

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 243 – Taking a Nap in the Jungle

His jungle hike turned out to be much less hectic and exhilarating than Jake had envisioned at first. In addition to not encountering a single monster, the air was humid and warm and the flora was so dense that he felt like he was wearing earplugs.

The field of birds that he could hear easily from outside the jungle were almost muffled once inside, as if a thick wall of leaves separated him from the tall branches where those singing birds were perched.

Each step forward was a real hassle, forcing him to contort himself back and forth to avoid rubbing against brambles and bushes. The T-Rex and its charcoal-colored predator obviously had skin thick enough that they didn't need to worry about it.

Without his machete, Jake had to use his claws to work his way through, and despite their sharpness, the force he could deploy with his fingers alone was limited. At first, he did not intend to sacrifice his time to craft a weapon, but he had to face the facts. At this rate he would have advanced only a few kilometers by the end of the day.

If he just traveled along the paths created by the T-Rex or other massive creatures, chances were that he would miss important clues. On the other hand, these animals could also carry key evidence. No path was to be overlooked.

He could, naturally, move underground, but one did not prevent the other. Sacrificing a few minutes, he made himself a new machete by

manipulating and heating the earth beneath his feet. He didn't know if the object would be strong enough, but he had an easy solution to this issue.

Jake was not short of Aether at the moment. He already had more than 400,000 Aether points before the Ordeal even started and after the reward of the first trial, it now peaked at 764,237 pts. It was a huge sum that would have made him dream a few days earlier, but which no longer triggered the slightest emotion in him. After all, just a glance at the merchandise in the Oracle Store would be enough to make anyone despair ...

Even though it was a simulation and he didn't know if the Aether would be returned to him, he still spent 500 Aether points, which he converted into 100 Grey Aether pts. This particular type of Aether improved the sharpness and solidity of edged weapons, and that was exactly what he needed.

With this Aether, even a twig could compete with the best sword, not to mention a machete made of cooled lava. With no knowledge of blacksmithing or the composition of the ground, Jake expected the result to be poor, but his surprise was huge when he discovered that his new machete was better than the first one he had gotten from his uncle.

The new machete resembled an obsidian blade and glitter-like particles of different colors covered the object. Even before the Grey Aether was added, this new weapon was already great. It was not worth the one forged from Wormak's claw, but it was still a more than decent weapon.

‘ How weird... ‘

Curious, he scanned the ground under his feet with his bracelet, but the result gave him little information.

[Tropical Jungle Soil: Mainly composed of red and yellow laterites. Poor in potassium, calcium, magnesium and phosphorus, contains oxides of aluminum and iron. Presence of humus, faeces, urine, dried blood... Traces of gold, iridium, Flintium, Orxanium, Naequat].

‘Ugh?’ Jake paid attention to the last words of the report.

Tval jfl ovu luhmrt oaqu ovulu ovzuu prcrmjv uiuqurol juzu quroamrut. Tvu dazlo oaqu jfl gw frfiwxare ovu hmqnmlaoamr md ovu zut hzwlofi hmrofarare ovu lmpi md ovu T-Ruk.

The first time he had not been able to draw any particular conclusion since this crystal was a mysterious object he had never encountered before, but this time the names of these three materials had appeared again when talking about the island’s soil.

[I have no recollection of these materials] Xi intervened of her own accord, smelling the question he was about to ask her. [The best would be to find a sample of these materials of sufficient size to make the scan report more accurate].

‘That’s what I had in mind, but I don’t think it’s going to be that easy...’ Jake sighed.

The important factor was that he had a decent weapon now. Armed with his new machete, his progress through the jungle became faster, and when he came up against a wall of brambles and vegetation that was much too thick, he simply vanished into the ground to cross the obstacle.

Compared to the first trial in the ocean, this one allowed him to put his Myrtharian skills to good use, which greatly reduced the apparent difficulty of the trial.

Nevertheless, the hike did not remain peaceful and relaxed for long. After having progressed about a kilometer, the fauna having fled because of the noise created by the T-Rex and its pursuer began to reoccupy the place... Or maybe it had never left.

As Jake was nonchalantly cutting through the vegetation in his path, what he thought was a large branch suddenly deformed in his hand when he tried to move it away. Unaware of what strange plant he was dealing with, he raised his trusty machete and cut it down without hesitation.

HISS!

The thick 'branch' was nicely severed, but instead of the characteristic 'thump' of a falling log, a blue blood spray splashed across his face as the raging, pain-stricken whistle of a snake pierced the silence.

Waov vfid md aol gmtw fqnpofout, ovu lrfeu vft rm arouroamr md zuozufoare. Tvu zulo md aol gmtw, jvahv jfl jzfnnut fzmprt lusuzfi vaev gzfrhvul, lptturiw nmprhut mr ovu hpinzao jaov aol bfjl jatu mnur.

Jake had not let up and easily avoided the surprise attack by leaning back. Finding itself without a target, the giant snake continued its fall and when its head with its fangs exposed passed in front of Jake's head, the 'culprit' took the opportunity to cut it off once more.

A snake's head followed by the intact half of the snake fell on top of each other, the snake's serpentine part wrapping around the severed head like a long turd would have done.

Jake stood perplexed for a short while, and then stepped over the corpse before resuming his journey. Still, he didn't forget to scan the creature for clues.

[Orxan Boa (Juvenile): A giant snake from the native planet of Zhorions. Able to change the color and texture of its scales to camouflage itself. Its body can grow back as long as no vital organs have been compromised. Its gaze has hypnotizing properties, while its blood has hallucinogenic and sedative properties. Usually hunts its prey by constricting it to death, but also naive predators who believe they can feed on its flesh with impunity].

When Jake read the report, his face froze. His face and torso were covered with the creature's blue blood. He hastily wiped the blood from his face, but without any clothes or rags it was a wasted effort. Within seconds, the blood had dried.

Soon his vision became distorted and he began to hear strange bells. Phosphenes began to shimmer in his field of vision and his body became heavier.

'Fu...'

Fa-thud!

When Jake reopened his eyes an undetermined time later, he was surprised not to find the white sandy beach and the feathered T-Rex. Observing the space around him, the dead body of the snake was still there, but no predators or insects had approached it.

Hal vuft jfl loaii lnarrare, gpo aol qmomz lcaiil vft ifzeuiw zuhmsuzut. Tval oaqu vu jfl iphcw, gpo vu qaevo rmo gu fgiu om lfw ovu lfqu ruko oaqu.

It was a hell of a poison. Thanks to his Myrtharian bloodline, his body was much stronger than normal and combined with his current Aether stats, it was impressive that a simple sedative could make him lose consciousness for half a day. He had not consumed any blood. Only his skin had come into contact with it.

With his bracelet on, he determined that he had been unconscious for most of the day. The sun was already about to set. Because of a cheap snake, he had literally lost a day's worth of research in a fraction of a second.

As Jake was musing over the course of the action, he realized that the snake's camouflage involved much more than color and texture. As he cut his way through with his machete, his Spirit Body had always been deployed. In other words, he should have been able to easily differentiate the snake's Aetheric signature from that of the rest of the vegetation. Yet this was clearly not the case.

This was the first time he had come across a wild creature capable of camouflaging its own Aetheric signature and it deserved a special attention. This island most likely held some great secrets.

As night was about to fall, it was too late to plan anything. Jake decided to wait there until dark. He also took the opportunity to scan himself in order to analyze the traces of poison in his system.

Unfortunately, the result of the analysis was inconclusive, as his metabolism had completely eliminated the poison in question. However, the blue blood test turned out to be successful.
