

The Oracle Paths

Volume 4: The Purgatory

Chapter 356 – Thelma

Minutes later, Jake and Will emerged from an elevator at the top of the skyscraper where a large metal platform awaited them. A Yellow Cube, about ten meters wide, emitting a pulsating light comparable to that of a dying sun, was floating in front of them one meter above the ground, slowly spinning on itself.

Accustomed to the procedure Will put his hand against the Yellow Cube and paid the Aether fee required for the teleportation. His body melted into the Yellow Cube and vanished in a flash, leaving his partner behind.

Jake had never been to Thelma before, but he was left unmoved by the trip. He just knew that compared to New Earth, this Floating Island was the jewel of B842 and also the home of the Oracle Overseer in charge of monitoring this planet.

The few guests from other planets and systems had to get special permission to visit B842 and except for a few exceptions, Thelma was the only place they were allowed to set foot. Of course, any form of violence was forbidden.

Thelma was unique not because this Floating Island was about the size of India, but because it was considered a full-fledged Oracle City as a whole. The Oracle's rules of non-violence applied to the entire island. The force field surrounding the island was strong enough to prevent the intrusion of the most powerful Digestors swarming on B842.

It was by far the safest place on the planet and could be considered the capital of all Oracle Cities on B842. To give an order of comparison, New Earth was about the size of the United Kingdom and its only Oracle City was only a few kilometers in diameter. It was insufficient to accommodate the entire Earth population, but above all the safety of its inhabitants was not fully guaranteed.

After paying the Aether fee in turn, the scene in front of Jake blurred and the next instant he was on a similar, but much larger platform.

Looking curiously around him he noticed that this new platform was several kilometers wide and that hundreds of Yellow Cubes similar to the one he had just borrowed were floating on its surface about 10 meters apart from each other.

Close to the edge of the platform, Jake walked closer to the void and a feeling of vertigo immediately overtook him. If not for a guardrail and an Oracle Drone to catch him, he would probably have tipped over into the void.

Indeed, the very top of the skyscraper where he was now standing was several tens of thousands of meters above the ground. It was the tallest construction he had ever seen.

If it was just that, he wouldn't have been so dizzy to the point of having wobbly legs. The reason for his momentary paralysis was that this skyscraper had been erected on the edge of this Floating Island. When he leaned over, he did not see the floor of the island and its inhabitants, but the planet B842 below.

It was such a shocking sight that no one could be mentally prepared for it.

B842 jfl f nifruo iaouzfiw ovu laxu md f prasuzlu. Tvfo Jfcu hmpit hmrouqnifou ao ar aol uroazuow mz fiqmllo ar aol uroazuow jfl fizuftw lvmhcare ar aoluid, qfcare vaq zufiaxu ovfo ovuw juzu rmo bplo f duj caimquouzl dzmq ovu lpzdfhu, gpo nzmfgiwi fo fr praqfearfgiu talofrhu.

They were in space.

The fact that the air was breathable, that the sky was blue and the temperature mild was a real mystery that could blow the minds of the greatest thinkers. However, with his razor-sharp vision, Jake could distinguish countless stars, satellites and other celestial bodies that were chaotically moving across the sky.

Space with its multicolored stars and its silence seemed enchanting and within reach, yet he knew deep down that if he crossed the barrier isolating Thelma from this void, he would face an incomparably hostile environment.

[With your Myrtharian Bloodline, you might survive. It's hard to say.] Xi reassured him as she gazed indifferently at this wonderful vision through Jake's eyes.

Jake thought for a moment about the possibility and realized that he was indeed not completely helpless if the worst were to come. The Kintharians could produce their oxygen and get their nutrients from the radiation emitted by a bright star and rich soil.

Even in a completely sterile environment, he might be able to survive for some time by creating the conditions he needed with his Aether Core.

The human mind feared the unknown. Realizing that he would not necessarily die, even in a sidereal void like this one, he regained his calm instantly and was finally able to concentrate on the fine details of this grandiose vision.

The first thing Jake noticed was the patchwork surface of the planet. This planet was indeed a recombined planet from different worlds. What was more surprising to him was that this phenomenon was clearly observable at this distance.

When he had first wandered on B842, he had experienced firsthand how the environment and climate could change abruptly every few kilometers. At such a distance from the planet, the planet's surface should have seemed relatively homogenous to him.

But this was not the case. Although there were tens of thousands of distinct areas covering the face of the globe exposed before his eyes, it was much less than his own

experience suggested. This made him realize that B842's design was not completely anarchic but was the result of complex engineering.

"Impressive isn't it. "A hoarse voice breathed a few centimeters above his ear in Oraclean.

Surprised, Jake turned his head towards the culprit and his eyes bulged as he came face to face with an old alien with long, floppy ears and a long mustache. His skin was grayish and covered with strange pea-like boils.

The individual wore rusty armor covered with gashes and a long, frayed black cloak hung loosely down his back. Despite his slightly prostrate posture, this alien was twice his size.

"First time on Thelma?" The alien in armor mocked gently as he saw his startled reaction.

"Yes, he's coming with me on business. "Will explained himself hastily with an apologetic expression. When he didn't immediately find Jake at his side, he had hurriedly looked for him with both eyes before finding him here.

