

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 320 - Hakkrasha

‘Who would have thought that we would meet again here... Life sometimes holds strange surprises. ‘Will said plainly, stroking the feathers of the little winged dinosaur in front of him.

The creature was actually purring with contentment, but the noise was closer to a hornet’s hum than a relaxing throat snarl. Like a toad’s throat, it swelled and deflated with high frequency, removing all the points of cuteness that the animal had earned so far.

Enya winced again after sipping another sip of her drink, and only then did she take an interest in the feathered dragon with a vaguely intrigued look on her face.

‘Where did you find this creature? ‘She asked, changing the subject completely. ‘It looks like the wyverns of my world, but it’s clearly just a lizard with bird wings. Not sure if this animal is a blessing.’

In response, Will just chuckled mysteriously. Seeing that he didn’t intend to answer, Enya harrumphed without politeness and forced herself again to swallow a sip of her foul drink.

Reciprocally, as Will watched her ingest this nauseating decoction, he couldn’t help but raise the question on the tip of his lips.

‘Why do you force yourself to drink this and where does it come from?’

Determined to return the favor, the young woman smirked and continued to sip in silence. ‘Serves you right!’

Alas for her, Will was a businessman. Keeping his cool and remaining friendly had always been his specialty. Since she was not willing to talk, he leaned against the back of his chair, folded his arms and closed his eyes as if he intended to take a nap.

Enya was seething inside when she noticed how she had been outsmarted by the businessman, but she swallowed her pride and accepted her defeat. After all the setbacks she and her sister had endured, her bad habits of pampered nobles had been greatly corrected.

When she thought about her adventures on the island with her sister, sadness and regret flashed fleetingly on her face and she couldn't help but glance at the big alien napping on the bench next to their table.

This alien was about three meters tall, and looked like a Bronze Hulk with few differences. His b̄ar̄e feet and hands were covered with thick, long black claws, while a long series of horns of the same color ran down his spine. His b̄ar̄e torso revealed oversized muscles, while his legs were hidden by puffy canvas pants.

There was also a long, hooked horn on the creature's forehead, whose skull had been wrapped in a turban of some sort. The individual was snoring shamelessly in the midst of all these Players, indifferent to the prevailing tension.

His snoring sounded like a small tornado. From time to time, the alien would change his position, letting a tar-like dribble of drool from his half-open jaw trickle down.

As intimidating as this participant may seem, Enya could only be as relaxed as she was because he was right there beside her. No matter how much he slept, she knew that at the first sign of danger, this big dude would unleash hell to protect her.

This carefree alien and Player was called Hakkrasha.

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Before meeting him, Enya and Esva had survived alone by sticking together. At first, they had wanted to join Jake when he appeared, but they quickly realized that an invisible border separated the island in two. Trying to cross it meant exposing themselves prematurely to Zhorion patrols, an enemy they unfortunately could not handle.

Moreover, the land had been so turned over at this frontier that the soil was completely barren and devoid of vegetation. This no man's land was quite large, a little more than five kilometers and it was a part of the island that Jake had never visited.

At the beginning of the third trial, this area was still passable. The Zhorions stayed underground during the day and had not yet started chasing actively the participants.

Unfortunately, this had changed when certain quarrelsome races such as the Nosks and Krishs had chosen to make this their territory. It was their way of challenging the Zhorions' authority, but also of showing their superiority and dominance over all the other Players timidly hiding in the jungle.

The Nosks were still honorable, but one had to accept a duel to be allowed to cross, while the Krishs were as depraved as a humanoid fly could be. It didn't take long for the two sisters to realize that joining Jake and the others would be impossible.

However, with the progress of their Aether mental stats as well as their Spirit Body, their control over their Fireball Spell had become more and more adept to the point that they truly believed they could get through to the end on their own by remaining cautious and low-key.

Regrettably, fate had decided otherwise. One night, as they returned to their camp, they met the three Krishs from the very top of the rankings.

