

## Oracle 821

### [Chapter 821 L Have To Watch What L Eat To](#)

Jake didn't answer immediately, checking on his companions first. He breathed a sigh of relief when he realized that none of them had been killed. However, he was also surprised to find that they had all been defeated by a single attacker.

A freakish woman, looking more like a scarlet humanoid flower than a human, stood in the center of the bunker, blood-red vines sprouting from her body and suspending his bound comrades in the air. What was jarring to him was that even Azeus' electric shocks seemed to have no effect on this thing.

Trea had been disarmed, her bow lying dozens of feet below her, Fo had used up all her Talismans and lost her Staff, while Tim and Skorgeld had also been stripped of their battleaxes. Lord Phenix was also tied up, having lost a bunch of feathers in a matter of seconds.

The defeat had been as swift as it was brutal.

Crunch, with his huge, rubbery body, was the only one who appeared indifferent to the vines binding him, but he couldn't move either. His indignant meows could do nothing.

Jake's pupils narrowed as he saw that Tim had begun to mobilize his Myrtharian Bloodline. He had obtained a sample of Blood Essence from Jake before the Ordeal and his hybrid Bloodline had already reached level 2. The heat and radiation he generated was nothing to someone like Jake, but the startling thing was that these vines were also unaffected.

Lord Phenix too was generating flames of searing heat, but nothing worked. These vines seemed indestructible.

A few seconds later, Lord Phenix, Tim and Azeus stopped struggling and passed out like the others, which made Jake's hair stand on end. Seeing thousands of blood red flower petals drifting towards him, he felt an acute sense of danger and activated his Oracle Shield right away.

Inside his Oracle Shield, his vision blurred slightly and he experienced a ghastly nausea that almost caused him to vomit. If his Constitution and Vitality were not so high he would have lost consciousness too.

'Poison...!' He concluded, looking at the flower woman.

[They're on the same level as the Nullifyer.] Xi warned him with a slight anguish in her voice. Their defeat against the Nullifyer was a trauma that their minds had not yet recovered from.

Safe in his Oracle Shield, Jake then focused his attention on the second individual, the man he had just confronted.

At first glance he was a handsome bearded middle-aged man about 7 meters tall. But when one looked at him a little more carefully, one noticed that his skin was glowing in a supernatural way, rainbow sheen on its surface giving the illusion that it was covered with scales.

This was what a normal human could see. When Jake looked at this man he saw a very different world. His "scales" were not scales. They were microscopic mini-cubes arranged in such a precise manner that it was almost impossible to figure out that this man had no genetic connection to humans.

But what really caught Jake's interest was that these microscopic cubes had a familiar appearance. If one ignored their size, their color and polished jewel-like structure filled with a faint pulsing light was the same as the Oracle Cubes on B842.

At the end of his third Ordeal, he had met an Oracle Guardian using the Cube magic of the Ancient Designer Aas. At the time he hadn't made the connection, but now as with the Zhorion race descending directly from Xion Zholvur, he came to realize that the other Ancient Designers also had their own descendants.

"Didn't you hear my question?" The cube man's face darkened and a flow of baleful orange energy enveloped his body and his sword. "Prysm, kill them."

"Wait!" Jake shouted as he held up his hands. "We had nothing to do with what just happened here. We just got here and it was already like that."

Prysm laughed coldly,

"And why should we believe you?" She scoffed sarcastically as she tightened the constriction of her vines.

His companions, especially Fo and Trea, the weakest physically of the group, immediately started screaming as their bones broke by the dozen. Tim and Azeus were okay but they didn't seem to appreciate this free osteopathic session.

"We're only here to look for someone. She wasn't even here when we arrived!" Jake replied, suppressing his anger. "As for what attacked you, we found that when we got here."

Casually and more rudely than he would have wanted, he tossed a handful of Schwazen feathers at the feet of Prysm and the other man. Recognizing these feathers, but above all perceiving their extraordinary hardness, they lost their attitude.

Prysm loosened the grip of her vines and his comrades could finally breathe properly, but they did not regain consciousness. The man gazed at the feathers for a moment, then back at Jake and asked,

"Who were you trying to free?"

"Ruby Hale, a Digestor Trojan that Lost Divinities recently gave you." Jake answered honestly.

If this Mirror Vanguard guy wanted to investigate them it would be a piece of cake. Sooner or later his Oracle Shield would overheat or he would run out of Aether and he was sure he couldn't outrun or defeat this Player without leaving the planet.

The two individuals' killing intent that had almost disappeared erupted forth much stronger and more oppressive than before and Jake knew that his answer had provoked them.

"Any friend of the Digestors is our enemy." The bearded man replied theatrically, aiming his sword at him.

The cube man's entire body rippled, and the surface of his skin turned a ruby red color. Using his Myrtharian Sight, Jake noticed that all the microscopic cubes in his body had taken on the appearance of a Red Cube.

A halo of blood red energy enveloped the Player's body and Jake had a bad feeling. The kind where his Oracle Shield wouldn't last very long.

"Wait!" He shouted again as he scrambled to think through the situation. "We're not Digestors, we just want revenge on Lost Divinities. Ruby is a Digestor, but we were able to stabilize her condition. Lost Divinities ambushed her to restore the Digestor's dominance over her, which allowed them to predict our movements with their Oracle Paths again. We just want to save her, stabilize her if possible and then get our revenge."

Listening to Jake and his friends' crazy plan, the bearded man gaped at him. As for Prysm, she burst out laughing.

"Pffff! Did you hear that, Vexa? They want to use a Digestor as a jammer to get back at Lost Divinities, hahahahaha!"

"Are you serious?" The cube man asked solemnly.

"I don't joke about this kind of thing." Jake replied firmly.

The man looked at him thoughtfully for a short while and then retracted his sword and said warmly,

"In that case, maybe we can work together. Our interests converge. My subordinates have been killed and you will replace them temporarily. You are a little weak, but if you are still alive, it means that you have passed the Oracle test coordinated by Lost Divinities, Anti-Life, Demiurge and my faction. There must be something we can do with you."

Jake didn't like the guy's disappointed tone, which sounded like he was reluctantly accepting second-hand products for lack of choice. His answer, however, confirmed to him that the attack from these super factions was not a gratuitous act of malice and they had followed certain rules in carrying out this large-scale Player massacre.

"My name is Vexacion Square, but you can call me Vexa." The man finally introduced himself, perhaps remembering the basic rules of etiquette.

"Prysm. Just Prysm." The cynical flower woman replied laconically.

"Jake Wilderth." He replied flatly as he warily turned off his Oracle Shield. "Can I have those feathers back?"

Vexa was taken aback by his question but nodded absentmindedly.

"These feathers are good material but they are slightly Corrupted." Prysm cautioned him as she detected the presence of many metals in the Myrtharian's body.

Jake didn't know this and immediately turned gloomy.

'Damn it, now I have to watch what I eat too...'

Seeing his discomfited expression, the flower woman giggled again, heartily this time, and released his companions. The substance she was releasing into the air to keep them asleep dissipated and they regained consciousness within seconds.

"What happened?" Tim grumbled as he rubbed his eyes sleepily.

"We were spared." Jake answered crisply.

He then told them what they had missed and the deal they had made, or rather the deal Vexa had forced upon him. Azeus showed no disappointment, but Tim and the Beskyrians were dejected, convinced that Jake had caved in to save them.

"It wasn't your fault." Jake insisted at the end to console them. "Even alone the situation would have been the same."

Whether they believed him or not was irrelevant, but after that they stopped being depressed and accepted their new role as conscripts for Mirror Vanguard. After they had talked among themselves, Vexa walked towards them with a grim look on his face.

#### [Chapter 822 Corruption Ls Not A Big Deal](#)

"Before we talk about any mission, I will have to mold you into real soldiers first." The cube man said as he stared at them with a dour look. "We're going up against a whole nation of elite Schwazens this time and an ordinary standard won't do. You wanted revenge on Lost Divinities, maybe you'll get your chance if you survive what's ahead.

"Regrettably, I'm caught up in the circumstances. Knowing the Schwazens' culinary habits, my men were probably captured and may still be alive. But not for long. We leave now. Better a demonstration than a long speech."

Jake and the others nodded grimly. Vexa gestured to Prysm and the flower woman sashayed toward them with a short, streamlined metal device in her hand reminding him of those metal detectors used in body searches.

"Legs apart, arms spread horizontally, chin up." Prysm ordered in a monotone voice as if she had uttered the phrase a thousand times.

Skorgeld clutched his battleaxe tightly with both hands instead of complying, and Vexa derided them sternly,

"I advise you to listen to her. It's not your hidden weapons this detector is after. Do you really think we are afraid of you?"

The Myrtharian Nerds' eyes shifted to Jake and after a short hesitation he nodded and grunted,

"Do as she says."

Skorgeld was screened first by the device. She first ran it up his body from his feet to his head, and then at the end instructed him to stare at the lens end of the device. The Beskyrian complied reluctantly and a spiritual impulse that Jake could barely feel passed through his Spirit Body, reaching directly into his soul.

A few seconds later, Prysm froze, her blank stare that of someone reading a mental interface, then she said,

"Corruption 3%, Stage 1. He's clean."

Vexa visibly relaxed, then motioned for her to do the next ones. Jake remained calm but inwardly he was incredibly shocked. If such a device existed, why didn't they all have one on them to monitor their own condition.

He didn't know what this Stage 1 meant, but thinking back on his own assumptions he surmised it had to do with the Aether Runes' degree of miniaturization, or perhaps the severity of the symptoms.

