

Oracle 599

Chapter 599 - Bitter Victory

Jake was finally out of his delusion. Myrmidian pride and overwhelming fighting spirit were no longer enough to keep him from realizing the extent of his predicament.

But he couldn't give up either. Running away was out of the question and his friends needed him badly. Every second he told himself that Will's heartbreaking scream he heard wasn't as bad as he feared, but he also knew that the longer he was stuck here the greater the chances were that his bleakest scenario would come true.

ROOOOARRR!

The Floor Boss roar rang out for the third time, and this time it was no longer a distant battle cry.

The top of a volcano less than a kilometer away from them disintegrated without a sound and out of the corner of his eye he was able to see one black and one silver figure collide with unimaginable frequency. Each of these collisions was like a thunderclap, the shockwave pulverizing into ashes anything that had the misfortune to enter too close to their battlefield.

After a few hundred more rounds of unbelievable violence, the two figures vanished inside the crater of the volcano, resuming their fight far from the public's eye. Not that anyone had the slightest desire to get closer to watch their duel...

Still, even Jake now had a lump of apprehension in his stomach as he watched these two monstrous entities battle to the death. One of them he recognized when it stopped for a split second on a rock to catch its breath. It was Urul Tak.

The black orc was covered in blood and sweat, his eyes were muddy and he was wheezing hard, showing advanced signs of fatigue and shortness of breath. His body was lacerated with deep purulent lesions, while his entire skin was charred. His armor had long since melted in the face of his enemy's fiery wrath.

It was a Sixth-Ordeal Evolver, for goodness sake!

At this level, a warrior had such a high Constitution and Vitality that he wasn't supposed to run out of steam so easily. Even if his Vitality was lacking, the wounds should have at least stopped bleeding and not become infected as if his immune system was overwhelmed.

Obviously, something had gone wrong. Urul Tak was losing his battle.

Once defeated, it would be their or his friends' turn to face this monster. Jake couldn't allow this thing near him, let alone his struggling companions.

His clone was now gloomy and as he realized that his beheading attempt had failed, he inspected his heavy greatsword with bewilderment trying to figure out what could have gone wrong, but in vain.

Unlike Jake, he knew exactly what fate awaited him if that silver figure descended upon him. His nervousness was more than apparent and it showed in his silence.

As he made his attack this time, the Digestor didn't utter a word, nor did he taunt him or laugh. A gravitational field pressed Jake to the ground, quadrupling his mass, and as he struggled to stand, a second telekinetic force more than ten times his physical strength compounded the first.

A halo of white light shimmered over the clone's body and the chitin tubes behind his elbows, knees, back, heels and back of his hand spat out jets of glowing plasma. The alien teleported in front of Jake and stabbed his sword directly between his eyes.

Jake knew immediately that playtime was over. His clone was no longer playing. He never had a chance to win.

Right now, Jake sported a twisted expression. When he should have been panicking, there was only a cold anger swirling in his eyes. His fists were shaking slightly, his body shuddering imperceptibly.

When he was desperate for a solution just now, he had immersed his consciousness in the Faction Vault with the idea of tapping into the stored arsenal. He hadn't found the miracle weapon he craved, but his mind had stumbled upon a piece of paper smeared with blood.

Both the Faction Chat and the Oracle System had been non-functional since their arrival in Digestor territory, and in theory they had no way to communicate. Jake and many others had been stuck on this idea, but forgot that there was one thing that always worked: their Faction Skills.

Using the Faction Vault, someone had handwritten a message, then dropped it in, hoping to be read. If Jake had known that such a situation would arise, they would have had a dedicated space for it.

Unfortunately, because the Faction Vault was so large, he had never thought to look for a piece of paper. In his desperate search, he had scanned the Faction Vault with his bracelet, and had stumbled upon this piece of paper by accident.

The handwriting was Will's, but it wasn't the desperate cry for help he'd predicted. It was much worse.

[Kyle is dead... Jake, don't come save us.]

