The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 148 - Rewards(part 2)

It was true that it was tempting to obtain in an instant the experience and know-how of a craft or art that would otherwise have required years of apprenticeship. However, this was normal human reasoning. There was one major difference between his former self and his present self: His stats.

What would have required thousands of hours of learning and revision in the past could probably be accomplished in record time with his present Intelligence. If so, was it still worth paying a hundred credits for knowledge he could easily learn on his own?

Whether it was a martial art, biology, cybernetics, or any other field of expertise, if a normal, motivated human could do it, it was probably extremely simple for him right now.

By the end of the Ordeal, his swordsmanship had surpassed 70 points and the majority of these points had been earned over the last few days as his intelligence grew.

After doubling his Intelligence in the arena battle, his outlook had changed again. All of his recent memories were extremely clear in his mind and he could clearly see the difference from his older memories. He still remembered the face of each person in the bleachers at the Coliseum from when he had reached 100 points of Intelligence, whereas his memories of a few minutes before he increased that stat were more fuzzy.

This did not mean that his memory had become infallible, but it was stable enough and the process of forgetting was slow enough not to affect him in the short term. Instead of reviewing a piece of information every two or three days to retain it, he could probably just review it once every two months.

This was in addition to the fact that a normal human had a limited memory span, whereas he could learn and retain much more in one session, all in much less time.

So Jake set out to find out if the knowledge and skills offered by the Oracle Store could be purchased in the form of textbooks or a digital encyclopedia. And the answer was yes.

The prices this time were much more affordable. 50 pts of proficiency in Medicine according to the Oracle standards required 300 credits and you could immediately get the knowledge and expertise of a real doctor, whereas textbooks on the subject would only cost him 30 credits. The difference in price was striking.

This meant that access to knowledge as such was not considered valuable. As long as it was authorized by his Oracle Rank, he could get it.

[Beware, Jake.] Xi suddenly intervened with a warning tone.

[This is an Oracle Store specific to the Ordeal. When you see the prices in the regular Oracle Store, you won't feel the same way. Ordeals are so special because the rewards you get there are almost impossible to get outside, except for the wealthy.]

However, many ways to get around the absurd prices of the System have been created in Oracle Cities. Too hasty a choice could serve you ill.

Indeed, buying manuals was cheaper than a direct transfer of knowledge, but it was still a mistake if the knowledge could easily be obtained without going through the System itself.

Fmz ukfqniu, dmz fr frhauro hasaiaxfoamr lphv fl ovu Mwzqatafrl, ovu crmjiuteu om gpait f vuiahmnouz jfl arsfipfgiu frt juii jmzov ovu nzahu. Tzfrlduzzare ovu crmjiuteu om crmj vmj om arlofroiw gpait f vuiahmnouz md f huzofar qmtui dzmq lhzfohv zuypazut 500 hzutaol.

That was ridiculously high, but it included the recognition of the materials, how to acquire them, the transformation of those materials into different alloys and shapes, and then the design itself. By knowing how to build a helicopter, someone could probably derive all that knowledge to create something else.

For an Earthman, depending on the context it might be worthwhile, but the knowledge itself was accessible to those who wanted to learn by simply going on the Internet.The purchase in the form of a textbook was only set at 50 credits, but useless for an Earthling who already had access to this information, although certainly not as well ordered.

Similarly, there were also textbooks explaining how to create technologies beyond those of today's humanity. In this case, whatever the price would be, it would still be worth it.

The problem was that the prices were not as strictly proportionate as he imagined. The manual for forging a good steel sword still cost 10 credits, a fifth of the price of the manual for making a helicopter from scratch.

Anyone who was stupid enough to spend his Ordeal credits on that was an idiot. But the fact that this kind of manual was offered meant that for some people even such basic knowledge was considered a treasure.

A Stegosaurus with 100 Aether points in each stat was undoubtedly an invincible opponent for a bàrè-handed Homo sapiens. However, the brain size of such a dinosaur was the size of a walnut. Even with 100 Aether Intelligence points, his IQ was probably lower than that of the dumbest human, as Aether only amplified physical and cerebral faculties.

