

## Oracle 831

### [Chapter 831 True Will](#)

The aura around the cube man underwent a radical change and everyone perceived the monstrous energy fluctuations building up in the arm holding his sword.

Several mirages of gigantic cubes of various colors except green, and including both black and white, appeared behind him and emitted a thick beam of light of the same color that all converged on his body. Vexa's power began to surge in a totally incoherent manner and he slowly raised his sword as he walked towards the Gumdolite block.

In addition to his insanely refined Aether Control and all of his bloodline abilities and amplification spells, Jake also perceived the presence of a staggering and abnormally pure amount of Sharpening Aether flowing around his blade. No matter what would be slashed by this sword, even if it was just a scratch it would be fatal.

There was no hope of survival, even for a Gold Myrtharian like him, even if he had plenty of Aether Sun Cores to boost his regeneration. That was how powerful Vexa was at that moment. The idea that he could survive 3 Virtues, 37 Powers, and hundreds of Principalities didn't seem so far-fetched anymore.

"Keep your eyes wide open." The cube man couldn't help but let out a small laugh as he beheld their gaping faces.

His gaze grew cold and focused as his arm turned into a blur, his sword swinging down at the block of Gumdolite with the sole intention of cleaving it in half. For Jake and the others, the fate of this spongy block of metal, however renowned, was already sealed.

CLANG!

For a fleeting moment, they truly believed that Vexa had succeeded. The Gumdolite did indeed appear to split in two, until they realized that Vexa's blade had stopped 8cm from the ground. At that point, they realized that he hadn't cut anything at all. The elastic metal had just followed the motion of his sword, deforming to some extent until its elastic force counteracted its initial momentum.

BANG!

Like a bowstring whose arrow has just been released, Vexa's arms, congested from exertion, managed to defy the elastic force opposing his weapon for a moment, then the Gumdolite sprang back to its original form and he was catapulted in the opposite direction like a cannonball.

To save him from a grisly death, the energy shields in the training room activated in time and a force field magically stopped his soaring flight before the cube man could crash to dust against the ceiling. When Vexa levitated back down to the ground, his face haggard and his aura nonexistent, he looked quite miserable.

"As you can see, when I say that Gumdolite boasts infinite elasticity I mean it." The Mirror Vanguard leader coughed awkwardly. "Now you'll see the difference with True Will."

No formidable aura erupted from his body this time, nor any flashy technique, but a thin halo of silver energy enveloped his blade. In fact, Jake wasn't even sure there was such a halo. It looked more like his blade was sparkling a little more, as if it had been manually sharpened to perfection.

He didn't let himself be fooled though. Behind the man's cubic pupils, there was a pale, unwavering glimmer that wasn't there before.

Vexa walked back to the Gumdolite block, but this time he took no stance. He simply placed the edge of his blade against the top of the metal block and nonchalantly lowered his arm. The gesture was effortless. There was no Aether fluctuation and his muscles barely contracted.

But the Gumdolite block was silently sliced apart without showing any resistance. It was as if its previous infinite elasticity was a lie.

The pale fire shining in Vexa's eyes faded and he suddenly seemed exhausted. Not physically, but mentally. Stowing away his sword, he turned to them and smiled tiredly,

"This is True Will. Great Right? But True Will of what? Do you think my every dream from morning to night is about slicing Gumdolite or that all I aspire to is chopping things up?"

No one answered.

"Of course not. What I have shown you is a mere application of everything I have taught you before. It is the result of routine and repetition. If you do the same thing over and over again with the same intention, the Soul Power associated with it grows. If on top of that, it is associated with a rise in your understanding, a change of mindset on your part to the point that it becomes obsessive, then it could become the catalyst for awakening a Soul Class or your own True Will.

"That's why I say True Will has nothing to do with your will. Because the majority of the things you experienced, you had no control over. You just reacted to those events and many of your habits and thought processes, whether positive or negative, are a direct result of that.

"To quote one of your oldest philosophers on earth, we are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit."

Jake and the others froze. That's it? The final highlight of his masterful lecture was a corny quote from Aristotle?

"Uh... S-so how do you get our True Will to awaken?" Tim raised his hand timidly.

Vexa and Prysm sighed in unison. It was really too exhausting to talk to these humans. Jake ruffled the teen's hair and answered,

"If I didn't misunderstand, just practice the same move or technique with the desired mindset until it becomes ingrained in you and you come to realize that you wouldn't see your life any other way." Then he stared again at the cube man seriously. "But I have a question. I once heard that Digestors all awaken their True Will of Destruction after a certain level of evolution. Does that mean that destroying us is more important than their own lives without anyone having instilled such zealotry in them?"

"You're... absolutely right." Prysm confirmed grimly. "Their thoughts at all times are driven by this underlying urge to destroy. Everything they live and experience, from eating to sleeping, is perceived

through the filter of this destructive impulse. In this way, as soon as their Soul Strength is sufficient, this True Will naturally awakens when they become aware of it.

"What Vexa did not tell you is that once the True Will is awakened, it begins to dissociate from the rest of your Soul Power. Although you still cannot intentionally manipulate or even observe the Soul Power in your Soul with your own consciousness, you will be able to feel how the True Will-induced mental state overwhelms you. Very soon, it won't leave you at all.

"Unlike a Soul Class that can be changed under certain circumstances, True Will is permanent. To get rid of an ill-fitting True Will there is only one solution: to erase the memories, affects, and other physiological, psychological, and magical influences associated with it. That would mean destroying a part of who you are.

"Therefore, the type and power of a person's True Will tell you a lot about who they are and how they spend their time. An egoist will never be able to emit a True Will of Protection to defend his or her friends in the way that a truly altruistic person of the same level might."

Vexa clapped his hands again to regain their attention.

"Now you know everything. Last thing. True Will has several categories. The first type, the one most of you have, is True Will of Self. You can only use it in extreme circumstances when what matters most to you is directly threatened. It is the most powerful form of True Will, but also the least specific and the most difficult to control. To control it at will would mean that you have complete and utter understanding of yourself. Only the best Evolvers in the Mirror Universe are capable of this.

"The second type is True Will of Intent. If you force yourself to desire, to want the same things all the time, it will become second nature. The best example is killing intent. You must have realized that the more people you kill, the more it grows, especially if you deeply wanted your victims to die. This type of True Will takes time to develop, but it does make a difference at a high level. Some also call it True Will of Accomplishments, because they reflect the weight of your choices and actions.

"The third type is True Will of Enlightenment. Basically, as you begin to grasp a knowledge topic, you will derive new knowledge by inference, and the resulting understanding may be unique to you. The understanding resulting from all your knowledge, memories, experiences, and various True Wills accumulated over your life is a powerful catalyst capable of harnessing a large portion of your Soul Power and sometimes your entire Soul. In the second case, it means that you have reached Enlightenment of your True Self. You can then use your True Will of Self at will.

"Finally, the last type is True Will of Habit or Repetition and the one you will focus on. By practicing the same movement repeatedly, obsessively, you will develop an unalterable will to perform it as well as possible. This may sound like True Will of Intent or Enlightenment, but it is different. You don't have to be emotionally invested to get results. As long as you have no choice but to repeat a certain action or spell a million times, you will get a result if your Soul Power is sufficient. Just because this one action now represents, days, weeks, months, years of your life and just as much Soul Power."

"Any questions?" Vexa ended sternly. "No? Then get to work. Create your first Killing Move."

[Chapter 832 You Just Have To Grab And Grip](#)

The cube man then linked several training rooms together, then had everyone pick one to set up their own environment. Jake waved goodbye to the others, then went straight to the room on his right.

Once inside, the Myrtharian didn't instantly create his ideal environment, an ultra-hot radioactive hell scorched by lightning and stormy winds of rock and steel dust. Instead, he sat cross-legged and closed his eyes to meditate.

His battle with the Nullifyer flashed through his memory, followed by all the times he had witnessed or been in the presence of a True Will manifestation. This included Vexa when he had protected them from that Schwazen Power, Vexa again when he had just effortlessly sliced through that block of Gumdolite, or Prysm and her never-ending petal barrage.

These were different uses of True Will, but they all had one thing in common. They defied common sense.

Jake didn't think he had inferior stats to Vexa or Prysm, and he was undoubtedly one of the tankiest and most tireless Players in this 4th Ordeal. Yet he knew in his heart that he could never have withstood the full power of this Corrupted Power's attack.

It was also impossible for him to come even close to 1% of Prysm's matter output with his Gold Stone Skill. This was the main reason why the Portable Fortresses and their ambitious spaceship had been delayed. If he was like her, he could have produced all the magic metals he needed in a matter of minutes.

It was important to know that the flower woman did not produce ephemeral energy-based spells like light or fire, but real matter. Her petals were not illusions. They were real.

'True Will of Infinity? Multiplication? Or maybe Abundance?' Jake immediately refuted that guess. It was too advanced and akin to an Intent or Enlightenment. 'In that case, it's a simple spell, which she practiced tirelessly.'

At that moment, he had a flash of insight.

'Wait. I haven't been idling around either. All that metal I conjured with my Stone Skill, all those months of roasting my Soul under the rays of my Aether Sun Cores... Shouldn't I have awakened a True Will of Something at some point?

Xi's hologram unexpectedly materialized before him. Her stunning figure never changed, and neither did her look. It was the same jet-black mid-length hair falling to her shoulders, the same red and black eyes, and the same tight-fitting black armor molding the curves of her body.

