

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 248 – Naequat Ore

With no intention of letting the thief rejoice, a huge clawed foot rushed straight to Jake's face, stirring up a gust of wind, as if the giant was about to take a penalty whose ball was his head.

Eyes bulging with fear, Jake dived into the ground by sheer reflex, narrowly dodging the lethal kick. Once underground, he fled without a second thought. Actively controlling the earth around him, he escaped at missile speed leaving the giant monster helpless.

Even for this creature, the vegetation was just too dense and there was nothing it could do to catch up with this insolent prey. Besides, it had no idea in which direction this thief had fled. As soon as Jake had gone beyond the reach of his senses, his Aetheric signature had disappeared and his movements underground had the virtue of being perfectly silent.

In less than five minutes, Jake had widened the distance to about fifteen kilometers, and he only stopped when he almost rammed into a huge boulder. Believing that he was safe now, he cautiously climbed to the surface and turned around. Like a badly driven nail, his head emerged above the ground, peeling off a patch of weeds at the same time.

Rotating his head swiftly to the left and right, and then above him, he made sure there were no dangerous beasts in the vicinity. Behind him

stood the boulder, so he had nothing to fear from behind. Jake heaved a sigh of relief when he didn't detect any presence.

After his misadventure with the snake, he now double-checked before concluding that any piece of wood was indeed a snake, but the place where he had landed was all clear, probably because of the huge rock that had forced him to stop.

Apart from a few weeds and bushes here and there, there was hardly anything. It was also the first place he discovered in the jungle where the foliage of the trees could not cover the sunlight.

The rock, which was about a dozen meters long, filled the space where a giant tree should have been. As a result, the sun's rays scattered their light there, effectively shielding him from retaliation by the humanoid monster roaming in the jungle.

Jake was surprised that no animals had come to seek shelter here, but upon analyzing his surroundings he soon found his answer. Even though this small sunny lawn area looked like a little piece of paradise in the middle of this hostile jungle, it was sadly not so easy to get there.

Azmprt ovu zmhc, ovu turlaow md gzfqgiul frt hzuunuzl jfl lphv ovfo jaov ovu ukhunoamr md f duj lqfii qfqqfil, gaztl mz arluhol ao jfl aqnmlagi om talhmsuz oval rfopzfi hiufzare. Srfcul vft f hvfrhu jaov nfoaurhu, gpo ovu lhfzhaow md nzuw frt ovu dfho ovfo mriw diware fraqfil hmpit euo vuzu uflaiw qftu oval nifhu prlpaofgiu dmz vproare.

Indeed, if there was one thing Jake had noticed about this island it was that birds were not the weakest link in the food chain. Their size was usually close to an airplane and the smallest bird he had met was that parrot he had seen a few minutes before. With its wings spread

out, even this harmless looking sleeping parrot could have a wingspan of up to four meters.

Far from being sheltered here, a snake would have been a vulnerable prey for these aerial predators. Add to this the fact that few mammals could reach this place, and these snakes and other predators capable of coming here would most often prefer to stay away from it.

At last certain that he was out of danger Jake popped out of his hole and took the opportunity to analyze the booty in his hand. The green stone did indeed look like an emerald full of impurity coming straight out of the mine, but it didn't matter. As long as he had his bracelet, he could easily analyze it as if geology was his own field of expertise.

[Naequat Ore: Ore with a crystalline structure and unique properties in the Mirror Universe. It is a material with mediating properties that is particularly sought after in the design of many advanced technologies. Because of its revitalizing properties for the soul and the fact that its radiation can easily neutralize external influences, good or bad, on the mind, this mineral is also called Green Soul Stone in the jargon of the Mirror Universe. This mineral contains many secrets].

'Hmm ? ' Jake continued to scroll down the report in search of more information, but as usual the Oracle System showed how stingy he could be.

It was clear that his bracelet had retained many details and he could only blame his Oracle Rank for being too low. Nevertheless, there were some crucial revelations in those few sentences and if that was what he thought, he had probably found a solution to this second trial. Something was telling him that the humanoid giant would not have such a good night this time, unless he could get a new Soul Stone before nightfall.

