

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 250 – Tim's Misadventures

Pant !Pant !

Thousands of miles from Jake's position, a young teenager was running for his life, huffing and puffing. His tousled brown hair had grown well since the Ordeal began, but the immature features of his face were still recognizable. It was no more and no less than Tim.

Except that since his excellent performance in the first trial, when he was the 996th competitor to reach the shore, the situation had changed. His composed but vigilant expression was over. On his face there was nothing but endless distress and deep despair.

His frail and underdeveloped muscles were trembling with exhaustion and Tim had stopped sweating long ago. His tongue was hanging down, his breathing was wheezing and his lips were bluish as if he was about to faint. He didn't know how he was still standing, but he knew that if he flinched for even a second, his Ordeal would end.

BOOOM!

Panicked, the child turned his head briefly behind his shoulder and the sight that appeared before his eyes almost caused him to drop dead of a heart attack. The brambles, creepers and bushes he had dodged with the greatest difficulty had been vaporized by intense heat and the ground behind him had been reduced to smoking lava.

'Sh-Shit!' Tim cursed, his body being seized by an irrepressible shiver of terror.

Frightened, a rush of adrenaline from deep within him gave his exhausted body a burst of vigor. As if he had just taken a doping drug, the young boy started running again, determined to make it through.

After he had already disappeared in the middle of another labyrinth of bushes and brambles, a humanoid shape about 2.5 meters high walked calmly on the molten ground, indifferent to the heat below him, which was over 1000°C.

Shortly afterwards, two other creatures of similar appearance, but of slightly more frail stature, appeared behind the first one, each standing to its right and left.

‘Krisshhh!’ (This prey is too troublesome, It is as if it can anticipate our movements and the environment seems to play in its favor). The humanoid creature on the right grunted in an annoyed tone.

‘Kriishhh!’ (But that’s what makes hunting fun. The tougher the prey, the more it deserves our attention.) The individual on the left roared with intense passion, never refusing a good challenge.

‘Krish ...’ (True...)

The alien in the middle who hadn’t uttered a word from the beginning suddenly raised a clawed hand covered with a sort of gauntlet in a mysterious alloy. Seeing their leader’s gesture, the other two aliens stopped whining.

Satisfied to have captured their attention, the humanoid creature at the head of this trio proposed an alternative.

‘Kriiishh! Krish?’ (Both of you are right. Hunting is more fun when the prey resists, but it is true that our time here is not unlimited. There are many feats and missions to accomplish on this island if we want to keep our advantage. On the other hand, if the prey is really worth it, it will survive until the descent of the Phantom Sanctuary. If it is the

case, we will meet it again. In this case, we might as well let it flee for the moment, what do you think?)

The individual on the right immediately showed its support for this brilliant idea, but the alien on the left remained silent for a long time, scratching its chin. If its face wasn't so different from a human, a trained eye could have read frustration, but also a form of defiance.

'Krish?! Krissh. KRRISSH!' (And our honor in all this?! Never should a Krish let a prey escape him. I WILL FIGHT ALONE IF I HAVE TO!)

The other two aliens let the alien on the left get it off his chest, but he seemed to have accumulated an astronomical amount of resentment and grievances about all its decisions as a leader. Its pride far outstripped its common sense and it had been raised in the purest Krish tradition.

Tired of its whining, the alien in the center raised its hand again to silence it, then as if it had just come up with a great idea, its multifaceted yellow eyes lit up and it said,

'Krish?' (Do you want to continue the hunt?)

Not knowing what its leader was getting at, the alien on the left simply shrugged, 'Krish?' (Yes?)

'Kri, kri, kri, kri, krish, krish?' (Hahaha, in that case, I have a simple idea. Let's split up. You continue to hunt the hairless gnome and we take care of the other objectives in the meantime. What do you say?)

The alien on the left felt that something was wrong with this proposal, but when its leader patted him on the shoulder twice with increasing pressure on his collarbone, it just swallowed its saliva and nodded in agreement with its leader's proposal.