"Corruption can't be purged from an individual, but it's okay as long as the percentage and Stage remain within tolerated thresholds." Vexa explained for Jake and the others as he saw their inquisitive expressions. "Like Bloodlines, Corruption has a Grade, but so high that even the Mirror Universe can't get rid of it perfectly. And like a Bloodline, when the accumulation of corrupted Aether is high enough, the Corruption will upgrade. When a Bloodline advances a level, its Aether Code is slightly compressed, making room for other dormant abilities. The same goes for Corruption.

"At Stage 1, Corruption is virtually harmless, affecting your personality only superficially. You may not even realize it."

While the Mirror Vanguard leader filled them in, Prysm ran the Corruption detector on the other Myrtharian Nerds and their results turned out to be in the ballpark. Soon it was Jake's turn.

Before she could repeat the instructions, he spread his arms and legs and let her do her job.

" Stare at the device."

FLASH!

"That's good, thanks."

Jake winced, not liking at all the sensation reminiscent of having his soul dipped into a tub of ice water. However, he forgot about his gripes when he saw Prysm and Vexacion's lugubrious expressions.

"Can you say that again?" The cube man said ominously.

"Corruption 23%. Stage 2." Prysm cleared her throat and reread the scan result aloud, having trouble believing it herself.

Vexacion teleported in front of Jake and a Violet Cube resembling a gigantic amethyst appeared behind him as the microscopic cubes on the surface of his skin turned the same color. A torrent of spiritual energy surged from his body and coursed through Jake's consciousness without him being able to resist.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" Jake gasped in anger. It was his Soul, not his hand or his leg that this Player had just analyzed.

Vexa ignored his icy tone and asked emotionlessly,

"Have you been in prolonged contact with a Rank 13 or higher Digestor lately? By prolonged contact, I mean at least three to six months.

"Not that I know of." Jake frowned. "Ah, before the Fourth Ordeal I spent a few days in a Dungeon Digestor. They're Rank 15 if I remember correctly."

"No. That can't be it." The cube man shook his head. "Did you directly assimilate the Aether from a Digestor without first processing it through the Aether Compression of your Oracle Device?"

Jake thought hard and eventually he recalled his fight with the very first Digestor he had faced moments after arriving on B842.

"Just one. A Rank 2, the first day I arrived in the Mirror Universe." He answered truthfully, not daring to hide the truth for something so important.

Vexa shook his head again.

"No, that can't be it either. Their minds are too primitive and the Corruption too low before Rank 4 to pose any threat. At worst, it only accounts for 1 or 2% of your overall Corruption and that's not nearly enough to explain a Stage 2. There must be something else. Something more recent."

Jake needed no further clues to find the answer. The cause was the event when he had tried to stabilize Ruby with his Words of Power. He told Vexa what had happened a few weeks earlier and how he had gotten through it by combining the spirit power of all the Eltarians and Myrtharian Nerds available at the time.

"So they are all Corrupted." The Mirror Vanguard leader concluded eerily. "But you've averted the worst outcome. If that was what you were planning to do to stabilize this Ruby after finding her, forget it for now. If this kind of incident happens two or three more times, it will be you who is beyond saving."

"Are you telling me that Ruby can't be saved?" Jake's face fell as he picked up on his fatalism.

"He didn't say that." Prysm snickered. "We can't save them, but we can help them. Likewise, we can't rid you of the Corruption either, but we can help you stay yourself and live with it. Of course, you're not a half-Digestor like her. Even at equal Corruption, your prognosis for maintaining a normal life would be much better, but sooner or later, yeah... we'll have to put you down..."

"She speaks the truth." Vexa replied sorrowfully. "This is the fate of everyone who fights the Digestors on the front lines. Prysm runs the detector on me."

The flower woman stiffened, but she obeyed wordlessly. A few seconds later, she muttered blandly,

"Corruption 43%, Stage 4."

Vexa patted Jake's shoulder and grinned,

"See... Corruption is not a big deal, but you must have the kind of mental strength and determination to pull it off that the average Evolver would never achieve. The way you are now, a Corruption of 50%, even at Stage 2, would be enough to turn you into a monster that the current you would find hard to fathom. Don't be fooled though. Sooner or later I will lose control too and someone will be responsible for taking me down if I don't commit suicide on my own."

Sensing the gloomy atmosphere in the bunker, Vexa and Prysm both erupted in laughter before very quickly reverting to a straight face.

"Let's go. Time is running out."

Moments later, the group flew in the presumed direction the Schwazens had taken. They found a few more feathers along the way, as well as blood from various human and alien species, and then nothing.

Vexa landed, then in frustration pummeled a cliff to dust, which crumbled with a booming roar.

"They've lost us again. These bastards are jamming our Oracle Paths." Prysm sighed with a crestfallen countenance. "They could be in any city by now. Until another Mirror Vanguard subfaction sends us a Tracker we're stuck."

"I guess we have no choice." Vexa grumbled tiredly.

Having followed their conversation, Jake stepped in,

"It's not over yet. To find Ruby we came prepared. Tim and Skorgeld do your thing."

Jake, Trea and Fo transferred their Luck Aether to them and Tim focused on the captured Mirror Vanguard prisoners rather than Ruby and immediately took a few steps in a certain direction. He then transferred his own Luck Aether to Skorgeld who confirmed the direction given.

"This way." Tim and Skorgeld said in unison with confidence.

"Luck?" Vexa and Prysm exclaimed knowingly. "We're... lucky I guess to have you."

"Looks like we won't have to wait for our tracker to continue the search." The flower woman chimed happily.

The group took off again, Jake using his telekinesis to support Skorgeld, Fo and Trea while Crunch followed them, galloping stealthily below them. Lord Phenix flew just below them, concealing their movements by masquerading as an ordinary bird at high altitude.

A few hours later, they saw towering infrastructure in the distance, thousands of winged humanoid creatures swarming through the air like a hive of bees.

"They're here." Vexa announced darkly. "Prepare for battle."

Chapter 823 Do As I Say But Not As I Do

At that moment, Jake and the other Myrtharian Nerds there, received a notification from the Oracle System.

[Side Mission n°6: Assist Mirror Vanguard in their war against the Serinese Theocracy.

Sub-mission 1: Rescue the kidnapped Mirror Vanguard Players

Sub-mission 2: Rescue Ruby Hale.

Sub-mission 3: Eliminate the Schwazen threat.]

This was the first time that an Ordeal Mission was clearly broken down into multiple sub-objectives. It was as if the Oracle System itself wasn't sure how far they could go.

"Did you get the Ordeal Mission too?" Jake checked as he glanced at his comrades.

They all confirmed with a grim expression. Regardless of their ambitions for revenge against Lost Divinities, the Oracle System had now recognized their perseverance and decided to reward them for their efforts by offering them a second chance.

"Very well. So let's give it our all with no regrets, but keep in mind that our main goal is still to survive this Ordeal to the end." Jake reminded them seriously. "Don't sacrifice yourself in vain. Your life is more important."

Crunch meowed grumpily in response,

"I haven't died in any of my Ordeals so far!

"Neither have I." Lord Phenix crowed boastfully.

The three Beskyrians responded with far less enthusiasm, but they were still confident. The one who was ironically the least confident was Tim. His death at the end of the previous Ordeal had made him painfully aware that he was by no means invincible.

"I'll do my best." He finally promised in a small voice.

"That's good enough." Jake smiled as he turned to Vexa and Prysm. "Whenever you want we can start the operation."

The cube man nodded as he pointed to the ground,

"Stealth mode approach from now on." He instructed telepathically.

Jake swooped down toward the pine forest below him and sank beneath the canopy of trees. Vexa and Prysm silently tailed him. Once on the ground, the Myrtharian wove several Stealth Spells around his companions to render invisible and muffle the noise, presence, and scent emitted by his companions.

The two Mirror Vanguard Players watched with interest and then the flower woman commented approvingly,

"Good enough. Cast those spells on us too."

Jake did not argue and cast his Stealth spells on Vexa and Prysm as well. The cube man then generated several mini black cubes in his hand the size of dice and asked each of them to pick one and sprinkle their blood on it.

They followed his instructions and soon the black cube disappeared in their hands and if they had not felt the link connecting them to it they might have doubted its existence. At that moment, the object dissolved, coating their bodies like a second skin.

"Now only those with one of these cubes can see each other. For the rest of the world, friends and enemies alike, we no longer exist."

Prysm in turn produced a colorless powder from the stigma of one of the blood red flowers blanketing her body like a natural dress. She brought her palm to her lips and blew gently. The invisible pollen spread over them and she said,



"From now on, every living thing will be inclined to look away, to focus their attention elsewhere in your presence.

Tim and the others put on mildly convinced expressions, but they still chose to take her word for it. Before they sneaked into Schwazen City, Vexa warned them sternly,

"If this is your first visit to a Schwazen city, what you're about to see will drive you nuts. Don't attack until I tell you to. We're just here to rescue my men, not save everyone else. No Oracle Scans either, it won't work and there's a chance it could get us spotted."

Jake and his companions frowned but nodded calmly.

"Okay, Tim and Skorgeld, we're behind you." Prysm crooned.

Jake and the other Myrtharian Nerds transferred their Luck Aether to them and they started moving ahead in the direction the surviving prisoners were supposed to be. A few minutes later, they entered the city.

This city was distinctly different from those of the Ret'Asi Empire. The architecture was streamlined, sleek, more round than square. All the walls and buildings were made of the same silvery-gray material, with a texture reminiscent of a mucous membrane. There was no surrounding wall, as if these angelic creatures were not afraid of any attack.

As they entered the city, they soon realized that there were no guards actively controlling the entrances and exits. The Schwazens were virtually identical and dressed alike, flying overhead, flapping their wings frantically, making an annoying droning sound. Very few roamed the alleys like them on foot.

