

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

### Chapter 284 – More Guests

Sprinting with a few jumps to the clearing, he noticed that most of the traps had been triggered. Lu Yan was following him closely, but her self-preservation instincts had already caused her to fall ‘slightly’ behind.

Jake expected to find a devastated clearing with potentially a ruined house and signs of confrontation, but what greeted him instead was a peaceful clearing and an untouched stone house. The greenish shimmering due to the NaeQuat deposit below was starting to fade with sunrise, and there was no hint of a deadly fight.

Quelling his doubts, he sank underground and reappeared under the tile floor of the house. He then spread out his Spirit Body to scan the Aetheric signatures present, but the feedback he received made him shudder.

There were way too many people!

Jake was agitated at the time, barely holding on to barge into the house and slaughter everyone, but as he paid more attention to the Aetheric signatures he recognized those of Sarah, Kevin, Tim and Lily. Even the little bear-like Ziwid was doing well.

Knowing that his mental scan had alerted most of the people present, he stopped hiding and materialized without further ado in the middle of the central room. No sooner had he pulled his body off the floor than a huge, hairy, clawed palm monopolized his field of vision.

Casually tilting his head to the right with a cold harrumph, he grabbed the culprit's wrist and sent him flying over him in an Aikido style by using his momentum.

'Kevin, what the hell are you doing?' 'Jake yelled in a bad mood. 'Damn it! Attacking the landlord without any scruples... As a squatter, don't you have any honor?'

Recognizing this deep, annoyed voice, Kevin, who was about to resume the attack, momentarily stiffened.

'Jake?'

'Who else?' 'Jake replied curtly.

At that precise moment, Lu Yan timidly knocked on the door, and then entered after having lifted the latch with her telekinesis. Her body language, her worried expression and the dribble of sweat on her forehead could almost make it look like she had rushed to join the fight and assist him, but Jake would be a complete moron if he fell for it. The simple act of knocking on the door had already ruined the entire show.

Obviously, it was intentional. Lu Yan knew full well that Jake could see through her acting and she hadn't dared to 'smash the door' to bring credibility to her play. Knocking on the door was therefore her way of taking responsibility for her act even though nothing prevented her from keeping up appearances with the rest of the group.

Ffhut jaov oval hmqqmoamr, ovu zulo md ovu numniu nzuluro jmcu pn mru gw mru mz lomnnut jvfo ovuw juzu tmare gudmzu ovfo. Mmqurol ifouz, ovu lpr jfl pn frt usuzwmru vft efovuzut ar ovu hiufzare om arozmtphu ovuqluisul, fiimjare Jfcu om npo f rfqu om ovu ruj mhhpnfrol.

Two young women sharing the same chestnut brown hair and intense green eyes were staring at him with an embarrassed expression. They were wearing leather armor that was a little too large for them, which Jake remembered

having made for Sarah and Lu Yan two weeks earlier. Who knew in what outfit they were wandering the island before settling here. Probably as naked as Tim and Sarah during their reunion...

These two women were none other than two of his cousins, the resplendent, neo-feminist Noémie and Kate. They were usually the type who refused to depend on anyone and to succeed at everything on the first try, so their presence here was indeed a valid reason for their embarrassment.

Jake also noticed a new bear cub arriving on his thigh. Its long glossy white hair, hanging tongue, and round, shirt-button eyes were vaguely reminiscent of a humanoid poodle. Another Ziwid for sure... And once again, not the sharpest knife in the drawer. Unless all the Ziwids were stupid?

Finally, a middle-aged man wearing his own gear was also present. His leather armor was roughly sewn, but considering that not everyone could magically forge needles like Jake, it was pretty good work. This man had brown hair and the same green irises as Noémie and Kate. It was another of his uncles, Elijah.

It was hard to tell with the Ziwid poodle, but these three members of his family had pale, bloodless faces and much of their exposed skin was covered with bandages. Clearly, they had been injured recently.

‘What are you doing here and why were the traps on the hill triggered?’ Jake asked with his arms folded without showing any sign of accepting or rejecting their presence.

‘Cough, how about we talk inside?’ Elijah proposed in a somewhat uncomfortable tone. The temperature had started to drop again last night and it was quite chilly in the clearing this morning.

It could be a harbinger of another storm, but for the moment there were no black clouds floating above them. They still had some time ahead of them.

‘Sure. ‘Jake nodded before returning inside the stone house.

During the six days or so of absence, the living room hadn’t changed much, but several fur mattresses had taken up space to accommodate the new guests. Sarah, Tim, Lily, Kevin and Lu Yan had their own room thanks to Jake’s powers and their own efforts, but the rest of his family, and the second Ziwid, had to share the center room.

Because of this, the living room was relatively cluttered and reeked of Ziwid’s wet hair, whose hygiene seemed very poor. The brown Ziwid that Lily had tamed was always close to her and was far cleaner.

Jake sometimes wondered how such an intellectually limited race could have ended up mixed with humans and all sorts of humanoid aliens, each more dangerous than the other. It was a fact, however, that these two Ziwids, despite their innocence and harmlessness, had survived until now without suffering the slightest visible injury.

Jake had also spotted numerous animal prints around the hill resembling those of the rabid hyenas he had encountered during his second ordeal. They seemed to patrol the area frequently and their feces were all over the place, but he had not spotted any.

At first, he had thought the base had been raided by a pack of these creatures, but this was apparently not the case. Once everyone was inside, he repeated his previous question, and Elijah proceeded to explain the details of what had happened, not forgetting to sigh between each sentence.

‘I ran into George and Brice, they’re fine. ‘His uncle changed his words and finally began his speech with what he thought was good news.

Bad choice. A vein of irritation immediately pulsed on Jake’s forehead. He couldn’t care less about these two assholes. Just because he tolerated Kevin’s presence didn’t mean he cared about them.

Seeing Jake's expression darken, Elijah, as a good corporate CEO, instantly realized that he had just made a mistake. Clearing his throat to mask his blunder, he then went straight to the heart of the matter.

'Your cousins Arthur, Aurelie and Edward were eliminated after we were attacked. Noemie, Kate and I had no choice but to come here after George and Brice refused to help us. These two have an Oracle Rank too high for us and refuse to be located, even by us. So we had to rely on you.'

Elijah paused briefly to gauge Jake's reaction to the news of his family's elimination, but only an expressionless face responded to him. Clearly, Jake wasn't caring much more about their life either. Sighing again, he resumed his speech.

'When I arrived on this island, I teamed up as soon as I could with Arthur and Aurélie. Edouard, Noémie and Kate joined us much more recently, about three days before we were attacked. The attack of our camp took place about two days ago.'

'They were Players or native island creatures?' Jake interrupted him briefly.

'The attack happened at night, so it's hard to tell, but it didn't look like a Players' attack.' Elijah squinted his eyes in a focusing effort, as if he wanted to remember all the details of the scene, but couldn't visualize them clearly.

'They were essentially large Flint dinosaurs, in their typical nocturnal berserk state from their red blood and the surrounding Flintium. Normally, as long as we hide well, they ignore us and continue to kill each other. Except that this time, they seemed to have only us in their sight. Our camp was besieged from everywhere at once and we had to abandon the camp. Arthur and Aurelie were never cut out for a marathon. Do you have any idea how much they hate sports?'

'I don't.' Jake responded with indifference. If they were that unwilling to exercise, they would never have made it to the third trial. The first trial was

already a sure way to turn the worst sedentary person into a great swimmer in no time and a real test of physical and mental endurance.