Riveting her gaze straight into Jake's eyes, she said,

"You may not have reached the level of True Will, but some changes in your Soul Power have taken place. Did you think that your increased pain tolerance brought on by your burning Soul was only due to the swift growth of your Spirit Body? It definitely weighed in the balance, but not to the point of making you numb to prolonged Soul and Spirit Body ignition over several months. No matter how tough you are, no one can adjust to that."

"So you already figured that out?" Jake winced with a slight tone of reproach. "Too bad it can't be used in combat..."

"Not yet." Xi smiled. "As for all the Adamantium you created with your Gold Stone Skin, you did it mechanically by splitting a sliver of your consciousness. Your body was fully committed, but your mind was elsewhere. Multitasking becomes a drawback when it comes to True Will, unless you want to awaken a Soul Class like Multitasker or some kind of Multitasking True Will, but that would be a long and hazardous process. Because how do you want to focus on your intent to multitask when your mind is already split to focus on different tasks? To succeed, you would then have to multitask, separate your mind for the sake of...multitasking? Not very helpful, right?"

"Okay, Xi. You seem to understand this stuff better than I do." Jake surrendered at once. "In that case, why don't you tell me what kind of True Will I can use against a Player like Vexa or the Nullifyer? Especially the Nullifyer. Vexa is strong, but I don't feel hopeless like I do with this alien."

The young woman considered his request seriously for a short while, then gave him an apologetic smile,

"I don't have a quick fix to defeat the Nullifyer. If you let the next fight go the way the first one did you will lose again unless he is trying to kill one of your friends at that time. But either way, I don't think he was serious. He took huge risks to push you into a corner. If a sniper beyond the range of his domain had shot him with a fast enough projectile, he would have been taken down with a single bullet.

"The best plan is to kill him before he decides to use those unstoppable moves like Nullify Intelligence, Nullify Instincts and Nullify Memories. Remember, True Will protects itself. The memories, instincts and powers associated with a True Will cannot be altered until that True Will has been consumed. Start by creating one or two Killing Moves as suggested by Vexa and diversify your arsenal as you progress. This Killing Move should be something easy and spontaneous to use, so that even under the influence of its Nullification you can somehow employ it."

Jake's eyes snapped open, struck with realization.

"The simplest moves..." He thought aloud. "Something even a baby might be able to use? A punch? No, babies don't punch. Before that, they just grab whatever captures their attention."

Everyone had seen a picture of a baby's tiny hand clutching onto a parent's big finger. It was a reflex that emerged a few days after birth. A delay in its appearance or its absence could be an early sign of mental impairment.

"A Grabbing move so? Smart." Xi chimed in approval. "If you create such a Killing Move, that move would be likely to occur in a fight even after your intelligence, memories and instincts have been nullified. However, I doubt it would be very useful in other circumstances. Besides that, you are wrong. The first instinctive ability a baby acquires develops in the womb and it is the ability to perceive. The sense of touch is awakened first, followed by taste, smell, hearing and finally sight. Your defeat against the Nullifyer was pretty much set in stone from the moment he deprived you of your senses."

Jake had not thought of it that way. Indeed, being deprived of all his senses went beyond being cut off from the world. Perception preceded control. How could he move his arm or leg if he couldn't feel it?

If he created this Grabbing Move, he might be able to use it under certain conditions, but deprived of all his senses he would be unable to feel his target anyway even when that target stabbed him in the heart.

"Xi... It's not that I haven't thought of this myself, but this kind of True Will must be difficult to awaken, right? After all, I've been using my senses since I was born and no True Will stemming from it has ever materialized."

The young woman rolled her eyes and corrected him teasingly,

"I didn't say you had to awaken a True Will of Sight or Touch right away. I just wanted to emphasize that anything you do subconsciously or instinctively prevents you from awakening the corresponding True Wills that could have made a difference. From now on, live in the moment. Pay attention not only to what you perceive or do, but also how you perceive or do it. Do you understand the nuance?"

Jake stiffened. It wasn't as easy as she wanted him to believe. It was akin to becoming a spectator of one's own body, constantly self-analyzing while being aware of psyching oneself out. It was a height of introspection and extrospection that he had never entertained.

"I... I'll do my best."

"That's all I wanted to hear." Xi's voice echoed in his head as her hologram faded away, leaving him alone in the huge chamber. "Now you can start working on that Grabbing Move."

Now that Jake knew how much mental commitment mattered, every move he made felt different. The vast, empty, metallic-gray room, the ambient Aether, the gentle caress of the air, the throbbing of his heart and breathing, the tingling in his fingertips...

Not only did he have a heightened awareness of these things, but from now on he would also have to condition himself mentally to seek out these signals, these sensory influxes, as if these senses were no longer something granted to him.

With a degree of focus that he never thought he could muster one day to power his Gold Stone Skin, he began to produce different items of diverse shapes and substances. Patiently, he produced thousands of them, until he was wading through them. By the time he finished the task, Jake was flushed and dripping with sweat.

[Now, you just have to grab and grip.] Xi whispered to him in jest.

And that's exactly what he did. He grabbed and gripped.

### [Chapter 833 How Noble](#)

In an unrecognizable training chamber, a Myrtharian stood alone in the midst of the chaos. The temperature inside the room had exceeded one million degrees and the radiation was such that anything exposed to it for more than a second would become radioactive for thousands of years, tainting anything that came near it.

Lightning bolts larger than a man's thigh constantly bombarded the solitary figure standing in the center of this hot hell, while the man himself had become the heart of a cyclone of Adamantium and other magical metals that had long since turned to plasma due to the apocalyptic weather conditions.

But what was even stranger than the fact that Jake stood indifferently inside this hellish world was that there was no light, no sound. For experimental purposes, Jake himself had sealed off all his senses with various Aether Spells except for pain.

He didn't want to forget the scorching agony that accompanied the ignition of his Soul. It was a sure sign that he was making progress.

Besides Jake, a conspicuous black steel boulder stoically braved the elemental storm a few hundred meters away from him. It was a reputedly indestructible material found only in the innermost cores of the densest neutron stars of the ancient Systems: Star Black Iron.

It was a mineral that was countless times harder than Oranium, let alone Adamantium. To obtain it in reality was virtually impossible, even for the Evolvers of those old Systems, but for training purposes Mirror Vanguard's Purple Hell could conjure up an illusion of it as it did with Gumdolite.

At that moment, in that dark hell, Jake lifted his hand blindly in front of him and squeezed the air. An invisible aura imbued with an unbreakable will swept through time and space and in perfect coordination with his grabbing motion, deep indentations shaped like his fingers, but a hundred times larger, deformed the Star Black Iron boulder. Where these indentations were located, the rock reddened and vibrated under the effect of some fantastic fundamental forces.

The lack of grinding, the pitch blackness, and the utter silence made it seem as if he had just clamped down on a piece of soft clay, but in reality he had almost crushed one of the hardest ores in the Mirror Universe.

After that first attempt, Jake gripped the void several times, but the flame of will blazing in his pupils dimmed as a result until he no longer had the strength to stand and even forgot what he was doing here.

The fail-safe he had set activated and the Aether Spells sealing his senses cleared. Jake took a long breath and opened every pore of both his physical and spiritual bodies, then let lightning, heat and radiation seep into him, threatening to blow him up.

At the same time, he made use of this excess energy and began to excrete alarming amounts of metals and magic rocks with his Gold Stone Skin, which he immediately reabsorbed into his skin. The cycle repeated itself at an increasing rate, until moments later Jake's mind was back to full strength. It seemed even more powerful than before.

Jake closed his eyes to assess the changes in him, then with ruthlessness to himself sealed his senses again and renewed the experiment.

'I shall not be satisfied until I can crush all that stands in my way. Lost Divinities, Schwazens or Digestors, it won't be the same next time.'

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In a room filled with screens broadcasting live what was happening in the different training rooms, Vexa and Prysm were in each other's arms, watching the different screens earnestly.

"Do you think we made a mistake giving those Myrtharian Nerds access to our Purple Hell?" The flower woman jested as she nibbled on her beloved's ear.

The cube man scowled instead of relaxing as he received her teasing.

"No. But I'm surprised. I'm afraid Lost Divinities kicked a hornet's nest this time. It would be great if they were outdoing themselves like this to defeat the Digestors and those Corrupted Schwazens, but they are for the most part humans. These lesser creatures don't think that far ahead. They may have acquired great power and all sorts of bloodlines, but I don't think they have such a sense of selflessness."

"Then why help them?" Prysm asked curiously, even though she had a pretty good inkling of the answer. "You used all your quotas and salary for the last three months to fund their training. Even for a disciple of Aas like you that seems quite lavish."

Vexa didn't answer immediately, first staring intently at the screen displaying Jake motionless in that grabbing position, then uttered,

"Potential. I thought Jake was promising, but I was wrong. They all are. Azeus, Tim, Crunch, Lord Phenix, Lucia, Gerulf, Rogen and the few other Myrtharian Nerds who have joined us in the last few weeks are all stellar talents. But he... He's a slumbering monster and I think Ael and all of his recent setbacks have managed to stir him up a little bit."

"This... I never thought I would ever hear those words come out of your mouth when talking about a human from a lower Seed World." The flower woman gasped as she looked back at Jake's screen, "Of all the True Wills of Habits I didn't think he'd pick one so plain. But aren't his improvements a little too terrifying?"

"They are..." Vexa sighed pensively. "No matter how motivated he is, his Bloodline and current stats are not enough to explain his strides. I have asked one of our higher-ups in System ZZ831 to investigate his origins and the exact details of his previous Ordeals."