Like Tim weeks earlier, they had tried everything in their power, first resisting them, then fleeing with all their might. Unfortunately, they didn't have his luck nor any companions nearby.

Esya, her little sister had been blasted away by a plasma shot. She could still remember the disbelief on her sister's half-melted face. Even to this day, she still occasionally had nightmares about it.

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Although, she has never really been alone. When she thought she was doomed, she had bumped into Hakkrasha who was dozing around. In retrospect, it was definitely her Shadow Guide who had brought her here.

She might have been thankful for the Oracle, but the only thing she felt about it to this day was resentment. If there was a Path that could save her, why hadn't they met this participant sooner?

She still didn't have the answer. According to Ekanor, her Oracle AI, there were too many possibilities to conclude with certainty.

It could be due to interference from the Zhorions or local Soul Stones deposits. It could also be due to the Oracle System itself having decided to put her to the test in its own way, although by saying this Ekanor was blaspheming against its creator. Perhaps before that, Hakkrasha did not wish to be found. His Oracle Rank was, after all, above theirs...

So Enya had to embrace reality. She had been saved by her bracelet, while her little sister had died miserably instead. Life is unfair. The Oracle is unfair. That was what she had learned from this Ordeal.

The day she had met Hakkrasha, everything had changed for her. As she knocked herself into him, the alien had simply grabbed her by her collar between two fingers and lifted her up to his face with curiosity. Seeing that she was harmless, he had let her go and went back to sleep.

Just afterwards the three Krishs had caught up with her and woke him up again by mistakenly hitting him with a plasma shot in the nose. Then, Hakkrasha had flattened the culprit with one single almighty slap.

The Krish had barely made it out alive thanks to its comrades, but she had learned that the alien had been killed shortly afterwards by a man named Alef.

Enya still didn't understand the alien's abilities. The only thing she knew was that he was absurdly strong and smart. He always knew what to do and seemed capable of achieving anything. When she had understood that he was mostly peaceful and compassionate, she had followed him everywhere like a shadow.

When she was thirsty, he would conjure up water. When she was cold, he would provide her with clothes. When she wanted to earn points by hunting or doing missions, everything would become as easy as child's play, as if the rewards were coming straight to her.

Too much had happened while accompanying him, but the second lesson she had learned on that island was to always obey Hakkrasha. The beverage she was struggling to drink was his creation. It was disgusting, both in taste and texture, but it was truly miraculous.

By drinking this potion, her body stats had significantly improved. The Fire mana that she had been unable to regenerate since her arrival in the Mirror

Universe had begun to replenish itself by converting the surrounding Aether. Something she thought was impossible without elemental fire particles.

Right now, even if she was threatened with a knife at her throat, she would continue to enjoy her drink until she died, no matter how much gagging it might give her.

An hour earlier, Hakkrasha had suddenly led her here to the island's center and she had followed him as usual without second thoughts. She had been quite shocked when she saw the huge temple in the very middle of the plain.

Heavily armed Zhorions and Thralls had immediately searched them and escorted them inside with menacing eyes, but faced with the Zhorions of Harmony, Hakkrasha had merely raised his hands up with a smile and then fell asleep on the bench where he had been sleeping ever since.

At first, she had been anxious when she spotted all the dried blood covering the floor of the huge room converted into a tavern where the Players were staying. But she had soon realized that the situation was not quite what she thought it was.

The Zhorions were friendly and the participants were cordial to each other. It was hard to believe that a murderous Battle Royale was raging at this very moment.

It was then that she had recognized Will at the table right next to the bench where Hakkrasha had fallen asleep. Although she was surprised at such a coincidence, she had long since stopped caring about all these mysteries. Everything Hakkrasha did was an enigma.

Aware that neither Will nor Hakkrasha intended to wake up to chat with her, Enya decided to kill time by watching the Player Ranking. A quick look around confirmed to her that she was far from being the only one. The mood was heavy and hostile despite the occasional loud laughter.

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As she was shockingly discovering how the Player Rankings had changed in a few hours, loud arguing cries erupted a few steps away from her.