

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 4: The Purgatory

### Chapter 365 - Danger

Within a few seconds, several hundred Digestors hatched. The smallest were the size of a large tarantula while the largest were as massive as an elephant and often much heavier.

Although the morphology of these monsters was diverse, they all shared certain traits, the result of their adaptation to this hostile environment.

Whether they had pointed insect legs, pads or webbed limbs, they all had a down of thorns allowing them to easily adhere to the slightest asperity. Their silvery sheen was a constant reminder that putting your hand on these hairs would be as stupid as trying to stroke a porcupine.

In the absence of atmosphere, these Digestors had also developed their own means of propulsion in space. Whether they had wings or not, they had strange limbs hollowed out on the inside, most often resembling long cables or sometimes simply looking like large holes inside the limbs, their wings and even their backs.

A bluish light escaped from these limbs, and when it grew brighter, hot air escaped from them to propel their bodies as a hydrogen rocket. At that moment, their hearts glowed brightly under their translucent grayish skin, siphoning the Aether all around them.

"Shrrriiiiiiii!"

All the monsters pounced on him at once, with the unstoppable momentum of a swarm of crickets. Jake struck back without hesitation with a telekinetic barrage, then lunged forward, slashing all the monsters caught in his wake.

Like a god of death, Jake leapt from one area of the island to the next, slashing monsters faster and faster as his Aether Control became more and more exquisite. Soon, supersonic BANGs began ringing out every split second and silvery sprays of blood spurted through the air, forming a gruesome pool in no time at all.

Jake didn't know where his three Oracle Constructors had gone, but apparently, they had managed to hide. He suspected them of being creeping under his island, or even having a way to take shelter directly in the metal base supporting his Floating Island.

After a few tens of seconds, there were only three huge Digestors with arachnoid shapes left and Jake had to admit that his new machete was really outstanding. The chitinous shells of these creatures were ripped apart like softened butter on contact with a red hot knife.

His only regret was that after having developed so much strength and grown so much, this weapon really looked like a toothpick.

Before, he didn't have a Space Storage and needed to limit his choices to weapons that were easily transportable and unobtrusive enough not to clutter up his movements. This was no longer necessary.

Now he could afford to diversify his arsenal and in an open space like this, a heavy broadsword would have been much more appropriate.

Regardless, that didn't stop him from butchering those Digestors. Perhaps because of the lack of prey, or because they were not yet fully awakened yet, their reflexes were sluggish, while their fighting ability was lacking. Accustomed to the sidereal vacuum, most of these creatures were struggling to adapt to his island's artificial gravity.

In doubt, Jake scanned the few survivors and then confirmed that all these Digestors were Rank 1. This should have been good news, but instead, it sent a shiver down his spine.

They were far too tenacious! Because Jake was well equipped and atrociously strong, these monsters looked ridiculously weak, but it was only against him!

Based on his previous experiences, even the smallest Digestors present surpassed the speed and dangerousness of the Rank 3s he had encountered, while the three huge Arachnid Digestors hadn't attacked yet, too busy trying to stand upright without losing their balance.

Jake had intentionally left them aside to get rid of the small fry first. However, according to his bracelet, those three huge Digestors were only Rank 2! But their Aether levels were those of a Rank 5. It was a scenario he hadn't anticipated.

[ Don't trust the Rank of those Digestors.] Xi's voice echoed in his mind to warn him. [ Because of the lack of prey, their genetic code is poor and limited by their circumstances of birth. It is difficult for them to evolve qualitatively. However, they can still absorb Aether to sustain their growth. As their Aether and Body stats increase, they awaken the Digestors' innate abilities hidden in their Aetheric Code and become more creative. Eventually, some variants will eventually evolve on their own.]

Jake squatted down for a brief moment to inspect one of the corpses at his feet, whose span barely exceeded that of his hand, and he silently nodded. This corpse, although considerably smaller, was almost identical to the three Rank 2 Digestors in front of him.

As impressive as these monsters were, they were simply larger. Because their Aether levels were higher and their bodies more massive, their intelligence had also increased, allowing them to transform their extremities more skillfully. Nevertheless, considering their difficulty in moving their bodies in this artificial gravity, it was clear that these monsters were still quite dumb.

[Don't give them time to adapt.] Xi reminded him in an urgent tone.

"I know."

The largest Digestor was barely staggering anymore and the multiple arms and propelling organs were stretched around his body, like a tightrope walker spreading his arms apart while walking on a rope to stabilize himself.

There was no more time to lose.

Jake raised his hand and a telekinetic sphere about ten meters in diameter formed in front of him. In the blink of an eye, it shrank to the size of a pebble, compressing all the air inside. Veins of lava then became transparent under his palm and the micro ball of air turned white-hot.

Then Jake stretched out his arm and violently slammed this microsphere with his palm outstretched and the projectile instantly pierced the Digestor's heart before generating a monstrous explosion.

Pieces of chitin, grayish flesh, and silvery blood were expelled in all directions, some of them flying directly into the cosmos, while most of them fell back on his island in the form of a morbid downpour.

With this first success, Jake executed the two remaining Digestors without giving them any respite. It wasn't that he didn't want to play with them anymore, but that time was running out. A second wave of "asteroids" was already converging toward their islands.

