

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 324 - Last Trial

‘If you want to enter the temple, you must allow yourself to be searched and entrust your weapon to us.’ The patrol leader, the only one putting up a brave front, asked timidly when he saw the huge cleaver in Jake’s hand.

The weapon in question was almost five meters long and as wide as his chest. It lay motionless on his shoulder, but it was still quite ominous.

Jake stared intensely into the patrol leader’s shifting eyes for a few seconds, then calmly replied, ‘Sure.’

A guard came to seize his weapon and Jake leisurely tossed it towards him as if it were a small wooden stick. Unconsciously influenced by the ease with which he was carrying this weapon, the Zhorion mechanically raised his arms to receive the item without suspecting anything.

And then... he was carried away. Like a beginner trying to lift too heavy at his first bench press, the guard found himself pinned down on the floor with the huge cleaver in his hands. It took two of his colleagues to help him up.

The Zhorions present drew a deep cold breath when they saw this, but they avoided any comment. Once they were sure he had no other weapons, the guards escorted him inside without wasting time.

Before entering the temple, Jake lifted his gaze above him and saw that the Phantom Sanctuary was about to land on the platform at the top of the temple. He had arrived on time.

When he entered the gigantic building, Jake discovered another Zhorion city with more elaborate and advanced architecture, but having already wiped out an entire tribe, he was not particularly distressed.

He took great care, however, to memorize all the discrepancies. The Harmony tribe was more civilized than the Chaos tribe and technologically more advanced. The Thralls were more numerous and on average larger in size. Even from a distance, Jake could see the massive silhouettes of at least four skyscraper Thralls that he was not confident of facing.

After a few minutes, the Zhorions escorting him stopped in front of a dark, smooth brick cube building. There was no glass or decoration, and after placing their hands against the wall, the smooth bricks folded back on themselves to open a passageway.

‘You can come in. If you need anything, just ask one of our representatives inside. It is forbidden to leave this room until further notice. Even though it may appear on the surface that you are prisoners, this is not really the case, as you will realize once you are inside. Things should change in a few hours.’ The patrol leader explained summarily in the flaccid tone of someone who had repeated these words hundreds of times.

Perhaps because Jake was more intimidating than most of the other participants, the Zhorion had felt the need to be a little more explicit than usual, but it was still extremely elusive.

A Zhorion who had become magically confident once in the temple pricked his back with the tip of his spear to prod him forward, but he cringed when he saw that the human had not been unbalanced nor had he even reacted to his attack. As for the tip of his spear, it was definitely shorter and blunter than before...

Not caring much about their shenanigans, Jake entered the building undisturbed and was immediately greeted by the strange atmosphere of an alien saloon. There was no music or decoration inside and the mood was

rather austere. However, as in any popular tavern, the stone tables were all occupied and the participants present were drinking and feasting freely without worrying about their peers.

Well, that was at first glance. At second glance, Jake noticed the blood trails of various colors, the smell of urine, sweat and feces, and the palpable tension that threatened to engulf him. They were all laughing, drinking and eating as if nothing had happened, but a fight seemed to be on the verge of breaking out at any moment.

Naturally, Jake took note of the space in the middle of the room, which was devoid of tables and chairs. It was also the place with the most blood and guts on the floor.

Upon seeing a newcomer, the Players present raised their heads in his direction, but when they saw that it was just another human, most of them lost interest immediately.

Not everyone.

‘Jake!’

A female voice suddenly rang out and when Jake turned his head to it he recognized Enya and Will sitting together around a table. A large bronze alien covered with horns was sleeping idly on the bench next to them. A little further on, Kevin, Kate and his two other cousins George and Brice were also present.

Seeing them, Jake cracked a smile and strolled relaxingly in their direction. With a wave, he grabbed a stone chair with his telekinesis from a nearby table and sat unceremoniously next to Enya and Will, whom he hadn’t seen in a while.

While he was catching up with his classmates, a Krish widened his big orange fly eyes in his direction. He had only seen this person once from a distance, but how could he not remember it.

