

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 159 - Finally quiet!

His cat's status was as follows:

[Species: Himalayan Persian cat.]

[Height: 88cm]

[Weight: 82kg]

[Oracle Rank: Level 2, Private.]

[Aether Storage: 1487 pts.]

His Aether Stats were uniform, around 25, while his Body Stats were close to 50 points except for his Intelligence which was around 4. Combined with the 25 Aether Intelligence points he had, his mental faculties were comparable to that of the average human on Earth. Even though he still looked as stupid as ever...

This could actually be explained in a very simple way. A cat's brain was not structured in the same way as a human being's. Fewer convolutions, a less developed frontal cortex, a good olfactory memory, but a poorer visual one. After magnification of these mental faculties thanks to the Aether, his intelligence had definitely increased but was definitely not comparable to that of a human.

The result would probably be quite similar if a trisomic or an autistic person increased their Aether stats. Their mental faculties would increase, but the behavioural disorders resulting from the genetic abnormality would still be present. They would become

‘Super Trisomics’, but without genetic adjustment, they could not totally correct these deficiencies unless appropriate therapy was provided.

Jake had also been aware for some time of the impact of the Aether of Intelligence on his temperament. He had been feeling more emotional recently, as the performance of the reptilian and limbic brains had been augmented like everything else. Thankfully, he had gained in self-control, but the benefits were cancelling out.

Self-control depended on the prefrontal cortex, the seat of consciousness and logical reasoning. Experienced meditators increased their self-control by increasing the thickness and activity of the prefrontal cortex through training, while reducing that of the reptilian brain. The result was a successful mixture of skill and physiological adaptations that made them more able to control themselves.

Other, more evolved aliens probably did not have these character issues, since their brain structure was different. Chances were that some species did not feel emotions at all, as these archaic brains had long since been abandoned in favour of other, more relevant and adapted abilities.

On the other hand, if a human with a character flaw, such as an impulsive or angry side, improved their mental faculties with the Aether, there was a real risk that their personality would become even more unstable.

Back to his cat, Jake didn’t need to think twice to understand why his cat had so much Aether. Crunch just didn’t know how to use it...

His Oracle device had simply continued to automatically absorb the Aether from his prey instead, as the cat didn’t care about those colored lights that couldn’t be eaten.

What put Jake in an even better mood was that he could take the Aether from his cat without his consent. Crunch was still too stupid and naive to realize the mistake he had made in accepting this Pet Contract.

‘You did well. ‘Jake stroked his cat’s head with sincere appreciation. ‘You don’t mind if I take a little bit of Aether ? It’s been a while since you paid any rent... ‘

Jake was the only person shameless enough to ask a rent from a cat, but Crunch didn’t seem to care at all, too busy purring under his master’s petting. On the contrary, seeing the satisfaction of the latter, the dumb cat was extremely proud, coming to rub himself against his tattered pants in the hope of being congratulated again.

Jake didn’t bother about his trousers this time, too focused on transferring his cat’s Aether to his own bracelet. Of course, Jake wasn’t a hypocrite either. He didn’t want the cat to die due to lack of Aether in a crucial situation.

Nevertheless, what was certain right now was that Jake was by far the smartest of the two. If there was one of the two best able to invest this Aether, it was definitely him.

Jake left his cat about a hundred points for the eventual expenses of entering and leaving Cubes, then finally turned his attention to his own rewards, letting the cat get familiar with his new home.

Opening his backpack, he took the two Blue Cubes out of it. The two cubes were about the size of a fist and emitted a faint glow. Putting his hands on them and concentrating according to Xi’s instructions, information soon appeared in his mind.

[Kinthar pure blood, quantity: 1L]

[Myrmidian Pure Blood (trace of another lineage detected), quantity: 1L]

Jake was puzzled to discover that the Myrmidian blood contained another bloodline, but he remembered that Lucia was Eltar on her father's side. This meant that the Oracle had actually found a way to replicate the princess' blood.