At that moment the control room door opened itself and a greenish humanoid alien with a long independent tail ending in a scorpion stinger entered the room unannounced.

"His last name is Wilderth, right? Ring any bells?" Radur crashed into the couple's discussion, sitting shamelessly in the chair formerly occupied by Prysm before she lovingly plopped herself down in Vexa's lap.

"Please spare us your jokes. It's not funny at all." Vexa snarled coldly. "I considered this possibility from the beginning, but it's just a last name. A mere coincidence. The other members of his family are all very talented compared to the humans of the Earth they come from, but not so talented as to defy reason. On the other hand, if Jake had even one drop of Wilderth blood running through his veins we wouldn't be busting our brains over this Schwazen threat. Instead, we'd be thinking about how to negotiate with him so he'd spare us."

Radur chuckled sinisterly as he saw his friend's extreme reaction.

"You seem pretty sure of yourself, but what do we know about the Wilderths? Do we even know who his parents are?"



Vexa's face twitched.

"They've been missing since the day thousands of rifts appeared on their planet... No luck for them, a Digestor invasion..." The cube man growled with a hint of pity in his voice. "But he has a paternal grandfather still alive, a Sixth Ordeal Evolver."

"Hmm?" Radur found it hard to remain unmoved. "That's... not bad I guess. Six Ordeals in such a short time is ballsy, but the fact that he's still alive offsets much of the downside. I guess he's taking all these risks to protect his family. How noble."

"At least it's more noble than these navel-gazing super factions who refuse to put their personal interests aside in the face of a common threat likely to kill us all." Prysm harrumphed as she averted her gaze from the brash alien.

"Speaking of those factions. What happened to the Primal Longhorn you were charged with destroying? You've been suspiciously evasive on the subject since you showed up." Vexa suddenly switched topics.

Radur's laid-back demeanor fell apart, giving way to a dismal mood.

"We lost. Anti-Life got their hands on the Antimatter bug."

"Are you messing with us?!" Prysm exclaimed in horror, her petals bristling as if she had goosebumps.

"I wish I could say I was, but I'm not." The alien sighed, slumping into his leather chair. "While our forces were scattered across Quanoth, facing all sorts of planetary threats, Anti-Life made a deal with Lost Divinities through Vhoskaud. As you know, Anti-Life and Replicators have always been good friends..."

"Ael..." Vexa muttered glumly. "That'll be one more variable in this Ordeal ending. I have a nagging feeling that Mirror Vanguard won't win the final battle this time..."

"Yeah... The Nullifier is one of the only Players in this Ordeal who does not fear the destructive potential of the Primal Longhorn." Radur smiled wryly. "Knowing his character, I'm sure he secretly wants Anti-Life to blow up the Antimatter bug before they have time to clone it. That way, he won't have to worry about who to sacrifice among his subordinates. Of the 10,000 spots aboard the Celestial City, we would be down to a few hundred after such a huge cataclysm... The Ordeal would end instantly."

### [Chapter 834 Let's Get Started](#)

Time ticked by and six weeks after he commenced his training, Jake received a message from Asfrid and Hade.

[We have reached the southern border of the Shatug Empire. No casualties to report, but the Emperor of Ret'Asi's army has been decimated. We await your command to evacuate the civilians from the planet while we still can.]

"Finally."

Jake restored the room to its original, pristine appearance, then teleported in front of the Orange Cube that had brought them here.

"Where are you going?" Vexa's voice boomed behind him.

"I have to take care of some small matter for my faction. I'll be back before sundown." Jake replied succinctly.

The cube man nodded, then announced,

"We got the information you wanted. Your subordinate, Hephais, was very impressive. He is wasting his talent in an ordinary faction and so are you."

Jake smiled as he was told that the assassin had managed to wow the Mirror Vanguard intelligence department. Vexa ignored his grin and continued,

"There will be a briefing early tomorrow morning. Our plan to deal with these Schwazens will be revealed. We've also gotten some news about Ruby Hale, the Digestor Trojan you're trying to save, and the situation is a bit more complicated than we feared. If you still want to save her to get back at Lost Divinities, you better be there."

Jake put on a grave face and nodded mutely.

"I'll be there."

"Great. See you later."

Vexa watched Jake vanish into the Orange Cube with a somber expression, then sighed wearily. He sounded confident, but defeating the Schwazens and freeing Ruby would not be as easy as he tried to make it look. If their progress wasn't as great as he expected, they would be slaughtered before they reached the capital.

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Jake returned to the surface and immediately felt the chill of the snowflakes on his face. When they made contact with his skin, they sizzled and then vaporized in a flash. It was dark, but not night, and he quickly realized that the black clouds had drifted all the way here even though the sky was still clear.

SHHRRRRIII!

"Fuck!"

He had barely made it outside when a Schwazen chose to fly over the area he was standing in. Jake squinted at the angelic creature and his pupils narrowed as he saw the golden sheen of its armor and the three pairs of metallic wings flapping at its back.

An Archangel.

If this was the Jake of two months ago, victory was not impossible, but their clash would have triggered a cataclysm and generated so much noise that they would have alerted all the Schwazens patrolling for dozens of kilometers around. But that was before.

As soon as the creature's golden eyes locked on him, Jake knew he had been spotted and adjusted his strategy accordingly. With superhuman speed, his hand grabbed the air in front of him and the archangel Schwazen imploded, remaining oblivious to his own death until the very end.

Jake teleported over the silver and gold painted snow where the archangel had been killed and scanned the remains carefully.

[Amazing, even the feathers that were supposed to be four times stronger than Adamantium were pulverized.] Xi flattered with awe. [It looks like your training has paid off. The real question is to what extent.]

Jake was about to reply when he saw a whole squad of Schwazen angels flying in his direction.

'Let's not just stand here.' He grunted stiffly.

Numerous Aether Symbols flashed over him and his silhouette faded from the snowy plain, his presence completely erased. The Schwazen squad circled over him without detecting anything unusual.

An hour later, Jake left the Serinese Theocracy, entering the Shatug Empire, the home of the Drurs. He had chosen the shortest route, but it was also his first time in what was rumored to be the most powerful and advanced empire in Quanoth.

Unlike the Schwazen nation, he noticed many differences. Despite the all-out war raging on the continent and the fierce competition for access to the Celestial City, the Drur cities were still prosperous and peaceful. From a bird's eye view, they looked like the futuristic city of Coruscant in Star Wars.

Here, nature had lost its rights and it was virtually impossible to spot a tree. The whole Empire was a gigantic, hyper-advanced megalopolis, a dense forest of skyscrapers that could be more than 6 kilometers high. No wonder Tim was able to survive so long in hiding before being rescued by Lucia.

Not intending to take a look at the Celestial City, Jake continued southwestward while still curiously observing the cities below him. Taking advantage of his invisibility, he also got a glimpse of his first Drurs.

They were humanoid aliens, 5 to 11 meters tall, with dark purple skin and pointed ears like elves. Their musculature was overdeveloped whether it was for men, women or children, and like the orcs their lower canines protruded from their mouths.

However, unlike the latter, they were civilized and their purple eyes sparkled with intelligence and wisdom. At least among the civilians, one would not find the typical wickedness of the Schwazens, nor the bloodthirstiness of many other inferior species. Their clothing was also refined and sophisticated, although armor and guns had very recently replaced the other styles.

Jake was not fooled, though. It would be a foolish mistake to believe that these Drurs were good people. Halfway to his destination, he spotted a group of aliens trying to sneak into an alley in the vain hope of reaching the Celestial City.

A Drur soldier spotted them and sounded the alarm. Seconds later, two of them were riddled with smoking holes by accurate blaster fire and the other six were decapitated. After tying them together by their feet and hanging them upside down from his belt, the Drur who had killed them went to an open-air market and one of the merchants, obviously a butcher, traded the bodies for a handful of coins.

Tim had already told him that the Drurs viewed other races in the same way that humans treated chickens or pigs. Some were vegan, vegetarian and empathetic, others didn't care what they ate as long as it was filling and tasted good.

Before the descent of the Celestial City, animal rights advocates had nearly convinced the Drur population that other intelligent aliens and humans did not deserve this treatment, but the joint invasion of all other races and nations had nipped that ambition in the bud.

Now, in order to survive, the Drurs had decreed that everything that was different from them would be their enemy and thus their food. It was also a way to show respect to their opponents. A tradition that had to do with their zero waste policy...

Jake witnessed several similar scenes as a distant spectator, but he never intervened. He had long since come to terms with the fact that he couldn't save everyone.

Further south as he drew closer to the border with the Maze of Mirik, the landscape began to change. The cities were no longer as thriving and populated and many buildings and vehicles were in ruins or ablaze.

The streets and alleys had become a battleground between the Drurs and the thousands of nations that had joined forces to reach the Celestial City. It was a bloody chaos punctuated by screams of agony and explosion, and the Drurs were slowly losing ground. However, for every Drur that fell, hundreds and sometimes thousands of invaders would lose their lives.

Jake broke out in a cold sweat as he imagined what the chaos around Celestial City must have been like. The elites of every Quanoth race had gathered there and the city was now a powder keg on the verge of exploding. All that remained to be done was to light a fire for the ultimate bloodbath to begin.

After witnessing all this, the Myrtharian lost interest in all these battles and refocused on his flight. In the late afternoon he reached the camp secretly established by the Myrtharian Nerds.