Within seconds of entering the city, they came upon their first Schwazen, a six-meter tall angelic creature with two pairs of silver wings and batrachian gray skin. Its body was covered with a tunic and armor plates made of the same material as their dwellings. He carried no weapon, but held a skewer of roasted meat in his hand, gobbling piece after piece with a gluttonous appetite.

"A civilian or a worker." Vexa briefed them in a low voice. "They have only one or two pairs of wings and are usually only used for the most basic manual tasks. Since this city is already built, they are essentially unemployed and enjoying life until they receive new orders. Make no mistake about it. This Schwazen may be at the bottom of his race's social ladder, but 99% of the Players deployed on Quanoth are not his opponent."

"What's he eating? It smells good." Tim muttered, sniffing the air as he salivated.

Crunch and Lord Phenix made a funny expression. This wasn't the first time they'd smelled that kind of odor. They had smelled it hundreds of times during this Ordeal.

"You'll find out soon enough..." Vexa growled glumly.

Jake and the others pressed their lips together but refrained from commenting. Stealthily, they walked the broad, identical streets of the city, watching like bystanders as the Schwazen citizens went about their daily lives.

On the surface, their way of life was no different from that of humans. They would meet to converse, trade in their own language, shop, eat in restaurants as in any civilized society. However, there was something unnerving about them and Jake soon found out what was bothering him.

These gray angels never laughed. They didn't smile either. Everything they did was done with apathy and indifference. Whether a Schwazen was a lowly worker or a respected and influential aristocrat, they showed no emotion, each accepting their role unabashedly. Only when they ate did they reveal a hint of ferocity in their white eyes, reminiscent of those of a blind man.

Soon they were halfway across the city and reached a grand building the size of a hypermarket with no windows. Some Schwazens were lined up at the entrance and they managed to squeeze in between two angels.

As soon as they found themselves in the building, their faces fell. A mouthful of vomit rose to Tim's lips, while Fo and Trea covered their mouths with an aghast expression. Skorgeld was pale too, although he had mentally braced himself for it.

It was a mall very similar to those on Earth, except for the monochrome design. There were shelves full of foodstuffs and the Schwazens were shopping there with their shopping carts, Storage Pouches, or whatever Space Artifact they happened to have.

Except that there was only meat stored in these shelves. It was neatly wrapped and packaged, making it impossible to tell at the time what species it was.

However... There was also a fresh section. In the same way that crabs were kept in a fish tank in a fish shop to ensure their freshness, humans of all races and origins were crammed naked into indestructible armored glass cages. Most were missing a limb or two and their eyes were filled with terror and despair.

In this butchery department, they could see limbs and even whole human bodies being roasted on a spit or hanging upside down behind the display after curing or smoking.

Right then and there they saw an old, inexpressive Schazen ask for a pound of ground meat, and the "butcher" cut off the leg of one of the caged humans and threw it into the grinder. Tim couldn't hold it in any longer and vomited everything in his stomach.

Jake clenched his fists, a killing intent that he didn't think he was able to feel toward any species other than the Digestors slowly seeping into his consciousness. Remembering Vexa's warning he bit his lip and forced himself to quell it, but at that moment he realized that the cube man and Prysm were no longer at their side.

CRACK!

Suddenly, an explosion resounded in front of them and they saw the armored glass cage shatter. Amidst the crowd of Schwazen customers, they recognized Vexa and Prysm seething with rage. Truly the personification of "do as I say but not as I do."

"I-I will exterminate you all!" The cube man roared, a colossal golem formed from a constellation of multicolored cubes engulfing the hypermarket while crushing hundreds of angels.

The one whose leg had just been cut off and the other men and women roasted and butchered in those stalls, they were all his friends!

#### [Chapter 824 They Were Waiting For Us](#)

Almost at the same time, Prysm's body swelled thousands of times, then dissolved into a thick forest of scarlet flowers that covered all the surfaces of the hypermarket like a huge carpet. The petals then detached from their stigma right after blooming, then became rigid as razor blades.

"You have eaten my friends, you rotten angels. Let's see if you can take a bite out of me that easily." Her angry voice echoed throughout the building and beyond as if amplified thousands of times by a high-powered megaphone.

The millions of petals stagnating in the air suddenly began to spin, and with inconceivable speed the peace was replaced by a hellish storm of sharp flowers. The petals, so numerous and clumped together that from a distance they looked like a tide of red sand, began to spiral at supersonic speed, raising a tornado of bright red blossoms the same diameter as the building.

What was left of the Schwazen mall was instantly blown away, razed to the ground. Jake and the other Myrtharian Nerds ducked out of the building just in time to avoid being dragged into the sharp tornado.

As they landed a few hundred meters beyond the devastation zone, Fo, the one with the lowest Constitution of the group, suddenly fainted, blood oozing from all her orifices. Trea also fell to her hands and knees, coughing up blood, and Skorgeld staggered off, his eyelids drooping and his complexion waxy.

Tim, who also had the Myrtharian Bloodline, wrapped himself in flames and barely managed to stay on his feet. As for Crunch and Lord Phenix, because of their bulky size Vexa had ordered them to remain on standby outside the city.

Seeing the state of his friends, Jake's face turned ugly and with an upset wave of his hand he blew the poisoned air towards the nearby Schwazens. His companions soon purged the toxins from their bodies and stood up as if nothing had happened.

"What do we do now, help them?" Skorgeld asked in a voice full of resentment. He clearly had no desire to fight with allies who could inadvertently kill him.

Tim, Fo and Trea said nothing, but from their worried expressions they shared his opinion. Jake hesitated, then said,

" We wait and see for now. If they need help, it's not too late to help them. If they need our help, they'll give us new orders."

His comrades agreed with his reasoning 200%. With Jake's Stealth Spells still at work, they had not yet been spotted and found themselves twiddling their thumbs. With nothing better to do, they turned their attention to the two Mirror Vanguard Players engaged in a fierce battle before them.

Vexa, in his giant golem form, was completely unaffected by Prysm's petal domain, but the Schwazen civilians shopping couldn't say the same. Thousands of angels with 2 to 4 wings hit by the flower tornado or the poison gas released by Prysm were shredded or liquefied into a bloody, acid-stinking pulp.

Tim and the others drew a cold breath when they saw this. If they had tarried half a second too long, it could have been their fate too.

SHHHHRRRRIII!

After the explosion of the huge building, followed by the massacre of thousands of Schwazens by a gigantic scarlet tornado rising to the sky, the alarm was sounded and all the angel soldiers flocked to the carnage zone, flying over the city in silvery trails reminiscent of a shooting star shower.

These Schwazens too had only four wings, but they were much beefier than the obliterated civilians and heavily armed, their natural armor suspiciously beginning to mimic the silver chitin of the Digestors. From a distance, one would have thought they were some kind of variant of the Rank 4 humanoid Digestors.

BOOOMM!

Hundreds of warrior angels crashed into Vexa like meteors without a care in the world as if they had no will of their own. A few hundred more circled the two Players, staying out of reach of the petal tornado and a pure white aura shone forth from their bodies. The stream of light linked up with all the Schwazens, forming a white ring of pure energy.

SHRRRI!

The ring abruptly contracted, going from its original diameter to zero in a heartbeat. Prysm's flower tornado was instantly atomized along with everything else inside. The flower woman folded her petals, condensing them into a scarlet bulb between Vexa's legs.

As for the cube man, the ring of light slashed through his giant body as it tightened, but just before impact the microscopic cubes that made him up by the billions turned golden yellow and the attack was completely negated. His hand dissolved into millions of tiny Orange Cube that scattered throughout the city and suddenly Vexa disappeared.

With breathtaking frequency, he teleported hundreds of times in a flash, the Player popping up in succession at the location of one of these Orange Cubes.

The counterattack was so lightning fast and instantaneous that for a fleeting moment even Jake felt as if hundreds of Vexa had appeared at once. There were so many afterimages that it looked like he was not alone, but a whole army.

Each Schwazen had at least a dozen of these cubes around them and they had no time to see it coming. The Vexa golem, whose cubes had turned red, struck each of these targets with a mighty punch, each impact generating a seismic wave exceeding level 12 on the Richter scale. All the Schwazen soldiers hit exploded on the spot, without having the time to understand that they had just been killed.

Not having said its last word either, the bulb condensed by Prysm also scattered and a bloody blast composed of billions of petals atomized a third of the city with the flower woman as epicenter. The few Schwazen warriors who were spared by Vexa were instantly disintegrated.

Jake and his companions were speechless. This level of massive destruction was just absurd. If some of their subordinates were still alive, hadn't they just killed them?

It wasn't just the physical damage that had to be considered. If Jake got serious and didn't care about his surroundings he could wipe out entire cities as well. To that end, not to mention his own powers, he could just detonate one of his Aether Sun Cores.

But here, it was not about innocent and helpless humans, but about Schwazens. The weakest of their warriors had armor and wings at least 2 to 4 times stronger than Adamantium. Such a pronounced power imbalance against such a formidable species was just mind-boggling.

"WHO DARES TO ATTACK MY CITY?!"

A Schwazen whose metallic wings were slightly golden thundered in a duplicitous, shrill voice. The angelic creature had three pairs of wings, its features were slightly more human, and its face much more expressive than those that Vexa and Prysm had just slaughtered. An oppressive and fiery aura radiated from his body, warping the atmosphere around him.

Seeing this new Schwazen that looked more dangerous than the others, Vexa threw the carcass of the last Schwazen he had just killed, its body crashing hundreds of meters below against a crumbling building. Where once stood hundreds of prosperous buildings, now there was nothing but ruins, corpses and desolation.

