

Oracle 594

Chapter 594 - Fighting Oneself(part 1)

As soon as Jake linked his mind to the Purgatory everything around him disappeared except for his allies. For a brief moment he found the fantasy and very personal landscape of the Purgatory Dream and he even saw his Digestor clone for the first time. The climatic and environmental conditions were not so different from the 4th Floor as they were optimal for those of his bloodline.

But Jake had no intention of fighting his doppelganger here, even though it was the ideal ground. His companions could not afford to wait any longer.

With a thought, he activated the Spaceship mode, which was really just an alternate manifestation of the Purgatory Dream. In its database was the blueprint of a 7th generation Consortium Interstellar Battleship, and this was just an illusion like everything else his Bronze Artifact could create.

Yet it was precisely what he needed. As long as these illusory constructs remained within the realm of the Purgatory, they were as real as real could be.

There was something different about this illusion, though. It was not another dimension superimposed on reality, but an illusion arising in the real world. The consequences on the lava river would have dire consequences for the Digestors and Evolvers nearby.

In the blink of an eye, the volcanic landscape vanished as well, and a floor and walls of dark, sleek metal replaced it, spreading like a virus around them. Jake and his group soon found themselves in the cockpit of a vast spaceship several hundred meters long.

The cockpit they were in was as large as a tennis court, and there were all sorts of screens, holograms, machines and other devices for a competent crew. Jake obviously didn't know how to drive this ship model... or any other for that matter, but he didn't need to. Xi was here to take care of this.

She downloaded her consciousness into the ship and immediately took over the controls. A steady stream of bluish plasma was spewed out of the rear and wing ramjets, while an energy shield enveloped the ship to neutralize and repel the lava heating the ship's armor.

This energy shield lived up to its billing. Once activated, the ship's plating temperature remained completely stable. Xi then prepared for takeoff by rotating the ramjets' outlets toward the ground. A powerful acceleration force pinned them to the ground, followed by a violent tremor that nearly sent them tumbling to the ground.

"Hang on!" Jake shouted, using his telekinesis to steady himself. Crunch dug his claws into a seat to hold on, while Melkree wrapped her roots around a console.

[Be careful, Jake! the Digestor is inside the ship.] Xi's warning caught him off guard as the ship began its ascent.

Jake had considered the possibility, but the warning came at the worst possible time. He hadn't yet learned how to sort out intruders on activation, and he was about to pay the price.

One of the holograms mapping the interior of the ship displayed several green dots corresponding to their position and another red dot only a few meters away from them.

"Shit!"

VVVROOO!

The ship took off with a phenomenal bang, pushing up the lava above them, but Jake and his group were unaware that outside a disaster had already struck.

As soon as the ship had popped out of nowhere, the space originally occupied by the lava had been violently replaced by a metal object of tens of thousands of cubic meters. The lava that was once there had not disappeared, but had been violently displaced outwards.

The inevitable consequence was a cataclysmic lava tsunami. Coming back to the present, this was what Shaktilar was currently experiencing first hand. Long before the ship began its takeoff, the ill-intentioned alien had already been dispatched to other skies.

Meanwhile, inside the ship, Jake was struggling with his clone. As the ship accelerated rapidly, his Digestor doppelganger had sneaked up behind them and by the time he received Xi's warning it was too late.

BOOOM!

The strobe light from the alarm sirens threw the interior of the ship into chaos, and Jake had a hard time locating the alien.

A lava bullet pierced Melkree's heart from behind, burning a huge hole in her chest. Crunch was not spared either, but his hardened fur withstood the blow. As for the kinetic energy of the projectile, it was neutralized by his Rubber flesh. In the end, he was left with a horrible burn, but his life was not in danger.

Jake also was treated to a lava bullet, but the Digestor had clearly set his priorities. Whether it was his predatory instincts or just intelligence, he understood that Jake was the most dangerous of the group. If he could eliminate the others, he could then focus on this tough prey.

