

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 234 - I can try this Strategy

While Jake and the few dozen thousand remaining participants were repeating the same nightmare for the third or fourth time, a few Players had already reached the shore.

Somewhere on a white sandy beach, a wave bigger than the others came crashing down, almost reaching the edge of the palm trees lining the nearby jungle. As the wave receded, dragging sand, wood and shells with it, an imposing silhouette with long claws and a carnivorous face walked out of the water with a heavy step. Behind it, a sea monster resembling a plesiosaurus was vigorously towed by this figure, the beheaded neck of the monster being firmly held by a steely grip.

At that moment, an artificial voice resounded in the air, informing it of its success of the first stage.

[Congratulations xxxxxx for being the first participant to reach the shore in only 3 minutes and 6 seconds.]

[10,000 points for passing the first stage and 100,000 points for being the first.]

[The second stage will begin shortly, in 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0]

The silhouette revealed its fangs when it heard the ruckus in the jungle ahead of it. The second trial had just begun.

Elsewhere, in another part of the island, two humans separated from each other by an indefinite number of kilometers received the congratulations of this same artificial voice with fury.

[Congratulations Brice Wilderth for being the 77th contestant to reach the shore in just 11 minutes and 27 seconds.]

[10,000 points for passing the first event and 10,000 points for placing in the top 100.]

[Congratulations George Wilderth for being the 248th contestant to reach the shore in just 12 minutes and 14 seconds.]

[10,000 points for passing the first event and 8,000 points for placing in the top 300.]

For Brice, whose ability to erase his presence was so strong that the unintelligent creatures would ignore him even if he stood in front of them, that first challenge was a big joke. In the eyes of these sea monsters and birds, he was no different from a seaweed or a stone, and he had swam peacefully to the beach, taking care to avoid the dangerous areas.

Nevertheless, he had had plenty of time to admire the horrors of these waters and could not understand how so many participants could have a better time than he did.

‘ Who cares... What matters is to be the last one standing at the end. ‘That was his consolation thought when the gong of the second stage sounded.

Fmz Gumzeu, oval usuro vft film guur ukozuquiw laqniu. Hal lcar jfl hmsuzut jaov suzw daru hpoahiul hfnfgiu md zudzfhoare mz talomzoare iaevo fl juii fl hvzmqfomnvmzu huiil ardaraouiw qmzu uddahauro ovfr ovmlu md f hvfquiumr. Io hmpit lvaru iacu f hzwlofi

om ovu nmaro md guare prhmqdmzofgiu om immc fo mz, mr ovu hmrozfzw, guhmqu arsalagiu gw giurtare arom ovu tuhmz.

As soon as he had entered the water, he had immediately activated his invisibility, and except for a jellyfish filament that he had inadvertently brushed against, the trip to the beach had gone smoothly. To be only 248th was a deep blow to his ego.

Putting back the imaginary glasses he hadn't worn since his Perception had reached a sufficient value, George also turned his attention to the jungle, ready to face anything that might come out of it.

A few minutes later, in another section of the island, a human whom Jake would have been dumbfounded to see unharmed on the shore was listening attentively to the congratulatory message, as he too had the tenacious habit of putting glasses back on that he no longer wore.

This dark-haired man, of average height and rather lanky physique, was none other than William Hopkins, one of Jake's companions. There was no fear on his face, not even the slightest indication of mental trauma. On the contrary, his face was relaxed and serene, even displaying a restrained, confident smile.

'You may go. 'Will said in a farewell gesture with his hand.

Upon these words, the killer whale sized cetacean behind him uttered a shrill hoot before disappearing into the ocean from which it came, satisfied to be free again.

As for Jake, the nightmare was far from over.

Or val dmpzov zulpzzuhoamr, vu ozaut f ruj fnnzmfv. Id ovu nfov md ovu faz jfl prduflagiu frt ovu nfov md jfouz npzu lpahatu, vu loaii vft mru iflo mnoamr iudo om vaq arsmisare val Mwzovfzafz gimmtiaru: Mmsare prtuzempzt.