On the way he had also seen what was left of the Ret'Asi army. A few thousand men compared to the tens of millions of a few months ago. The war against the Shrons must have been brutal...

Asfrid and Hade sensed the arrival of their leader even before he landed. He may have moved stealthily and been invisible, but by the time he crossed the spiritual barrier protecting the camp he had revealed his position.

When Jake showed up in the middle of the camp, the few Myrtharian Nerds defending the camp like Drastan, Daniel, Kevin and Mufasa were delighted, but most citizens of Laudarkvik barely looked up for a second before falling back into their depression. The journey had pushed them to the limit and many had no hope of ever regaining a normal life.

There were few Myrtharian Nerds present, but that was because the others had already joined the Purple Hell in the last few weeks to train under the supervision of Vexa and Prysm. In exchange, they would have to participate in the special operation against the Schwazens.

"Is everything ready?" Jake asked Asfrid and Hade privately a few minutes later.

"We're just waiting for your go-ahead."

Jake looked up to peer at the ominous black clouds, then said grimly,

"Let's get started."

### [Chapter 835 We Pulled Lt Off](#)

"Myrtharian Nerds who have already reached their Main Mission goal and just want to take advantage of some extra Ordeal time to train, move to one side. Those who want to continue fighting with your leader stick to your position." Hade instructed sternly.

No one moved.

A faint smile of appreciation spread across the faces of Jake, Hade and Asfrid.

"Then wait patiently for us to return here." Jake laughed.

Jake pressed his bracelet to Hade and Asfrid's and accepted a colossal sum of 3700B Aether points. This was most of the Aether the Myrtharian Nerds had accumulated and stolen since the beginning of the Ordeal and the amount they could safely dispose of.

With the Aether Jake already had, he carried over 4000B of Aether points.

Hade then materialized all the Portable Fortresses he had made, as well as a small 20 meter long spaceship much less ambitious than the one they had originally planned. Apart from its two wings and thrusters, the ship consisted of a cockpit and a long hull that served as a cargo hold. The vehicle had no offensive capabilities.

"Is this the ship intended to house the Portable Fortresses in space?" Jake cocked an unimpressed eyebrow. "It's... more modest than I imagined."

Hade smiled wryly,

" Since making a proper battleship was no longer an option, I had to switch tactics. This plane is small, but it has camouflage and a reliable energy shield. It can detect a speck of dust at 10,000km radius and is programmed to initiate instant warp jumps into hyperspace in the event of a proven threat.

"After we leave, it will conceal itself in the shadow of the sun far away from Quanoth. Unless Aurae or a Player like the Nullifyer specifically want all these innocent citizens dead, who pose no threat to them, then we have nothing to worry about.

"It also has an oxygen recycling system, as do each of the Portable Fortresses I've made. They'll be fine for a couple of years, I promise."

Jake stopped quibbling.

"Very well. Together when you're ready."

Asfrid agreed, then began barking orders for all the citizens of Laudarkvik to enter their assigned Portable Fortress in accordance with the established security protocol. At that very moment, Jake finally noticed that the number of civilians under their protection had increased dramatically since his departure.

There were now more than half a million of them, most with decent fighting potential but not enough to survive on their own. Without their support, they would have been doomed to perish on Quanoth in the next few days or weeks.

'Good thing I never stopped making those Fluid Artifacts.' Hade ached as he watched the tide of humans disappear in a steady stream inside the black spheres.

Most were civilians forsaken by the Ret'Asi Empire's military or adventurers and mercenaries who had become stranded after their companies and squads had been decimated by war and repeated Shron assaults.

Jake was impressed by the utter obedience of these survivors. He wondered by what iron fist Hade and Asfrid had tamed these hardened survivors to obtain such a degree of docility from them.

About half an hour later, the barren valley where they had set up camp was completely deserted. Except for the few dozen Myrtharian Nerds and beasts subservient to Mufasa, only Jake, Hade and Asfrid remained.

"See you later."

Jake, Hade and Asfrid flew together in tight formation, breaking the sound barrier with a deafening shock wave. The trio collided with the mass of black clouds creating a thunderous rumble and soon they dropped out of sight of the other Myrtharian Nerds peering apprehensively into the sky.

It had been a few months since Jake had flown through these dark clouds and he felt the difference at once. After traveling only a few kilometers up, his Gold Stone Skin began to erode and when a bolt of lightning struck him, his consciousness blurred for a quarter of a second.

"Oracle Shield." He shouted telepathically to his two partners who had not waited for his reminder to activate theirs.

A triple Oracle Shields coated their bodies and they tightened the formation a little more, their bodies nearly touching. With the synergy of Asfrid's, Hade's and Jake's combined telekinesis their speed quickly topped 10km/seconds and seconds later they entered the mesosphere. Problem was, they still hadn't left the thunderstorm cloud layer.

"My Oracle Shield just overheated. Automatic deactivation in 5 seconds." Hade informed them bleakly.

His Oracle Shield formed the outermost layer of their triple force field. The Aether Fluid Grandmaster was currently carrying 7 tons of liquid alloy.

Jake thought quickly, then said,

" Reduce speed by 50%. Let's redirect our telekinesis to erect a barrier over the Oracle Shield."

Asfrid, whose Oracle Shield had just taken over, nodded silently and they decelerated sharply, an invisible but tangible sphere overlapping it. The frictional constraints were reduced dozens of times but they had to endure the downpour of lightning and whatever was lurking in those clouds twice as long. Hade took the opportunity to transfer his 7 tons of liquid alloy to the Eltarian female.

A few seconds later, they formally crossed into the thermosphere more than 100km above the ground and only then did they leave those infernal clouds. But instead of entering a slightly calmer buffer zone, the Mana Storm slammed right into them.

BAAAANG!

Their field of vision was replaced by a deluge of multicolored light, their telekinetic barrier freezing, melting, distorting, and then turning into soap bubbles in an instant before exploding into thousands of butterflies that burst into flames upon contact with the other Mana Spells clustered in what could now only be described as a Mana Gigastorm.

"My Oracle Shield just overheated! Forced deactivation in 5 seconds." Asfrid shouted anxiously.

Jake frowned. It was too soon.

"Give me all your liquid alloy. Quickly! If you have any other solutions, now is the time to use them."

Hade and Asfrid became solemn, their gaze turning to pure concentration. Jake equipped his entire liquid alloy and activated all his passive and active abilities, including those of his armor.

With what Asfrid had just handed him, he had 59 tons of liquid alloy on him. If Lost Divinities had not stolen some of it, he would have carried even more.

Despite this, the Oracle Shield quickly began to sizzle and flicker and less than ten seconds later Jake received an overheating message of his own.

"Fuck... Now!"

"Spiritual Fusion." Asfrid growled, forcefully merging their minds together to raise their consciousness levels.

A black blade appeared in Hade's hand and a bright white flame of True Will blazed in his pupils. While Jake and the others were training, they had taken the time to report on what their training consisted of.

Although Hade and Asfrid had not been able to join them, they had not been idle. The only downside was that their training conditions were not nearly as good.

"Sunder." Hade roared as he slowly sliced the air before him with his blade.

The Mana Superstorm split in front of them for dozens of kilometers, giving them a clear view for a split second. Jake's eyes narrowed and decisively grabbed the wrists of his two friends as he summoned one of his Grade 5 Aether Cores and used the local Aether density of over 100,000 points to teleport as far away as his eyesight would allow.

The Aether Core was unfortunately left behind, but that was the price he had to pay to get through this Mana Storm. Discarding 6 more Aether Cores, Jake and Hade repeated the maneuver until his Oracle Device sent him the notification he feared.

[Oracle Shield overheating. Shutdown Effective Immediately.]

At that moment, Hade channeled what was left of his True Will of Sundering and sliced the Mana Storm one last time. For a split second, the sidereal void was revealed at the other end of the storm.

Jake wasted no time and summoned the small ship Hade had crafted. Xi, who didn't need his instructions to figure out his intentions, overrode the ship's AI and triggered an emergency Warp Jump.

BANG!

The little ship burst into a superluminal trail and a tenth of a second later it reappeared in the middle of space a few million kilometers away. Jake looked around and saw that Hade and Asfrid were both unharmed but shaken. It had been a close call.

"Remind me never to trust you with a plan like this again." Hade winced as he staggered back with a pale face. Almost all of his True Will had been consumed in getting them through this Mana Storm.

Jake laughed awkwardly with a guilty face. He really didn't anticipate that the danger would increase so much.

"How could I have guessed that breaking through that atmosphere would become so dangerous?" He sheepishly defended himself. "I'm beginning to think that the apocalypse Aerae predicted is indeed inevitable. But look on the bright side.

"We pulled it off."

#### [Chapter 836 Plan B](#)

"So what do we do now? We leave the ship here and go home?" Asfrid inquisitively asked with a grimace. "I have a nasty feeling that the return trip is going to cost us even more."

"Asfrid is right. We've had a close call this time." Hade agreed with her sentiment.

"So what? You want to give up?" Jake scowled. "Focus on the positive for once. Didn't you get that notification?"

Asfrid and Hade stopped complaining at once.

"We got it."

The Oracle System notification Jake was talking about was this one:

[Side Mission n°4: Save the people of Laudarkvik from the Purge]

[Mission accomplished: Beyond perfect Rating. Save even more people to improve the rating further]

They still had no way of knowing if the reward would be worth their sacrifices, but at least they knew they hadn't taken all those risks for nothing. Seeing that this wasn't enough to lift Hade and Asfrid's spirits, Jake reminded them,

"If worse comes to worse, I have the Codex of Aerae that Crunch and Lord Phenix discovered. We should be able to change the Mana Storm's properties with it, but I'd rather not. My gut tells me that it's because the atmosphere is so tricky to get through that the rescued civilians are safe.

