

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 300 - Extraction

Recognizing the object on the alien's wrist, Jake didn't immediately make the connection. After all, jewelry was not the exclusive preserve of Earthlings, and what was the likelihood that this bracelet, although similar to his, was an Oracle Device?

In fact, when Jake squinted his eyes to better distinguish its details, he immediately noticed the differences. The smooth, dark texture of the metal making up the bracelet was similar, but the shape of the object was different. Rather than the width of a connected watch, this bracelet had more the profile of a patch of armor covering the forearm like a vambrace.

This plate covered the right forearm of the Zhorion priest from the wrist to the elbow joint, and at this point it could not be called a bracelet.

Bathed in the soul energy emitted by the crystal altar, this previously invisible accessory had suddenly revealed itself as the metallic liquid oozed from the pores of the priest's skin during its transformation. The scene was very similar to what happened when an Evolver decided to intentionally reveal his own Oracle Device.

'Xi, an explanation?' Jake whispered in disbelief as he was plagued by doubt. Luckily, the priest's yelling in Berserk mode largely covered his inadvertent whispering.

[I, I don't know any more than you do...]

Jake found his AI's tone hesitant, but he didn't insist. If she didn't want to answer, there was no way he could get it out of her.

As he wondered how long this farce would last, the Zhorion priest stopped roaring and turned to stare at the crowd. However, the altar was not deactivated. The invisible energy, so dangerous for the Players without Green Soul Stone, was still emitting.

The fact that this energy was invisible instead of radiating a compelling red light like anything containing Flintium at night indicated that this energy was of a different nature. Without being certain, the kind of formation inscribed on the ground, which emitted an intense scarlet light, must have had a purifying role to play.

Bathed in this energy with a serene expression, the Zhorion priest spread his arms and nodded to one of his fellow countrymen in armor to bring the prisoners. While a Player resembling some kind of interbreeding between a batrachian and a chimpanzee was struggling and howling in fear as he was forcibly dragged to the altar with his chains, this priest flashed an evil and falsely benevolent smile at his worshippers.

‘This individual seems pitiful, but by his sacrifice he allows our tribute to flourish. Contemplate this poor creature and offer it all your gratitude. For through it you will live. Its flesh will become your flesh, its blood will become your blood. Its knowledge will become ours and if its ability is good it will even be able to serve the Order of Chaos until the end of time.’

As good devotees, the crowd of Zhorions made a pious bow in the direction of the wretched participant, who continued groaning and roaring with helplessness and despair. His body was thin and pale, and it was clear that he had already suffered some abuse before. Taking more blood from him could very well lead to his death.

Despite his apparent terror, this prisoner had not given up his life. In spite of his restlessness, this Player struggled tirelessly with all his strength, as if he had decided that he would fight until his last breath. Jake hoped that his

cousin Noemie had shown the same courage before ending up in a broth, but he doubted it.

In fact, she had. It was what followed that extinguished her will and dignity. As soon as the monkey-batrachian alien was thrown on the crystal altar, he instantly stopped struggling.

Like Jake and Lu Yan under the Flintium effect, his Spirit Body underwent a change of atmosphere and a beastly, murderous aura erupted from the depths of his soul. The Aetheric Code of his bloodline ignited on contact with this invisible spark and his appearance began to alter just as ludicrously as that of the Zhorion priest.

In a matter of seconds, this Player, which was not particularly imposing at the base, began to grow uncontrollably and quickly surpassed five meters in height. A spinosaurus-like membranous collar grew along its spine and its hitherto tiny tail became long and flexible enough to be used as a weapon.

It was always the same alien. But while he once looked like a juvenile, his current appearance was clearly that of an adult at the peak of his evolution.

Jfcu jmrutzut jvfo jmpit vfnnur ad f vpqfr ufzoviare jaovmpo frw Auovuzah gimmtiaru hfqu ar hmrofho jaov oval uruzew. Puzvfnl val fpzf jmpit hvfreu frt val qplhpifopzu jmpit arhzufu ezmlliw, gpo vu tmpgout ovfo lphv f nvwlahfi qpofeamr hmpit mhhpz. Uriull ovuzu jfl lmqu movuz luhzuo guvart oval fiofz ?

Nevertheless, at that very moment, the prisoner in the middle of the altar didn't care about that. Under the Flintium's influence, the participant had completely lost his mind and only a murderous impulse was glowing behind his pupils.