At least, Jake hoped so. Because otherwise, it meant that the young woman and Gerulf had been bled against their will.

[The Oracle System can recreate absolutely everything it has knowledge of using Aether as raw material.] Xi reassured him in a gentle voice. [That's why the prices in the Oracle Store are so high.] Even the food from the Oracle Store is made of Aether. It doesn't really grow in the fields.]

‘ Really?’ Jake frowned, not convinced. ‘If that were true, I don't think there'd be much difference in price between a piece of food, a sword, or a gun as long as the weight is similar, right?’

Some materials are more complex than others to reproduce, even for the Oracle System. It's true, however, that the Oracle has the makings of a businessman. Depending on the rarity of an object in the Mirror Universe or the level of technology needed to make it, the price changes drastically. Only knowledge is affordable, but again it depends on what form it takes and your Oracle Rank's level].

So, basically the Oracle was a rip-off. But he knew that already. There were two pieces of good news, though.

The first was that everything in the Blue Cubes was frozen in time and therefore imperishable.

It worked in theory with living things as well, but each of the Cubes were programmed to contain only what they were assigned to. Once empty, they were useless.

It was then possible to feed them to a bracelet, which provided the precious energy and a tiny amount of the alloy needed to improve it. The high prices in the Oracle Store were also partly due to their packaging, since even if you just bought a hairpin, the same Blue Cube would be used for delivery.

The stands in the Oracle Playground were an exception, since these Cubes were directly connected to the main Oracle Store, with food, clothing and other items being directly removed from the Blue Cubes by the selling drone. This reduced costs, making prices more sensible. Well, almost.

Tvu luhmrt emmt rujl jfl ovfo f iaouz jfl f imo md gimmt! Hu jfl plut om f duj tzmnl md taipout gimmt frt ao qftu f vpeu tadduzurhu. Ahhmztare om Xa, mru ourov md ovfo fqmpro jfl urmpev om lphhulldpiiw ozfrlnifro ovu Bimmtiaru.

A good Aetherist could pull it off with just a sample of a few cells as long as the Aetheric and Genetic Code remained intact.

‘Now that the problem of conservation is solved, I can focus on how to find an Aetherist to do the job or become one myself.’ Jake pondered aloud.

[Even if there is one on B842, you’re unlikely to find it any time soon]. Xi ruthlessly cooled his spirits. [Aetherists usually have a very high Oracle Rank. You won’t be able to find it using the Prediction function.]

‘It’s okay, nothing urgent. I can start gathering information by asking Patrick or Alima.’ Jake made up his mind.

‘If it doesn’t work, I can always try my luck on Thelma. Of all the Oracle Cities, I think this is the place where I have the best chance to find him. An individual like that must carry a reputation that follows him everywhere. There’s no way anyone hasn’t heard of him.’

[It’s often true, but some Aetherists like to keep a low profile.] Xi warned him again.

Jake grunted in response, but didn’t object. If finding an Aetherist was too difficult, he would handle it on his own. That’s what he’d always done.

‘Let’s try to stay optimistic.’ Jake suddenly said. ‘Xi, I assume the two manuals I bought are stored in my bracelet?’

[Not exactly. You can indeed consult the contents in the digital library of your bracelet, but you access it by connecting directly to the Oracle System database. You simply have authorization.]

He wasn’t too happy about that. It meant that the Oracle remained the sole owner of its knowledge. If Jake really wanted to make it his own, he would have to either copy the contents or memorize it by heart.

‘In that case, no time to waste...’ Jake concluded with a determined expression.

Focusing mentally, the hologram of a huge book appeared in his mind. Seeing how thick the book was, he was already reluctant to open it. On the cover he could read in English ‘Aether Manipulation for Novice. »

‘All right. My first step in my future career as an Aetherist has come. The other Aetherists better watch out!’