"The fact that our rating was delivered before the end of the Ordeal suggests that the Oracle System predicted that the likelihood of anything happening to them was zero regardless of Ruby's and those Corrupted Schwazens' ability to skew its calculations.



"It also tells us something very interesting. Lost Divinities and these other super factions don't have the time or freedom to come and deal with us anymore. Either our desire to save Ruby is covering us, or Vexa and Mirror Vanguard have decided to treat us as their allies. On that point, he didn't lie to us. He's going to give us our chance to get back at Lost Divinities. The other super factions have refused to send them support and I know he's pissed at them even though he hides it well."

"Can we trust them?" Hade asked in a cautious tone.

"Well... No." Jake conceded in a low voice. "There's still the possibility that they'll get rid of us once the Schwazen threat is dealt with. However, for once I'd like to trust my instincts. Vexa and Prysm are trustworthy in my opinion, but Mirror Vanguard is a huge faction fighting for higher interests. Their loyalty to their cause is unwavering. As long as we don't give them any reason to doubt us, I don't see why they would betray us."

"In any case, now that Lost Divinities is out of our hair and we're back in space, I intend to make my trip worthwhile. I have to replace the Aether Cores I lost... "

"You mean..."

"Yeah... Aerae wants an apocalypse, so we're going to hand it to it on a platter." Jake smiled sinisterly.

The trio climbed back into the ship and headed for Quanoth's sun. The motionless titan holding the planet in his hands locked his six eyeballs in their direction and the shadow of a grin distorted his metallic face.

Aerae had never left.

Jake, Hade, and Asfrid noticed none of this and reached the yellow star a moment later.

"Is it me or is that sun shining a little too dimly?" Asfrid commented as she glanced at the star from inside the ship with a pair of sunglasses.

"Your work, Jake?" Hade chuckled knowingly.

"Right, and this time I'm going to make it worse."

Jake was now an expert at this. He summoned all the Aether Cores in his possession to raise the local Aether density as much as possible, then used them to quickly create new Aether Cores and Aether Sun Cores. He customized them with various Aether Symbols, especially to allow the conversion of energy and matter, but this time he went even further.

Hade was not a trained Aetherist, but his Aether Fluid Grandmaster Soul Class gave him very similar abilities. Where Jake had to consciously produce each Rune, the sage warrior had a much more instinctive understanding of the Aether. All he had to do was wish for what he wanted by tuning into the Aether Dream fabric to get a result that was close to Jake's spells and sometimes even better.

Soon the two men were churning out Aether Cores in silence. Asfrid watched them perform with curiosity and also decided to try her hand at it. She was no Aetherist, but her mind was powerful and sharp. Creating ordinary Aether Cores was no problem.

An hour later, Jake felt the hundreds of Aether Cores they had created were enough and taking Asfrid's and Hade's with him, he fearlessly descended to the surface of the sun. Now that he was a Gold Myrtharian and his stats had greatly improved his body could withstand a temperature of several million degrees. As long as he did not venture into the core he had nothing to fear.

Nevertheless, the danger of solar flares and sub-surface currents was still as perilous as ever. During his descent, one of these small flares ejected thousands of tons of plasma at 800km/second right at him and if he hadn't anticipated it with his Shadow Guide, the impact alone would surely have killed him.

When he was close enough, Jake dumped all of the Aether Cores and Aether Sun Cores into the sun and the task was completed as he quickly made his way back to Hade and Asfrid.

"Now what?" Asfrid asked.

"We wait. Or we can keep making Aether Cores to speed up the process." Jake replied calmly.

"Then, let's do this." Hade agreed evenly.

Jake was supposed to meet Vexa at nightfall for the briefing on the counteroffensive operation against the Schwazens, but this was too important. He wouldn't go back while this sun still had an ounce of heat and radiation to vamp.

Fortunately, he had underestimated the productivity of three elite players like them. Every half hour, Jake would drop hundreds of brand new modified Aether Cores into the sun and the effects were soon felt.

90 minutes later after the first Aether Cores and Aether Sun Cores fell into the star, its surface began to dim like magma pouring into an icy river. The sun became covered in dark, ashen patches as the heat of the core failed to maintain the temperature of the star's periphery.

And all the while, the first Aether Cores, which were already Grade 5 to begin with, continued to grow in density, their absorption rate increasing exponentially. The trio produced another batch of Aether Cores and then patiently let time do its work.

An hour later, Jake landed on the surface of the star, the glaring plasma having solidified into a smooth, dark gray shell. Solid hydrogen at -262°C.

His legs froze at the touch, but a blast of heat instantly evaporated the fuel, the rest forming a pool of liquid hydrogen.

"I can't use my Earth Control on this." Jake informed Hade and Asfrid who were levitating at a distance from him.

"Converting heat and energy into Aether is fast, but converting matter takes much longer. Recovering our Aether Cores will be difficult if we let them sink any further. Unless we are willing to wait here for a few years until the entire star has been fully absorbed..." Hade frowned.

"Unless I can extend my Earth Control over this hydrogen." Jake disagreed with a steely look on his face as he tore off a wafer of solid hydrogen from the star with his bare hands.

His hands froze upon contact, but he ignored the freezing sensation and activated his Double Bloodline Ignition, biting fiercely into the icy piece of hydrogen. He swallowed hard and almost immediately felt the foreign object singeing his esophagus before landing in his stomach.

BANG!

The hydrogen quickly went from solid to gas by sublimation, resulting in a massive explosion inside his stomach. Jake belched a mushroom cloud of hydrogen plasma and grunted,

"It didn't work."

"No shit..." Hade facepalmed.

"You give up?" Asfrid teased him.

"No... Plan B." Jake uttered darkly. "I should have implemented it a long time ago. Vexa gave me the idea, but I couldn't do it before. Besides training my True Will I've spent the last six weeks honing the Aether Spells I need to accomplish this."

"Why didn't you give it a try sooner?" Hade worried, sensing he was omitting something.

"Because it's dangerous." Jake half-admitted. "I would have preferred to try it in a safer environment, preferably with my master Cekt to salvage the mess in case it gets out of hand."

"Well, we're here." His two friends reassured him. "At worst we fail the Ordeal. No final death, so no big deal."

"Your optimism warms my heart." Jake rolled his eyes, but with their support he decided to go through with his plan.

First he called back the Aether Sun Cores and Aether Cores within range, pulling them back through the solid hydrogen crust while the others maintained their slow descent toward the core. With the Aether Sun Cores giving off constant heat, the hydrogen melted again, but Jake had no intention of taking advantage of it.

348 Grade 4 Aether Cores, 36 Grade 5 Aether Cores, 3 Grade 6 Aether Cores, 112 Grade 4 Aether Sun Cores, 16 Grade 5 Aether Sun Cores, 1 Grade 6 Aether Sun Core.

With this, Jake would accomplish a feat that would change not only his future, but that of his entire faction.

### [Chapter 837 Convergence](#)

Once all these Aether Cores were gathered in front of him, Jake immediately began to modify them, adding additional Aether Symbols to channel the Aether contained in their accretion discs to serve higher purposes. He added a Spirit Link to each of them so he could control them remotely.

The reason he couldn't do the same with the Aether Cores trapped inside the star was because his Spirit Energy couldn't survive the hellish temperature and pressure conditions of the core. But in space, sending a simple signal over long distances was not that complicated.

Drawing all of these Aether Runes took him over an hour, even with his newfound Aetherist skills and his ability to instantly duplicate runes and symbols he already knew.

"These Aether Symbols..." Hade mused as he thoughtfully stroked his chin. "Some kind of convergence spell?"

Jake shrugged and continued to carve mysteriously. When he finished tracing the last rune, he exhaled heavily and became focused.

"Now things are going to get tricky." Jake muttered with some trepidation. "I'm going to need an asteroid big and nutritious enough to help me with what's coming next."

"Let me handle it." Hade and Asfrid nodded as they boarded the small spaceship again.

Once inside, the ship activated its long-range scanner and a few seconds later made a warp jump.

During this time, with Xi's help, Jake made some incredibly complex calculations. Once he had completed the calculations, he had no choice but to wait for his two companions to return.

About 20 minutes later, the ship jumped out of hyperspace in front of him. A few more meters and it would have crashed into him.

"So? Did you find a suitable asteroid?" Jake asked not too hopefully.

Asfrid and Hade exchanged a still incredulous look and answered in unison,

"Against all odds, yes. We found the perfect asteroid but it's pretty far from here."

"How many kilometers are we talking about?" Jake inquired curiously.

"126 billions." Hade blurted out laconically. "But don't worry, with the ship we'll be there in a few minutes."

Their leader let out a relieved sigh upon hearing this.

"Okay, let's move."

The trio boarded the ship and made their way to the asteroid chosen by Asfrid and Hade but only after storing several tons of solid hydrogen in the Faction Vault. At their destination, Jake understood why they were so surprised.

If such an asteroid had been discovered on Quanoth, the value of its deposits would have been estimated in the thousands of trillions of gold coins. It was literally a mile-long block of precious and magical metals, the black rock that made it up being a superior form of black diamond that could only be created in an environment with very high temperature and pressure conditions.