The whole thing covered in flower petals.

"Me." Vexa sneered as he teleported in front of the Schwazen with partially golden wings.

Without preamble, he summoned his heavy sword and slashed down ruthlessly. A red halo shrouded his arm and weapon and the mirage of a huge Red Cube appeared behind him.

CLANG!

Like Jake during his morning clash against Vexa, the creature was slammed to the ground like a cannonball, the arm having blocked ending up fractured into dozens of fragments. The angel got up straight away and its arm regenerated instantly.

From this, Jake became aware that this monster's level was about equal to his own. Using his intelligence and artifacts he could surely prevail.

"A Schwazen archangel." Vexa taunted as he floated to the ground, his overpowering killing intent spearing through the winged alien. "I should have known that those stupid angels wouldn't have been enough to capture my men and destroy my base. However... You are too weak too. Who else was with you?"

The Schwazen archangel stared at the cube man with no fear or hatred, just deep disdain and retorted with a hint of a smile,

"You are right. I was not alone. After all, I'm just an insignificant archangel. I'm just following orders."

After he spoke these ambiguous words, the air warped several kilometers above them and several dozen Schwazens a head taller than this archangel burst out of the vortex with the same flair as a spaceship leaving hyperspace. Their wings were half-golden, as was their chitinous armor, which now had its own differences in style and design. Their white eyes gleamed like stars, filled with profound wisdom and malice.

Vexa and Prysm's faces fell.

"Principalities..." The flower woman muttered solemnly. "We must retreat. I have a bad feeling about this."

As if to prove her right, a final figure stepped out of the vortex and as soon as it appeared, a horrific spiritual pressure, dozens of times more overwhelming than all those Principalities combined, engulfed the entire city.

"A Power. They sent a Power!" Prysm's heart sank. "They were waiting for us!"

### [Chapter 825 We're Safe](#)

This Power was head and shoulders above the other Principalities, its ideally proportioned face having something demonic about it in its lack of imperfections. It had one more pair of wings than its subordinates, bringing its total number of wings to eight. Each of them had the color and sheen of pure gold. The golden chitin covering its body formed an impenetrable plate armor far exceeding the sophistication and craftsmanship of the best blacksmiths. A helmet also protected its head, exposing only its eyes burning like two yellow suns.

Whereas the Principalities were equipped only with a spear, a gladius and a small roundel, the Power was armed with a heavy halberd, a massive rectangular shield covering its body from head to ankle, while thick gold chains were wrapped around its body and connected to its wrists.

As soon as it arrived, its cold eyes radiated an uncanny light and with one sweep of its gaze it scanned the entire city. His attention was drawn first to Vexa and Prysm, then immediately to Jake and his companions, and finally to Crunch and Lord Phenix who were lying in wait outside the city.

"Wretched ungodly vermin, you are disturbing our peace and our plans." The Power declared with a sentencing tone. "These interferences from the Oracle are but the last futile stirrings of resistance from an already vanquished enemy. The more you antagonize us, the more you hasten your undoing."

The eight-winged angel's body burst forth with a powerful dawn-like pulsing light and the Myrtharian Nerds, Jake included, felt a compelling urge to prostrate themselves. This feeling of reverence and adulation came from the bottom of their hearts and at that moment if that Schwazen had asked them to commit suicide, they would have done so gladly.

But even if that wasn't their intention, that wasn't the only danger of that radiant aura. Besides feeling their Spiritual Energy rapidly depleting and disrupting their consciousness, their cells were also dying from within, their DNA and Aether Code rapidly denaturing.

They didn't know it yet, but if they stayed in here any longer than a few hours they would eventually die of what the Aetherists called Aether Cancer. This was what happened when an individual's Aether Code became completely dysfunctional.

The most optimistic prognosis was that their Bloodline Grade would drop to zero. In other words, they would become ordinary humans again. The slightly less optimistic one was that the Encoding of their Aether stats would be compromised. If their Aether stats dropped to zero as well, the consequence would be instant death by disintegration.

In theory, even if that happened, they still had Quanoth's minimal Aether density to ensure their survival, but Jake and his friends soon noticed that under the effect of this aura of golden light the surrounding Aether appeared to be shying away from their presence. It was still there, but they could no longer access it.

As Jake felt these strange symptoms robbing him of the control over his own life, he felt the same sense of helplessness he had felt against the Nullifyer. What was the point of having super-high stats if everything could be taken away from him with a snap of the finger?

The feeling of futility, that all his efforts served no purpose or meaning festered in Jake's mind, but his companions were facing the same anguish.

Just then, Vexa's voice rang out simultaneously in their minds.

"Take the prisoners and leave. Now! I'll meet you later."

A White Cube suddenly encased them, forming a protective shield, and an extremely dense stream of pure Aether cleansed the enemy aura. A Green Cube overlapped with the White Cube, producing a bright emerald light that instantly repaired the damage to their Aether Code, Soul and DNA.

Jake was the first to recover and he decisively looked around for the prisoners mentioned. Responding to his wish, several dozen badly injured humans and aliens magically appeared in front of Jake inside the two Cubes and he immediately recognized the prisoners locked in that armored glass cage before the hypermarket explosion. Apparently, the cube man had been thoughtful enough to save them before he trashed the place.

"That goes for you too, Prysm." Vexa's voice echoed in their minds again.

The flower woman clenched her teeth and fists in frustration, but orders came first and she retracted the tide of scarlet flower petals into her body and teleported to Jake and the others. She promptly brought out a human-sized Yellow Cube from her Space Storage and asked them to step inside.

"What about Crunch and Lord Phenix? Tim frowned.

Prysm gaped stupidly, then cursed loudly,

"Shit! I'll be right back."

She teleported out of town, then a few seconds later reappeared with Crunch and the giant turkey. Displeased, she growled at Jake,

"You'll have to pay me back all that Aether. Now get in the Yellow Cube, we don't have much time."

"Do as she says." Jake ordered the others, who complied readily.

The wounded prisoners followed by Fo and Trea were the first to disappear into the Yellow Cube, and the Power watching them condescendingly in the sky missed nothing of their actions.

"You really think I'm going to let you escape so easily?" He commented in a gentle, soothing voice. "You destroyed this city and this will be your burial ground."

His hand grabbed the air and a golden chitin javelin was excreted from it. The Schwazen's gaze hardened and a golden, then black halo coated the projectile. Then, at a swiftness beyond comprehension, he threw the weapon he had just created at Jake and his fleeing comrades. Immediately afterwards, he equipped his halberd.

The projectile turned into a blur and shot through the kilometers of empty space separating them in a flash. As it drew near, Jake again felt his cells, DNA, and Aether Code become unstable and break apart despite the protection of the two Cubes conjured by Vexa.

When the impact seemed inevitable, the cube man teleported between them and the javelin wrapped in black light and deflected it with his own sword shrouded in a blinding halo of red, orange, yellow, purple, black and white light.

BANG!

A flash of black light momentarily imprinted their retinas and a blast of darkness instantly engulfed the entire city and the edge of the surrounding forest. The walls of the two cubes shook, a rumble of apocalyptic turbulence raging outside the shield.

Prysm's face clouded over with concern for Vexa, but biting her lip she vented her frustration at Jake and the others,

"What are you waiting for? Get your asses moving!"

CLANG, BANG, BOOOOOM!

Hearing the sounds of bangs, explosions, and seismic tremors occurring at an insane rate outside the two cubes, Jake and his friends were quick to respond. The scariest part was that the darkness generated by the first collision had still not subsided.

'Xi, is it just dark or... is there nothing left?' Jake wondered with a grim expression.

[Surely a bit of both.] She answered solemnly. [Go now. Don't waste Vexa's sacrifice. Especially since I don't think he will die so easily. After all, it's his job to deal with this kind of threat. If he didn't have the level he wouldn't have received this Ordeal Mission and neither would we. There must be a way to defeat them.]

'That's what I think too.' Jake nodded, his countenance a little more relaxed.

Skorgeld, Tim, then Crunch and Lord Phenix entered the portable Yellow Cube in turn, and soon it was just Jake and Prysm.

"Will he make it?" Jake inquired before stepping into the cube.

The flower woman flinched, but forcing herself to smile she answered,

"He always does. But it's still depressing. One of these days, I'm afraid he won't come back."

BOOOOOM!



The walls of the Green Cube shattered and those of the White Cube began to crack quickly. Unsure of what to say and pressed for time, Jake nodded towards the young woman, then disappeared into the Yellow Cube.

The next second he appeared in a bunker that was identical to, yet different from, the previous base they had visited. It was another Mirror Vanguard hideout, a place to fall back to when the first base was compromised.

Seconds later, Prysm popped up behind them, but immediately afterwards the Yellow Cube that had allowed them to reach the site disintegrated, a wave of dark energy consuming its structure. The black light didn't stop there and quickly spread throughout the bunker, disintegrating the floor and walls.

Jake and the other Myrtharian Nerds scrambled back, but the flower woman could not escape. Raising her palms in front of her, she fired millions of flower petals into the black light like a hailstorm. Each time one of these scarlet petals touched that energy, it would turn black and promptly disintegrate.

Nevertheless, Prysm persevered, instead intensifying her petal production and soon the black light began to dim, consumed by the endless tide of flowers. About 5 minutes later, the half-destroyed bunker returned to its original peace, half-buried in a lake of scarlet flowers 7 to 8 meters deep.

"It's okay, we're safe." Prysm sighed as she wiped the sweat off her forehead.

Now all that was left was to wait for Vexa and pray that he was still alive.

