

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 286 – Exploring the Abyss Again

Luckily, the sun had just started and he decided to take care of the Feats in progress he had overlooked when he experienced first hand the incredible efficiency of the Volcano Body Tempering Method. He didn't have so many options anyway.

He still had his goals of hunting in the ocean, the feat of Free-diving as well as the exploration of the ocean depths, plus perhaps trying his luck once more against the invincible monster that had nearly killed him on his last dive.

The only catch was that even with his recent progress, he was skeptical about defeating such a creature. The good thing about his group, however, was that with the exception of the two children, all of them refused to stay cooped up in the clearing.

As a result, Jake's agenda was accepted without a hitch and he went on a solo mop after repairing the traps and reinforcing the weapons of his uncle and two cousins with his Grey Aether. Elijah used a sword made from the bones of a local species, while Noemie and Kate wielded a rudimentary spear similar to the one previously used by Lu Yan.

After hinting that they preferred to use a sword, Jake forged the weapons they wanted and then hurried off before they had time to solicit him to build them a bedroom or sew armor for them.

The beach was not far away and moving underground without any dead weight with him made it easy for him to travel such a distance. In less than

ten minutes he had left the jungle and was now wading in the white sand. The sun was not yet high in the sky, but there was enough clarity.

This time, he did not throw himself directly into the water as he was used to, but decided to play it safe. He hadn't forgotten his Free-diving goal, but he didn't need to dive to reach the ocean floor.

He also didn't want to ruin his armor and clothes, so he quickly undressed before burying his equipment several meters deep to avoid unpleasant surprises. If his stuff was stolen, he could only blame it on bad luck. Nonetheless, he still kept his trusty machete.

Like a ghost, he then disappeared under the sand again and went a little deeper underground towards the ocean. The dry sand quickly became wet and then soggy.

At first he thought that moving underground into the ocean would be easy, but it turned out to be more complicated than he had expected. The waterlogged sand and earth meant that he was not fully in an earthy environment. There was a lot of water around and above him over which he did not have the same control, and his progress was affected accordingly.

This was not enough to stop him, though, and by assisting his Earth manipulation skill with his telekinesis and his own swimming talents, he managed to move forward unhindered. Using his Spirit Body as a sonar, he deployed his consciousness outwardly in the form of brief impulses to avoid drawing attention to himself.

He suspected that this was one of the methods potentially used by the mysterious presence his group had felt to monitor their movements. Theoretically, if the action was performed quickly enough, it would overwhelm their perceptual abilities and they would not be aware of anything. Conversely, to get feedback from his Spirit Body, a simple nanosecond was enough, since his bracelet recorded everything. Xi could easily retrieve this information.

Alas, Jake was far from being able to emit such short-lived mental waves, but to fool poorly alert sea monsters with limited intelligence was enough.

Little by little, he felt the pressure of the water above him increasing and progressing became more and more tedious, until he felt the slope tilt down sharply like a cliff edge. Following the curve of the sand, his body made a 90° turn and he sank into the abyss.

In a few minutes he noticed that the water pressure had already exceeded the pressure of the time he had touched the bottom of the ocean during his first trial. This meant that the depth where he was now was at least over 1000 meters.

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His skin stiffened like the surface of a drum, but that was far from enough. His anatomy was adapted to moving underground, but at a depth limited to a few dozen meters maximum and without direct contact with the earth above him. What he was doing at the moment was extremely dangerous and pushed his body to its limits.

Jake kept going for a few more minutes until he reached a point where he felt it would be dangerous to continue. He had a good amount of breath, but it was best to avoid taking any undue risks. If he ran out of air here, he would die pitifully with only his own stupidity to blame.

He waited a few more seconds for a notification to validate his achievement, but to no avail. He even checked the Exploration and Feats section to see if any changes had taken place, but there were no changes. Remembering that he had to validate his feat by proving that it was not a suicidal attempt, he made the decision to turn back.

And great good it did him! Because climbing the cliff again by swimming underground proved to be one of the most grueling hardships he had faced

since the beginning of this Ordeal. Between the pressure of the water, the weight of the sand and the increasing lack of oxygen, the Jake who reappeared on the shore had little more bearing than a worn-out salmon after swimming against the current of his birth fjord.

Jake wheezed and panted for a long time after dropping in the sand on his back like a starfish, but the notification he was waiting for still made him smile.

[Explorer of the Abyss (Gold): 2488/5000m. 1000 000 pts of Aether rewarded. This feat is a prerequisite for another achievement.]

With this first success, Jake resumed at once after catching his breath. He knew that it was impossible for him to reach the 5000 meters depth area, but he could try to accomplish the corresponding hunting and free-diving feats.

There were all kinds of abyssal creatures, each one more hideous and puzzling than the next, and there were many opportunities for such feats. He had, of course, inspected in more detail the enormous Green Soul Stone covering the ocean floor, but it had turned out to be too massive to be of any use. The energy it contained was colossal, but he had no way to harness it. Even after all this time, he had no clue how to mine it.

Securing the feat of Free-Diving for 100 and 500 meters, meanwhile, required no special effort on his part and he did not come across any marine predators capable of threatening his existence. These depths could not be considered part of the abyss and he was still close enough to the shore to be able to react in case of a surprise attack.

Tvur, arlouft md tazuhoiw foouqnoare ovu dufo md Fzuu-tasare dmz 1000 Quouzl, vu dazlo nzuduzzut om vpro usuzwovare vu hmpit ar ovu lnmo jvuzu vu arourtut om tm val dzuutasare.

To do so, he first returned to the island and moved underground to reach the relevant location. This allowed him to keep enough breath to face the abyssal

species, while allowing him to escape quickly if the Monster Boss of the last time decided to show up.

Unlike species swarming on the surface, monsters at this depth were not always intimidated by the daunting aura emanating from his Apex Ocean Predator title. Most of them were too bizarre to be intimidated so easily and the fact that his human skin reflected too much light compared to the local species made him particularly striking.

Among the abyssal species, there were generally two predominant types. Those that emitted light to bait their prey or to orientate themselves and those whose skin absorbed so much light that they became invisible. Many species were blind at these depths where darkness reigned supreme, but for those that were not, any light was something captivating and vital to their existence.

Soon a curious fish resembling a long translucent eel began to snake around and tried to bite it. Then its companions of various shapes and forms tried their luck in turn. A moment later, Jake was slaying monster after monster in complete darkness, seeing the counter of several hunting feats climbing at a staggering speed.