"I'm impressed." Jake confessed in awe. "That should do the job, thank you."

Checking the results of his and Xi's calculations, the Myrtharian then sprang into motion, flying up and down like a bee on amphetamines to place each of his Aether Cores in a specific location.

At Grade 4 and 5, the absorption power of these Aether Cores was sufficient to siphon off the surrounding Aether for hundreds of meters, even kilometers, and although the Aether sucked in was

quickly replenished, these Aether Cores would find themselves in competition, unable to reach their full potential.

While two Grade 5 Aether Cores could produce an accretion disk tens of meters in diameter with an Aether density of between 100,000 and almost 1M, when placed side by side, the Aether density would not double.

Jake intended to remedy this problem. A few minutes later, he finished positioning his Aether Cores at locations far enough apart that their accretion disks would not touch.

In front of his two bewildered companions, he then floated to the center of this formation. He was right now in the center of a field of several hundred Aether Cores and Aether Sun Cores, each of which was located several dozen kilometers away from him.

At first glance it looked safe, but Hade and Asfrid were not. They began to get a vague idea of what he was planning to do and it was a very bad idea.

"Are you sure about that?" The Fluid Grandmaster worried. "The accretion disk could kill you."

"Let's begin." Jake said resolutely.

"At your own risk..." Hade and Asfrid winced as they took their distance.

With a thought, the Myrtharian activated the Aether Symbols he had just etched on all those Aether Cores and Aether Sun Cores via their Spirit Link, and over 350 rays of light converged on him at the speed of light. There was a flash of white that was as short-lived as it was dazzling, but no sound.

Hade and Asfrid opened their eyes and saw the lone figure of their friend rapidly disintegrating from his lower abdomen. The accretion disk of his Aether Core had begun to overflow.

Indeed, all the light beams were the Aether continuously produced by all those Aether Cores. They were so condensed and focused that their Aether density was in the tens of millions. Anything in their path would be irreparably and instantly disintegrated.

Their target? His Aether Core and Reiga Core. If his calculations and aiming angle had been off by a mere millionth of a degree, Jake and his soul would have been riddled with holes if not completely obliterated.

Right now, whether it was his Aether Core or Reiga Core, which was mid-Grade 3 and early Grade 3 respectively, they couldn't gobble up and convert that much Aether in that short a time, even though the process was artificially accelerated thousands of times. The Aether they could not swallow quickly pooled around the two Cores, with the local Aether density quickly climbing to over several million.

These two Cores positioned at his dantian were microscopic, their primary accretion disk not extending beyond a centimeter in radius. But when this excess Aether grew far beyond acceptable limits, both disks began to expand outward with decreasing density from the center, and Jake's insides disintegrated as a result.

Ignoring the excruciating pain reminding him that he had a rapidly growing hole in his stomach, Jake steeled his mind and then activated the other modified Aether Cores and Aether Sun Cores. Less focused beams of light that had nothing to do with Aether rained down on his body and Spirit Body.

Beams of radiation and heat reaching millions of degrees, lightning bolts as wide as a truck, a magnetic field of such power that it could lift entire hills of steel washed over his body and Soul and every part of his being began to frantically soak up all this nourishing energy.

Under the influence of this unusual heat the metals making up the asteroid he was standing on melted on the spot, forming a pool of magma and liquid metal. Jake reflexively activated his telekinesis to avoid sinking into the ground and steering clear of the Aether Cores' rays.

The molten metal and rock plasma joined the other beams of heat, radiation, magnetism and lightning and were drunkenly sucked into his body. Double Bloodline Ignition was triggered, as was the embryonic True Will that had allowed him to quickly adapt to whatever abuse he brought upon himself for training purposes.

His Accelerated Healing ability skyrocketed to unprecedented levels, and while the expansion of the two accretion disks was not stopped, his cells stopped disintegrating as quickly, surviving for half a second instead of the previous thousandth of a second.

As for the ones that were not yet affected, they strengthened quickly, but like his Aether and Reiga Cores they reached their saturation point very soon as well. After that, Jake began to burn like a candle at both ends.

On the one hand, he was suffering burns, electrocution and other disturbing symptoms, like his body transmuting into a metal golem due to the overflow of metal and rocks; and on the other hand, an insane amount of Aether was disintegrating him from within.

Of all his internal organs, only the upper third of his lungs remained, while his legs were about to separate from his torso. His Spirit Body had also taken heavy damage, but the effect he was looking for finally appeared.

[Aether density: 800,000 points.]

Besides the disintegrated parts of his body in the center of the accretion disk, his periphery was not nearly as lethal. 800,000 points was the current Aether density endured by his living cells, while those in the process of disintegration faced several million.

For the first time in his life, Jake again experienced the near omnipotence he had experienced at the end of his Second Ordeal as he stepped into this ocean of emerald light. It was in this miraculous environment that he had managed to digest a Silver Soul Stone.

"Hade, hydrogen." Jake grunted as he sputtered a spray of blood that immediately disintegrated.

His friend reacted swiftly, hurling the huge solid hydrogen wafer at him like a supersonic Frisbee. Long before it reached its target, it was vaporized and Jake inhaled it with a deep breath. His stomach was gone, but it didn't matter.

Because he could feel it. The hydrogen had already been digested and assimilated.

[Chapter 838 Just Come And See](#)

As soon as the digestion was complete, Jake immediately put an end to the Aether bombardment. The Aether Cores and Aether Sun Cores stopped emitting their light beams and he finally got a respite.

However, he did not recover. With his current Vitality and boosted by the increased Aether density it should have been almost instantaneous, but instead his body just kept breaking down, while his cells continued to disintegrate.

The accretion disk had accumulated so much Aether that it would take hours for it to finish being absorbed. With no choice, Jake gritted his teeth and reactivated the Aether Sun Cores, Lightning Cores and other modified Cores to boost his Myrtharian Bloodline. At the same time he resumed devouring the asteroid he was standing on.

Sensing that this was dangerous, Hade and Asfrid used the Spirit Shell by tacit agreement to supplement him with their Spirit Energy. The Fluid Grandmaster also teleported to one of the disabled Aether Cores and closing his eyes to reach out to the Aether, he began to modify it to produce a rudimentary Healing Spell.

"Jake activate this Aether Core here." He shouted telepathically.

Jake, whose body was now as translucent and cracked as a windshield after a car accident, subconsciously obeyed and immediately felt a warm, invigorating light caress his skin. Unfortunately, this was counterproductive.

A Healing Spell, no matter how well cast, was still Aether. Especially since Hade was no Master Aetherist. As Jake's cells had far exceeded their Aether limit, the matter within him had begun to destabilize, reverting to the Aether it was originally part of. More Aether would only hasten this process.

Hade had just made a mistake.

"Damn it! I forgot everything is Aether. I've only made it worse" He realized as he saw Jake's face contort in pain. "We've got to get rid of all this Aether overflow."

"Too late." Asfrid retorted grimly, "We can't get near him in these temperature and radiation conditions unless we use our Oracle Shield. That accretion disk is confined to his body, so we have no way to control this Aether unless we damage his Spirit Body even more than it already is. This is a bad idea."

"In that case, what do you suggest?" Hade fidgeted.

"Nothing. Jake has already done what needs to be done. Check the faction chat."

[Jake: Gerulf, Rogen, Drastan, Lord Phenix, I need you to transfer wounds. Are you available?"]

[Lord Phenix: ... Will it be painful?]

[Jake: Very.]

[Lord Phenix: I want a reward.]

[Jake: Fine. A Grade 6 Aether Sun Core for each of you.]

[Gerulf: Count me in.]

[Rogen: No need for Gerulf, I can take these cheap wounds on my own.]

[Drastan: A Versing Troll fears no injury.]

Their leader did not respond as they had expected. Because at that moment, the danger and pain he was enduring had just reached a critical level.

"ARRRRGGH, Fuck!" Jake roared suddenly, a loud shockwave rippling through space despite the supposed absence of air, flattening the asteroid another dozen meters and deflecting it from its previous course.

Its translucent and almost disintegrated body suddenly became compact and healthy again, but the accretion disk had hardly shrunk at all. Just then, he had used one of his two Oracle Heals.

His body and Spirit Body began to disintegrate again immediately afterwards. Mentally exhausted, he wrote back in the Faction chat,

[Jake: Thanks guys.]

The four fortunate companions enlisted to share his suffering suddenly had a foreboding feeling upon receiving his gratitude in such a concise message. Gerulf and Rogen, who were far from being the penguins sliding the furthest on the ice floes, also felt that something was wrong.

They understood why a second later when they accepted the notification sent by Jake.

[Vitality Link activated.]

In four training rooms positioned at four different locations in Mirror Vanguard's Purple Hell, four heart-rending shrieks of agony pierced the silence simultaneously. Vexa and Prysm, who were monitoring the various screens while flirting in the control room, were immediately alarmed.

"What's going on? A technical failure?" The cube man muttered with incomprehension.

At that moment, he telepathically sought the reason from one of the Myrtharian Nerds taking a break and the latter replied matter-of-factly,

"Our leader has activated our Faction Skill Vitality Link."

Vexa was not at all reassured by this explanation. Rogen and Gerulf had clearly underestimated the danger and had not properly configured their training room to withstand such injuries.

Drastan was still hanging on thanks to his insane troll regeneration but his DNA was already damaged. As for Lord Phenix, he had already burned himself to a pile of smoking ash beneath him.

"Ignore the phoenix, he'll be fine." Vexa shouted to Prysm, who had already left to provide assistance.

