

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

### Chapter 312 - Morality

Before searching the temple, and now that Jake no longer had to watch his back, he could at last take a look at the dead bodies around him. After examining the charred body of the Zhorion priest and the bodies of several other guards, he was able to ascertain with great regret that their bracelets were irretrievable.

Unlike the participants' Oracle Devices, the latter had not disappeared, but his own bracelet seemed not to care, as if these scraps of inert metal had nothing substantial enough to deserve to be assimilated.

Intuitively, Jake thought this was odd, but not necessarily absurd. In his own opinion, the metallic liquid in his bracelet was not just metal, but more likely a multitude of nano-robots or at least something capable of supporting a complex program. If it was really just metal, the Aetheric Code of the material must have had unique properties.

When he had absorbed another Player's bracelet during his first Ordeal, the metal had been used to upgrade his own Oracle Device. At the time, he felt it had more to do with the energy contained in the metal than the data contained inside. Clearly, his bracelet seemed to be able to make use of this liquid metal regardless of its original state.

In other words, if absorption of these Zhorion bracelets was not possible, the most likely reason was that the precious metal inside had already vanished. These ornaments remaining visible after their deaths were just perfectly normal jewelry and accessories.

Jake then took a look at the corpses of the participants, but as expected he found nothing interesting on them. Some people might have thought that he had been cruel in eliminating them all without showing any remorse, but he felt that he had been merciful.

Those prisoners who had surrendered to the Zhorions' mind techniques were already at the end of their rope and could not have lasted any longer with or without his intervention. After all, the Phantom Sanctuary could not proceed with its descent as long as there were still more than 100 Players in the running.

As for those who had thanked his act of indirect rescue with boundless and willfully malicious greed, they deserved even more to die. If Jake was a ruthless monster, he should have dismembered them alive to absorb their bracelets.

On this point, Jake was still too candid and still suffering from his habits on Earth. He could kill effortlessly when his immediate or future survival was threatened because it didn't conflict with the moral standards he had been taught, but when it came to killing out of sheer selfishness, he felt a certain reluctance.

Ir oval hflu, vu cruj vu lvmpit rmo vfsu vulaofout. Tvulu nfzoahanfrol vft rmo vulaofout om foofhc vaq frt vu lvmpit vfsu guur qmzu tuhalasu ovfr ovfo. Kaiiare ovuq jfl dfz omm euruzmpl f zuofiafoamr.

'Next time, I won't hesitate.' Jake mumbled, clenching his fists.

His mumble caught Wurching's attention, but seeing that it was his benefactor, the lizard quickly lost interest in him and returned to munching on the Thrall in front of him with ravenous appetite. By seeing him doubting, his AI's hologram materialized in front of him.

'As long as you're aware of it, that's all that matters.' Xi reassured him with a tired tone as if she had already experienced all the vicissitudes of life.

‘Unconsciously, you still justify your murders by telling yourself that these Ordeals are not really reality, even though you know that this is not the case. You killed all these creatures, dinosaurs and even Zhorions without hesitation because they are not of the same species as you and you were profiting from their death. They brought you food, fur, materials or Aether. Their death had meaning. Killing a human for money, resources or Aether is not fundamentally different. By giving a different importance to human life, you are acting out of speciesism. Don’t judge life that way and don’t be hypocritical.

‘You don’t really feel guilty about killing these humans, because deep down you know that they are not really dead. It is a mistake to think like that, which sooner or later will lead you to failure. In three Ordeals and maybe even as soon as you wander around on B842 you will have to kill other Earthlings to guarantee your own interests. In a world at peace, you might wonder about this moral code that encourages the emergence of sociopaths, but believe me if you want to survive to the end, kindness will get you nowhere. Don’t kill for no reason, but if you have a solid reason, no matter how futile, you don’t have to hesitate.’

Jake stiffened when he heard Xi’s last words. It was the first time he had ever heard such ruthless words come out of her mouth. It was only then that he fully realized that his Oracle AI was not the duplicate consciousness of a mere young woman, but the mind of a warrior who probably had more blood on her hands than all the Zhorions in this city. Killing a human or wringing the neck of a chicken probably made no difference to her.

