

Oracle 597

Chapter 597 - Dead?

Jake's body flashed by for half a kilometer at a speed nearly impossible to follow with the naked eye until a natural obstacle brought its course to an end: Another volcano.

A human crevice was carved into the side of the same volcano, followed by a landslide, then a massive rock fall. Jake was completely buried underneath in front of a horrified Shaktilar. After yelling, he held his breath, praying for a miracle, but reality quickly caught up with him.

'Is he dead?' Shyril wondered far from experiencing the thrill he should have felt upon regaining his freedom.

Probing his body carefully, then his Oracle Status, he immediately pulled himself together with a conflicted expression.

He's still alive. I don't know if I should be happy or sad...'

From now on, Shaktilar would have to worry about the Digestor a few meters away from him. With Jake out of the picture, he would soon be the target again. After the lava river had burst its banks, the alien had thought he was doomed and had summoned all the mana in his Ice Mana Core to save himself.

Shortly thereafter, he had bumped into that clone and his heart had skipped a beat when the Digestor had recognized him and guffawed, "Gegege, you're the vermin that escaped earlier. I'm glad you came back so I can rectify my mistake."

The Shyril didn't know what he was hoping for when he ran to Jake, but certainly not this. To survive these few seconds against the Digestor, he had sacrificed his last Ice Pearl, an item he had found in his Fourth Ordeal. His precious Magic Staff had also been destroyed and he had long since used up his rare Mana Potions.

Now he was basically naked and penniless. His soul was so damaged that it was about to disintegrate and his headache was so excruciating that he couldn't even control his Mana let alone his Aether. His body could still move, but he couldn't even focus on guiding his legs.

When the Myrtharian Digestor turned his head to finish the job, Shaktilar's heart sank but he also stopped struggling. When he accepted his fate, his fear also left him. Paradoxically, he felt better.

'If I concentrate with all my heart, I can still use one Ice Spell, but my Soul will explode. Even if I survive, I will probably have the IQ of a Nawai male after that.'

As he prepared to die in a final blaze, the rubble of the other volcano's rockslide began to shake. A force field from below suddenly burst through them and the rocks began to vibrate as they slowly rose into the air. A disheveled, dust-covered male figure emerged from the rubble, looking dark and angry.

The Digestor who was about to eliminate Shaktilar promptly turned his attention back to the human he thought was the original.

"Ugh, still alive? I should have expected that from someone who looks just like me."

Jake spat out a bloody gob in response, pounding his chest with his fist to force himself to cough up what was obstructing his airways. His wound was initially much more serious, the edge of the enemy's blade having struck from under his pectoral muscles, collapsing his lungs and shattering his rib cage in the process. His heart had been spared, but his aorta artery had been severed, momentarily cutting off the blood flow to his brain and arms.

Had he not directed his Constitution and Vitality Aether into the damaged area at the last moment, he would have been sliced in half. Upon slamming into the volcano, he didn't get up immediately, taking advantage of the landslide to summon his Aether Sun Core to melt the rock around him and heal his wounds.

With the local Aether density, Jake's Real Vitality was almost 4000 times that of a human. With his Healing Skill, the support of this terrain, and his Aether Sun Core, he was virtually unkillable if he wasn't killed in one hit.

The problem... was that this was true for his opponent as well.

'Whatever, I'll just fight him first.' Jake cracked his neck with a grunt from the pain. The landing had also fractured a few vertebrae in him.

"Shaktilar, keep protecting Melkree." Jake called the Shyril back to order as he watched him remain transfixed in amazement.

"Sure..." The alien obeyed meekly without nitpicking for the first time. This unexpected burst of hope had made him lose his voice.

Jake gave up any idea of hand-to-hand combat. Their first exchange had made him realize that whatever he could do, his clone could do better. The Digestor was faster, stronger and more agile, not to mention having to deal with his invisibility as well. There was only one area in which neither of them could quickly stand out and that was their tenacity.

To test the waters, he fired a first burst of Air Bullets at his clone. The Digestor didn't budge, his telekinetic shield intercepting these bullets without showing any sign of weakness.

Jake followed up with a large Air Blade, patiently condensing until the air itself began to hum, but the result was the same. The force field around the alien coalesced around the windblade with a few fluctuations, but nothing more.

Jake hesitated for a long time about his next move, but he wasn't sure what he could improvise on the spot that would work. These Wind Spells were fancy moves, but an Air Blade could not logically outperform a real steel blade at equal speed. Fire and Lava Spells were also out of the question, unless he could generate so much heat that not even a Myrtharian could withstand it.

For the next few seconds, his clone mockingly let him test a lot of combinations, more or less innovative, but nothing worked. Fire, Light, Lava, Earth, Metal, none of these elements controlled as he did could break through the Digestor's perfect defense. Of course, this was by not tapping into his stamina.

However, there were some techniques that gave him some hope. When he sped up one of the steel needles made during his Second Ordeal with his telekinesis and a blast of heat, the projectile effortlessly

pierced the enemy's immaterial barrier. Had the clone not intercepted it with his sword, he might have been injured.

Another time, he did the same by accelerating a bazzoka warhead stored in the Faction Vault by Will. The result was even better. Not knowing what he was dealing with, his clone interpreted the nature of this object as that of a "bigger needle" than the previous one, and his sword swung up with the same nonchalance.

The resulting explosion and shockwave created a crater the size of a basketball court. When the dust settled, his clone stood unharmed with his guard up in a defensive posture, but the residual shrapnel had cut into his chitin exoskeleton.

'So, I can't play fair if I want to win.'

What Jake didn't realize was that his clone was learning as he did. So far, he had defeated many of his clones to evolve to the point where he was and he had always been the most talented. Over time, he had also killed other Evolvers, sometimes acquiring their techniques. Some of his clones also had their own specialties.

Thanks to Jake, the Digestor had just discovered the dangers of technology. At the same time, Jake knew that because of his intelligence, what worked once had no chance of working a second time. His next attack... He would go all out!

Alas, his clone wasn't his clone for nothing. What the monster was thinking at that moment was something like,

'If I let him fool me a third time, I will die. I must attack first.'

And so he did.

As Jake mentally conditioned himself to attempt a combination he had never dared to use, his clone beat him to it.

Before he blinked, the Digestor was standing almost 400 meters away from him, when he opened his eyes again, Jake saw the air distort in front of him because of his clone who had just teleported.

'Fuck!'

Jake urgently teleported a few feet away, but the clone stomped violently on the ground and the alien reappeared in front of him with an upward swing. His blade only half raised, Jake teleported again, this time behind his opponent and twirled backward.

As if he had eyes in the back of his head, the alien leaned his torso to the right while contorting himself, then rolled to the ground while stretching his back legs in a double kick. His left leg deflected Jake's blade, while his right foot struck Jake's plexus, knocking the breath out of him and sending him flying.

As Jake rose in a parabolic curve, his clone reappeared above him and hacked him down with his own invisible greatsword. Feeling his death approaching like a wild beast facing a superpredator, Jake applied telekinesis to his own belly to throw himself to the ground, while his palms blasted a blinding jet of flame to hasten his fall just a little more.

Despite this, the invisible blade was inexorably closing in on his chest and in a moment of dazzling lucidity, Jake met his clone's cold gaze and retaliated with a Myrtharian Soul Beam, one of his only seasoned eye techniques.

The result? The Digestor didn't even slow down, his swing even accelerating in the process. Instead, a flash of infrared radiation hit his retinas and a mind-bending pain shot through his skull, electrifying his Spirit Body and his entire Soul.

'Damn it...'

His vision blurred and when it stabilized again, he was pinned to the ground unable to feel his legs.