Challenging the authority of their boss was a very bad idea and it was not confident in its ability to survive an altercation with their leader. In their society, positions of authority were occupied by the most illustrious warriors with the best genes and achievements of their species. An inferior caste warrior like him had no hope in a frontal confrontation.

The trio having reached an agreement, the leader and the alien on the right dashed off in another direction while the remaining alien, abandoned by its companions, shifted its attention to the bushes where the child had disappeared.

For several minutes, Tim continued to run like a madman until his last burst of energy ran out. When he stumbled against a root because his tired, heavy leg refused to take another step forward, he knew he was a goner. Yet, while he expected to be caught any second, his Danger Sense Skill remained silent.

‘I-I-I survived?’ Stuttering those words, even Tim couldn’t believe it. But the facts were there, those who were chasing him had ceased pursuing him.

Nevertheless, he noticed that his sense of danger was not completely dormant. The threat behind him had not completely disappeared, it was simply less urgent.

Knowing that if he stayed there, he would soon be in danger again, the boy forced himself up and began to limp slowly towards another mass of brambles and bushes. This was far from a solution, but it would make it more difficult for his pursuers.

Al vu hmromzout vaqluid guojuur ovu gzfqgiul, fiouzrfoare guojuur hzfjiare frt ezmsuiiare, vu hmpit rmo vuin gpo zuhfii ovu dfhol ovfo vft iut vaq om oval fjdpi laopfoamr.

Even after he had reached the shore, the second trial had not been too difficult for him. Although he had exhausted his luck in the first trial, an afternoon's rest on the beach had allowed him to recover his Aether of Luck without exposing himself to the slightest danger.

Like Jake, he had tried to spend the first night on the beach in vain, but when he had realized that the solution was in the jungle, he had simply used his natural luck to fumble his way to the destination holding the answer.

It had taken several attempts, but with his luck several times better than normal and his Innate Luck skill, which could boost his luck against equivalent temporary bad luck, he had quickly solved the case.

On the fifth day, Tim had discovered a clearing where sparkling green grass was growing and a herd of giant deer were grazing peacefully. As unlikely as this setting may seem, he had immediately felt his heart calm and his mental fatigue subside. Even his good luck had quickly recovered, giving him the opportunity to use his Innate Luck skill again.

Unsurprisingly, he had camped in this lost clearing until nightfall, and the grass and plants around him had soon given off a bright green light. Each time a rabid predator approached this green light, he would briefly regain its lucidity or, on the contrary, become even crazier. But each time, the giant deer stood united in the face of the threat and Tim didn't have to get his hands dirty.

In the end, he had spent a wonderful night and the artificial voice had resounded the next morning to declare his success. He was then the 2216th participant to reach the real island. And it was at that very moment that the real hell had begun for him.

Because when he had arrived on the island, things were quite different. The herd of giant deer defending the clearing was absent and Tim had to face the fact that he hadn't eaten or drunk since the beginning of the Ordeal.

Predictably, he had been left with no choice but to explore the island during the day, but unlike the previous two trials, there was no room for error anymore. Cautious by nature, Tim would flee whenever his Danger Sense gave him the slightest warning. At night, he would return to hide in the clearing.

Alas, no prey on this island was an easy prey. To survive, he had fed mainly on insects and berries, but not enough to maintain his weight. On the 11th day, a giant humanoid with charcoal-colored skin had suddenly burst into the clearing and claimed the site with a deafening meow.

Taq vft guur dmzhut om diuu frt val Oztufi vft guur f raevoqfzu usuz larhu. A duj vmpzl ufziauz, vu vft talhmsuzut f ruj hiufzare laqaifz om ovu nzusampl mru frt jfl msuzbmwut. Wvm jmpit vfsu ovmpevo ovfo vu vft bplo ulhfnut dzmq mru vuiivmiu om bpqn arom fr usur jnzlu mru.

For the new clearing was already occupied. Occupied by three aliens.