

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

### Chapter 246 - Success?

When Jake regained consciousness a number of hours later, the spectacle before his eyes was very different from his last memory.

Goodbye rabid hyenas and angry T-Rex. Instead, a desolate landscape had replaced them. The corpses of many other animals were scattered all over the place, more or less undamaged, wherever he looked.

A sort of wildebeest with sharp teeth dangled with its tongue hanging on a high branch above it. Blood beaded down his skull with the regularity of a clock.

A bird of prey with a wingspan of about five meters was nothing more than a disarticulated mass of flesh and bone at his feet, such as a kite that would have crashed into a mountain with the force of a hurricane.

Twenty meters behind him was a massive dinosaur, about fifteen meters long, with most of its teeth and half of its ribs missing, and it had long since stopped breathing.

The landscape was that way as far as his eyes could see. Jungle animals were not the only victims. The flora had not been spared either.

The giant trees with trunks several meters in diameter had mostly survived, but their bark was charred black and they were often missing a good part of their branches or even a portion of their trunk or roots.

The bushes, vines, creepers, and tall grasses were in poor condition, as if they had been trampled repeatedly by a herd of rabid elephants. The grass had been completely burned in some places, while smaller shrubs had been completely uprooted.

In the midst of this scene of carnage, there was only one living creature: Jake.

But alive did not mean unharmed. If these dinosaurs of all sizes and origins had ended up in this state, it didn't matter whether Jake was responsible or not. It was impossible for him to survive unharmed in the face of all these creatures.

Yet he had to face the facts. All of these creatures, carnivorous and herbivorous, had been reduced to a state of fertilizer while he was still standing. Even though he was still disoriented, he was not so naive as to believe that he was not responsible for the hecatomb that had just taken place.

His body had been completely repainted with blood from head to toe, and because of the phosphorescent blue and red blood of his victims, he resembled those primitive tribes practicing shamanic rites before going into battle.

'What... I have done?' Jake muttered as he tried to remember the events of last night hard.

The virtual hologram of Xi suddenly materialized a few meters before him in answer. The expression of the young woman with the red irises were rather compassionate, but she did not seem as bewildered as him. Clearly, she had not lost consciousness during the night and had witnessed each one of his feats of arms.

['You fainted after being sprayed with hyena blood.] The Oracle AI explained succinctly.

She then recounted to him in a few words the course of events in the preceding hours. Apparently, after losing consciousness he had transformed into another person, completely devoid of any self-preservation instincts.

His intellect had completely faded away in favor of an amplified Spirit Body. All of his Aether Skills had reached a level out of all proportion to his real abilities and his Myrtharian Bloodline had been doped as if it had gained two or three levels.

Tval vft fqniadaut fii md val Bimmtiaru Scaail, arhiptare ovu Mwzovfzafr Tzfrhul fqniadware val nvwlahfi frt qurofi fgaiaaul pnmr hmrofho jaov f daevo mz hvfiureu. Hal daevoare arloarhol vft guhmqu lm nmjuzdpi ovfo vu vft dfhut fii ovulu hzufopzul jaov ovu quoahpimpl uddahaurhw md f gfooiudait suouzfr jvm vft guur mr ovu gfooiudait dmz huropzaul.

Each of his actions had been mere reflexes, but each of these reflexes responded perfectly to the situations of the moment. No wonder these hyenas were able to maintain a perfect teamplay despite the rage comparable to his own that consumed them.

After Xi had finished recounting all of his exploits from the last few hours, Jake stood frozen in stupor for a long time, but a sudden vertigo brought him back to reality. Before he could even react, his forehead had already hit the soft ground in front of him.

When he pushed on his forearms to get up, he realized that he simply didn't have the strength to do so. Every effort would make him dizzy and he quickly began to pant as if he had just finished a long sprint.

[ Your arms! ] Xi suddenly screamed, pointing to the forearms he was supporting himself on in his attempt to straighten himself up.

