

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

### Chapter 290 - Exasperation

Instinctively, the first thing Jake had in mind was rushing to the stone house ruins in search of survivors. But when he found the extent of the carnage, he took a step back. The only way his companions could have survived was to have fled or been left for dead. Otherwise, they would still be fighting.

As mighty as Jake may be, he had no effective way to put out the wildfire. Theoretically, he should have been able to create a vacuum zone with his telekinesis to deprive the flames of oxygen or absorb their heat with his own body, but the latter ability was passive. He didn't have much control over it.

As for his telekinesis, his control over a fire of this magnitude was far from absolute. He could only hope that it would rain or that the fire would stop on its own. With the recent drop in temperature it was not impossible.

On top of that, he was still injured. He was really hoping that no monsters were still lurking around or he might spend a nasty night.

Walking calmly around the clearing with a gloomy look on his face, Jake coldly inspected every inch of the battlefield. Every single trap had been triggered, but very few of the beasts had been caught.

None of his companions in the camp had the power to command fire, but he could not ignore the possibility that one of them had hidden his game or that the enemy was responsible for the fire.

If it was an enemy, the hypothesis of another Player was more likely, but the presence of so many creatures rather supported that of the mysterious

presence which had been spying on them for several days. Quite coincidentally, it had struck while he was away.

Owooooo!

Jake, who had barely begun to examine the rubble, raised his head briskly when he heard this beastly howl. It sounded like the cry of a wolf. The howl seemed near and far at the same time. He couldn't tell if it was one of the monsters that had attacked their base.

'Should I go there or not?' Jake hesitated momentarily, torn between satisfying his curiosity and playing it safe.

Thinking about something else, he tried to locate Sarah, Kevin and the others to see if the screams were coming from the same direction. To his surprise, most of them were still alive. Only his uncle Elijah was impossible to locate alive. Knowing that he had not specified his comrades' status in his wish to locate them, being impossible to locate meant that the body no longer existed. He had probably been dismembered and devoured by a group of beasts, hence the impossibility of giving a clear answer.

On the other hand, all the others except Tim and Lily were together, apparently heading towards the heart of the island. Jake was slightly taken aback when he realized that it was the same direction as the volcano where he had discovered the secret underpass. Still thinking that the last events were just coincidences was now quite impossible.

'Weird... Why aren't Tim and Lily with the others? Did they manage to escape? Neither are the Ziuids...' Jake was baffled by this riddle.

Remembering Tim's bloodline and his ability to sense danger, that he was able to miraculously escape was not so surprising. It should not be forgotten that he had survived the pursuit of the Krish trio occupying the top 5 of the Player Rankings. Well, there were only two of them left after one of them had been killed by a human.

Taking a look at the said Player Rankings, Jake was appalled to learn that the number of participants had dropped sharply yet again. There were now less than 1 500 participants.

‘What’s going on here...‘ Jake couldn’t help but wonder upon seeing this, ‘Have these monsters been ordered to cooperate to purge the island of its participants, or is this just one more test to overcome?’

[ The Ordeals are unpredictable.] Xi tactfully reminded him. [ There was an Ordeal where all the candidates were eliminated in the first minute because a meteorite had hit the planet where the Ordeal was taking place. In principle this cannot happen if this world is in the Mirror Universe or under its jurisdiction, but remembers that the Oracle is not infallible].

‘No kidding!‘ Jake scoffed. If he hadn’t figured it out by then, he could as well commit suicide right now.

[I’m not kidding. The Oracle System guarantees your survival during the first four Ordeals, but that’s also why it can afford to take certain risks it wouldn’t normally take. This asteroid is in the System .]

[Mw quqmzaul fzu arfhullagiu, gpo f jmzit oval mit hfr mriw vfsu guur fgfrtmrut dmz ojm zuflmrl. Armovuz uroaow hmQnfzfgiu om ovu Ozfhiu vfl ofcur hmrozmi md ao, mz ovu Daeulomzl vfsu imre larhu uzftahfout ovmlu jvm zulatut vuzu. Tvu quzu dfho ovfo lphv f lfrhopfzw loaii ukalol al f qazfhiu ar aoluid frt ovuzudmzu ao al aQnmlagiu dmz lphv f nifhu om gu rmzQfi. Tvu dfho ovfo wmpz gzfhuiuo al lm przuiafgiu vuzu al dpzovuz nzmmd md oval ...]

Now that Xi was pointing out these anomalies, Jake couldn’t help but imagine the worst. His first Ordeal, which was supposed to be the most relaxed, had already been fučkéd up by an invasion of Digestors and System A16 deserters. What was the likelihood for his second Ordeal to be just as fučkéd up?

[ The second Ordeal is the same for everyone. Using the authorization level of your Oracle Rank I can at least confirm from the accessible archives that it always happens in similar Sanctuary Bubbles of System A0. So there is no need to panic. The Oracle must have some kind of deal with the Zhorions living here].

Xi's reassuring speech managed to placate him, but not completely.

Everything that had happened since he had received his bracelet was so bizarre and unbelievable that he had trouble distinguishing what was reliable from what was not.

' One thing at a time! I find Tim and Lily and work out a plan to save Sarah and the others.' Jake braced himself by slapping his cheeks with both hands to divert his pessimistic thoughts.

Unsurprisingly, he found Tim and Lily hiding in the trunk of a dead tree a few kilometers from the hill. It was almost unbelievable how they had gotten there without warning the others, but Jake had to accept their explanation.

Squeezing Lily's hand with a flushed face, but tinged with pride and joy like a dog wagging its tail after bringing back a ball, Tim stuttered with embarrassment that he and Lily had wanted to go for a night stroll as lovers and that sensing extreme danger approaching, they had hidden and decided to wait for things to calm down. In the end, huddled together in that tree trunk, they had let their hormones kick in and shared their first kisses.

'Fuck!' Jake was speechless. He had literally shunned Sarah's advances so as not to get distracted while the two kids were openly flirting during the night, when the island's creatures were at their most active.

'Why am I even bothering about them...?' He sighed as he decided to ignore them from now on. Worrying about them was not good for his mental health.

As for the two Ziuids, he found them a few kilometers away from the hill as well, but for a completely different reason. With what he deduced from their

motives via his telepathy, he learned that they had simply set off in Quest of honey. The poodle Ziwid had found a prehistoric hive of bees and greedy as it was it had chosen to keep the secret to itself.

Bad luck for it, the brown Ziwid had found it suspicious and had followed it at nightfall. When Jake had found them, the two teddy bears were in a recovery position, their bellies were round and their noses were smeared with honey after having stuffed themselves until they couldn't move anymore...

Facepalming and overwhelmed with a sudden tiredness that made him want to let go and throw in the towel, Jake decided to stop caring about them as well. Otherwise, he risked giving in to his impulses and adding four more kills to his record!

Nonetheless, he ordered them all to return to the base and when he saw their shaking at the sight of the carnage, he regained some of his inner peace. They were not yet beyond redemption.

But seeing the two Ziwids digging in panic with their little hands to unearth an intact roasted T-Rex thigh and hugging it in their arms with tears streaming down their faces as if they had just been reunited with their loved one after a long separation, Jake lost hope for good.

‘Whatever...‘

Their base no longer existed, Jake advised the children and Ziwids to hide and be careful in his absence. He particularly insisted that it was possible that they might not meet again until the end of this Ordeal and that they should act as such. The enemy capable of capturing Sarah, Kevin and Lu Yan would be a tough foe.

Then Jake set off, without looking back.