Handling the stone in his hand with care, Jake carefully inspected the object with his own senses in vain. It was only when he connected his consciousness to the Naequat ore that he got a reaction.

Under the lucid scrutiny of his Spirit Body, the Soul Stone seemed to harbor a mysterious energy that was extremely compatible with his Soul. This energy was produced slowly but at a constant rate, but no matter what he tried, he was unable to extract it from the rock.

This stone seemed to follow a specific cycle that he was not able to influence at his level. However, after creating this mental connection with the object, Jake felt his mental fatigue diminish in a distinct way, as if he had been wearing a vise around his skull until now and it had suddenly been removed. He could only feel better after that.

Wvur vu arlnuhout val lofol, vu dmprrt ovfo val Ekozf-lurlmzw
Puzhunoamr frt Irouiiaeurhu Auovuz juzu lvmjare laerl md ezmjov, fl
jfl val Snazao Bmtw. Tvu udduho jfl qaraqfi, gpo ar ovu imre zpr ao
qaevo zulpio ar f gae tadduzurhu.

In other words, he had struck gold and if he wasn't in a simulation he would definitely have been the happiest person in the world. The idea that this Soul Stone was fake was extremely discouraging.

In any case, his predicament had probably been solved by the acquisition of this stone. The ability to ward off any outside influences on the mind seemed to match his need precisely.

He had already been able to confirm that he had not been poisoned on the previous three nights, but each time his consciousness had been strongly altered, leaving crucial after-effects on his body and mind that had led each time to his death, either directly or indirectly.

Although the day was just beginning, Jake had no intention of taking any risks. Because it was the time he used to roast the pterodactyl, his belly soon began to rumble, but he held his nerve.

If camping on this rock for one night allowed him to confirm his hypothesis and validate his second trial, he was quite willing to do without meals for a day. Moreover, he did not need to eat.

Deciding to try his Accelerated Healing Skill, Jake buried himself underground with the Naequat Stone in fetal position and proceeded to nap until the next morning. Putting things into perspective, his body had just been fighting in the ocean for over a week and he definitely needed a rest.

This small clearing also had the added benefit of satisfactory exposure to the sun and burying himself underground in a sunny space was currently the Kintharians' preferred means of strengthening their bodies or healing from their injuries.

No matter what the next event was going to be, he wanted to face it in the best possible conditions. Once underground, he immersed his consciousness inside the Soul Stone not without keeping a sliver of attention on the rest of his environment in case of an unexpected guest.

Slowly, time passed and soon the day gave way to night. The sun's rays were replaced by the negligible brightness of a few distant stars and the temperature dropped sharply by several degrees.

The Soul Stone in the palm of his hand suddenly began to radiate a mysterious green light and the hitherto inaccessible energy inside the ore suddenly began to surge through him. The stone's radiance seemed to be unhindered by any physical obstacle and he understood instinctively that he was not the only living being to benefit from these effects.

What was the real scope of influence of this stone? Unfortunately, he had no way to verify this. What he did know, though, was that he could channel this flow of energy onto himself.

When he tested his hypothesis, the stone stopped glowing, but Jake felt the fog enveloping his consciousness dissipate with a feeling of enlightenment comparable to what a child may feel when holding himself on his bike without any help for the first time.

His Spirit Body and mental stats grew at a rapid rate, but the mysterious energy inside the stone also declined rapidly. Unlike the day when the energy seemed to be generated on a constant basis, the production at night had slowed down to a crawl and if it continued like this the stone's energy would be depleted in less than thirty minutes. If this happened, he would be much less confident in his chances of surviving until the morning.

So Jake forced himself to conserve the remaining energy stored in the stone, and having nothing better to do, he chose to go back to sleep. The not-so-distant angry cries of the monsters were unable to disrupt him. The not-so-distant furious cries of the monsters sounded like a lullaby to him and he slept like a baby.

In the morning, when the sun rose again, the long awaited artificial voice resounded above him and he knew that he had finally passed the second trial.