#### [Chapter 826 Healing Competition](#)

"Is such power really allowed in a Fourth Ordeal?" Tim couldn't help but ask the flower woman with a voice trembling with palpable distress. "Do the Oracle and Aurae really allow such disruptive, unfair forces to exist? How are we normal Players supposed to survive in the midst of all these monsters?"

Perhaps because she was aware that he was still a child, Prysm's cold face softened and one of the flowers on her shoulder gown bloomed, releasing a puff of invisible pollen. The teenager breathed in some of it unknowingly, and his face, which had been racked with anxiety and apprehension, instantly relaxed.

The other Myrtharian Nerds may have been more cool-headed, but deep inside what they were feeling wasn't that different from Tim, Jake included. Breathing in the pollen, their worries vanished for a while.

In fact, even Prysm breathed in some of her own pollen to soothe her nerves like an addict. If Peter, may he rest in peace, had been there he would have been delighted.

"Everyone has a different starting point, but our ending point is not predetermined." The flower woman finally stated when she felt them more receptive. "You were just ordinary humans and pets at your first Ordeal, don't forget that. If you had the powers you have today at your first Ordeal, how would your future change? This is the situation for many of us. Lost Divinities, Anti-Life, Replicators and Mirror Vanguards, all of our officers and leaders are such individuals.

"Do not compare yourself to them. You have nothing to be ashamed of..."

That should have made them feel better, but Jake and the others felt even more bitter after her encouraging words. A better starting point, didn't guarantee a more meteoric rise or else Gerulf, Lucia and the other natives from their First Ordeal would have far surpassed Jake today.

If Jake had possessed the power he had today and returned to his First Ordeal, he knew now that his Main Mission would have been ridiculously demanding with many conditions and constraints to meet. Perhaps he would have been asked to get Kinthar's approbation, develop his reputation to the same level as those deified legendary Heroes among the people, or help and test participants like himself at the time to overcome their hardships like when the Nullifyer had come to confront him. There were so many possibilities.

After successfully completing his Main Mission, he would only have received the minimum 100 rating points. How would he then match or even surpass the score of his current self? The missions would probably have reached a nearly insurmountable level.

What Prysm didn't tell them was that a higher initial power meant lower Ordeal Ratings. At least during the first few Ordeals. Because at high levels, it was much harder to create the opportunities that could drastically change your destiny.

Where was someone like the Nullifyer supposed to meet a native in his first Ordeal as life-changing as Gerulf and Lucia had been for Jake in a world with an Aether density of 8? Even if this person existed, it would be an endless struggle to track them down and meet them, because they were not confined to the rules that natives and Players followed.

Silence fell and soon they remembered the prisoners they had just freed. Most of them were missing one or more limbs, and two of them had only their heads and a portion of their trunks left.

These injuries were certainly horrendous, but it shouldn't have been such a big deal for elite players like them with insane Constitution and Vitality. But the thing was, they weren't healing.

Not everyone had a Bloodline that could regenerate their limbs like Jake. In this context, even an infinite Vitality would only allow instant healing and nothing more.

Yet, in the case of these prisoners, even the healing was not going well. The amputated limbs were still bloody, partially clotted and some prisoners were still bleeding, their Vitality compensating for their uninterrupted blood flow.

"Let's stabilize the injured first." Prysm clapped her hands loudly to rouse Jake and the others from their numbness, but from the twitching of her eyebrows she wasn't handling her emotions as well as she pretended.

The Myrtharian Nerds exchanged glances with each other and then obliged unquestioningly.

"Okay..."

Jake took the hand of one of the more severely wounded prisoners and transferred his Vitality to him, but his brow furrowed when he saw that it made almost no difference. The trickle of blood from his four stumps went on, dripping down in the same metronome.

The other Myrtharian Nerds were not getting any better results so they combined their Vitality on one wounded man and finally there was a slight difference. After three or four minutes, the unconscious Player finally stopped bleeding, but his clotting rate was still slightly below that of a normal human.

"Something is interfering with their natural regeneration, meow." Crunch commented satirically as he stroked his chin with his paw pads.

Lord Phenix reciprocated with a peck in the ribs.

"No kidding you dumb cat! Did you think we wouldn't notice?" The turkey chirped in scorn.

While the two troublemakers bickered, Jake glanced over at Prysm and saw that she had already completely healed two injured people. Their limbs hadn't grown back, but they had no longer any apparent wounds.

To heal them, she had nicked her own hand and a sap-like substance had begun to ooze out of it. As soon as the viscous, amber-colored liquid came into contact with a wound, the wound would heal in a jiffy. Seeing the difference between them and Mirror Vanguard, Jake became depressed again.

With his competitive spirit stirred once more, he tried to remember how his master, Cekt, had healed this Oracle Guardian named Citro. He was not present at the time, but Cekt had sent him several video clips to expand his horizons, or perhaps just to brag.

He was clear about it. From the green light fueling all his Healing Spells, Cekt used an upgraded version of Vitality Aether.

Jake could only achieve Grade 1 Encodings on the fly at the moment, but there was no need for him to do so. With his Aether Conversion Spell he could convert the Aether gathered around his Aether Core into the Aether stat of his choice.

Upon this realization, he summoned one of the thousands of Grade 5 Aether Cores in his arsenal that he had created and used Aether Conversion on them to convert their Aether stream into Vitality Aether, alas only Grade 3 Vitality Aether. This was the highest level of Aether stats compression currently allowed by his bloodline.

Grade 5 Aether Cores had an Aether density above 100,000, but more Aether Cores in the same area did not mean a higher Aether density. Just one of them was powerful enough to siphon Aether from kilometers away, and summoning more would not expand that absorption area by much.

In the few inches of space surrounding the Aether Core itself, that Aether density reached into the hundreds of millions, but absolutely nothing could survive there. At least, not on Quanoth, with the possible exception of Aerae. This was the main reason why Jake could not place such an Aether Core within him, besides the fact that he would have to withstand the environment of a star's core for several hours to improve the one he already had.

On the other hand, their accretion disk was larger, raising the local Aether density to 100,000 over several dozen meters of radius. Prysm looked at him for the first time with astonishment when she saw that he had such an Aether Core in his possession. If she had known he was storing thousands of them in his Space Storage, her reaction would have been very interesting.

Jake wove a rudimentary Healing Spell with nothing but Vitality Aether for the first time and the result was impressive. The wounded man's amputated limb stopped bleeding, quickly forming a crust on its surface. A few minutes later, the crust flaked off and a smooth new skin appeared underneath.

This healing speed was still slower than that allowed by Prysm's sap, but it was still night and day compared to his earlier primitive method.

Lord Phenix wanted to test his Phenix Fire on the wounded to incinerate them and allow them to "rise from the ashes", but Crunch and the other Myrtharian Nerds barely managed to dissuade him. By the time they persuaded him, the turkey was almost completely featherless and was leering at them, especially Crunch, with a look of resentment over his betrayal.

A few dozen minutes later, all the injured were stabilized and they could finally take a breather.

"Now we just have to wait for one of our Healers to arrive or for Vexa to return to fully heal them." Prysm heaved a deep, exhausted sigh, the mention of Vexa reawakening her worries about the cube man.

Time passed, and day gave way to night, then back to day. Jake and the others spoke little, each meditating or training in silence, trying to figure out what they could do to become strong faster and stop feeling so useless and helpless.

As time passed, the flower woman became more and more anxious, pacing nervously from one end of the bunker to the other, nibbling her nails, erm... petals. Just when even Jake and the others were beginning to believe that Vexa was done for and wasn't coming back, a flash of yellow light blinded them and when their vision accommodated again, they recognized the cube man.

His body had turned black, and the microscopic cubes that made him up were crumbling to the naked eye, a thick, corrosive aura enveloping him as if he were a radioactive pile. As soon as he appeared in the bunker, he fainted before their eyes and collapsed to the ground.

### [Chapter 827 A Way To Escape](#)

Prysm subconsciously teleported in front of Vexa to stop his fall, but as she reached him she let out a groan of pain and her arms disintegrated, the scarlet flowers covering her arms turning black instantly.

"Shit!"

In one swift motion, she sliced both arms a few inches above the contaminated area, telekinetically manipulating several sharp petals. Two plant stems grew back right afterwards, blossoming to regenerate the two original arms. As for the ones she had just severed, they had already decayed leaving no trace, not even ashes.

Jake also tried to move closer to Vexa but a corrosive aura destabilizing his DNA and Aether Code stopped him dead in his tracks. Three meters away was his limit.

Remembering the method Prysm had used to neutralize this extremely invasive energy, he mused briefly, weighing the pros and cons, then summoned five of his Aether Cores. Using his mental manipulation, he placed them in formation around Vexa, then used his Aether Control to cause them to indiscriminately siphon off all the surrounding Aether.

This destructive aura was capable of destroying even the Aether Code and that meant that somehow it was intertwined with the Aether in an incredibly intricate way. This entanglement was the only loophole he had found to get rid of it.

The Aether saturated with this corrosive black energy was sucked faster and faster into his 5 Aether Cores and their pure white radiance turned gray, darkening rapidly. From that point on, Jake knew they would never be able to use them again, because the accretion disk surrounding them was also polluted.

'Well, having a few waste Aether Cores is also an asset in itself. With these, I can at least clear out those pesky auras.' Jake consoled himself with a not quite convinced look.

Seeing his method, Prysm looked at him in a new light, but she especially took into account that they had no time to lose. Vexa's life was at stake. She raised her arms and a new tide of scarlet petals shot forward, clashing with the evil aura emanating from the fainting cube man.