‘Krish? ‘(Do you recognize him?) His captain calmly asked his subordinate, who was none other than Arrogant Krish, the one who had chased Tim and Sarah weeks earlier.

‘Krish... Krish.’(Yeah, that’s him... the human because of whom I retreated.)

The leader, who was more than three meters tall, squinted his eyes slightly as he heard these words, which wasn’t simple at all with globular, bug-faceted eyes. With his experience and his keen senses, he knew that this human was the real deal.

Human Players were weak most of the time, mere cannonfodders, but there were exceptions. Sharing the same concerns, the two Krishs gazed at another table in the tavern where a group of humans were feasting in silence.

The old man at that particular table had left them with a very bad memory. Their comrade had been finished off by him after Hakkrasha had mortally wounded her. Their two groups were irreconcilable.

The most shocking thing was that he seemed full of deference to the frail human with long white hair sitting next to him. The young woman was not malnourished or in poor health. For the Krish, anything less than two meters tall and weighing less than 200 kg was considered frail.

This group of humans had arrived a few hours earlier and some of the Players present had immediately proposed them as the next sacrifices, thinking they were dealing with a bunch of weaklings. Result, one Nosk, two Krishs and 4 dead Wengols.

The Wengols were aliens three to four meters tall with two pairs of arms and a mushroom-shaped skull. Their skin was red-brown and seemed slimy and soft like that of an octopus. Although they weren’t in the top ranks, none of

them had died since the Ordeal began. The arrival of these humans had put an end to this record.

Jfcu, mr ovu movuz vfrt, vft fizuftw quQmzaxut ovu dfhul md fii ovu nfzoahanfrol frt ovu eimmQw efxu md ovu ojm Kzalvl mr vaQ vft rmo ulhfnut val rmoahu. Hu vft film lnmoout ovu ezmpn md vpQfrl fo ovu movuz urt md ovu ofsuzr, gpo vu vft lpghmrlhampliw rmo àllmhafout ovu immc md ovu jvaou-vfazut jmQfr jaov ovfo md Rpgw Hfiu.

After all, the difference was too striking. Even though he knew that she had certainly changed after her arrival in the Mirror Universe, it was impossible for him to imagine her other than by her hideous and terribly handicapped appearance.

He had a vivid imagination, but almost eight months had passed since their only meeting. Although he remembered her name and vaguely remembered her original features, it was too long ago.

As soon as Jake looked away from this group of humans, the wary gaze of the white-haired young woman had instantly focused on him, but he hadn't noticed anything. This was not, however, the case of her own companions.

'Do you know him?' Alef inquired in a hoarse voice as he carried on sharpening his sword with a grindstone.

The old man was the military instructor in charge of supervising this group of young prodigies. Wang Xiaoming, the Chinese middle-aged man also sitting at this table was his àssistant. It was a huge sacrifice for them to start their Ordeals so late just to ensure the coordination and safety of these 'kids'.

Ruby in particular was a special case. Orphaned since birth, she had been officially raised by her aunt... Except that she didn't have any aunt. As a pupil of the Earth Government, her 'aunt' was only a legal guardian and she had spent the first years of her life in a military hospital. Her talent had only been discovered by letting her test the VR game Trial Worlds by chance.

Perfectly aware of how few friends she had and how few opportunities she had to make some, it was strange for Alef to see her so unsettled at the sight of someone.

Faced with the inquisitive gaze of her superior, the young woman averted her eyes from Jake and simply retorted with an angelic smirk,

‘If I told you it is my Soul mate, would you believe it?’

Hearing this, Craig and Ryo feasting beside them violently choked on their food. If their Constitution wasn’t so high, they probably would have died just like that.

Alef and Xiaoming were surprised, but they knew better. When they were about to ask for more details, the artificial voice of the Sanctuary Bubble abruptly broke the silence, resonating in the minds of everyone, humans like Zhorion.

The fourth and final trial was about to begin.