When he saw this message, his clone's invisible blade was about to pierce his forehead and his Aether Soul Core in the process. The sword stroke was filled with a mysterious energy that made his skin crawl. If this attack hit, Jake had no doubt about the outcome.

His brain and soul would be destroyed forever.

That, plus the news about Will, was too much for Jake. When someone had just lost something important and realized what they still had to lose, they would also become aware of what they were willing to sacrifice to safeguard what was left.

What Jake had to do to win this fight became clear.

[Aether Storage: 14.6B points]

Jake had something the Dungeon Digestor could never emulate: His wealth.

BANG!

An indestructible energy barrier emerged on the surface of Jake's body, then suddenly expanded, forming an impenetrable sphere 10 meters in diameter. The super-fast, power-laden blade that was about to skewer his brain collided with the force field, then was violently pushed back along with the clone wielding it.

The sphere expanded so rapidly that the Digestor felt as if he had been hit by a truck. His body was propelled half a kilometer backwards, experiencing what Jake had endured earlier.

[Oracle Shield lvl 3 activated. Maximum range: 10m. Effect duration: 20 seconds. Aether Cost: 200M Aether pts per activation.]

Contrary to what Jake imagined, the clone showed no surprise when he met this Aether shield. Other Evolvers may have used this Oracle Skill against him or it was part of their innate memory.

Before crossing the 500 meters, the alien decisively planted his greatsword in the ground to slow down his flight, digging a long trench in the ground for a hundred meters. Then, once stabilized, he pushed the ground with his foot, releasing a telekinetic blast and multiple jets of plasma, and charged again.

Jake squinted alertly as he watched the Digestor ram fearlessly toward the supposedly invincible spherical shield. Then silently, the clone vanished and he could guess what the monster was planning to do.

[Attempting a second activation of Oracle Shield lvl3.]

[Analysis in progress...]

[Second activation of Oracle Shield lvl 3 allowed. Oracle Shield lvl 3 activated.]

A second Aether Shield glowed on the surface of Jake's body, just as his clone was popping up in front of him stabbing forward at the same spot as the last time.

From the way his clone's galactic eyes bulged out, Jake knew that this time the alien was surprised.

When the Oracle Shield suddenly began to expand, an expression of utter horror contorted his clone's face.

"You know what I have that you don't?" Jake sketched a cruel smile as he saw his clone's terror.

"Money!"

BLAM!

Instantly, the second shield stretched out faster than an explosion, overlapping with the first Oracle Shield. A spray of white-hot blood splattered inside the sphere, a leg and arm instantly grinded to a subatomic scale.

"Tche, I missed." Jake cursed, casting a regretful look in a certain direction. "Because of you, my friend died. I could have avoided it by being less stingy, but if you hadn't blocked my way, I could have definitely helped them. For this, you shall die."

His figure radiating a sinister aura disappeared from his spot and Jake resurfaced in front of his clone a hundred meters away with an arm and a leg missing. The clone immediately slashed at him, but what he dreaded happened.

[Attempting a third activation of Oracle Shield lvl3.]

[Analysis in progress...]

[Third activation of Oracle Shield lvl 3 authorized. Oracle Shield lvl 3 activated.]

A third energy sphere draped over Jake's skin, blocking the clone's blade, and then the barrier expanded in turn, overlapping with the other two spheres. The clone urgently teleported again, but at the cost of another arm.

With a thought, Jake stopped the expansion of the third shield, preserving the Greatsword left intact inside. After storing it in his Space Storage, he teleported back in front of his clone, but only after recalling the third Oracle Shield to his skin.

Jake had finally realized the true potential of this Oracle Skill. The range of his Oracle Shield could be modulated at will within a 10 meter radius and keep it active as long as he could afford it.

Activating a second Oracle Shield was an idea he'd just had on the fly, and the result had exceeded his wildest expectations. According to Xi, it was only possible because of his Oracle Rank and the fact that his bracelet held far more liquid alloy than normal.

Once the method was tried and tested, the rest was predictable. After a short game of catch where Jake and his clone teleported incessantly from one point of the battlefield to another, the Digestor died.

Yet the price of this victory was bitter.