"Oh... Will Hopkins, right? We met earlier this morning. The overflowing energy of lesser species will always elude me... You're striving to give some meaning to your existence when what really matters is right in front of you."

Faced with the old man's sanctimonious and rambunctious tone, Will just smiled and said nothing. He had already received a long moralizing sermon on his previous arrival on Thelma. This veteran soldier was in charge, along with a few other colleagues, of overseeing the security of this transportation tower and seemed to be mortally bored. The Oracle alone knew how many years this alien had lived.

The old soldier recounted a few anecdotes from his time when he was still dashing about, not forgetting each time to tell them how important it was to cherish what really mattered instead of chasing chimeras.

Will had excellent self-control and managed to maintain a fake expression of fascination on his face from the beginning to the end of the alien's speech. Sadly, Jake was not so patient. After a few minutes, an irrepressible yawn escaped from his mouth, bringing the old man's monologue to an abrupt end.

Faced with his comrade's blunder, Will stiffened up but the alien didn't seem to mind. On the contrary, instead of reprimanding him, he redirected the conversation to whatever had prompted him to talk in the beginning.

"If you have questions about what you see, you can ask me. I don't know everything, but I know enough."

Jake didn't change his expression, but his gaze turned back to the incomprehensible patchwork surface of B842.

"How does day and night work on B842? "Jake asked after a while and continued to stare into the void in front of him. "I see a lot of stars and moons orbiting around us, but with the size of this planet we should never see the same star or moon again from

one day to the next. Yet, in a given area, I remember that the sun and moons do not change."

Will remained silent, but from his attentive face, he was also interested.

"Ahem, actually I don't know..." The old alien admitted with embarrassment after failing at the very first question. But when he saw their disappointed expressions, he added a few words of clarification, "What I can tell you is that dimensional portals have been set up everywhere like a game of mirrors. A bit like wormholes that you can't see and that connect different points in space together. It helps to ensure stable environments and climates to some extent, but it also serves other ends... more practical."

"You mean..." Jake suddenly thought of something.

" Exactly. It's a defense system. " The veteran Evolver confirmed with a brooding grimace. "To prevent the Digestors from escaping from B842 too easily, but above all to prevent those coming from elsewhere from invading us... These mirror sets are not just below us, but above us as well. Don't trust what you see, it could only be an illusion. Without a guide or the computing power of a Lieutenant-Colonel's Oracle Device it is impossible to leave the planet without authorization. It would be nothing short of suicide."

Just as the old alien was about to conclude shocking them after dropping bomb after bomb, Jake's attention, who had never stopped staring at the surface of B842, was suddenly caught by a strange purple spark in a brown cyclone spot on the planet's surface.

Just based on its size and distance, which he couldn't really fathom, this vortex on B842's surface was probably the diameter of a hundred milky way. For this spark to be visible, a lightning bolt or an explosion of unimaginable magnitude had just struck this place.

Upon discovering the reason for Jake's astonished surprise, the old soldier's face instantly darkened, his almost senile kindness giving way to intense gravity. An overwhelming murderous aura suddenly began to radiate from his pores.

"It's time for you to leave, I have work to do. "The alien growled ferociously as he still gently but firmly pushed them towards the elevator.

"What's going on? "Jake asked worriedly, realizing that things weren't as simple as they thought.

Instead of answering him, the alien materialized his bracelet and psychic fluctuations emanated at high frequency from his body, betraying that he was communicating with other units.

The few veteran Evolvers on the platform who were as relaxed and nonchalant as he was suddenly set in motion like a swarm of bees stirring in battle. Weapons appeared in their hands and several of them began assembling a huge futuristic cannon pointing straight at the hurricane that had captured Jake's attention.

Jake and Will, like the other visitors, were dumbfounded and momentarily frozen in place. Seeing that they hadn't run away, the old alien grunted and pushed them out again.

"Don't be surprised, it happens every day. That's why Thelma, us and the Oracle Guardians are in that shit hole. B842 like every planet in the Mirror Universe is separated into various environments on both a micro and macroscopic level. Going from a rainy to a dry and hot environment is not dangerous for an Evolver, or even a human as long as the air is breathable. These are the climate changes you've experienced on the B842 so far.

"It's a different matter if you suddenly pass through the atmosphere of a gassy, unbreathable planet prone to storms and hurricanes. With the exception of a few rare species, nothing survives there for very long and life doesn't develop naturally. Unfortunately, Digestors thrive everywhere... "

Jake and Will nodded, believing they had understood. As they were about to ask one last question, the old alien pushed them into the elevator with a few thousand other visitors that other soldiers had hurriedly led here.

Another veteran suddenly pressed the switch and the elevator roared up, the platform at the top of the tower disappearing from their sight in the blink of an eye. Minutes later, as they left the tower, Jake and Will heard terrifying beastly roars and the muffled thunderclaps of multiple cannons.

Bpo oval jfl rm imreuz ovuaz hmrhuzr frwqmzu, gpo ovfo md ovu Ozfhiu Osuzluuz. Tval jfl ovu tfaiw iadu md ovu suouzfrl urozplout jaov ovu luhpzaow md Tvuiqf frt ovu uroazu nifruo B842.