

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 261 - Dignity

When Jake awoke an unknown length of time later, it was pitch black and the peace and Quiet of the jungle had been replaced by the rabid and frantic cries of the animals under the influence of the red ore.

He did not understand previously the nature of these roars and groans, thinking that they were completely commonplace cries in a prehistoric jungle filled with dinosaurs and other alien creatures. However, after surviving an entire night inside, he now had a very different perspective.

Every roar seemed tinged with fury and even the singing of some cicadas had something deeply hostile about it. As if the goal was no longer to sing to seduce and reproduce, but to intimidate and assault.

Under the ground and with his eyelids still closed, Jake could feel the ghostly greenish light of the Soul Stone inserted in his machete. There was something reassuring about it, and its gentle energy had certainly helped speed up his mental recovery. Remembering his exhaustion a few hours earlier, he was afraid that he might not wake up at all.

He cautiously inspected his body with his senses without making any sudden movements, but he was surprised not to feel any pain or discomfort. Even with his vitality, a few hours were not enough to heal him completely. And yet, he had to face the facts.

His sternum and ribs were already practically as good as new and the lost blood had nearly been renewed. Having eaten nothing all day, Jake wondered where his body had gotten those nutrients, but he soon realized that he had simply greatly underestimated his Healing Skill.

The Kintharians were originally a people living on volcanic planets close to their star. These were utterly uninhabitable environments for humans. A Grade 7 Bloodline was truly no joke.

He had expected that the healing process, although perfect, would take a relatively long time, but he understood now that with enough heat, radiation and minerals, his body could apparently recover from the most serious injuries in no time at all. He didn't know if this was in proportion to his Vitality, but it was great news for him. He would now be much less frightened by the thought of injury.

With a sudden shake of his body, Jake dislodged himself from his sand sarcophagus and crawled out of his tomb by pushing himself out with his arms. Mobilizing his muscles caused him to tug slightly on his old wounds, but it was still easily bearable.

As he dusted off all the damp sand sticking to his body, a huge figure suddenly leapt out of the darkness of the jungle and pounced on him. With a nonchalant gesture, Jake leaned slightly to one side and waved his machete.

Shriiish!

Wvfousuz ao jfl, oval ovare jfl hpo ar vfid gw val mjr QmQuropQ frt Jfcu laQniw buzcut val Qfhvuou fdouz ovfo om euo zat md ovu gimmt.

'Hmmm, blue blood?' Jake was surprised to see the luminescent blood slowly seeping into the sand.

His curiosity was aroused and he knelt down near the body to discover that it was a kind of furless panther. Its pink and hairless skin made the beast rather abject but certainly not frightening. It was comparable in size to a leopard on earth and it was the first time Jake had come across such a 'normal' animal since his arrival on this island.

Nevertheless, he had no doubt that this creature was dangerous. The monster's fangs emitted the same bluish glow as the blood spilling on the

sand, and upon closer inspection of the open maw of the corpse, Jake noticed the presence of venom canals. With his knife, he then easily spotted the venom glands and decided to keep them for some tests.

He still used his bracelet to scan the glands and could not help but frown with concern. The venom was extraordinarily powerful. A single drop was enough to kill a dinosaur weighing more than 10 tons. Not those of the Earth, but those of this island...

With the Aether density being much higher, the Constitution and Vitality was also incomparable. Comparing his weight to that of the largest dinosaurs on the island, Jake concluded that a bite would have put him into a deep coma within seconds, followed by death within a minute.

Of course, that was if he did not take any measures to fight this poison. In practice, he could contract the sphincters in his arteries to slow or even stop the spreading of the poison, and if that wasn't enough, he could always amputate a limb. By concentrating his Aether of Constitution and Vitality in the bite area, he could even fight the poison effectively, but this was alas only speculation.

Such a poison was extremely toxic and the Orxanium inside would directly affect his consciousness. The most likely result was that he would probably be delirious long before he could react.

With almost no clothing or accessories since his arrival on the island, Jake suddenly became aware that he could not present himself to Tim and Sarah like this. His rags had long since disappeared in the water during the battles and he was completely *nàkèd*. No matter how antisocial he was, he had his dignity and he needed a bag or something similar to carry the venom glands anyway.

If he wasn't worried about Tim's situation, Jake would have skinned the panther to make a leather outfit for himself, but contrary to what was seen in many movies or video games, this kind of feat could not be accomplished in

minutes, or even days. The salting stage alone took several hours and he didn't even have any salt on him.

In other words, he was doomed to remain stark *nàkèd* for the next few days. He didn't mind when he was swimming or wandering on his own, but he was aware that this could also cause him a lot of trouble. Going *bàrè*foot in a jungle where all sorts of poisonous insects and reptiles were hiding in the brush was an invitation to be bitten or stung.

In the end, Jake cast a tearful glance at the leaves of a nearby palm tree and resolved to make himself an ugly loincloth using different leaves and grasses from the area. His pride had just suffered a great blow, but at least his private parts were hidden, even though he now had the ugly impression to wear a skirt...

'So pretty...' The hologram of Xi exclaimed on the side while observing the result with one of her delicate hands on her mouth repressing an umpteenth giggle.

Jake who was hardly starting to be satisfied with the result dropped all that he had in the hands when he heard the soft and sarcastic voice of his AI. A vein pulsated on his forehead and if he could punch this hologram in the face, he would have done it!

'Fuck! The first who laughs, I make him eat my loincloth.' Jake growled while giving a kick to the panther to let off steam, which took off in the air like a soccer ball after a free kick.

After this misadventure, Jake decided to plan his Ordeal a little more. Instead of spending all his time in the water, he would from now on devote some of his time to this kind of menial task. He had the required notions for this and if he did it right, he would have a decent wardrobe in one to two weeks.

As for the venom glands, he had made himself a filthy handbag by felting stems together and the result was more than debatable. In fact, he wasn't

even sure that the object would hold up when travelling underground. In the end, he had to bury his meager loot under a tree so that he could retrieve it later.

Naturally, Jake had not forgotten the potential emergency Tim was in. When he woke up, the first thing he had checked was whether the child was still alive, and then his location.

He was able to confirm that the boy had likely made it to Sarah. The two were lined up in the same direction, which was highly implausible, unless Tim and Sarah were on the same axis, which was still a possibility.

The only thing really surprising was that they were both in the jungle, but it was not absurd either if they didn't have a green stone like him to sleep out in the open.

Ir frw hflu, gw lpzasare lm imre jaovmpo vuin, Jfcu duio ovfo ovu hvait jfl nzmfgiw fii zaevo. Eaovuz vu vft lmisut ovu nzmgiuq vaqluid mz Sfzfv vft ofcur hfzu md ao.

Being the only one to have a Myrmidian bloodline with the Self-Encoding skill like him, Jake was quite confident in her abilities and character. Kyle had been disappointing, but he knew the young woman was a tough nut to crack since the night before their first Ordeal.

At last dressed up as the Tarzan of the Poor, Jake had barely set off when he heard some ruckus in front of him. It sounded like footsteps and they seemed to take no precautions at all to conceal their arrival. Intuitively, he would have said there were at least two of them.

On high alert, Jake held his machete firmly in his hand and prepared to face the other Players, but when he recognized the two newcomers, his jaw almost dropped to his ankles.

It was Tim and Sarah. While he was taking his time meticulously knitting a palm-leaf loincloth, his two comrades were running stark nàkèd for their lives in a state of filth never seen before.