

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

### Chapter 301 - Despair and Helplessness.

Jake remained flabbergasted for a long time after witnessing such a brutal killing. He was certain that these images haunting his mind would remain forever etched in his memory. Despite his apparent trauma, his brain was in a state of turmoil.

Numerous scenarios and explanations that could explain what had just happened were running through his mind nonstop, one by one, quickly sifting through his logic. Soon he regained his composure and narrowed down the range of plausible explanations to two major hypotheses.

Either the Second Ordeal was proceeding as planned and everything that had happened had been anticipated by the Oracle. Or, an incident defying the Oracle System's prediction capabilities had occurred as in his First Ordeal with the Digestors' appearance.

In his heart, he prayed that the first assumption would be the right one, or it would end in disaster for these prisoners and himself if he did not find a way to escape. Fortunately, the current situation tended more towards this hypothesis or else it would mean that the Zhorions were even more terrifying than the Digestors.

After all, as soon as Jake had discovered the Digestors' presence with his own eyes, the Oracle had immediately repatriated them in an emergency. The fact that nothing happened here was therefore rather reassuring.

He was willing to believe that he had been extremely unlucky on his First Ordeal to stumble upon an invasion of Digestors, but he refused to think that such an anomaly could happen a second time. Otherwise, the testimonies of

the other Evolvers and probably the Oracle System would have warned them one way or another.

What had really shaken Jake was that these aliens could actually see their bracelets and extract the alloy out of them. During his first Ordeal, he had been free to hide or show his bracelet, but the native Myrmidians and Throsgenians had been unable to discern the true nature of the bracelets on their wrists. The ability to hide the bracelet was only to protect themselves from other participants.

Whether Jake hid or showed his bracelet, only the nearby Players had shown a reaction back then. The natives had always ignored this magic trick.

He had the feeling here too that these Zhorions couldn't see their bracelet directly, but they were very clearly aware of their existence and the altar forged from a giant Red Soul Stone seemed to be able to solidify these bracelets in plain sight.

If the Oracle System had really foreseen this scenario, and considering that the risk was increasing for the surviving Players when their rewards should have increased, then there was no doubt that the punishment for having their bracelet stolen from them could not be too severe.

Alas, Jake had no doubt that it would still have severe consequences, which he hoped would be offset by a better rating. Now that he knew what would happen if he was captured, he knew that it was better to commit suicide, even if it would mean losing some of his precious Aether stat points.

Since these Sanctuary Bubbles were located on an abandoned asteroid of System A0, it was quite consistent that the residents of this world were once part of the Mirror Universe and therefore there were Players among the Zhorions when this System was still inhabited.

Given the unprecedented levels of Aether and gravity that Jake had measured on the asteroid, it was clear that the Zhorion or Zhorions who had built these sanctuaries for their descendants were at the top of the Mirror Universe food

chain. Even if they were not, they were still considerably superior to the Evolvers of B842.

Trying to guess or infer what kind of deal or relationship they had with the Oracle was completely futile. Maybe they were Players themselves facing dangers for the Mirror Universe that he wasn't even aware of.

Although the second hypothesis was less likely, it was much more frightening. Based on his own experience with a Brain Eater, he knew that the Oracle System was not invincible. He had to consider the possibility of dying permanently on this island.

Thinking about this eventuality, the terrified face of Noemie and the alien dissected on the altar flashed before him and he felt like something was gripping his chest, momentarily preventing him from breathing.

He didn't know this cousin of his very well, but seeing the exhausted and desperate expressions of Sarah, Kevin and Kate among the prisoners, his heart tightened slightly. Maybe he appreciated them more than he thought he did? Still, he knew it would not change the facts.

If Jake knew how to save them, he would have tried something, even if the success rate was not 100%. He could accept to take a measured risk. But escaping from such an alien army where even the minions were already a tough match for him was just plain dumb.

Io jmpit gu ftqazfgiu urmpev ad vu qfrfeut om hzml l ovu talofrhu lunfzfoare vaq dzmq ovu nzalmrztl jaovmpo fiuzoare f epfzt. Id vu tat, vu jmpit ovur vfsu om zuqmsu ovuaz hvfarl frt nzmfgi w jufz ovuq mz nzmouho ovuq ar nuzlmr guhfplu md ovuaz jufcurut lofou.

