

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

### Chapter 333 - Follow the Arrows

Upon arriving in the hall, Bawopi and the other Nosks had directly riveted their attention on Ruby, Craig and Xiaoming, but seeing the other participants and Zhorions all sitting together without making a fuss, he had suddenly hesitated.

Finally, he had dropped a few words in the Nosk language and his comrades had picked out a few free chairs. Xiaoming had breathed an involuntary sigh of relief when the alien squad lost interest in him. Stifling a groan of pain, the soldier had limped to Ruby and Craig, leaving several pools of blood in his wake.

Jake, like everyone else, had witnessed the tension between these two groups and had chosen to remain neutral. Once the 37 contestants had been seated in their respective chairs, the metal forming the chair had suddenly deformed at the armrests and chair legs, forming shackles that pinned their feet and ankles to the seat. They were now trapped on their chairs.

Everyone, including Jake, had tried to fight their way out of their shackles, but it was the moment the Phantom Sanctuary had chosen to take off. With the pressure of the ship's increasing acceleration, Players and Zhorions had abandoned their futile resistance to focus on the other individuals trapped with them.

Jake was relatively unconcerned, but he would be lying, however, if he said he was not shocked by Ruby Hale's new appearance. Since her entrance, his gaze had unconsciously tended to wander to her, as the contrast between the young woman in front of him and the one in his memories was so striking.

The only image of her that he had kept in his memory was that of a hideous runt, so horribly handicapped and feeble that it was difficult, even for a well-educated and open-minded person, not to be momentarily disturbed, or even disgusted at the sight of her. She seemed to defy logic by the simple fact that she was still alive. Even the undead didn't look so bad.

But now... it was still the same person. He could still recognize the shape and color of her eyes and some of the distinctive features of her previous face. Her current body and face were the ones she would have naturally developed if she had not been irradiated so much from the time when she was just a fetus.

Jake knew that by the time they arrived on B842, the Oracle had purged their bodies of all their genetic defects and healed any wounds they might have had. Nevertheless, he knew that the Oracle had a very perverse conception of normality.

For example, was a diabetic sick if he did not consume sugar? Was a bird unable to fly disabled? Not necessarily. Otherwise there would be no ostriches or chickens.

Ir movuz jmztl, mrhu ovu nmllagiu jmprtl vufiut frt ovu eurooah tuduhol juzu dakut, Rpgw Hfiu lvmpit laQniw vfsu guur vufiovw, rmovare Qmzu. Ir ovu QutapQ ouzQ, jaov vuz eurooah tuduhol hmzzuhout frt ovu arhzuflu ar vuz Auovuz lofol, ovu Qwmnfovw nzusuroare vuz dzmQ jficare jmpit vfsu talfnnufzut fl vuz Qplhiul zuopzrut om rmzQfi QuofgmialQ, gpo vuz gmru twlQmznvaf jmpit vfsu zuQfarut.

However, the Ruby in front of him was obviously a stunning woman. She was tall for a woman, taller than most men, and her body was ridiculously athletic for a woman who had been in a wheelchair a few months earlier. In contrast to his tanned complexion, her skin was rather pale, matching perfectly with her long snow-white hair.

Her hair was truly immaculate snow white! It was no longer the snow piss color he had dared to compare it to in his mind at the time. Jake couldn't help but feel awkward remembering how he had reacted at the time.

Having fought Digestors and monsters, each more repulsive than the next, it would have been impossible for him to show any shock when faced with a disabled human, no matter how severe the disability.

He was quite petty in those days, and in many ways he still was, but his perspective had changed greatly. Add to that his very bad acting at the time, and he had no doubt that Ruby had not been fooled despite her apparent courtesy.

In the end, it all started out as an Oracle Mission, but he had spent such a wonderful day that he had almost forgotten what she looked like. It was the first time he'd had such a good day in years and that's why he hadn't completely forgotten her after all this time.

While Jake stared at her with intense curiosity, Ruby's attention was on Bawopi. The human and the alien were glaring at each other as if they were trying to strike each other with their eyes. The chubby black man and the middle-aged Asian man beside her seemed to share the same hostility towards this group of Nosks.

Although he remained silent, Jake felt that he had gotten the gist of it after looking at the two groups respectively.

Deep down, he was rather worried. Whether it was the two Krishs, the Nosks, his two cousins, or the Zhorions, they were all extremely strong.