Within a few minutes, Jake and Prysm's efforts overcame the aura, but its source, Vexa, had not been removed, so they could not get rid of it completely. As soon as they stopped, this all-pervading energy began to spread through the bunker again.

But it was enough to help Vexa. Prysm braved the danger fearlessly, letting that destructive aura wash over her to reach the cube man. Once near him, she opened her veins and spilled a copious amount of sap. As it dripped onto Vexa's face, the aura sizzled and soon he was able to open his eyes again.

As soon as he regained consciousness, he nodded gratefully to the flower woman and took over. Several flashes of light occurred and his body was encased in several house-sized Green and White Cubes. From inside the cubes, a bright emerald light brighter than a star shone down and the Mirror Vanguard leader stifled a groan of pain.

Black miasma oozed out of the walls of the last Green Cube before igniting on contact with the surrounding Aether. What little survived the purification was then absorbed by Jake's stand-by Aether Cores.

Prysm and the Myrtharian Nerds waited patiently in silence for nearly six hours, then suddenly the Cubes faded and disappeared, revealing an unharmed but tired Vexa. Prysm immediately threw herself into his arms, her eyes welling up with tears. A trace of tenderness flashed briefly in her multicolored, cube-filled eyes and he returned her embrace, stroking the petal-shaped hair mechanically to reassure her.

"Cough, cough..." Jake cleared his throat. "We're still here. Just get a damn room."

A love affair between a flower and a cube who would have believed it? The two lovebirds stopped whispering sweet nothings to each other, but they remained clung together.

"I'm sorry I worried you." Vexa apologized composedly. "I shouldn't have involved you in my mission. As you can see, we were misinformed."

Prysm finally disentangled herself from the cube man and staring at him sternly she asked,

"What really happened there after we left? A Power and some Principalities are deadly threats to any Fourth-Ordeal Players but you. A fight like this is always risky and I always prepare for the worst, but this is the first time I've seen you come so close to death."

Before answering, Vexa conjured up several seats composed of millions of cubes and uttered,

"Sit down."

Jake and the others slouched to their seats, too eager to know what had happened to him. Feeling the stares of Prysm, the Myrtharian Nerds and his newly released underlings he sighed,

"That Power... That was just the appetizer. They sent a Virtue."

"Impossible." Prysm adamantly objected. "Auræ would never tolerate a creature of that level on Quanoth."

"Then two more..." Vexa added shortly thereafter, his expression turning more and more gloomy. "3 Virtues, 37 Powers, 846 Principalities and 12386 Archangels, that's what they sent to kill me."

Dead silence.

Jake and the others didn't know what all those names entailed, but they could sense from the cube man's tone that it was definitely not normal.

"Corrupted?" Prysm inquired darkly.

"All corrupted." Vexa confirmed. "This has gone far beyond what our data from Quanoth's previous iterations predicted. There's something wrong in the Mirror Universe, and not just here.

"You think Auræ...?" Jake frowned.

"No. Well, maybe, but I don't think so." Vexa shook his head. "After a certain threshold the Corruption can't really be destroyed, just diluted. With each new iteration of Quanoth, Auræ makes something new out of the old. He destroys Quanoth and recreates it, but he reuses the same Aether. The Corrupted Aether is still there and is accumulating. Auræ is aware of the issue, but he does nothing because he sees it as an opportunity to train the most promising Players."

Jake and the other Myrtharian Nerds didn't know what to make of it. This situation was beyond them, and even Xi appeared unnerved by the news. There was nothing in her records or memories to indicate that the Mirror Universe was in such dire straits.

"What do we do now then? Do we give up?" Jake stared coldly at Vexa.

Giving up also meant giving up on saving Ruby, and indirectly giving up any hope of revenge against Lost Divinities. It also meant automatically failing two Side Ordeal Missions.

Jake's question represented everyone's thoughts. Not only Prysm and the Myrtharian Nerds, but also the surviving subordinates. Their prognosis was no longer life-threatening, but they were no longer in any condition to fight, either physically or psychologically. Vexa was well aware of this and declared,

"We're not giving up."

"But?" The flower woman pursed her lips as she saw his face grow cold.

"But we're in no condition to attack them." He continued with a steely look. "We're going to need more help and information. The Demiurges are fighting the World Destroyers in space so we won't be able to count on them. Lost Divinities is too spread out and they are preparing to take on the Drurs with Replicators. The Drurs are just as dangerous as the Schwazens and if they face surprises as unpleasant as ours, then they won't help us either. That leaves the other subfactions of Mirror Vanguard and Anti-Life. I won't hide it from you, Anti-Life is almost as detestable as the Digestors. Their nature and ambition is in their faction name and their only known allies are the Replicators. The idea of us being wiped out by these corrupted Schwazens will surely delight them."

Listening to him, Jake suddenly formed an idea.

"Why not ignore the Schwazens and wait for them to migrate to Celestial City on their own? Wouldn't that force the other super factions to fight them for survival?"

Vexa and Prysm both winced at his suggestion.

"Your plan might work if these Schwazens really intended to follow the rules of the game set by Auraa. All angelic species, whether artificial or natural, are affiliated with a god or higher entity whose authority and power they embody. An angel without affiliation is deprived of some of its powers. These Schwazens are Corrupted and the powers they use have nothing to do with Auraa. One could have doubts about ordinary angels, but these Powers and Virtues manipulate the Dawn and Holy Element, and all their attacks are powered by their True Will of Destruction. These are the typical abilities of a Seraphim Digestor or perhaps something even mightier.

"The records of Quanoth's past iterations don't mention this, so it must have happened quite recently. If my instincts aren't playing tricks on me, the reason Mirror Vanguard was given this mission is because the Schwazens have a way to escape from here."

At that moment, Jake remembered the terrifying winged Digestor that had appeared to retrieve Nylreg at the end of his Third Ordeal and his face lost all color as he came to the realization that this scenario was entirely plausible.

### [Chapter 828 A Fair Chance](#)

"Verxes..." Jake muttered with a grim look on his face.

Vexa's face scrunched up slightly as he heard the name.

"A particularly dangerous Seraphim Digestor skilled in Time and Space Magic." Prysm spoke in his stead. "He is indeed one of the main suspects in the corruption and switching of allegiances of these Schwazens. Whether it's him or another Digestor of the same order, if they're behind this we won't be able to stop them unless Auraa or another Ancient Designer interferes directly. Mind you, there's no way they would personally oversee such an Ordeal."

Jake suddenly gazed at the flower woman very oddly, as if he had just figured out what was amiss all along.

"But... Auras is here." He objected hesitantly, "When I left the planet a few weeks earlier, I beheld it create the Mana Storm that is quickly blanketing the planet with my very own eyes."

"No, it's not that guy. One of its countless clones at best, but its consciousness and main body are elsewhere." Vexa replied flatly.

"I know what I saw." Jake insisted with a cold voice. "This isn't the first Ancient Designer I've met and I wouldn't mistake this aura for any other. Its size alone is enough to make it an indomitable Evolver in this Ordeal."

The two Mirror Vanguard Players exchanged a musing look, both trying to wrap their heads around this unlikely option, then Vexa ordered darkly,

"Wait for me here."

Several Yellow Cubes surrounded him, overlapping each other and emitting a dazzling radiance. When the light faded, the cubes were still there, but Vexa was gone.

The Myrtharian Nerds and Mirror Vanguard members present waited in silence, then a few minutes later the Yellow Cubes lit up again and a disheveled Vexa whose aura was saturated with unstable Mana reappeared before them.

The microscopic cubes beneath his skin were chaotically changing color, their molecular structure constantly altering as millions of Mana Spells randomly ravaged his body. One moment his hand was deformed, covered in slimy scales; the next moment it was a hoof covered in wool.

Indifferent to his alarming symptoms, Vexa snapped his fingers and the array of Green and White Cubes that had saved his life earlier reappeared, purifying the Mana that was wreaking havoc on his body.

"Am I dreaming or did you go through the Mana Storm head-on without an Oracle Shield?" Jake blinked in bewilderment.

"I had to taste that Mana Storm personally." Vexa coughed sourly before adding, "It's not Auras. Just a lesser clone."

Jake was taken aback by his confident tone.

"Are you sure?" He asked with his forehead knotted with uncertainty.

"Absolutely sure. I don't joke about such important matters."

The cube man obviously noticed that Jake wasn't convinced, but he didn't hold it against him. He thought he could call it a day, but the Myrtharian asked seriously,

"Can you take me there with you?"

Vexa had no desire to do so, but as he met his determined gaze he let out a sigh and agreed. A moment later, the duo appeared in the middle of the Mana Superstorm where Vexa's Yellow Cube orbited. Of course, Jake was not suicidal like the leader of Mirror Vanguard and he had preemptively activated his Oracle Shield.



They quickly passed through the storm and a few minutes later Jake found himself back in space, a dark and empty environment devoid of sound and life. Not having forgotten why he had come, he immediately looked for Aerae.

He found it. The Ancient Designer was as titanic and fear-inspiring as ever, its hands as dark as a moonless night holding Quanoth like a basketball. But Jake and Xi sensed immediately that something had changed.

The entity was still as unfathomable as ever, but it no longer felt like the presence that had terrified him when the thing had looked in his direction. He knew he wasn't crazy and concluded that Aerae had either left or decided to lay low.

"Strange."

The duo silently returned to the bunker and as they arrived Vexa patted his shoulders with a laugh,

"Convinced now?"

Jake frowned, but answered ambiguously,

"That thing was not Aerae."

With the Myrtharian admitting his mistake, Vexa told them to rest while he contacted a number of allied factions and subfactions for reinforcements. He had already promised to train Jake and the other Myrtharian Nerds personally after that, aware that they were his only fighting forces but totally useless against the Schwazen threat.

