

Oracle 591

Chapter 591 - Lord Phenix

Jake didn't waste a single second. Once he made up his mind, nothing could stop him. A moment later, he and his group stepped out of their dark tunnel and an otherworldly sunshine poured its deadly rays upon their faces, which were still rosy from the icy wind on the floor above.

Shaktilar was clearly dragging his feet behind them, but his foul mood could do nothing against the absolute orders of his new master. He, who much preferred the blizzard, braced himself for the fiery burns to come, but relaxed when he saw that the sunrays were quite bearable.

"Told you. You worry about nothing." Crunch meowed as he trotted with his head held high in this barren, volcanic world.

The Orange Turkey on his back, however, wasn't faring all that well. His stats were the lowest of the group, and even with the Myrtharian Body, that radiation was slowly but surely frying him. The consolation was that it was stimulating his cells. If he persevered and survived until then, his Body Stats would be greatly enhanced.

"So much for naming yourself Lord Phenix..." Jake twisted the knife in the wound of the poor turkey, his nostrils flaring as he smelled roast chicken in the air.

"More like Lord Fry Chicken..." Crunch snickered, though using his fur as a screen to protect the wretched bird.

"Gobble!" Lord Phenix gobbled indignantly as he received these successive taunts, but there was little he could do given the circumstances other than patiently endure while dreaming of his future revenge.

The turkey had chosen his name a few minutes earlier while listening to Crunch tell him an anecdote. Apparently, the black cat had encountered such a mythical bird in his Second Ordeal and had almost died. The turkey had been deeply moved and had immediately renamed himself Lord Phoenix.

What Crunch didn't tell him was that this famous phoenix had ultimately been hunted thanks to the seamless cooperation between Mufasa and Shere Khan. The poor mythical bird had ended up as a late afternoon snack for the feline pride. Taking advantage of the fact that a phoenix could rise from its ashes, the felines had thrown the bones into the fire as many times as necessary until they were fully satiated...

So much so that when they had eventually left this legendary phoenix in peace, it had cursed them for thirteen generations and the rest of their Ordeal had been a living hell. It turned out that this phoenix was a toddler and had a very possessive mother and father...

But that story was for another time for obvious reasons.

The one who wasn't talking at all right now, however, was Melkree. She was the only one in the group who was not a member of the Myrtharian Nerds. She may have been the only supposed survivor of her faction, but she hadn't disbanded it yet. Strangely enough, although she felt little emotion, she sometimes behaved in a very human way.

The problem was that Melkree was basically a plant. As much as she needed sunlight to grow, this kind of sunlight was way beyond the threshold of radiation and heat that a tree could endure. Without her high Aether stats, she might have looked worse than the turkey.

"Are you sure you don't want to join my faction?" Jake asked in a concerned tone. If she agreed, she could have healed much faster and even progressed beyond her former limitations.

"It's not needed for now." She answered flatly, though her shifting eyes betrayed her hesitation.

The truth was, she didn't trust him yet. His performance had been excellent so far, and he had even saved her life, but her only points of comparison were with Bhuzkoc and Shaktilar, two tyrants devoid of morals and capable of the most heinous crimes.

But above all, the cruel and decisive mercilessness that Jake could show as he had earlier with Shaktilar had also shown her that this human was not an innocent soul. Until she was clear on whether it was instability or fortitude, she would continue to feel like she was walking on eggshells.

Like Will earlier, Jake had not been cocky in discovering this new environment devoid of atmosphere, but he had not equipped his spacesuit either. Since his Bloodline and Body Stats were far more advanced, he benefited much more from completely removing his armor.

Where Will and Kyle still needed an external source of oxygen, with this heat, radiation, and telluric soil, Jake had everything he needed to sustain himself indefinitely. After all, the Kintharians came from a planet with an environment many times more inhospitable than this one.