Although his Spirit Body was retracted, he could, with his upgraded Aether Vision and Myrtharian Sight, visualize the flow and essence of virtually all types of Aether. What his vision was telling him right now was that with the exception of one or two Zhorions, all of the individuals present had similar Aether fluctuations.

It wasn't just Aether fluctuations related to normal stats. Whether it was Will's Aether of Charisma surrounding him forming a sort of ghostly pinkish cloud or the strange fiery energy circulating in the meridians of Enya, these were abilities that he did not understand.

Everyone present seemed to have unique and special abilities or they could never have made it this far. He just had to pray for his own bloodline to be more special than theirs.

There was indeed one thing that neither his Myrtharian Sight nor his Aether Vision could evaluate, and that was the exact quality of the Spirit and Physical Body. It was on this aspect that he had a chance to shine.

Well, at least that's what he was hoping for. Seeing out of the corner of his eye how the Krish leader was flexing his muscles to loosen his metal bonds, he lost his optimism. The handcuffs securing the alien's arms to the armrests had already begun to distort ...

The next fights would not be easy...

By constantly inspecting the other contestants, Jake noticed that Enya had never really been able to relax after the appearance of the human with black hair and eyes. He would have liked to ask her telepathically if she knew him, but he had to save his strength for the grand finale.

Xi interrupted his reverie without warning, and indeed, a second after the Sanctuary Phantom stopped vibrating, the pressure on their seats disappeared.

To Jake's surprise, Xi let out an amused chuckle and explained [The Phantom Sanctuary has left the atmosphere. We are in space.]

'Oh I see...'

On the surface, he seemed to digest the news calmly, but inside his heart was beating fast. The idea that only the walls of the Phantom Sanctuary separated them from the void of space was something terribly frightening.

Tvu movuz nfzoahanfrol film luuqut om gu fjfzu md ovu ruj laopfoamr, huzofariw ovzmphev ovuaz mjr Ozfhiu All. Smqu juzu fl lpznzalut fl vu jfl, ulnuhafiiw Erwf frt ovu movuz lozfreu vpqfr jvm hfqu dzmq jmziti jvuzu lnfhu ozfsui vft rmo usur guur ovumzaxut.

Others, on the other hand, were completely stoic, as if they were waiting for the next subway stop. The Nosks and Krishs in particular were admirably calm. The only other alien who did not seem to care was Hakkrasha, who shone with his insouciance. Since his arrival in the hall, Jake had never seen him do anything but sleep.

Minutes later, a tremor shook the hall and Xi informed him that the Phantom Sanctuary had just docked to another, considerably more massive structure. Had they been able to see the ship from space, they would have been amazed to realize that the huge Phantom Sanctuary was like a fly hovering next to an eagle. So insignificant next to it that the two ships could not even be compared to each other.

Once anchored, the handcuffs securing them to their seats suddenly retracted, giving them full freedom of movement. The artificial voice that had not resounded since the beginning of the fourth trial was then heard again, but this time the voice no longer sounded so artificial and monotonous.

The voice was deep and soft, expressing itself with a perfect accent in the language with which they were most familiar. Clearly, it was no longer a mere artificial intelligence speaking to them.

[ Congratulations to the 37 participants who successfully overcame all the challenges that led them to this fateful moment. As soon as you were teleported inside the Phantom Sanctuary, you became our guests. Whatever conflicts you may have with each other, forget them.]

[Alas, I do understand that it is impossible to convince you. That is why there is one final test to settle your differences. Now that your freedom of

movement has been restored, you may have noticed the luminous indications appearing on the walls. Whatever motivations or Questions you have, and I suppose you have many, you will eventually get the answers you are looking for by following the lights to the end.]

[I look forward to getting to know all of you in person very soon... Good luck to you all.]

When silence returned, the 37 candidates became aware of the bright markings painted on the walls. These were literally arrows showing the way forward, usually with one or two mysterious symbols linked to them that none of them were able to translate.

One could have imagined, that they would have hurried off in the indicated direction to get ahead of their competitors, but as the voice predicted, a tangible animosity pervaded the room as soon as it left.

Hpqfrl, Nmlcl, Kzalvl, frt Zvmzamrl tzuj ovuaz jufnmrl frt Qpioaniu Snazao Bmtaul msuzifnnut, hiflvare dzmQ oaQu om oaQu euruzfoare lnazaopfiw tfxxiare lnfzcl.

A new battle was about to begin.