Remembering that not everyone was as strong as he was, he ran to the edge of his island to check his friends' situation, but he was reassured to find that the first wave had also been smoothly eliminated on their side.

An impressive blaze had covered the two sisters island, the black smoke rising from it blending into the pitch-black darkness of outer space.

Sfzfv vft janut mpo fii ovu Daeulomzl ofzeuoare vuz jaov vuz ljmzt, jvaiu omeuovuz, Waii, Kwiu frt Taq vft lphhulldpiiw tufio jaov ovu ovzufo.

"I tried to tame one of those Digestors, it didn't work..." Will sighed after Jake re-established communication with them.

"What a shitty idea!" Sarah scoffed as she wiped the blood covering her sword blade.

[The Digestors cannot be reasoned with. Their instincts trump our Aether Skills.] Xi explained to him separately, not daring to communicate directly with his companions. It was taboo in the Mirror Universe because each one had their own AI Oracle to fulfill this function.

[Even in the memories of the original Xi that I remember,] She added, [there is no recollection of an Evolver having managed to gain the sincere loyalty of one of these monsters.]

"Impossible..." Jake rebutted in disbelief. "I agree that it is quite possible for some of these unintelligent monsters, but if they can think, if they feel emotions or *désirés*, they should be able to be controlled. Just by satisfying their hunger and allowing them to evolve, it should logically be possible to obtain their devotion after a certain amount of time."

[But no one succeeds in doing so. Digestors don't know gratitude. Of that I am sure. Apart from their hunger that is impossible to satiate, they hate other forms of life with unbounded fervor.] Xi replied with conviction, but with their mental link he knew the truth. She had doubts, many actually.

"It doesn't matter." Jake ended the conversation. "We'll find out soon enough. The second wave is already coming. Brace yourself- "

BOOM

Jake hadn't finished warning his comrades that a huge metal rock crashed down from the sky with the mighty force of a meteor. This time, his island flipped over itself for a brief second and Jake had to cling as hard as he could to the porous ground so as not to be slingshot into space.

Looking at the void below him, his face fell when he discovered that his friends' Floating Islands had suffered the same fate. Will, true to his values, had reacted in time.

A shiny transparent energy shield had taken the meteor strike, fine wrinkles rippling on its surface after the impact. The second wave of meteors ricocheted into space without causing any damage.

Enya and Esya had been lucky and their islands were stable, swaying insignificantly. But when Jake saw Sarah's island, he almost had a heart attack.

The young blonde's island had also flipped over, but when the habitable side of the island reappeared, Sarah was nowhere in sight.

"Fuck!" Jake cursed.

Without a second thought, he jumped into the void and with a telekinetic impulse, his body burst through the cosmos like a shooting star, gaining speed continuously. In spite of his dizzying speed, because of the absence of atmosphere he could only hear silence.

In a few seconds, he reached Sarah's island, span on himself to avoid it, and continued to accelerate.

From the corner of his eye, he just had time to see a huge rock about ten meters in diameter resembling a strange silver sea urchin. It was the Digestor who had turned her island upside down.

However, it was not the time for settling scores. With a short-range scan, Jake detected Sarah's tiny body a few kilometers away from him, spinning around at very high speed and constantly accelerating. Because of the spinning, she had already vomited everything in her stomach, leaving a disgusting trail of stomach juices in her wake.

According to the report, she was still alive, but unlike him, she was not a real Myrtharian. The Myrtharian Body skill faction might have been able to allow them to survive for a while in space thanks to cosmic radiation, but without oxygen, she wouldn't last long.

Ir f duj luhmrtl, Jfcu zuffhvut val qfkaqqp lnuut, jvahnv jaovmpo frw faz zulalofrhu om limj vaq tmjr ypahciw ukhuutut 5000cq/v jaov uflu. Szfzv vft guur hfofnpiout arom lnfhv, gpo vu qfrfeut om hfohv vuz ar fr arlofro.

Once close enough, Jake slowed down to fly parallel to her trajectory. He then focused his telekinesis to slow her down. Once stabilized, he took her in his arms and finally turned around.

This time the usually mischievous woman made no attempt to exploit their physical proximity. Perhaps because of the centrifugal effect or lack of oxygen, she was close to passing out.

Jake gave up the idea of taking her for a roller coaster ride for a date. Of course, he didn't mean it. He had no plan to waste his time in such a stupid way when Space Digestors were out to get them.

They had only flown for a few seconds, but Jake got a fright when he realized that they could hardly see their islands anymore. Until then he thought their territories were static, but they seemed to be orbiting B842 at a certain speed.

It was slow, but certainly not negligible. Almost as fast as he was. This made him realize that these Void Digestors were much faster in space than he had imagined. He didn't know how these monsters could reach such speeds with their Aether levels.

Jake drew a cold breath and hurried to go back before his island gets out of sight. Less than a minute later, he was back and dropped the unconscious blond woman on his island. Checking the situation, his face immediately paled when he discovered that the two sisters' island was now deserted.

One of those huge silver sea urchins had also crashed on their island and was proudly enthroned in the center of it. As for the one on his own and Sarah's islands, the two monsters had already hatched and a vicious predatory aura was suffusing out of them.