His girlfriend nodded and went to Drastan's rescue, while Vexa temporarily moved Gerulf and Rogen to the same room. Once they stood in front of him, he sealed them in one of his Green Cubes.

Their wounds healed instantly, but Vexa grew gloomy as their cells kept disintegrating without explanation.

'This kind of damage, it looks like...'

How could this happen in a fourth Ordeal? Unless...

"No fucking way." Vexa cursed as he looked up to the sky at where Jake was enduring his torment.



\*\*\*\*\*

A few hours later, well past the time he had promised to return to Vexa, the accretion disc raging in Jake's body finally came under control. His wounds healed instantly once the root cause was dealt with.

Where an asteroid once stood, there was nothing but void. Jake had eaten it all up to endure this hardship.

Jake brought his hand up in front of his face and clenched his fist in wonder, his True Will of Gripping subconsciously kicking in. The space around his fist began to warp as it was compressed by a power that shouldn't exist.

[Spirit Body level: 41>50(Digitized)]

[Species: Gold Myrtharian]

[ Physique: Gold Myrtharian Body lvl4]

[ Height: 6.17>7.86 meters]

[ Weight: 12046>18689kg]

[Soul Class: Rune Aetherist]

[Strength: 54489.6>108979]

[Agility: 29543.8>59086]

[Constitution: 92899>185798]

[Vitality: 70216>140432]

[Intelligence: 27748>55496]

[Perception: 57986>115972]

[Extrasensory Perception: 29855>59710]

[Luck: 207>329]

[Aether Stats: 3815>12386]

[Grade 4 Aether Core: 5719>64389 points.]

[Reiga Core lvl 3>4.]

This was his progress since the onset of his training with Vexa, but half of the growth had taken place in the last few hours alone. The dramatic increase in his Aether stats, Aether Core and Reiga Core were almost entirely due to the forced absorption of all that Aether.

As for his Body Stats, they had increased significantly, but it was his Bloodline that was the greatest winner. It was already a little closer to its next evolution even if there was still a long way to go.

But the most astounding thing by far was his Aether Core and Reiga Core. This was the first time Jake had been in this configuration. Namely, having an Aether Core that gave him by default an Aether stat amplification so much greater than that of the local Aether density.

The last time this had happened was during his first Ordeal when his Aether stats had reached the cap of 100 in a world limited to an Aether density of 8. With such Aether stats, Jake could even tackle his Sixth Ordeal right now and he wouldn't necessarily be at a disadvantage to the average Player.

"Unbelievable... So that was all I had to do to break the game." Jake laughed sorrowfully as he explored his newfound power.

Quickly, though, he noticed a subtle change in his surroundings. The Aether density next to him had dropped. Instead of the 1000 points it had been before, the value was now 999.9 and was slowly but surely dropping.

He was appalled when he saw this. Until now he had always believed that the amount of Aether in a world could only go up and never down. Hade and Asfrid had long since noticed this anomaly while their leader was getting tortured and their expressions showed a certain urgency and concern as they flew over to him.

"I think it's from the Grade 6 Aether Cores." The Fluid Grandmaster gravely deferred.

"What makes you think that?" Jake arched a confused eyebrow.

"Just come and see..."

The trio flew to one of the three Aether Cores and Jake observed for the first time in his life a phenomenon that was only possible to witness on rare occasions: A lack of Aether.

To be exact, upon reaching Grade 6, the Aetheric pull of an Aether Core would become so strong that all Aether for kilometers around would be siphoned off at an ungodly rate. Until now, an inexhaustible source of Aether had always seemed to replenish the absorbed or consumed Aether in real time, making it impossible to notice any difference.

They had come to believe that Aether was unlimited. The Aether was, but the amount available at any given time was not. A Grade 6 Aether Core was enough to locally drain the Aether of a Fourth Ordeal World with an Aether density over a thousand times less.

Still, Jake noted that this was a slow process that would take several days. Thinking fast, he immediately came up with a quick fix: Keep the Aether Core moving, so that it would never siphon off the same location for more than a few seconds.

### [Chapter 839 The Death Of A Star](#)

Now that Jake was back to normal, they boarded the ship and made a quick hyperspace jump back to the dying sun. When they left the ship a short time later, they didn't find it right away.

Where there was supposed to be a blinding ball of light, there was only darkness. It was just as they had suspected, but it unnerved them more than they were willing to admit. It was an overwhelming sight.

The death of a star.

When a star died, it was supposed to explode or collapse under its own weight, but much more rarely did it simply snuff itself out. This was a fate usually reserved for smaller stars.

"Jake, do your thing." Hade sighed.

"Sure."

The Myrtharian flew to the cooled sun, and touched down like a meteor on a hilly plain of solid hydrogen. It was a dark gray desert, bare and frozen. But this time, Jake didn't feel the cold.

Unlike his previous visit, where the contact of his boots against the hydrogen had immediately triggered a freezing process, nothing happened this time. Nothing visible, anyway.

Jake sensed a negative energy that went against all common sense and should not exist seeping through the soles of his feet and the solid hydrogen he was standing on started to melt. It was exactly the same scenario as when he first came, but the cause was completely different.

Before, he had emitted heat to resist the cold. This time, it absorbed the star's cold, which naturally heated the hydrogen on its surface.

This kind of ability was very similar to those of Throsgenians like Ruby or Rogen.

'Do I have the abilities of a Throsgenian now too?' He asked himself with a baffled look.

He glanced at his Oracle Status, his Bloodline this time, and quickly found what had changed.

[Heat, Cold and Radiation tolerance lvl4: The body temperature is no longer fixed at 37°C and can withstand a much higher and lower internal temperature without shutting down.]

[Heat, Cold and Radiation Control lvl4: . It becomes possible to thermally and energetically excite AND cool down any object, including one's own body. At lvl4, you can now perform advanced heat, cold and radiation manipulation. The finesse of control and perception doubles at every level.]

Paradoxically, the description of these two Bloodline abilities had not changed, but their scope of action was now much wider. In fact, it was not that far to be called Energy Control and Tolerance.

Jake tried to figure out how this could have happened and deduced that in order to assimilate this solid hydrogen into his Myrtharian Bloodline he had to digest it completely before it melted. In other words, when it was at a temperature below -262°C.

"So it was the trick to get the Cold Control ability.' He couldn't help but laugh.

It was so straightforward and so complicated at the same time. If he hadn't created these abnormal conditions, Jake would only have been able to attempt such a feat in three or four Ordeals assuming his Body Stats and Bloodline level didn't improve by then.

He had just saved a considerable amount of time, probably on the order of several years.

And now he was even more confident that he could overpower Ruby. The Throsgenian part of her Bloodline was now powerless against him. The outcome of all this would depend on how much Ruby had grown over the past few months.

It was her Digestor half that was in charge and her presence in the Schwazen capital boded ill. Shaking off his worries, Jake focused on the frozen crust of hydrogen beneath him and made another attempt to use his Earth Manipulation ability.

The result compared to his first attempt was as different as fire and water. Combined with his Heat and Cold Control, the hydrogen ground parted in two, receding to the sides like a fluid, and Jake shot forward into the breach.

With only the vacuum to slow him down, Jake picked up speed exponentially until he surpassed 100km/second, which was more than ten times his maximum speed in terrestrial atmosphere. The pressure steadily increased, accelerating his fall toward the core.

After about two hours, Jake felt he was close to his limit, but there was still no sign of his Aether Cores. The pressure around him had reached such an astronomical value that one square centimeter of hydrogen now weighed several thousand tons. His Earth Control was having trouble getting it to obey.

Just as he was about to change his strategy by forcing his way through with massive nuclear explosions, the resistance that was holding him back disappeared.

The hydrogen in his path also vanished and he unexpectedly landed in a sphere of void.

"What the f-"

He had underestimated the danger of so many Aether Cores and Aether Sun Cores in one place.

[Aether density: 0.001]

What Jake saw just now was almost as terrifying as a black hole. In the center of this sphere of emptiness and darkness, stood a lone white Aether dot, stunningly mesmerizing. But space was warping around it for thousands of kilometers, shaping a blinding spiral of Aether.

All of the Aether in this sphere had been siphoned off by this lone Aether Core of unknown Grade and as the local Aether density fell, the surrounding matter had become too fragile and unstable to continue to exist in this form.

Jake mulled it over, trying to piece together the sequence of events that could have led to such a catastrophe. At the same time, he also had to fight the pull that was trying to drain the Aether from his body with all of his willpower.

He soon came up with an unbelievable answer, but the only plausible one.

Each Aether Core and Aether Sun Cores had at first drawn in Aether, ambient heat and radiation, and negligible amounts of matter on their own. This status quo had persisted until these Aether Cores reached Grade 6.

The Aether density around these Aether Cores had then slowly begun to fall, but this was a draining process requiring several days and limited to a few kilometers in radius. Definitely not enough to create this calamity.

That was until a Grade 7 Aether Core or maybe even a Grade 8 was born. Jake could already imagine how it happened.

An initial Grade 7 Aether Core had formed and one or more lower Grade Aether Cores had been affected by its Aetheric pull. Just as when one black hole swallows another, they had first swirled together slowly, then this gyratory dance had accelerated exponentially until they finally merged.

After that, things must have gotten out of hand in a matter of minutes. This new Aether Core had swallowed up some others and its Grade had increased again. The local Aether density dropped even faster and the star's matter became more unstable, breaking down more easily into energy and Aether, which was the primary food of choice for these Aether and Aether Sun Cores.

