

The Oracle Paths

Volume 2: The First Ordeal

Chapter 40 – Allow me to doubt it

The invisible pressure that prevented them from breathing disappeared as suddenly as it had come. Jake took a deep breath to calm himself. Aslael may have looked and acted wacky, but his power was real.

‘The time has come for me to abandon you.’ Aslael resumed peacefully.

‘But before that one last important thing to mention. You must search for the Cubes.

‘These technological gems are exclusive to the Oracle. No one knows how the Oracle System designs them. They come in many types and sizes. The one you absolutely must find if you want to become a Player is the Red Cube. It will give you access to your First Ordeal.’

As he said those words, his eyes lingered on Jake.

‘Most Cubes are accessible from the Oracle cities, but Red and Black Cubes are numerous in the wild. The Black Cube is a teleporter. With enough Aether to pay the travel expenses, it is your best chance to find your loved ones if they survive until then.

‘On planet B842, all roads lead to Thelma.’

Despite these positive words, the morale of his audience was at an all-time low.

‘Come on, don’t pull that face!’ Aslaël teased them with his shrill voice, undoubtedly delighted to see their faces so deflated.

‘To be honest, you don’t really have any goals to achieve. You can rot in here for all I care. No matter which way you go, as long as you can get some Aether, you’ll be all right. The Oracle device on your wrist is here to tell you how. It’s not like you’re on your own.’

‘In other words, we don’t have a choice. We’ll literally have to kill to survive, unless we can offer a service in exchange for lightning.’ Summarized the businessman with glasses. ‘I’m sure these Oracle cities are full of opportunities for a businessman like me anyway.’

Not everyone shared his optimism. The other three middle-aged men were sweating profusely. Jake was already seeing them commit suicide before the end of the week, if they survived until then.

The Playboy also seemed terrified, but managed to keep a slightly relaxed, though slightly tense, smile on his face, probably to keep up with the five young women beside him.

As for these young women, the voluptuous blonde watched the Playboy’s Colt with almost hypnotic intensity. It was easy to guess what was going through her mind.

Of the other four students, only one seemed calm. But it could have been terror. People all reacted differently to such a situation.

Not very tall, no more than one meter sixty, generous shapes and a slender waist. Despite its very feminine forms, she seemed small and fragile to Jake.

The first reason being that she was the youngest woman in the group, with barely twenty years on the clock. The second reason was that she was hiding behind the Playboy, as if she didn’t want to be noticed. She was also the only one wearing jeans, rather than a dress or minishort.

Unfortunately for her, her modesty might have been a drawback, as these skinny jeans were not known to be suitable for off-road trekking. Luckily she was wearing

flat boots, where one of the other young women had had the bad idea to wear heels.

As for her face, it was dazzling. A beautiful brown hair falling below her shoulders, with blue strands at the ends, probably the expression of a late adolescent revolt. Her eyes were of an ocean cyan colour matching her hair colour, her bewitching lips with the right amount of volume, her little nose slightly trumpet-shaped, matching impeccably with the rest.

One could have reproached her for her pale skin, but the pink of her cheeks and the total absence of imperfection on the contrary gave her an aura of virginal purity.

However, all the women in the group, both the young student and the mother of the child, wore mostly mid-season clothes despite the month of December. Tops, T-shirts or short dresses. The men were no different in this respect, except for the businessman who wore a suit. None of them had a jacket.

Since everyone spoke English, even with the accents it was difficult to identify their country of origin with their Caucasian physique. With global warming the winters were milder and depending on the country the temperatures could be quite warm at that time.

Seeing their outfits, Jake sighed mentally. With the ever-changing climates of this world, this group was in danger of having a tough day. There was even a good chance that they would perish, not from the monsters, but from cold, or thirst.

But, well, none of that was his concern. As soon as the Instructor finished his speech, he would leave. Only the child aroused his pity, but he had already gone through far too much mourning to be affected. He would leave it to fate.

Speaking of the Instructor, he would sweep his inquisitive gaze from person to person, sometimes giggling when he read an original thought or one that moved him. However, he did not always smile.

When he stopped on Jake, the glow in his eyes would intensify and his expression would get harder. Then he would nod approvingly, before moving on to another person. The man in the suit was also entitled to this kind of consideration, as was the Playboy or the young female student.