Following the young woman's finger, Jake stared at one of his hands and his blood ran cold in his veins. The red and blue blood, which

until then had glowed like any phosphorescent or fluorescent substance, had suddenly begun to lose their splendor.

The glow emanating from the dried blood on his body had begun to dim and the process was observable to the naked eye. Jake was wondering what the reason might be, but he immediately got his answer.

The almost total darkness that had inhabited the jungle until now had now been replaced by more than enough light to allow him to orient himself with his present Perception without any problem. This was in fact already the case as soon as he woke up or he would not have been able to observe all those animal carcasses.

Thinking at full speed, Jake remembered that the blue blood and the crystal of the T-Rex had indeed also started to glow when the night had fallen. During that night, Jake had lost his machete and the crystal a long time ago, but the blood covering his body was an excellent baseline to assess the phenomenon.

Now that the sun was rising, it was quite logical and acceptable that the blood of these creatures would cease to emit. Moreover, the fact that the sun was rising meant... that he was about to pass his second trial!

Wvm jmpit vfsu ovmpervo ovfo fr fhhaturo iacu oval mru jmpit fiimj vaq om msuzhmqu oval luhmrt ozafi, ovu qwlouzw md jvahn loaii zuqfarut prlmisut. Waov ovu usurol md ovu iflo 24 vmpzl, vu vft fizuftw efovuzut lmqu hmrsarhare hipul, gpo vu jfl dfz dzmq vfsare fii ovu frljuzl.

Knowing that he had no power in him at the moment, Jake waited patiently lying on his back for the sun to rise completely. The berserk mode into which the red blood had forcibly plunged him was not without consequences and the backlash had left him in a critical state.

Although he had no apparent injuries except for a few bruises and bites, his body was exhausted and stiff as if all his vital energy had been stolen from him.

After what seemed like an endless amount of time, the sun finally rose completely and the limited visibility was replaced by daylight. One of the nearby trees had been severely damaged in the fighting, probably due to the fall of the giant raptor, and a ray of sunlight had managed to make its way to the jungle floor.

Without the corrosive smell of blood and viscera, the atmosphere could have felt almost like a fairy tale, but this morning was doomed to remain a nightmare. As Jake waited with growing impatience for the arrival of the artificial voice announcing his success, only silence kept answering him.

As time passed, Jake frowned more and more and slowly grew nervous. According to the terms of the test, he should have received an announcement long ago. But this time he was sure that he wasn't under the influence of drugs or hallucinations...

'Unless I didn't succeed in the mission?' Jake speculated as he tried to remember the exact terms of the objective, but he couldn't think of any subtleties.

The mission was indeed to survive one night on the island. In that sense, he had done well. So why was the artificial voice refusing to grant him victory?

[Jake...] Xi whispered in a small, agitated voice.

'What?' he said.

[Lmmc guvart wmp...]

Obediently, Jake, who was still lying on his back, còcked his head back to see what was worrying Xi so much, but when he saw the thing in question he almost shat his pants.

The owner of the giant charcoal-colored hand was approaching him calmly, each of its steps being as supple and stealthy as a leopard's stride despite its imposing size. It was a bipedal creature, of almost human morphology except that the Hulk might have been described as 'cute' next to this monster.

More than twelve meters high, with long arms almost reaching to his knees and a shredded and over-developed musculature to the point of seeming unhealthy and alienating. In addition to being completely bald and hairless, pointed ears and two bulging green eyes shining like emeralds were staring menacingly at him.

The monster's green eyes with their half-moon shaped pupils were certainly unnerving, but what caught Jake's attention was the green crystal hanging down around the monster's neck with a crude string.

Alas, before Jake could draw any conclusions, the monster was on top of him and he only had time to catch a huge clawed foot coming down to his face before his consciousness was blasted to oblivion.

At least he now understood why he had failed the second trial. What was the point of surviving the night if it meant dying right afterwards. Of course, the owner of the Sanctuary Bubble had long since planned a parade for this kind of cheap scheme.

Unless he could repeat the feat and ensure his survival in the following days, the only way to pass this second test was still to unravel the mystery of this island.