Jake deflected the bullet with his own force field, then took control of it and sent it back to the sender with twice its original speed. The Digestor wasn't expecting this counterattack, and he took it in the face.

The heat was nothing to the creature, but the impact shook his head back violently. For a second, Jake thought he had defeated the monster, but a silvery sheen on the alien's forehead quickly changed his mind. Like him earlier, the Digestor had used his own Silver Stone Skin to survive the headshot.

The monster then unleashed a barrage of lava bullets drawing on its own stamina and Jake calmly parried, neutralizing each projectile by absorbing their heat, before sending the cooled projectile back at the alien.

The Digestor was still young and inexperienced, but he had the stats to compensate. His intelligence was as terrifying as Jake's. He could multitask and his brain was highly efficient and adaptive.

Accustomed to swimming and fighting in lava, this was the first time he was forced to fight outside of his preferred environment and he had already realized that shooting Lava Bullets without lava nearby was draining his strength quickly. Creating solid matter out of nothing, even the more powerful Evolvers would not venture into that territory.

It wasn't that it was impossible, but depending on the energy system used to fight, the cost could quickly become astronomical.

Neither Jake nor his Digestor counterpart had reached the level to spam lava spells created out of thin air. Panting slightly, the creature swept its gaze over the metal walls around it and Jake with a curious expression, or rather his mind, perceived psychic impulses running through the ship. It wasn't on the level of an Oracle Scan, but it sure looked like one.

The alien let out a shrill cackle as it realized that the lava hadn't really disappeared. It was just outside. While Jake and even a relatively mature human would have chosen to fight in other ways, the Digestor opted for the plan that seemed most obvious: Destroy the ship.

BAM!

The monster rammed itself into one of the walls, speeding up its run with telekinesis, and Jake watched dumbly as his clone wasted his energy on a metal illusion. During his Third Ordeal, he too had dealt with this kind of steel on several occasions and while it wasn't indestructible, it was stronger than it looked, especially the outer armor of the ship.

By the time the Digestor managed to melt and sink a tiny portion, the ship had surfaced above the river of lava and the metal behemoth soared majestically into the sky like some humongous monster.

Shrrri!

Maddened by the sight of the structure resisting its claws and teeth, the alien let out a shrill cry that shattered their eardrums, but Xi continued to maneuver the ship to the other side. When they reached it, Jake deactivated the Purgatory and stowed the artifact, his mission accomplished.

Melkree, Crunch and Lord Phenix were gently waved away behind him, clearing the battlefield of their presence. The Dryad was not dead. A tree didn't really have a heart. However, she was badly wounded again. She needed a few minutes to recover.

Now that Jake had his feet back on solid ground and a bright sun shining on his back, he could finally get a good look at the Digestor that Shaktilar had mistaken him for and that had left him so traumatized.

With the ship gone, the alien also stopped raging futilely and turned to the only human present, who bore an uncanny resemblance to him. The human and the Digestor stared into each other's eyes, studying each other, and the same astonishment could be seen inside.

The Digestor looked 90% like him. His body was exactly the same in size, proportion, musculature and hair. His hair was also a mixture of gold and silver, as was the glow in his irises. A network of lava veins dotted the surface of his skin and his translucent claws and fangs were also identical to hers.

Where the monster stood out, proudly displaying its Digestor heritage, was in its grayish, translucent skin color and the silver chitin exoskeleton covering its body. Still, the monster was shirtless, wearing only a straight shoulder pad, leggings and boots covered with sharp spikes and reinforced gauntlets.

"This clone, doesn't look as terrifying as I imagined." Jake wore a disappointed expression.

Ambushed under the lava and forced to protect his allies, he had found this enemy nightmarish, but now that he saw it without any filter, the creature looked immature and inexperienced. Only its stats seemed to match or even surpass his own, but the difference was not obvious.

"If that's all it is, then killing you is no longer of any interest." Jake said as he unsheathed his Bone Crushing Snowworm's Fang for the first time.

Baiting the monster with a wave of his hand, he commanded,

" Bring it on!"