Fzmq oaqu om oaqu, f hmqnflamrfou uknzullamr jmpit hmqu msuz vaq jvur vu jfl àllullare ovu qmovuz frt hvait, gpo vu jmpit lmmr zuefar val fqplut rupozfiaow. Bpo dmz Jfcu, ovu qullfeu jfl hiufz: Alifui lfj ovuq fl fizuftw tuft.

Jake coldly analyzed all the information revealed and immediately decided on his route plan. Forward to the Red Cube!

According to the Oracle, one of these Cubes was not far away but in the opposite direction to the nearest Oracle city. His plan, however, remained the same.

Even if after his death battle against a Digestor lvl2 his Aether and Body stats had increased, he was just confident to handle only one Digestor of this level. A level 3 or a group of these creatures and he would literally gamble his life on a dice roll.

The first Ordeal would undoubtedly be a terrible challenge, but he would come out stronger and more importantly alive, since the Oracle guaranteed their survival on the first four rounds.

Aslael suddenly clapped his hands, which suddenly took Jake out of his inner monologue. He then realized that the Instructor was simply applauding him.

‘You’ve got potential, kid, that deserves a little nudge. Here, take this.’

Jake grabbed the silver cubic object thrown at him by The Trainer and put it away without looking or showing any change in expression.

This sequence of events happened so fast that it seemed as if nothing had happened, but unfortunately the group was perfectly attentive and didn’t miss any of the injustice.

‘Hey!’ The Playboy snarled, in a stirred-up tone. ‘Why does he get a gift and we don’t? If he’s as good as you say he is, his chances of survival are already better than ours.’

Tvur ovu zulo md ovu ezmpn smahut ovuaz mjr duuiarel md arbploahu, jaov ovu ukhunoamr md ovu qfr ar ovu lpao frt ovu wmpre jmqfr, jvm zuqfarut laiuro, ovmprev ovuw lofzut fo ovu nmhcuo ar jvahv Jfcu vft npo ovu laisuz hpgu.

Seeing that Aslael continued to smile and look up at the sky as if he could not see them, the group turned their anger to the recipient of this attention, Jake.

‘Hey, let’s see what you got.’ The Playboy assaulted him, suddenly pointing his Colt at Jake.

‘Sorry, buddy, but there’s no way we’re letting you walk away with something that could save our lives. I’m not just thinking about myself here, I’m thinking about the rest of the group.’

Jake gave him a predatory look. It was only then that the Playboy realized that the man in front of him, the man he had pointed his gun at, was an athlete with a ripped physique against whom he wouldn’t stand a chance in single combat.

The tangled hair, the shaggy beard, his eyes of embers, the machete in his right hand, the semi-automatic pistol stored in his belt. Everything about this man reminded him of a ferocious beast capable of crushing him like an insect.

‘What if I don’t feel like it?’ Jake replied nonchalantly, staring down at him.

The Playboy was terrified, but he couldn’t back down now, his reputation depended on it. Taking a deep breath, he repressed the terror in his voice and forced himself to answer threateningly.

‘You will pay the consequences.’ He declared, lowering his Colt’s safety to give credence to his words.

The Playboy looked to the women behind him for courage. Fatal mistake.

Ao ovfo qmquro, f lvfzn nfar ar ovu hzmmc md val jzalo qftu vaq tzmn ovu epr. Tvu nfar jfl lm ukozuqu ovfo val salamr gipzzut frt oufzl hfqu om val uwul. Hu hmpit rm imreuz duui val zaevo vftr. Ar Ozfhiu Pfov gufpoadpiiw ukuhpout. Tvu dfho ovfo val ojm lofoplul hmqgarut efsu vaq fr uknimlasu lnuut fiqmlo ovzuu oaqul ovfo md ovu fsuzfeu qfr qplo vfsu nifwut aol nfzo.

‘Allow me to doubt it.’ Jake simply replied, picking up the Colt, emptying its cylinder and handing him the gun and the three remaining bullets in his other hand. He then let go of his victim’s twisted wrist, dusted off the playboy’s white shirt, and went back to his seat as if nothing had happened.