

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 259 – Jake's Enlightenment

'Cough, cough, fuČk...' Jake swore after yet another retching that ended in a cough of blood.

His crushed rib cage had damaged many organs and arteries, including his lungs and heart. With his constitution and vitality, he could withstand such a level of damage, but the fractured and sharp bones of his ribs and sternum were pricking his muscles and organs with every movement, gradually flooding his punctured trachea.

As he struggled to reach the shore, his vision gradually blurred as he was losing blood and his oxygen level kept dropping dangerously. His limbs were getting heavier and his dyspnea was getting worse by the second.

'No! It won't do!'

If he continued like this, he would faint in the next few minutes, long before reaching the beach. If this happened while he was still in the water, the tragic conclusion would undoubtedly be his drowning.

Gathering what little consciousness he had left, Jake actively controlled his Aether to perceive the inside of his body. He was not a doctor, but he had notions and with an Intelligence and Perception like his, it was not difficult for him to examine himself and act accordingly.

His Indigo Aether of Perception concentrated on his brain, rib cage and relevant nerves to amplify his sensory input and the condition of his bones, organs, arteries and veins soon became clear in his mind.

After that, he used his telekinesis to connect his pieces of broken bones together and he concentrated all of his Green Aether of Vitality in the affected areas to force an accelerated healing process.

With an Aether of Vitality greater than 100 and his Myrtharian Body, his healing speed was already more than twenty times faster than normal and by condensing his Aether to such an extreme, he effortlessly managed to boost it tenfolds.

Tvu araoafi hmrlmiatfoamr nvflu, jvahv jmpit vfsu ofcur fo iuflo dmpz om lak juucl, hmpit ovpl gu zutphut om f duj vmpzl, gpo ovulu duj luhmrtl juzu urmpev om fo iuflo euo vaq mpo md oval hzaoahfi laopfoamr. Aiovmpev val gmrul juzu loaii suzw gzaooiu, ovuw rm imreuz nauzhut val saofi mzefrl frt vu jfl rm imreuz fo zalc md qfidmzqfoamrl. Hu hmpit darfiw hmrhurozfou mr ovu gimmt daiiare val iprel frt nzusuroare vaq dzmq gzufovare.

Again using his telekinesis, he redirected this partially clotted blood to his esophagus so as not to sacrifice any nutrients. His digestive system, which was capable of metabolizing even metal, set itself in motion and the whole healing mechanism was activated.

Because he had neglected his minor injuries to concentrate on those that directly threatened his survival, the rest of his body was far from being in good condition, since his Vitality had been temporarily nerfed at the level of that of a normal human.

Instead of foolishly continuing to swim to shore, Jake simply lay on his back in a starfish shape on the surface of the ocean, letting himself be carried along by the waves without making any abrupt movements. The blood that he had coughed on several occasions earlier dispersed little by little, and the tension that had accompanied him gradually faded away, and he felt his mind drowsing.

Out of danger, Jake closed his eyes in spite of himself and as unlikely as it may seem, he fell asleep on the surface of the water about two kilometers from the shore. There was something relaxing about the wave action, almost acting like a lullaby.

Unfortunately, his respite was short-lived. As the pain was just barely receding and he began to truly relax, he was startled by a sharp pain in his leg. The searing pain was so unexpected that he almost drowned when he swallowed sea water.

These sudden movements awakened the pain in his bones and organs that were just starting to recover and a barely contained groan of pain seeped out from between his clenched teeth. The fangs and claws he usually hid were plainly visible, attesting to the fact that his body and mind were facing a life-threatening emergency.

‘Cough! What attacked me, Xi?’ Jake asked, spitting out sea water one last time, his face pale and ringed.

[I’m afraid it was one of those little carnivorous fish that we kept encountering during the first trial]. The hologram of the young woman responded with a gloomy expression as she appeared before him.

On hearing her explanation, Jake was momentarily taken aback.

‘How is it possible? With the Soul Glyph ‘Apex Ocean Predator’, all these little predators should normally be terrified at my approach and flee as far away as possible. Since the beginning of the third event, I have not actually encountered a single marine creature under 5 meters.’

Xi shook her head with a wry smile.

‘That may have been true when you were a match for that Soul Glyph, but right now you’re just a wounded man who’s lost a lot of blood. In the wild, hyenas avoid attacking lions, but it is not uncommon for them to devour an old lion isolated from his pack. You are in a similar situation. As threatening

as your aura may be, the blood you have lost has betrayed your condition. Including the fact that your Myrmidian blood must be an intoxicating delicacy for these fish, it's not surprising that one of them has come back so quickly. The really amazing thing is that it's the only one... '

When Jake listened to Xi's last words, his face crumbled in horror. Redeploying his Spirit Body that he was too exhausted a moment ago to maintain, he noticed a multitude of Aetheric signatures slowly accumulating around him.

These fish hadn't attacked yet, but it was obvious that the way they were shortening the distance, their hesitation was gradually decreasing. Before long, this school of prehistoric piranhas would give in to their instincts, and this time he would be attacked by not one, but several thousand fish.

Horried, Jake used his telekinesis with difficulty to extricate himself from the water and somehow he managed to levitate towards the beach, while avoiding any sudden acceleration.

'CAW! CAW!

Looking up to the sky, Jake almost fell back into the water when he saw the flock of pterodactyl vultures circling above him. Not once had he seen the tip of their beak since he had stepped back into the water and now that he was seriously injured, the damn birds had decided to reappear as if by magic! What the hell kind of bad luck was that?!

Grinding his teeth against each other so loudly that a shrill sound could be heard from several meters away, the arm holding the machete suddenly stiffened. It was clear that it was impossible for him to reach the shore without a fight.

'Sorry Tim, you'll have to rely on Sarah to solve your problem...'. Jake muttered as he let himself fall back into the water. If these creatures thought he had become easy prey, they were cruelly mistaken.

Waving to the feathered pterosaurs above him, Jake simply bellowed 'Come!

As if their dignity had just been provoked, the hundred or so giant birds circling in the sky uttered their war cry before swooping down on him just like an air missile strike. At the same time, the thousands of carnivorous fishes lurking around him had caught up with him, and they came straight at him together.

Attacked by both sea and sky, in spite of the pain, Jake's clenched jaws grinned without warning. As if he had just been enlightened, he felt his Aether stats start climbing again much faster than with all the fighting he had endured in the previous hours.

To become stronger as a Myrtharian he needed challenges worthy of him, constantly pushing his limits. He had thought he was just unlucky not to find a worthy predator, but he was wrong. If there was no challenge worthy of him, he could simply handicap himself!

In its present state, this struggle against these fish and birds was once again balanced. In addition to being seriously injured and exhausted, his bones were not consolidated and could re-break at the slightest sharp movement. He would therefore have to fight without mobilizing the muscle chains involving his torso, which would considerably reduce his effective strength.

His mind being sharpened in the face of this life threatening ordeal, a psychic wave rippled out of his mind, like an explosion, repelling all the fishes rushing at him. At the same time, with a thrust of his legs, his body leaped out of the water, like a dolphin performing an acrobatic stunt, and with a swipe of his hand, his machete decapitated the two closest pterosaurs.

Unable to move his torso, the beak of one of the beheaded pterodactyls kept on falling and stuck itself in his shoulder, but the second one inherited Jake's previous fate by turning into the new fishes' feast.

The battle had only just begun, but this time there was no room for error. To die was to fail and for the first time since the first trial, he felt alive.