Even if he managed to free everyone to create chaos, he had no doubt that the priest and his giant servants would be able to regain control of the situation in a matter of seconds. Then he would not even be able to escape.

While Jake was lost in thought, the altar had been cleansed of his blood by spilling large buckets of water. The priest Zhorion was not satisfied and had already signaled the guards to bring in the next prisoner.

Seconds later, a young woman with sky-blue hair was dragged to his feet. At a glance, Jake recognized a noble Egean from the same planet as Enya and Esya.

With her long wavy hair, her electric blue irises where one could get lost, and her voluptuous, though slimmed down body, her pitiful appearance and the dry tears along her cheeks should have easily evoked a reaction of lust or compassion in a male human. Unfortunately, the priest Zhorion was as inexpressive as a rock. With the exception of his creepy smile, this alien had not once changed his expression.

‘Please! I have done nothing to deserve this!’ She started sobbing as she brought out her best acting. With her current despair, it wasn’t too difficult.

The expression on the priest’s face remained indifferent. Instead, his head tilted slightly to one side with a contemplative look of false puzzlement. The creepy smile was still there.

‘Oraclean? The accent is horrible, but I guess it’s good enough for 2nd class Player to have started learning the language. Your internal structure and meridians indicate that you come from a world where some form of magic is possible. But right now, both your core and meridians are empty. No matter what your status or talent was in your home world, it’s useless here. Well, you can die now.’

The eyes of the tetanized woman bulged when the priest Zhorion announced the sentence, but her face was now more filled with confusion than fear. Jake, who had heard everything, was no exception.

2nd Class Player probably referred to the number of Ordeals a Player had participated in. It was incredible that this alien had such information. He

seemed to know more about the Mirror Universe than the participants themselves.

However, the young woman Egean didn't have time to dwell on this. Once thrown on the altar, the young woman's body ignited under the effect of this purified red soul energy like the previous alien.

Instead of mutating into a giant and hideous monster, the air began to crackle around her and soon lightning snakes as wide as her forearm flashed around her body, quickly engulfing the young woman in an ocean of lightning.

'AAAAHH! Thunder Cannon!!!'

Barely lucid, she aimed both palms of her hands at the priest and an Egean version of kamehameha engulfed the Zhorion preacher with a deafening thunderclap. The explosion of light was so dazzling that everyone watching lost their sight for a few seconds, including Jake.

When he opened his eyes again, his eyeballs nearly popped out of his head.

'The fućk is that? And who's dumb enough to yell out the name of their technique? Did she think she was in an anime?'

Jake couldn't believe that such a naive and stupid person could exist at this stage of the Second Ordeal. Like the two pink-haired sisters, she probably had a pampered childhood that stripped her of her common sense.

Of course, that wasn't why Jake was so shocked. When he regained his eyesight, he had found that nothing had changed.

The altar was intact, as was the temple behind the priest. As for the priest himself, he had not moved, but in front of him the foot of the skyscraper-sized humanoid monster had intercepted the lightning strike.

For this creature, such a voltage was no better than static electricity. Its skin was still charred on the surface, but for a monster of this size it was nothing

at all. Also, less than a minute later the charred skin had peeled off, replaced by a brand new skin.

Tvu nzalruz vft omofiiw imlo vuz Qart frt f ruj eafro iaevorare gmio jfl hvfzeare guojuur vuz nfiql, nzmQalare om gu usur Qmzu tusflofoare. Bpo fl lvu jfl fgmpo om dazu f luhmrt lvmo, ovu iaevorare fzmprt vuz Qfeahfiw tallanfout.

Jake realized that much like he and Lu Yan a day earlier, this firepower came at a price. In a matter of seconds, her beautiful appearance had been reduced to that of a mummy breathing its last breath. A little more and she would have disintegrated on the spot like a sand castle after a passing wave.

Sigh...

A few minutes later, she was dead like the previous prisoner and her organs had been harvested in other containers. The alloy in her bracelet had also been absorbed, sinking under the altar through the grooves like the first time.

Then the slaughter resumed, over and over again.