

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

### Chapter 242 - First Clue?

With the unconscious T-Rex at his feet, Jake eagerly awaited the arrival of the predator that had gutted the dinosaur the previous two times. He didn't know if the monster would take the bait, but it was worth a try.

Suddenly, the howling between a meow and the chirping of a canary pierced the silence of the jungle again, triggering the flight of another flock of birds. The foliage of the trees wavered and capsized as the creature passed by, allowing Jake to predict its arrival.

Then it was silent again and the trees and bushes became still once more. Jake's fine hearing could hear a wheeze, close to a rattle a few meters in front of him, but the monster remained hidden behind the trees and bushes, sheltered from the light.

The man and the beast stared at each other for a long time without really being able to distinguish anything, but they could feel each other's presence. In the end, the predator did not fall for it.

The green eyes of the creature, the only visible part of the monster, emitted a ghostly aura giving the impression that one's soul was exposed and vulnerable, but their owner never took action.

After a few minutes, the creature produced a long, plaintive whimper, and then the heavy footsteps began to recede. Jake breathed a sigh of relief, but also of regret. He wished the monster had attacked on the beach.

This now forced him to move on to Plan B, which was to enter the jungle to pursue the monster and gather clues as to why he had died. Jake was confident that he could survive an entire night if he buried himself underground using his Myrtharian skills, but he felt that it was absolutely necessary to solve this riddle if he wanted to go further in the Ordeal.

The first trial had already proved that despite its apparent impossibility it was possible to overcome it by redoubling his efforts. After all his attempts, Jake was now quite confident that he could reach the shore with his eyes closed.

So this second trial couldn't be impossible and there had to be an explanation for what had happened to him. Since he no longer intended to camp on the beach, he might as well treat himself to a real feast. If predators were to show up because of the smell, at least he would have confirmation that it was definitely an idea to avoid.

Approaching the edge of the jungle, he retrieved some wood with his claws and lit a campfire. He had neither lighter nor flint, but with his ability to thermally agitate the material it was only a formality.

Not forgetting that the T-Rex was still alive, Jake finished off the dinosaur by cutting out its heart and then began to dissect it. He did the same with the Pterodactyl vulture and made skewers with the two different meats to experiment.

Half an hour later, the meat was perfectly roasted and he was finally able to eat a real meal since his arrival in the Sanctuary Bubble. The bird meat had a taste of chicken, but more pronounced. The kind of difference in taste that could be found between pork and wild boar meat.

As for the T-Rex meat, it turned out to be close to chicken as well, but it was dry and stringy. In addition to needing good teeth to chew this meat, it had a peculiar unpleasant smell that he was not used to.

In conclusion, Jake eventually abandoned T-Rex skewers by crossing this dinosaur off the list of edible game on the island. As for the carcasses of the two monsters, he didn't waste any time this time getting rid of the remains since he had no intention of staying there anymore. If other predators were attracted by the smell after his departure it would not cause him any harm.

However, out of curiosity he removed the small red crystal embedded in the monster's glabella. At first glance, the object looked like a Strength Red Crystal, but the nature of it was completely different.

When the T-Rex was alive, a faint glow emanated from the crystal, but this glow had faded away as soon as the dinosaur had passed out, and was completely extinguished by the time Jake had killed it.

Inspecting the object with his Spirit Body, he didn't feel any uniqueness, but the result was different when he used the scan of his bracelet.

[ Red Soul Crystal (T-Rex): The seat of the T-Rex's soul. It's an artificial object that was grafted to this tyrannosaurus after its birth and which conditions its behavior. The object feeds on the surrounding Aether and other traces of minerals present on the island including Flintium, Orxanium and Naequat. Other functions : Preserve the integrity of a soul and the memories of a creature after its death, detection].

'Hmm ? ' Jake was taken aback reading this. ' Xi, what do you think ?'

The hologram of a young woman with short black hair and blood-red irises materialized in front of him. It was the first time since the beginning of the Ordeal that she appeared physically at his side.

Scrupulously observing the crystal through Jake's senses, she responded nonchalantly,

'It is indeed a Zhorion crystal. If my memories are good, they use it to trace the movements of their creations, but also to configure the behavior of these monsters. Somewhere on the island, there should be a biological factory or a laboratory mass-producing these creatures.'

Jake frowned for a short time, but regained his peace of mind before long. He was in a simulation, so those monsters were fake anyway. No need for labs or factories to create these creatures. Besides, he doubted that this factory could kill him unless it was producing a lethal poison impossible to detect at night.

Uruknuhoutiw, frmovuz atuf hfqu om vaq frt vu lnmrofrumpliwi flcut ovu wmpre jmqfr.

'Can their creators see us through these crystals?'

Xi hesitated for a few seconds, her mouth opening and then closing twice, then finally she conceded tersely, 'It's possible.'

'Fuck.'

Having no secrets for the Oracle was already exceedingly hard to accept and now he was also a circus freak that the owners of the Sanctuary Bubble were free to observe as they wished. A bit like in a reality show he hadn't chosen to participate in.

In any case, this did not solve the problem of his unexplainable death. Now that he was full, it was time to enter this damn jungle. Not

knowing what to do with the crystal in his hand, he had to make up his mind to throw it away.

For better or for worse, no clothes had been provided for their arrival on the island, so he had no pockets, bags or storage for the crystal. If he survived that first night he would certainly take care of these details, but for the moment it was not his priority.

As his gaze lingered on the crystal one last time, he realized a detail to which he had not paid much attention.

‘Xi, to what does this red color refer?’ Jake inquired in a doubtful tone. ‘The scan report doesn’t explain it, but it does take the trouble to point it out. If the color didn’t matter, a simple ‘Soul Cristal’ would have sufficed.

This time, the young woman serving as an AI came up with an answer.

‘The two most likely hypotheses are that the material composing the crystal is responsible for this color and is important enough to be mentioned or that the properties and functions of the crystal differ according to this color. In both cases, it will be necessary to pay attention while hunting other creatures on the island.’

Jake nodded in agreement. ‘The sea animals didn’t have any. This shows that things are different on the island.’

‘You should still keep the crystal until nightfall.’ Xi advised cautiously. ‘Who knows if this object is of any importance in explaining what’s going on here.’

‘All right.’

It wasn’t convenient for him, but he could always use it as a stone to knock out his enemies. The crystal itself weighed only a few hundred

grams and although the object was rather warm to the touch, it was insignificant for a Myrtharian like him.

Holding the crystal firmly in his hand, Jake strode slowly towards the jungle, his Spirit Body deployed at its maximum range. If the predator from before or some other even more vicious creature ambushed him as soon as he entered, it would be too late to regret.

A while later, the white sand and the comforting rays of the sun had abandoned him and a dense, dark jungle filled his sight. The density of bushes, grasses and shrubs was such that it was almost impossible to move around. If the T-Rex and the monster chasing it hadn't uprooted everything in their path, it probably would have taken a considerable amount of time just to advance a few meters.

Anyway, Jake had survived his entrance into the jungle and it was now time to start investigating. Following the path traced by the footsteps of the T-Rex and its predator, he prudently began his journey to the heart of the island.