Since there was only one Aether Core left and not an Aether Sun Core, Jake could easily guess who had won the contest of who eats the fastest.

'Okay, so now I've lost all my Aether Sun Cores and Aether Cores except... this thing.' He grinned bitterly. 'How am I supposed to get it back?'

[No matter how high the rank of this Aether Core is, you are still its creator. If you get close enough, you should be able to call it back into your space storage.] Xi suggested uncertainly.

Jake's face twitched as he heeded her idea.

'Is my space storage even capable of housing this?' he quipped in a skeptical voice.

[Don't underestimate the usefulness of liquid alloy. The space dimension it conjures is much denser than this Ordeal World. However... You have to get close to it first.]

With that, Jake put on a gloomy face. It was easier said than done.

The Aetheric pull was not a big deal. His mind could stop it, and he could even let himself be dragged to his Aether Core. The real problem began when he entered the accretion disk area.

But before that, he had to deal with another difficulty, the space of low Aether density. At the smallest movement, he could feel space distorting and he had no desire to know what would happen if he accidentally entered some kind of spatial rift.

In the end, Jake couldn't bring himself to give up this ultimate Aether Core. After all, he had destroyed the future of a whole star to produce it. Gritting his teeth, he braced himself for the worst, but as he was about to jump in he suddenly had an idea upon seeing the space distort around him.

'If space is so fragile, teleporting should be much easier!' His face lit up with this realization.

He focused his attention on the far edge of the accretion disk thousands of kilometers ahead of him and looking death straight in the eyes he teleported.

[Aether density: 1.1M points]

He was right on the edge, but fortunately, the disk only extended for a few kilometers. At this distance, Jake could do it. He focused on the Spirit Link he had left on his Aether Core and by goodness, it was still there!

With a simple thought, that Aether singularity disappeared and the darkness and silence returned. But just before stowing it away, Jake had time to read the scan result.

[Grade 10 Aether Core.]

### [Chapter 840 Do You Accept This Mission?](#)

When Jake resurfaced at the surface of the dying star, Hade and Asfrid could tell by his still agitated countenance that something had happened below. But when they saw him shaking his head they refrained from inquiring further.

They boarded the ship and a few seconds later the planet Quanoth and the colossal Aurae showed up in their field of vision. After getting off the ship, it sped away on autopilot to bring the other refugees to safety as originally planned.

"Ready to go back?" Asfrid swallowed listlessly as she sighted the Mana Storm, which had expanded significantly in a few hours.

Now, a good quarter of the Shatug Empire was also covered. Those who had been enjoying the sunlight until then must have succumbed to panic when the sun was magically extinguished. If some still had doubts about the impending apocalypse, they now had no choice but to believe in it.

"I'm not, but our friends need us down there." Hade said matter of factly, but from his twitching brow he was somewhat apprehensive.

Jake, on the other hand, was regally serene, which confounded his two comrades.

"Are you really that confident?" They marveled, each raising an eyebrow.

Jake smiled stiffly in response.

"I'm not. But it doesn't matter anymore."

He levitated until he was hovering a few feet above the Mana Storm, then cast a knowing look at Aurae. He was attempting a bluff, but somehow he was sure it would work.

And indeed, the Mana Storm flowed back, forming a tunnel wide enough for the trio.

"H-how?" Hade stammered in amazement.

"Aurae needs this Mana Storm for the Ordeal to work properly and I have a way to destroy it." Jake replied cheerlessly.

While storing his Grade 10 Aether Core, he had received a notification from the Oracle System that he was not allowed to use this treasure on Quanoth. In return, his final Ordeal rating would take this fact into account so as not to penalize him unfairly.

Aurae could of course let him sacrifice several Grade 4 Aether Cores, but that would be totally unfair as Jake could easily destroy this Mana Storm with his Grade 10 Aether Core without taking any risk. The Ancient Designer could of course stop him, but that would be overstepping his rights.

So instead, Aurae simply chose to let them pass. Since they would have survived anyway, he might as well make a small compromise.

A moment later, they crossed back through the dark clouds and met up with the Myrtharian Nerds who were still waiting for them down below like Mufasa. It was dark, but it didn't matter anymore; there was no more sun.

An hour later, Jake and his group flew across the Serinese Theocracy border and landed near a Mirror Vanguard hideout. On their way, they came across several Schwazen patrols but they made short work of them.

"So that's the Purple Hell I've heard so much about." Hade exclaimed as he admired the vast false sky of the artifact they had just appeared in.

"You're finally here." Vexa wore a relieved expression as he saw that Jake was unharmed. "What did you do to get here so late? I spent the evening tending to the wounds of four of your companions."

As he said this, the cube man carefully scanned the changes in Jake's expression, but Jake remained indifferent.

"Thank you for your help. Sorry for the inconvenience." Hade thanked him politely with an awkward laugh.

Since they didn't want to talk about it, Vexa didn't beat around the bush. His face hardened and he snorted in a deep voice,

"The disappearance of the sun? That was you?"

"Cough, I'm afraid so." Jake cleared his throat coyly.

Vexa looked at each of them in turn, then realizing they wouldn't elaborate he dropped the matter and uttered,

" War council in five minutes. "

Five minutes later, Jake, Hade, Asfrid, Lucia and a few other Myrtharian Nerds like Hephais, Haynt, Aisling, Xaverie and Kenway met with Vexa, Prysm, Radur and a few other Mirror Vanguard higher-ups around a stark table.

Jake and the others expected one of the Mirror Vanguard officers to speak, but it was Hephais who officially started the meeting with Vexa's consent.

"While Boss and the others were training, I was involved in intelligence gathering to prepare for the upcoming special operation." The Assassin reminded them first to get everyone up to speed. "For the past six weeks, Mirror Vanguard and I have been spying on the Schwazens, but it wasn't until nine days ago that we perhaps finally discovered their weak point."

Hephais paused, but Vexa and Radur nodded to him to continue. Being only a guest here he continued,

"Let's start with the bad news. Ruby Hale has been chosen as their new Oracle and for that they will hold a sacred ritual tomorrow night at the end of which their 'god' will make her its divine emissary by granting her some of its power. If it works out as planned, she will become at least a Virtue, but more likely a Throne. A Digestor Throne."

The faces of everyone, including Vexa and the other Mirror Vanguard Players turned ugly. They may have already known about this, but it was still very bad news. But being a Throne was more about angelic quality than power. Being a Throne would give her tremendous growth potential, but it would take much longer for her to pose a threat to Players like Vexa and Radur.

In any case, Jake now knew why the attack had to happen tomorrow at the latest.

"The second piece of bad news is that she's not the only Digestor Trojans on Quanoth." Hephais then announced. "In addition to Ruby, six other Players of various species will also participate in this ritual. Together, the seven of them will have the full loyalty of the Schwazen army once the ceremony is over."

Now that was news for Mirror Vanguard to worry about. Jake and the other Myrtharian Nerds were only concerned with recapturing Ruby. The other Digestor Trojans could die.

However, putting it into perspective, Jake thought it was all for the best. Even if Ruby died or slipped through the net, they had six more chances. They only needed one of those seven to achieve their goal.

"Now for the good news." Hephais grinned sinisterly, "Not all Schwazens are corrupt. They were originally an angelic race that served Aerae. One of their six Virtues, Caphriel, is currently in quarantine with the angels loyal to her in the Temple of Aerae in the capital. She has already been contacted and if we can free her she will fight on our side. She has also promised to grant all our requests as long as they are not excessive.

"We're talking about a Virtue of Aerae, not just any angel. If we can save her, our chances of victory will increase by at least 30%."

Jake was already thinking about something else. He had been frustrated that he couldn't devour those Corrupted Angel feathers, but now that he knew there were pure Schwazens out there he could allow himself to dream again.

If this Virtue named Caphriel was as pure of heart and soul as the angels portrayed in the literature of his childhood then perhaps Ruby still had a chance to regain some semblance of self-control.

Jake was also interested in these angels' bloodline because he had a gut feeling that it would allow him to harness the power of Divinities. It should not be forgotten that he still had the Divinity of Shamash in his possession. Therefore, he not only wanted to munch on some feathers, but also some of their Blood Essence.

"How do we free her?" Lucia questioned as she crossed her arms. "I suppose such a Virtue must be closely guarded."

"Thank you Hephais. I'll take over from now." Vexa stepped in to answer the impatient young woman. "The three Virtues who attacked me six weeks ago are usually on standby at the capital, but they are mobile. Their job is to eradicate any threat to their Theocracy. A fourth, exclusively protects the capital and the temple dedicated to their dark cult. The fifth, accompanied by 20 Powers, watches over every move of the angels in the Temple of Aerae.

"The plan is as follows. Mirror Vanguard and I will devise a scheme to lure the three mobile Virtues out of the capital. Although I cannot defeat them, I am confident that I can keep them busy for a few hours with the help of my men. It won't be like last time.



"Radur and his men will lay siege to the capital, and more precisely to their main temple, to engage the Fourth Virtue and his army of angels. He will also make sure to attack the Temple of Aurae to hopefully taunt the fifth Virtue."

The cube man solemnly stared at each Myrtharian Nerds present and then officially declared,

"Your role as Myrtharian Nerds will be to sneak into the two under-protected temples to rescue or kill the Digestor Trojans, but also to free Caphriel and her retinue. I hope I don't have to point out what the priority objective is between these two targets.

"Myrtharian Nerds, do you accept this mission?"