On the infinite scale of the Mirror Universe, there had to be all kinds of species stupider than humans. Until he knew where humans stood, it was best to be careful.

Anyway, Jake already saw a way around the high prices of the Oracle Store. All you had to do was deal directly with the humans or the aliens with the technology you were looking for. Aether being the recognized currency of the Mirror Universe, there was clearly a fortune to be made for those who were willing to learn a craft.

Even if he charged a high price for Aether in his transactions, such as selling swords, it would certainly be much cheaper than if someone bought them directly from the System.

'So it's a no for knowledge and skills as well. I need more perspective...' Jake concluded mentally. 'In that case, I'll just have to see what I can do with Lucia and Gerulf's reconstituted pure blood. '

The first thing he did was to look for the Myrmidian and Kinthar Pure Blood price in the 'Materials' category. To his pleasant surprise, Jake discovered that if he had had to buy them in person it would have cost him 5000 credits per sample. Samples with lower purity were available at more affordable prices, the cheapest being only 5 credits.

He then went to the 'Aether/Genetic Code Enhancements' category and discovered that getting the bloodline from a Myrmidian or

Kinthar directly cost 1000 credits. If he wanted to get both at the same time, the price shot up to 5000 credits. The notion of bloodline purity was never mentioned.

[It has been detected that the Player has a sample of pure Myrmidian and Kinthar blood. Ability to merge the Aetheric and Genetic Code of the samples with that of the Player. Price: 305 credits.]

The coincidence of the price matching his Ordeal rating made him refrain from accepting. It was as if the Oracle System wanted him to evolve into a mixture of the two. Why so much insistence?

'Xi?'

[I'm here.]

His question was rhetorical, as was Xi's answer, but since she didn't have a body, he could never really be sure if she was there or not. It was like talking on the phone for a long time without the person on the other end of the phone replying. At some point, we all ended up pausing to make sure we weren't blabbering to ourself.

'Are there any Aetheric Code specialists in the Oracle Cities? After all, we do have geneticists on Earth. I'm sure there must be some alien species on B842 that can do the same thing as the Oracle for less, right?'

[There are. The two most recognized professions in the Mirror Universe are Aether Weavers and Gene Weavers. Those who can do both are called Aetherists and are highly respected.]

'What are my chances of meeting one in an Oracle City?' Jake asked to decide if it was worth the risk.

[There's always at least one on every planet in the Mirror Universe. Even if there isn't one, it is possible to commission an Aetherist

from another planet. There will be a price in Aether to pay, however, but it's still far cheaper than the Oracle Store.]

' Would an Aetherist be able to extract only part of a genome or Aether code ? For example, I like getting stronger with every victory, but getting weaker with every defeat a lot less. Becoming Myrmidian doesn't just have advantages... '

When the idea came to him, Jake looked for the option in the Oracle Store, and once again it existed. If he wished, he could customize the assimilation of each bloodline, but the more precise his request was, the more exponentially the price went up. Removing the negative aspect of the Myrmidian bloodline would cost 10,000 credits...

In this case, he had only one option left. If Aetherist was the most respected profession in the Mirror Universe, all he had to do was become one himself. With Xi's help, he found the introductory manuals he was interested in.

[Novice Aether Manipulation: 250 credits.]

[Genetics of the Mirror Universe for Novice: 50 credits]

There were plenty of other textbooks Jake would have wanted to buy, but they were overpriced. His consolation was that Aetherists were extremely rare. These two manuals were just scratching the surface, but the likelihood that he could acquire them for a pittance on B842 was extremely low.

[Do you want to spend 300 credits ?]

Jake agreed without batting an eyelid.

[Tzfrlfhoamr hmqniuout.]

[Remaining credits: 5]

The contents of the manuals he had just purchased were instantly downloaded into his Oracle Device. He could start reading them with a mere thought.

Now that he was done with his rewards, it was time for him to return to B842. Remembering what Yerode and Lamine had done to Elias and the other girls, Jake couldn't wait to meet them again at the exit of the Red Cube.