Right now, Jake wore only shorts and walked barefoot on the hot rock. The heat and radiation stimulated his Myrtharian Bloodline, making the network of lava veins running through his body apparent. His golden and silver mane shone, while the galactic glow of his pupils was visible from hundreds of meters away.

He was in great shape!

His cells had no trouble withstanding the stresses of this hostile environment and were converting all that energy into oxygen and other nutrients for his body with ease. His Passive Healing Skill was also activated, allowing him to recover from any injury even without doing anything.

Jake probably wouldn't have to pay anything to activate Bloodline Ignition this time. Usually he had to mobilize his Aether Core and sacrifice stamina for it, but this environment provided enough energy to make up for the losses.

Here, Jake was at least twice as powerful as anywhere else, and that was even more glaring compared to the frigid territory of the third floor. Needless to say, Shaktilar and Melkree could definitively feel it.

The lack of atmosphere had one major drawback, though: There was no sound. To communicate, they had to use telepathy, but not everyone was capable of that.

"I guess, you'll have to shut up this time, Crunch." Jake joked, his face beaming with happiness.

As long as he didn't take the initiative to connect his mind to his cat's, the cat couldn't tell him anything. Will had foresight, but not to the point of planning spacesuits for huge felines. As a result, Crunch couldn't even speak into a microphone.

Lord Phenix should have been treated the same way, but he was small enough to fit into a suit. Jake didn't need his, so he lent it to him and by squeezing himself in, the turkey managed to fit perfectly into the helmet. Fortunately for them, he spared them his sulky gobbles.

Shaktilar had arranged for his own suit and Jake didn't have to worry about him. As for Melkree, she seemed able to breathe normally with the help of her photosynthesis.

The group progressed for several kilometers without encountering anyone or anything, and Jake began to wonder if Shaktilar had been telling them anything at all.

This floor was just a flat, hot rock. Except for a few volcanoes, one of which was particularly majestic in the distance, the ground was completely flat although riddled with craters of varying widths.

There was vegetation and even tall trees with a network of sap emitting a soft orange light as fiery as its own veins, but nowhere near as dense as the forest on the second floor.

With so few obstructions hindering their vision, Jake should have been able to spot potential enemies easily, but they hadn't run into anyone so far.

"Are you sure this floor was crawling with Digestors? So far it really looks like a dead asteroid." Jake questioned Shaktilar, raising a wary eyebrow.

The Shyril looked as confused as he was. He hadn't made up the enemies that had slaughtered his faction.

"I swear they were everywhere when I came here with my comrades. I, I have no idea where they all went..."

"There are no dead bodies, no signs of fighting either." Melkree remarked as she examined the handful of dust flowing through her fingers.

Jake activated his Myrtharian Sight and spotted numerous Aether dots in the distance towards the main volcano.

"Looks like the Digestors have regrouped." He concluded with a somber look on his face. "I don't know if they've been lured by something or if they're following the Dungeon's orders, but it doesn't look good to me."

"We can still turn around." Shaktilar suggested graciously.

"We can, but we won't." Jake cut the debate short, immediately ruining his renewed hope. He then offered for the others, "If you don't want to come I won't force anyone."

Shaktilar's face lit up, about to back out when Jake clarified,

"Except you Shaktilar. I need a meatshield in case something happens."

As if Jake was the kind of guy to let such a bully off the hook so easily. He had a better chance of getting his redemption by going straight to hell.

Now that Jake had located the enemies, he had no reason to cautiously explore the area. He immediately used his Earth Gliding Skill, taking the rest of his companions with him.

The group began to cut through the rock as if the ground were a silent sea, swallowing up the miles at breakneck speed. In an instant, they went past the minor volcanoes they had seen on their way in, and the vegetation soon grew denser around them.

The central volcano which was already impressive seen from afar was now downright monstrous, the lava sprays that the latter vomited continuously generating a torrid heat that they could feel from their position.

At long last, Jake and his group met their first "Jake" and he learned the hard way that Shaktilar's fears were not unfounded.