‘I’ll remember that.’ He finally answered after a few seconds of silence. What else could he say?

Deep down, even if he didn’t completely agree, he had already unconsciously begun to compromise for future instances where such a situation would arise.

He absolutely had to toughen up. It was not enough to depend on the confidence conferred by the character traits of his bloodline.

Exhaling a deep breath of hot air, he gave both his cheeks a vigorous slap to refocus his mind on reality and strode toward the temple. He had already scanned the catacombs beneath the altar without finding any access.

Of course, he had tried to simply pull up the liquid metal that had flowed into the crevices using his telekinesis, but the catacombs were simply too deep. Even by extending his Spirit Body more than 100 meters deep he had not been able to find any sign of this precious resource. However, just as when he had tried to go from underneath, the walls of an almost indestructible vault prevented him from making his way through.

Al f zulpio md val prlphulldpi foouqnoI, Jfcu jfl dmzhut om immc dmz frmovuz jfw. Tvu ouqniu jfl ovu qmlo nzmqalare mnoamr. Tvu mriw ovare ovfo gmovuzut vaq fgmpo ovu ouqniu jfl ovu mnfypu tfzcrull arlatu, jvahn luuqut om hfohv fii ovu iaevo jaovmpo iuooare frwovare mpo.

When he had finished climbing the few steps leading up to the large, dark arcade without a doorway, a warm draft of air blew abruptly from the depths of the temple. This level of wind and heat was nothing to him, but a normal human probably could not have stood still.

Vigilant, Jake unhesitatingly activated the Myrtarian Trance and Sight before entering the monument. As he stepped into the hall, he felt like he was being sucked into a black hole, but after a few meters he realized that the building wasn't so ghastly.

The walls were indeed coated with a material that absorbed 100% of the light emitted, but otherwise the hall was empty. To be honest, from his Spirit Body's feedback, the building looked more like a kind of barn where the Zhorion Thralls were certainly crowded together most of the time. The

permanent darkness inside was simply the environment these creatures preferred.

The temple was much larger than it appeared from the outside, but being devoid of furniture, he quickly found a trap door in the center of the only room and immediately blew it out of the way with a waving gesture. A mental scan allowed him to recognize the same type of catacombs as the one under the altar.

Delighted to find that it was so simple, Jake leapt into the hole without hesitation. He fell for about five seconds before hitting the bottom. He had noticed a ladder against one of the walls during his fall, but the priest could fly in his Berserk form, so it was probably not in use.

Once down, he scanned his surroundings again and calmly headed in a direction. With its multiple steel galleries and lack of light, this labyrinth would have been a nightmare for a normal human, but for Jake it was as simple as a walk in his own garden.

The few traps present were not able to overcome the telekinetic force field erected around him, while he could easily find his way around thanks to his Spirit Body, which now had a relatively high range.

In an instant he arrived in a room that he estimated would be right under the altar. He knew that he had arrived at his destination, because an armored safe door was now blocking his path.

Naturally he tried to open it by force, but the thick armored door did not move an inch. Becoming impatient, Jake started scanning the door for a clue, but the surface of the obstacle was perfectly smooth and shiny. He saw no code system, lock, or other identification device.

Nmo dartare f lmipoamr usur jaov val nzuluro arouiiaeurhu frt nuzhunoamr, vu jfl dmzhut om fgfrtmr ovu lmdo Quovmt.

At first, he gave the metal door a big punch that shook the walls of the catacombs, but the door held firm.

Second, he punched again, adding telekinesis for more impact and speed, but with no more success.

Thirdly, he concentrated his Aether of Strength, Agility and Constitution in his right arm for even more power and only then a slight indentation of one millimeter appeared on the surface of the plating.

But Jake's face darkened instead of rejoicing when he saw this meager achievement. His mental scan was formal. This door was several meters thick.

Even if he punched it non-stop without taking a break, this vault would still be in one piece the next morning.

The alloy making up the door and the walls of the safe appeared to be remarkably ductile. If he struck like this, he might just crush what was inside like a crushed can. The creator of this chest knew what he was doing when he designed this door.

Helpless, he had to consider other solutions.