Once he had some peace, Jake conferred with his companions and finally decided to contact the rest of the Myrtharian Nerds.

[Jake: Everything okay on your end?]

[Asfrid: Like clockwork. The Ret'Asi Empire's army has engaged the Shrons, drawing most of their attention, and we're taking advantage of their sacrifices to move forward safely. Lucia, Gerulf, and the others are fighting on the front lines.]

[Jake: Great, how are you doing, Hade?]

[Hade: The Portable Fortresses are finished. We can get Laudarkvik civilians and any willing Myrtharian Nerds off the planet as soon as we reach a cloud-free zone. By the way, Craig is back with New Earth's soldiers. What do you want to do with them?]

There was a short pause, then,

[Jake: If they still want to save Ruby, they can join us at the Serinese Theocracy, but tell them it will be dangerous and they're likely to die. That's why I'm contacting you. If you can afford it, I would like Lucia and the other promising Myrtharian Nerds to join us for Mirror Vanguard training. Hephais' presence is mandatory].

[Hephais: no problem, boss.]

Jake then told them about his first encounter with the Schwazens to get them to understand his reasons and Asfrid, Hade, and the other Myrtharian Nerds online agreed with his plan after learning how dire the situation was. Hephais would leave to meet them right away and the others would be dispatched depending on how the situation developed.

The next morning, Vexa and Prysm visited them to announce the start of their training. They were escorted to an underground base hidden dozens of kilometers below ground by a futuristic elevator. Jake and the others didn't understand how they could train properly in such an environment, but they got their answer a few moments later.

The highly pressurized, glowing rock that was supposed to be waiting for them downstairs was replaced by a small, dimly lit room of cubic metal. In the center stood a human-sized Orange Cube.

"After you." Vexa gestured for them to enter with a smiling face.

Crunch and Lord Phenix glowered at him in frustration, but the cube man had also arranged an alternative for the two large creatures.

The group then traveled through a dozen Orange Cubes in succession, losing their sense of direction before landing in a strange place that didn't look anything like Quanoth.

A complex of metal buildings with unusual geometric shapes and tapered edges stretched as far as the eye could see under a fake purple sky filled with dark green stars.

"Welcome to one of Mirror Vanguard's many training camps." Vexa proudly introduced. "Don't waste time trying to figure out how we could build such a place in an Ordeal. This place is just a knock-off of the original version, but it's still a Gold Aether Artifact named Purple Hell. The first half of the name is self-explanatory but you'll understand the second half as you train there, hehe."

Jake swallowed all his questions as he heard the word Gold from Vexa's mouth. It was two tiers above his Purgatory. As they walked towards one of the buildings they spotted one of the prisoners they had rescued the day before, which helped them understand where they had gone.

The most surprising thing was that this man had all his limbs back, but his haggard face was still a bit traumatized from his recent experiences at the Schwazens' hands. With this insight, the group of Myrtharian Nerds vowed never to let themselves be captured by these sadistic angels. It was safer to commit suicide.

Once inside the building, a new world opened up to them. The hall was clean and modern, and there were many consoles granting access to individual training rooms. Vexa and Prysm ignored them and went straight to the registration desk where a receptionist more hideous and muscular than an orc in heavy armor was dozing.

"Hello, Gixy." The flowery woman greeted with a loud palm strike on the desk that jolted awake the alien she was addressing.

"Oh, Prysm that's you. Ah and Vexa too. This must be my lucky day." She giggled awkwardly as she rubbed her eyes. "What do you want from me?"

"I want to reserve a tier 5 training room for each of them. They're not from Mirror Vanguard so deduct it from my quota."

The alien named Gixy looked surprised, but quickly pulled herself together and confirmed,

"It's done, but since they are not from Mirror Vanguard they will have to pay for their use."

"Deduct the cost from my contribution points." Vexa ordered impassively.

This time even Prysm was surprised, but seeing her reaction the cube man simply shrugged,

"I have a good feeling about them. Besides... I'm still upset that none of the other super factions agreed to help us. They want revenge on Lost Divinities and if I can get back at them even a little bit I'm willing to give them a fair chance."

### [Chapter 829 Lt Has Nothing To Do With Your Will](#)

"What?! No one is coming to help us?" Tim blurted out with a shell-shocked face.

"Apart from Mirror Vanguard, I'm afraid not..." Vexa grunted wistfully. "I'll make them pay for it, but until then we're on our own. Enough small talk, follow me."

After authenticating themselves and receiving their respective badges, the cube man lead them directly to one of the training rooms built in the basement. Even before entering the facility, what shocked them about this floor was the technology and the tight security.

Armed, laser-scanning cameras constantly scanned the vast hallway littered with hermetically sealed doors accessible only with the pass in their hands. In addition to the pass, their appearance, DNA, Aetheric and spiritual signatures were also matched against those in their database, making it virtually impossible for them to commit fraud.

"Welcome back, Major Vexa. A robotic female voice echoed in their ears as he unlocked the entrance to one of the training chambers.

Several Mirror Guards members who had been chatting in whispers between training sessions turned in their direction with wide-eyed surprise as they heard that their leader for this Ordeal was actually in the Purple Hell. They hadn't seen him for months.

One of them, a muscular, greenish alien about 3m tall that looked like a mix of Cell from Dragon Ball and the Chimera Ant King from HxH walked up to Vexa and gave him a manly hug. Releasing him, he said without a smile,

"I heard what happened. As soon as I take care of the Anti-Life members holding me back, I'll join you in plucking those Schwazen pests."

" Well glad to hear it, Radur." Vexa snorted gratefully. He had heard of the difficulties his colleague was facing.

While Vexa was the commander-in-chief of all Quanoth operations, Radur was a sub-leader on par with him and Nullifyer with his own responsibilities to shoulder.

His duty for this Ordeal, besides getting a good rating for himself and his men, was to eliminate a rather special creature that multiplied rapidly by mitosis as soon as it built up enough energy. This alien species was neither hostile nor corrupt, but it had one major structural difference from the other life forms of Quanoth: It was composed of antimatter.

Antimatter had the same elementary particles as matter, namely electrons, protons and neutrons, but their charges were reversed. The electrons became positrons, while the protons and neutrons became antiprotons and antineutrons. When colliding with normal matter, matter and antimatter particles were then annihilated releasing an astronomical amount of energy.

One gram of antimatter could generate an explosive power of 40 kilotons when in contact with an equivalent quantity of matter. In other words, three times the Hiroshima atomic bomb. For comparison, it took 4 to 5 kilos of plutonium or uranium to initiate the nuclear reaction required for such an explosion.

Thus, it was easy to imagine the danger of a life form composed of antimatter and able to survive and develop in a conventional world of matter. Whereas the black clouds and the Mana Superstorm were the main world-ending cause of most Quanoth iterations, it wasn't as if Aurae had set up only one threat.

Most of the participating Players would never realize they had escaped obliteration, too focused on trying to survive against the ordinary threats posed by the monsters of the Wilderness and other human or alien kingdoms killing each other for the sake of an illusory hope of survival.

Mirror Vanguard obviously advocated the destruction or neutralization of such a creature, but Anti-Life saw it as a weapon for their dark purposes. For this reason, two super factions were competing locally on Quanoth because of their conflicting interests.

No matter who won, the regular Players would not be affected, provided this antimatter life form did not explode. However, if Anti-Life were to acquire it, their victory in this Ordeal would be all but assured. With such a weapon, this faction could easily dominate the other super-factions.

"Don't talk to me about it, these Anti-Life guys are driving me crazy. They're really playing with fire..." Radur chuckled as he cracked his neck. "Whatever it is, it will be over soon. Regardless of the outcome, I'll be coming to lend you a hand in four to five days."

With that short, cordial exchange, the sub-leader bid them farewell and teleported out of the complex. Vexa and Prysm appeared to be in a much better mood, so Jake and the others figured that Radur was a strong ally and remembered not to provoke him.

"Come in." Prysm invited them into the training room.

Inside, they found a room resembling a giant warehouse, with high ceilings and enough room for several soccer fields, but otherwise it was rather empty except for a console embedded in the wall next to the front door.

The door closed and Vexa clapped his hands to get their attention,

"Aether, Physique, Spirit, Bloodline. These are the four most important Aspects of an Evolver." The cube man declared in a deep, booming voice. " No matter what your initial shortcomings were, during these

Four Ordeals you would normally have made extensive progress in each of these four Aspects or you would not be here on Quanoth, a place reserved for the elite.

"The first Ordeal taught you the basics of combat and strengthened your Aether and Body stats, while the Second Ordeal focused on your mentality, your mindset to toughen you up in the face of death, or more generally what scares you, and help you overcome your traumas. For many, this Ordeal made them realize that they would never be able to do it, or it increased their determination to become stronger to avoid such scenarios at all costs. Whether you failed or survived to the end you gained valuable lessons and a better understanding of yourself."

Jake and the others didn't know what he was getting at, but so far they agreed with him. For example, he may have toughened up and gained confidence, but in the face of his recent failures he had quickly realized that his self-confidence and composure were actually quite tenuous.

If one were to take away his crutches, he was still the same procrastinating, low-self esteem adult of old. He was working hard to turn that around, but it wasn't so easy to change.

"The third Ordeal introduced you to Corruption, or at least one of the forms it can take." Vexa continued to speak at the same pace. "It may have made you aware of the flimsiness of our moral values, principles and beliefs. I won't steal? Under the influence of Corruption you will not only steal, but you will kill without remorse to satisfy your greed. I will not \*\*\*\*, rather die? Not only will you \*\*\*\* under the effect of Corruption, you will surely take pleasure in dominating, torturing, destroying the lives of others as long as you get some kind of benefit from it. I will never be a cannibal? With the Corruption, you would even eat your brothers and sisters if your stomach began to growl.

