

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 241 - The Mysterious Death

Facing the multicolored feathered T-Rex from the day before, Jake felt no particular fear or curiosity. Indifferent to the roar of the starving dinosaur, Jake was sputtered on again and the giant biped flew off in the same direction as the day before.

The strident cry between that of a kitten and a canary also rang out again and as expected, the tyrannosaurus uttered a long cry of agony and resentment a few moments later when the predator chasing it caught up with it.

This time Jake was very careful not to look away. It was a predator capable of eliminating a T-Rex in less than a second and this would give him a better idea of the dangers he would have to overcome on this island.

Focused as ever and with his eyes squinted to better see the details, Jake watched for the lightning assault of the mysterious predator and he was not disappointed.

A hand with six clawed fingers emerged from the ferns lining the jungle and grabbed the tail of the T-Rex. Then the hand disappeared as quickly as it had appeared, dragging with it the helpless tyrannosaurus that tried to cling to the sand as best it could in vain.

The scene might have seemed trivial at first, but it couldn't have been more creepy. The T-Rex was running along the beach along the edge of the jungle and should have sensed the attack coming. The other confusing aspect was that this 'hand' was clearly not that of a human.

The hand was the size of an umbrella and each finger was as thick as the forearm of an average adult male. The skin was dark, close to that of coal, but was not covered with scales, hair or feathers. The claws were yellowish and covered with dried blood, but incredibly sharp.

Even then, if that was all there was, Jake would not have been so puzzled. After all, a predator capable of spooking a T-Rex had to be at least that terrifying. A large size was more plausible than a small one, and the fact that no venom or Aether ability was involved was actually quite reassuring.

No, the most disturbing element of this action was actually what occurred on that hand. When the hand grabbed the tail of the T-Rex by exposing itself to the sun's rays, the skin immediately began to boil and then putrefy, revealing dark green blood.

In addition to the creature's incredible physical strength and speed of execution, the reason for the brevity of the assault was clearly because it had no choice. Sunlight was its greatest foe.

This was good news for Jake, as it meant that as long as he stayed on the beach, he would not have much to fear during the day. The real challenge was at nightfall.

However, it was precisely during the night that he had died without knowing how. It was certainly not this predator with a coal hand that had put an end to his life, or at least he would have been able to defend himself.

Yuo, dzmq ovu lhuru vu vft bplo jaorullut, ao jfl hiufz ovfo oval
nzutfomz jfl zfovuz juui-ftfnout om vproare fo raevo. Dpzare ovu tfw,
oval qmrlouz jmpit vfsu om fsmat uknmlare aoluid om ovu iaevo gw
zuloare ar hfsul, hfsuzrl mz gpzzmj. Esur ad ovu hzufopzu zuqfarut
fhoasu tpzare ovu tfw, ao lvmpit vfsu zulatut ar ovu vufzo md ovu
bpreiu, jvuzu ovu dmiafeu md ovu ozuul jfl ovu turlulo.

Taking such a risk to hunt this T-Rex was rather unexpected. Either this predator was inexplicably stupid, or he too had no choice but to hunt under these circumstances. In the second case, it was a very bad omen for the rest of the trial.

Either way, there was nothing Jake could do at this point. Sure, he could take the risk of exploring the jungle, but first he had to figure out what had killed him. There was still the possibility that he may have fallen asleep due to lack of vigilance and in that case this first death would be his fault.

To be sure, he had to spend a second night on the beach. Therefore, Jake cut a piece of meat from the pterodactyl behind him once again, and then like the day before got rid of the remains a few kilometers further on. He then calmly waited for the rest of the day to pass and for the sun to give way to the few stars he had observed the previous night.

It was extremely boring, but he had no choice. To pass the time, he tried to generate his Aether Core, but he felt that in this simulation it would be a waste of time. It was still a good training for him though, and he had also started reading the manual containing the basics of the Mirror Universe genetics.

This manual was not as complicated to understand and master as the Aether manual, but the amount of data contained in it was massive. As with the Aetheric Code and the Aetheric Runes within it, the genetics might seem simple at first glance, but it was actually immensely complex.

Just by taking the four nitrogenous bases that made up the dna of all living things on Earth, it was possible to obtain an incredible diversity in terms of morphology and abilities. Earth's geneticists could not claim to know everything about the subject, even in 2106.

Except that the genetics of the Mirror Universe was not limited to DNA and its four standard nucleotides. To begin with, not all life forms were carbon-based, but more importantly some life forms could only exist in conjunction with their Aetheric Code, or even only thanks to their Aetheric Code.

For example, on Enya and Esya's planet, elemental spirits based on fire, water, lightning or earth were quite common. How could a flame spirit have a genetic code? The DNA would have melted immediately.

Artificial intelligence forms were also considered as living beings from the moment their Soul assumed its shape and naturally their genetic heritage rested in the chip containing their program.

Thus, there were obviously other ways of encoding an individual's genetic heritage and DNA was only one of these ways. In the end, reading this manual was a lengthy process, which would take much more than a few days to be fully understood.

Eventually night fell and Jake stopped multitasking between training and reading. To avoid inadvertently falling asleep, he also forced himself to stand up and started pacing.

According to him, it should be impossible for someone to fall asleep standing up while walking. To really put all the chances on his side, he even started shadowboxing in the void, trying to remember everything he had learned during his first Ordeal.

While Jake was repeating the moves and katas he remembered, the night gradually passed. Listening, he was comforted to hear that the jungle was not silent.

A few birds were hooting, the singing of some kind of cricket or cicada reached him, and every once in a while the roar or bellow of a

creature would echo in the distance, reminding him that the night was not a danger to all the creatures on the island.

Always vigilant, Jake did not relax. He continued to move, even allowing himself to go jogging by the sea. Still nothing. Was he just unlucky the night before?

It was impossible. The more time passed, the more nervous Jake grew. At the slightest rustle, Jake would turn around, but each time it was a false alarm.

It was under these strange conditions that the night passed, until the first rays of the sun reappeared. As miraculous as it seemed, he had actually survived the night.

But all of a sudden, as he watched the red sun rise with incredible relief, he sensed that something was wrong. As if things were not as they should be.

His heart began to beat faster and faster in his chest and he began to hyperventilate as if he felt out of place in his own body. His mind instinctively searched for a way out of this problem and when he found it, he thoughtlessly grasped it.

GASP!

When Jake reopened his eyes, his body was still soaked by the sea water and the corpse of a pterodactyl vulture was gently levitating behind him. A roar between that of an elephant, a tiger and a whale resounded and a moment later, a hungry T-Rex with multicolored feathers appeared before his eyes.

'I died...again?' He wondered suspiciously.

This time there was no doubt about it. He hadn't fallen asleep. And yet, the end of that night had felt weird to him, but he couldn't say

since when. His third resurrection had given him the impression of waking up from a lucid dream, not of dying.

It was clear that camping on the beach would not allow him to solve this new enigma. He had not smelled anything unusual and had even used his scan twice to analyze the surroundings. There were subtle variations in the composition of the atmosphere, but nothing alarming.

Regardless, he could not ignore the possibility that he had already been unconscious when he had used his scanner, in which case that action had been pointless, but the Aether had definitely been debited.

So on that third morning, Jake took the only decision he could make. Raising his hand with a sinister aura that Darth Vader would not have envied, he clenched his fist. With its trachea, arteries and heart compressed, the T-Rex was choked within seconds.

Once the dinosaur lay unconscious, Jake trailed the monster to him, then stood idly by, waiting for its pursuer to come after its prey. He was going to enter the jungle through the big gate!