ROAAARRRR!

With a bestial roar that generated a slight shock wave, the Player, who had become as big as a giant, freed himself from his chains by brutally contracting

his muscles. The steel chains that were clearly not designed to imprison such a monster instantly yielded with a big snap.

Jake was stunned by this display of raw power, but he was even more shocked to see that the other prisoners kept displaying the same desperate expressions.

Having experienced the incredible power-up from the Red Soul Stone firsthand, a prolonged contact with such pure energy had probably multiplied the Player's capabilities immeasurably. At the very least, Jake was certain that he couldn't break these chains by brute force, or his cousin Kevin would have escaped long ago.

There was even a chained Nosk among them. It was not as desperate as the other prisoners, but it too was unable to escape. Visibly aware of the danger, its skull had been shaved to the bone. Without any dendrites, its fighting skills were severely diminished, not to say crippled.

Realizing that something would soon end the insurgency of the rabid Player, Jake opened his eyes wide not to miss any details.

And indeed, what happened next was truly the most desperate and anticlimactic execution he had ever seen.

The priest Zhorion, who despite his height of three meters looked like a child next to the Player, flapped his wings to get some distance and snapped his fingers. A tenth of a second later, a clawed finger as large as a century-old tree trunk fell from the sky like a meteor and smashed the batracian alien down to the ground.

Tvu vpqfrmat qmrlouz ovu laxu md f lcwlhzfnuz jfohvare msuz ovu haow vft qftu aol qmsu!

With its forefinger in place, the stunned Player experienced the excruciating pain of having his spine and internal organs reduced to mush. He was unable to free himself. This finger was like a heavenly pillar, impossible to resist.

Just after this incident, the Zhorion priest landed gently onto the ground with his sacrificial scimitar in his hand. With a condescending smile, the alien grabbed the Player by his hair, which was as slippery as seaweed, and forced him to meet his gaze.

The change came lightning-fast. His murderous rage, which was already fading because of the pain, vanished instantly, replaced by the same terror that still inhabited the decapitated head of his cousin Noemie.

Jake realized that the priest was just having fun. With such control of his Aether, the priest could have neutralized him from the beginning. Letting him out of his chains was a sick whim that could only come from the mind of a degenerate.

The execution was carried out as he expected, albeit not exactly. While Jake was expecting the Zhorion priest to slit the Player's throat or decapitate him, he did something unforeseen.

He cut off the prisoner's arm.

It was only then that Jake noticed that just like the priest before him, the bracelet had forcibly materialized upon contact with the Flintium. Because of this, the Zhorion had easily identified where the bracelet was hidden.

Aaaarrgh!

When the Player's hand was cut off and the bracelet was lost, his gaze went blank for a brief moment and he suddenly began to scream. The pain of the dismemberment could not explain this.

Jfcu vaqluid duio fr arukniahfgiu prufnarull jvur vu jaorullut oval frt ao jfl hiufz ovfo oval Pifwuz vft zuhuasut f rmoadahfoamr dzmQ val Ozfhiu

Swlouq. Wvfousuz ao jfl, ao vft hfplut oval nfzoahanfro om imlu fii val lfraow, fl ad val mriw vmnu vft bplo liannut fjfw dmzusuz.

Unconsciously, Jake rubbed his wrist where his own bracelet was hidden. He hated the Oracle, but paradoxically he was in no hurry to find out what happened when it was taken from him. He had been lucky enough to absorb the metal contained in another Player's bracelet, but he didn't care about the consequences for the latter at the time.

But the worst was yet to come. Instead of beheading the prisoner, the priest Zhorion picked up the arm and pressed his bracelet against the Player's. The light of the integrated circuit running through the altar intensified as if a switch had been turned on and the Player's bracelet, which had been solid until then, liquefied as it had on the first day.

Except that instead of being absorbed by the priest's bracelet as Jake had imagined, the liquid simply dripped down the altar and then flowed into grooves intended for this purpose that he had not noticed until then. The metallic liquid seeped inside and continued to trickle down until it completely disappeared from his sight.

Once the extraction was completed, the priest repeated the process, cutting each limb off one by one and harvesting each bone and organ as well as the blood into dedicated containers. Each time, the Zhorion would pass his bracelet over it and the liquid behind the bracelet's functions would leak out, although in smaller quantities.

The prisoner was never beheaded. He simply died when he had only one head left.