"Long before you were affected by Corruption, your personalities were shaped by your upbringing and socioeconomic background and are still affected and influenced by your hormones and neurotransmitters. For artificial species such as androids, it is their programs, their operating systems that condition them to behave in a certain way. The consumption of certain substances, drugs and food by your mother can also affect your personality from birth. Therefore, the Corruption therefore begins in a sense from your very conception."

Jake and the other Myrtharian Nerds all stiffened. They had never thought of Corruption in this way. They had always seen it as a kind of mind magic that was impossible to get rid of. The idea that corruption was everywhere, insidious, inevitable, and sometimes welcome was totally new to them.

"... And most, if not all of you, had failed to resist it during your third Ordeal. Some of you may remember horrible things you did during your last Ordeal and it will haunt you forever. Some..." And at that moment he gave Jake a meaningful look, "Some managed to resist it to some extent, realizing that some things were important enough to them to resist the Corruption. The energy that comes from this inalienable will is called True Will. If you have not yet been eliminated from this Ordeal, it is because you have passed the test, and if you have not awakened your True Will you have shown the predisposition to do so.

"What do you think True Will really is?" Vexa then asked them in a cryptic tone. "A hint, it has to do with the main theme of this Ordeal: Soul Classes."

No one answered immediately. After some thought, Jake was tempted to answer that his True Will was a very pristine and pure form of Soul Energy altered by some part of his Soul Aether Code, but his instincts told him that if that were the case awakening his True Will would be much easier. As Vexa and Prysm watched them rack their brains over his simple question, they burst out laughing.

Seeing their baffled faces, the cube man laughed some more and then said,

"Stop worrying. Whatever explanation you have in mind, you're right. True Will are just like Soul Classes. So let's start by debunking a common misconception,

"True Will actually has nothing to do with your will. In fact, it's the exact opposite."

### [Chapter 830 Let's Check It Out](#)

Crunch and Lord Phenix blinked stupidly, glaring at him with a disdainful expression like,

'What the fucking shit are you on, bro? It literally has the word Will in it...'

Jake and the other Myrtharian Nerds weren't stupid and already had their own idea of what it was, but an expert like Vexa could save them a lot of time. All they had to do was listen to him.

Seeing that no one was cocky enough to contradict him, the cube man lost his fervor and enlightened them in a dull voice,

"Don't misunderstand. True Will has nothing to do with your own will, but it reflects who you are, what you do, or rather what your soul believes you are or do. You have all acquired one or two Soul Classes during this Ordeal. So you have experienced the side effects of these classes for yourselves. Some of these side effects on your personality may be so intense that they may even feel worse than those of Corruption. A Soul Class like Serial Killer would literally turn you into a psychopath with an irrepressible urge to methodically kill people who fit your criteria. A Soul Class like Loner or Hermit would literally make you anti-social.

"Fortunately, the Soul Classes suggested by these Prophetic Steles are based on your predispositions or past achievements. Yet despite this, whatever choice you made significantly affected your personality in one way or another. But in essence, it is much the same as your True Will. What you have to remember is that a Will that doesn't come from you and affects you, can still be willed.

"A Soul Class is simply your whole soul being rewired to think and act in a certain way. Each of your thoughts and intentions is basically Soul Power and when your Soul reaches a certain... volume or density let's say, you will begin to affect the reality around you. Rather than talking about Spirit Body level, which varies greatly in meaning between species and bloodlines, I prefer to talk about Soul Strength/Spirit Body Strength as well as Soul Power/Spirit Energy."

Jake frowned. This was getting confusing. For some strange reason the Oracle Status had never shown his Soul stats in this way, though he always chose the most clear and readable display model for himself. From their skeptical faces, his friends thought the same.

"It seems that no one took the time to teach you these basics. You guys had it tough..." Prysm quipped to the side, leaning against a wall with her arms crossed.

"Well, that's currently the norm in most factions." Vexa shrugged. "They would have been informed of all of this before their Fifth Ordeal anyway, if they ever chose to participate."

Turning his attention back to Jake and his comrades, the cube man summarized,

"Let's start with the basics. The Soul is to the Spirit Body what the brain is to the body. So far, nothing fancy. But the Soul can either dissociate itself from the Spirit Body and command it as the brain does through our nerves, or it can merge with it, which means a fusion of consciousness. In this state Soul=Spirit Body.

"Soul Power is the extremely pure Spirit Energy produced by your Soul when you think and with which you control your Spirit Body. In the example of the brain and nerves, it would be the electrical impulse controlling the Spirit Body. If your Soul Strength is high, your Soul Power will be stronger and more abundant and by extension so will your Spirit Body control. This does not grow like the Spirit Body through cultivation, but by simply living, experiencing things. When I was born, my Soul Strength was almost identical to yours, but because my cognitive faculties were immensely superior, I accumulated in just a few days as much memory and knowledge as an ordinary human would in a lifetime. From then on, my Soul Strength was much stronger, simply because it is bigger, denser, richer.

"A simple rule in the Mirror Universe that will never deceive you is that an aged Evolver is a dangerous Evolver. He may be weak, but his Soul is definitively strong. And I must stress, Soul Strength and personality are two fundamentally different things. Just because you are a tough guy who can withstand any kind of torture does not mean that your Soul Strength is high. Otherwise, we wouldn't be having this discussion today."

Jake surprisingly understood what he meant. When his Intelligence stat was that of an ordinary human, he would forget things, his memories would degrade over time, and his senses were not as sharp.

Even if he tried hard to learn and increase the number of new experiences, there was a threshold of intellectual maturity that a human could not surpass. With age one could even speak of mental decline. This meant that the Earthmen had an average Soul Strength on a species scale that they could hardly surpass.

Nowadays, he could outperform in one day a Nobel Prize winner in mathematics if he felt like it and this knowledge would be crystallized in his memory forever. It was part of him, which meant that his overall Soul Strength had indeed grown permanently.

Having a powerful brain was the prerequisite for making this miracle happen in species without Souls at birth like on Earth. But if the Aether density was not sufficient, the Soul would still fail to take shape.

"Now that you know what Soul Strength and Soul Power are, you know that there is no way to hasten their growth except by staying alive and building up your mental stats to gain experience faster. A less noble shortcut is to devour, assimilate other souls and memories, but that has dreadful side effects..." Vexa ended the first chapter of his lecture on a somewhat depressing note. "However, your Soul Strength, but also your Bloodline, directly influences the ability and limit of growth of your Spirit Body.

"So let's talk about Spirit Body Strength and Spirit Energy. Why Spirit Body Strength, rather than Spirit Body level? Because quantity often matters more than quality. A being the size of Aerae, even with a Spirit Body lvl 1 and an inferior bloodline would have billions of times more Spirit Energy than you.

Because its Spirit Body is huge, fragile and lacking in density, a lvl 30 Spirit Body could easily damage it with Spiritual Attacks. On the other hand, as weak as a lvl1 Aerae might be, if he decides to focus all his Spirit Body Strength on you, you are dead. Of course, it would need great mental stats and Soul Strength to handle such a mass of Spirit Energy, but even if its control is crude it will have no difficulty annihilating you.

" In short, a lvl 1 Aerae baby would have a Spirit Body Strength and therefore an amount of Spirit Energy at its disposal much higher than you. I digress, but this rule also works with Aether. Aerae's body contains more Aether than you can imagine. The simplest Aether Spell cast by it, even if the local Aether density was 10, can destroy Quanoth. Life is unfair, get over it."

Jake and the others grew glum upon hearing this. Life was indeed unfair. Earthlings like them had to fight for every tiny power-up while some other species were born at the top of the Mirror Universe food chain.

In the end, they were like ants fighting for crumbs while dreaming of supplanting the sun. Maybe they were wasting their time.

"What about True Will in all this, meow?" Crunch yawned.

"Tsk, I'm getting to that." Vexa clicked his tongue with annoyance. "True Will is focused Soul Power. Do you remember what Soul Power is? The energy of your thoughts and intentions. With that you can control your Spirit Energy, but not your thoughts and certainly not Soul Power. Because to control a thought, you need another thought, so Soul Power to control Soul Power. On your planet, in psychology you would refer to this as consciousness and unconsciousness.

"Most of your Soul Power acts upstream. You never realize that it exists. The Soul Power contained in your thoughts is pathetic compared to the incredible amount of Soul Power contained in your Soul. A thought lasts only an instant. It can never equal decades of memories and emotions.

"True Will is when your unconscious and conscious Soul Power are on the same page. In simple terms, what you think and desire at a given moment corresponds to past memories, experiences, emotions and values that your Soul has integrated in the past. Automatically, this gives you access to much more Soul Power than a simple thought would allow and this energy is also much purer, much harder to tamper with.

A Soul Class works in a similar way, but much broader and less specific. Digestor Corruption works on all levels, directly impacting the Aether making up your Soul Power."

Vexa stopped there. At this point, he knew that a demonstration was better than a long speech. He walked over to the mural console and pressed a few buttons. A block of gum pink metal about his height, and quite spongy, appeared in the center of the training chamber.

"This is Gumdolite, a metal with an infinite coefficient of elasticity." Prysm explained to them, laughing softly. "It's very rare and you can't find it in a natural state, not even in System 0. It's an illusion created for training purposes."

Jake nodded. It was like his Purgatory Dream, only better.



"You heard Prysm. Vexa said. "Who says infinitely elastic means it can't be cut, only deformed. I'm a swordsman so let's check it out."