The problem was nevertheless a big one. He had no idea how deep these waters were and visibility was practically non-existent beyond a few meters. After ten meters he would literally be in total darkness and when he recalled the atrocities that this ocean held on the surface, he could not imagine what kind of abominations were swarming in those depths. Just thinking about it, he was in a cold sweat.

And yet he had to take that risk. The first time he didn't know that he could resurrect, and the next two times he still had the slim hope that he would be able to make it out of there alive in a frantic sprint. But after three gruesome deaths, he was now ready to consider this solution.

Taking a deep breath, he immersed his head underwater, beginning his treacherous journey towards the ocean floor. Less than a kilometer from shore, he hoped it would be no more than a few hundred meters, but he also knew that the ocean floor could be much deeper than that. If it was located on an ocean trench or if the giant island was just the top of a gigantic mountain or a plateau, this fourth attempt would end in failure.

Alas, Jake did not have a chance to test his theory. Less than thirty seconds into his dive, he hit a spongy object. A fraction of a second later, he was held captive by the creature's tentacles and was quickly constricted to death before being thrown into the monster's wide-open beak.

GASP!

SPLASH!

The fifth time he tried to dive again and was intercepted by a shoal of jellyfish in the depths which paralyzed and poisoned him to death.

The sixth time, Jake swam for over a minute without encountering anything before. At the speed at which he was swimming, he had already passed the 200-meter mark and the pressure was starting to build. Thanks to his Stone Skin skill, this was no problem for him at the moment, as it tightened like a drum in the same way that sperm whales did when they hunted at depth.

But suddenly he heard a humming sound near his ear and he felt his consciousness clouding. Stunned he momentarily stopped swimming and foolishly exhaled all his air before inhaling again as if he was back on the surface of the water. A moment later, he had drowned himself and a shapeless creature resembling a transparent plastic bag wrapped around his body before commencing the digestion of his fresh meal.

GASP!

SPLASH!

The seventh time... He wasn't so confident about this solution and he tried his luck again on the surface. This time he miraculously escaped the shark's attention by giving it a bird to eat with the same diversion as on his third attempt, but while trying to go around the school of jellyfish, he fell into a school of piranhas that only made a mouthful of him.

After about ten more attempts, whether from the air, the water surface, or by diving, Jake began to despair badly. His determination hadn't wavered, but he genuinely doubted that a solution existed.

His intuition told him that an impossible trial made no sense, but he couldn't deny the possibility that it was the very purpose of this Ordeal to test their resilience in such a way when there was no apparent prospect of hope.

However, as he curiously inspected his Status for the first time since his first resurrection, he got a surprise. His physical stats hadn't changed one iota, but his Aether of Intelligence and Perception had surpassed 115 points, while his Extrasensory Perception once at 127 points had even reached 130 points.

Even more surprisingly, his lvl 1.5 Spirit Body had apparently reached level 2 without him noticing. He hadn't felt any noticeable difference, but he knew what it meant.

[Spirit Body lvl 2: Stable, but immaterial. Cannot affect the physical world and has no defense except the host's consciousness to resist external psychic influences. The performance of mental and Aetheric skills is slightly enhanced.]

Only the last sentence had changed, but it was an incredible source of optimism for Jake. It was only then that he realized that the mental pressure that was preventing him from thinking and using his skills properly was no longer that unpleasant. He thought maybe he was just getting used to it, but it was actually his mind that was getting stronger.

'I can try that strategy again!'

Ekhaout, Jfcu tunimwut val Snazao Bmtw fl dfz fl vu hmpit, frt dmz ovu dazlo oaqu larhu urouzare ovu Sfrhopfzw Bpggiu vu qfrfeut om uknfrt val hmrlhamplrull om msuz 6 quouzl, ovu Auovuzah fpzf md ovu himlulo dalv fnnufzare ar val quart iacu dazudiaul.

For the first time since the beginning of this trial, he was no longer blind in these murky waters.