnel at the foot of the spiral promontory. They were plunged into darkness for a few moments, and a downward slope signaled that they were going deeper and deeper into the Dungeon's depths.

As Jake considered producing some light, the slope began to straighten out until it was completely flat and a chill wind blew in their faces.

With the narrowness of the tunnel, it was as if someone had left the door of a house open during a storm, and the icy air current was strong enough to sweep away objects weighing several hundred kilograms.

For Jake, who weighed several tons with his liquid alloy, it was nothing, but for Melkree in her Dryad form it was a different story. Light brown vines shot out of her hands in all directions and clung to the legs of Jake and Crunch.

There was another one who was struggling even more than Melkree and that was the Orange Turkey. Its talons and beak were firmly gripping the fur and wrinkled skin of the big black cat, pulling its skin back and lifting Crunch's face at the same time. Far from being embarrassed, the cat seemed to enjoy the massage.

Jake and Crunch continued to move forward effortlessly until they emerged from the tunnel to discover... a new cavern.

This one was large, perhaps even larger than the last, but there was no forest or architecture blocking their view. The only thing they could see were snow dunes as far as the eye could see and a blizzard that stormed relentlessly and obstructed their vision. Without their heightened perception, they couldn't have seen more than a few feet ahead.

The first thing Jake thought was that it had been much harder to find his comrades and the entrance to the lower floor. On the other hand, it also meant that he was less likely to be spotted as well.

The most annoying thing, however, was that his pursuit of Urul Tak ended here. Because of the blizzard, their footprints in the snow did not survive for more than a few seconds and it was so cold that the ground was mostly icy. Unless you stomped the ground extremely hard or weighed several tons, it was impossible to leave your footprints there anyway.

"Meow..."

"Yeah, I know... I don't like this place either." Jake nodded.

It wasn't just because he couldn't see, but also because the cold didn't give him any advantage. Here, his Passive Healing Skill couldn't be triggered at all. He could only rely on his Vitality and Constitution to recover.

Moreover, his Myrtharian Body worked better at a higher temperature. Even though he would not suffer from a low temperature, all his physical faculties would inevitably be impacted if he let his body temperature drop too low.

With this blizzard, he would have to expend considerable energy to keep his body temperature constant. With his Aether Core and Aether Sun Core, or even his natural Constitution this wasn't really a problem, but it still meant that his Heat Spells would be a bit weaker here and he would have less energy available to cast other spells.

"I don't like it here either." Melkree admitted a few seconds later as she shivered, her arms crossed around her chest for warmth.

Obviously, a few patches of bark wasn't enough anymore. Jake was suddenly aware that she was barefoot. In this snow, it was a recipe for frostbite and possibly amputation.

"Climb on Crunch's back for now. I'll try to figure out what to do about your clothes on the way." Jake suggested with a tone that left no room for rejection.

Melkree was still a little confused since her rebirth and obeyed submissively with a nod. As soon as she put her feet in the thick warm fur of the feline, she felt better. Although it didn't look like it, Crunch was also benefiting from the Myrtharian Body passive and was making a decent boiler.

Jake then began to move forward cautiously, even considering flying for a brief moment, figuring he had little chance of being spotted, but he gave up on that plan. Although he had the Aether of Luck with him, all it took was an unfortunate encounter with the wrong person or Digestor to seal his fate.

Before he did anything crazy, he wanted to determine the level of the Digestors on this floor first. Someone must have heard his wish, because it was granted much faster than he expected.

After walking only a few hundred meters, the ground began to shake in front of them and Jake saw a gigantic bulge appear under one of the snow dunes, cracking the ice as it passed.

This bulge was moving under the snow and was a good ten meters wide, lifting the snow above it by several meters as it passed. Jake squinted his eyes, calmly staring at the entity without daring to breathe, but when he confirmed that this subterranean thing was heading towards them, he abandoned all discretion.

"Prepare for battle."

As soon as Jake put his comrades on guard, the bulge under the snow suddenly sped up, hurtling toward them like an underwater torpedo. Crunch inhaled a ton of air and ruffled his fur into his defensive pufferfish form and stuck his tail into the ground to use his body as a flail.

The Orange Turkey flapped its wings in panic to get as high in the air as possible but with the blizzard in full swing it was a tall order. Melkree was still recovering and was far from her full fighting potential, but she was still a Fourth-Ordeal Evolver.

Bark covered her entire body until it formed a kind of natural armor. Branches, then triangular auburn leaves grew from her back and head, quickly giving her the appearance of a small Ent or Treant.

Jake knew that the group was counting on him for this confrontation, but he was a little confused. His Earth Control allowed him to easily perceive movements and vibrations in the earth, but it could do nothing about snow. This thing under the snow was moving above the ground and he could only use his other senses to follow its movements.

Preparing for the worst, he fired a few Air Bullets, those compressed and accelerated by his telekinesis. His Telekinesis Skill could generate a force equivalent to twice his Real Strength, to which was added that of his Spirit Body, which in addition to its level was also twelve times greater than a normal Spirit.

When a force more than twenty times greater than his maximum physical strength was focused on a very small object, the power generated was simply stupendous. Jake could not defend himself against his own spell, and logically, neither could his enemies.

The bullets hit the snow with teleportation-like speed and geysers of snow shot high into the sky, producing large bangs. For a moment the snow mass collapsed, the dune became smooth again, but a few seconds later the bulge started moving towards him again with even greater speed.

His Air Bullets had failed to kill their target.