

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 283 - Bad Feeling

‘ You mentioned a red crystal embedded in their foreheads, right ? ‘ Jake reacted by recalling his own experience during the second trial.

Paradoxically, the first dinosaur he had met during the simulation of the second trial also had a red crystal inserted between his eyes, but once on the real island he hadn’t met a single one. There were T-Rexes and other monsters of comparable size and strength, but none of them had a crystal.

He had come to question whether this fortuitous encounter during the second trial was not a coincidence but rather a scenario planned by the simulation to expose them to certain clues. Scanning the crystal had indeed taught him some crucial information about the three special ores composing the object and that could be found everywhere on the island.

In fact, it was the same with the humanoid giant with its black and hairless skin. He had been exposed to this monster very early during the second trial simulation, but it had taken almost a month on the real island before finding other traces of their existence.

‘They were indeed red crystals, about the size of a quail’s egg,’ Lu Yan confirmed as she took a short break to forget the pain. ‘I killed two of these monkeys, but each time one of their fellow monkeys had recovered the crystals before I could extract them from their bodies. So I don’t know much about this other than what the Oracle scan report told me.’

Jake eyes lit up. Placing his bracelet against her own, he downloaded the data from the scan as well as a video clip of Lu Yan’s fight against the

creatures without asking permission, but Lu Yan didn't dare to hide anything for her own sake this time. She accepted the request for the information transfer without hesitation. If Jake could discover something, she had everything to gain from this.

'So?' She asked with little hope when she saw his deadpan face.

'I think it's already clear that this crystal protects the spirit of these monsters from the influence of the various Soul Stones. The red color and their multiplied strength at night suggests that they were under the influence of the Flintium ore, which I think is a Red Soul Stone, but the fact that they didn't lose their minds and collaborated so ingeniously suggests that there are other factors at play.

'What I'm certain of, though, is that these monkeys were controlled or obeyed someone or something. In spite of their apparent cooperation, these animals seemed devoid of emotions, and their reaction time and attack pattern always remained the same, as if they were driven by their reflex or some kind of program.'

'I thought the same thing at first. 'Lu Yan agreed with a nod, 'but I couldn't find any sign that they were obeying anyone. It is true, however, that I felt repeatedly observed, as if no matter where I was hiding, I could not escape that invisible gaze.'

This better explained why Lu Yan was so agitated when he found her. When all our hiding places were discovered in an instant and an invisible presence was constantly spying on us, we could quickly become paranoid. Even after she had lost her pursuers, she had not been able to regain her composure. The serious injuries she suffered had accentuated this anguish.

'It happened last night?' Jake asked more to confirm than out of doubt.

'Yes, why?'

‘ No reason... Let’s go back to the base. I have something to share with everyone.’

Lu Yan was curious, but she knew when to shut up. This time Jake helped her to speed up the healing process. With his telekinesis and increased reserves of Vitality Aether, stabilizing the young woman’s injuries took only a minute or two, since she had already done most of the work.

The duo then set off again, covering the distance to the hillside where their base of operations was hidden in less than a day. The only reason it had taken them more than two days to get to the volcano the first time was because they were unfamiliar with this section of the island and had proceeded with extreme caution.

Jake had found Lu Yan around noon and they reached the bottom of the hill at dawn. Travelling at night had been particularly grueling, as the island’s animals were mostly active and generally in a berserk state. To reach their base, they had lost count of the number of dinosaurs and monsters of all kinds whose blood they had shed. They even had to flee several times.

Traveling at night was dangerous for Lu Yan because she didn’t have a Green Soul Stone like Jake. Contrary to the experience of the second trial, surviving one night in the jungle was not impossible if prior exposure to Naequat had been sufficient. On the other hand, the young woman had no trouble finding these safe havens, since she knew exactly what to look for. If that failed, covering herself with local mud, as Sarah and Tim had done before, was another viable solution.

In order not to waste time, she had to stay almost stuck to Jake for most of the trip, creating a suffocating and uncomfortable atmosphere between the two individuals. This was even more of a burden for Lu Yan who could feel that Jake was even more unfathomable than before.

”Why dont you share your training method with me ?” Lu Yan was constantly complaining in her mind, feeling deeply stifled inside.

Of course, even if Jake wanted to help her there was nothing he could do and he had no desire to do so. To be fair, there was a method at his disposal to assist his companions. Blood donation.

By giving a little of his blood to each member of his group, especially those without conflicting bloodlines like Lily, Sarah, Lu Yan and potentially Tim, he could bestow some of his abilities on them. By temporarily granting them the Self-Encoding Skill, he could effectively help them to overcome their Aether limit.

Tvuaz frfomqw guare tadduzuro, ovuaz gmtaul jmpit rmo gu fiouzut, frt ao jfl mgsampl ovfo ovu udduho md val Auovuz lcaiil jmpit mriw gu f dzfhoamr md val ozpu fgaiaaul. Bpo fo iuflo ao jmpit easu ovuq fr ukozf ozpqn hfzt.

The real reason Jake didn't do it was not because he didn't trust them, but because giving enough blood with an Aetheric Code loaded with energy could weaken his bloodline in the long run.

His Myrtharian Bloodline was still only lv11 despite his best efforts. The corresponding Aetheric Code was gradually strengthening but it was painfully slow. In order not to lose this precious Aether every time he was injured, the Bloodline Aether fuelling this Aetheric Code was usually concentrated in the most important stem cells and tissues of his body, such as bone marrow for example.

If he concentrated this very special energy in his blood and then donated it, he would indeed be weakened. At his level of Aether control, he had no way to replenish this lost energy. To be even more accurate, the same was true with his Aether of Vitality or Constitution.

If he concentrated all of his Vitality Aether in his blood and then extracted it and donated it, the Vitality Aether trapped inside would indeed be lost. Except that unlike his Bloodline, this type of Aether could passively

regenerate itself via the surrounding Aether until it regained its previous value.

This was the opposite of the Bloodline Aether, which in order to accumulate required to stimulate and nourish its bloodline by respecting a certain number of principles. Perhaps it would eventually recover, even without any active effort on his part, but he was certain that it would be a long process.

Even in the case of an important loss of Aether of Vitality or Constitution, it might take several days or weeks depending on the case to be regenerated. This was also one of the reasons he was so eager to create his Aether Core. The pure energy inside could effectively supplement his Aether stats after a few adjustments.

The conclusion was that Jake would only be willing to donate blood when his regenerative abilities became such that it wouldn't make the slightest difference. Until then, he would do better to preserve his vital energy for life and death situations.

Back on the hill, Jake and Lu Yan braked abruptly as they smelled human blood near the clearing. With their current Perception stats, their sense of smell was not much different from that of a hunting dog.

Straining their ears, no suspicious noise came from the clearing, but considering that the sun was not yet fully up, this was not surprising. Perhaps they had simply been attacked by wild animals, Jake thought fleetingly. But deep down he had a bad feeling.