

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

### Chapter 160 - Jackpot!

After taking a deep breath to give himself courage, Jake finally opened the virtual grimoire. The first reaction he had when he discovered the inside was to insult the Oracle with every curse he knew.

‘Fuck! The cover is in English, but the inside is in the language of the Mirror Universe! I can’t even read it!’ Jake raged mad at the Oracle and himself for getting ripped off so easily.

[I can always try to translate it as I go along, but it’ll take me a while.] Xi calmly offered in an attempt to console him.

‘Ugh... I don’t have a choice, I guess. I reckon I’m going to have to learn this language first if I want to accomplish anything in the Mirror Universe.’

[It’s indeed the right choice.] The AI concurred.

‘I’ll have to check the prices of a Dictionary in the Oracle Store tomorrow, but I’m already expecting the worst.’ Jake sighed as he contemplated his poor 1600 Aether pts (90% of which came from his cat).

[No need to spend. I can already copy the symbols I can translate so you can memorize them. AS for buying an English-Oraclean dictionary, the best thing is to go to Thelma or the New Earth Island belonging to your government.]

[Since they've been on B842 for so long, they must've bought one that they copied and then scanned and digitized. You should be able to get one for a few Aether points if your government aren't crooks. Maybe they're even giving it away for free to new Earthlings coming to the island].

That made kind of sense. In that case, Patrick and Alima would be delighted to know that he was finally planning to visit New Earth. It was not worth recruiting, but at least they had done their job properly.

After all, they were all Earth people. Even on Earth, not everyone worked for the government. Private businesses, restaurants and so on were all independent, even if they had to pay taxes. As long as he didn't have to live there, he could still visit from time to time and enjoy it as a tourist.

Jake then waited for Xi to finish translating the first few pages so he could start reading. This took some time, since despite the fact that Xi was an AI attached to his Oracle device, her abilities were limited to that of a mind trapped in a machine.

She couldn't translate pages with one click, or perform millions of calculations simultaneously. That kind of capability was within the scope of the programs contained in the bracelet and governed by the Oracle System. What she was doing as an Oracle AI, was guiding Jake and using the functions of the bracelet wisely.

Except this time the Oracle was preventing her from using those functions. So she could only use her own memories to translate at her own pace, her memory coming back to her as she discovered the symbols.

Half an hour later, Xi had finally finished translating the first pages and Jake could finally start reading. The introductory page gave him a definition of the Aether and its nature and that was enough to give him food for thought.

[The Aether or rather Dream Aether is the primordial energy at the origin of the Universe. No one knows where it comes from and it is considered infinite. From Aether comes energy and from energy comes matter.]

[Tvu vaevuz ovu turlaow md ovu Auovuz, ovu ezufouz ovu nzmfgaiaow ovfo uruzew frt qfoouz jaii gu euruzfout. Wvur ovu hmrtaoamrl fzu zaevo, f Bae Bfre mhhpzl frt f ruj Urasuzlu mz Suut Wmzit jaii gu gmzr.]

[The Aether density of a Universe is always increasing, along with its entropy. There are three main reasons for this:

-The Aether of a world is constantly renewing itself, connected to its infinite source beyond time and space that no one can harness, not even the Oracle. The Aether of our Worlds is therefore only the crumbs of a larger source.

-The Aether is drawn to the Aether. The denser the Aether is at a point, the more the Aether will be drawn to that point, like matter with gravity. This means that the most powerful Evolvers and Players are helping to increase the density of Aether in the world they live in. It's an inevitable process that nothing and no one can stop.

-Aether is drawn by brain activity, especially thoughts and dreams, hence the term Dream Aether. Some Aetherists have theorized that the solidified Soul of living beings is actually a mini source of Aether, which then allows its control. Aether is therefore attracted to Life to a certain extent, and even more so to intellectually evolved

life forms. A powerful Spirit attracts Aether just as money attracts the poor. (and the rich).]

By reading this introduction, Jake already had a better understanding of the nature of Aether, but more importantly, that even without doing anything, a powerful Player would continue to become stronger by attracting and tapping Aether from this infinite source from which the Worlds were born.

This meant that the Aether concentration on planet B842 would swiftly rise now that a large number of Players and Evolvers from different Seed Worlds were actively enhancing themselves.

It also implied that he was close to forming his Soul, since he could already control the Aether inside his body. He was expecting to receive a notification from the System to congratulate him or something like that the day he succeeded, but that didn't seem to be the case.

[We talk about Soul when it can survive on its own after the body dies.] Xi reminded him in a few words. [But, once your mind is strong enough, which is the case after you increase your intelligence, the Aether begins to come to you.]

[ If your body were to die, your Soul can undoubtedly be saved if we don't drag things out too much. That's what the Oracle probably does when it repatriates a Player who was killed during an Ordeal. He recreates a new, identical body and puts the preserved soul of the Player inside.]

'If the Oracle knows everything about us, can't he just download a copy of our consciousness into a new clone? Isn't that what he's already doing with the Oracle AIs?' Jake asked with a gloomy expression. 'Because if he did, the clone wouldn't be aware of it, but the original is definitely dead...'

[...]

[It's a possibility.] Xi recognized before she fell silent again.

Jake realized that he had been tactless in reminding her of her condition of duplicate consciousness, but it was too late to turn back. Instead, he decided to act as if nothing had happened by turning his attention back to the book.

The next page of the manual explained the notion of Aetheric Code. Just like the genetic code, Aether's movements and patterns had concrete meaning and effects, which reinforced the theory that Aether was not totally inert.

There was even a major cult dedicated to Aethia in the Mirror Universe, an abstract name for the infinite source of Aether at the origin of everything.

Using advanced microscopy technology, the early Aetherists had long since observed, counted, and referenced all of these distinctly effective Aether patterns, and this formed an extremely complex runic language that was named the Aetherian.

Anyone wishing to become an Aetherist or simply to better understand and control their Aether had to delve into this language and become familiar with it. Even the most brainless warriors knew some Aetherian runes or rune sequences for everyday life.

These Aether runes were too small to be consciously controlled, in the order of Planck's Distance ( $10^{-34}\text{m}$ ), but it was possible to reproduce them on a larger scale to achieve macroscopic effects.

In order to modify the Aetheric code or make a transfer, however, a confirmed Aetherist was needed as well as several advanced technologies to observe, manipulate and copy these infinitesimally small Aetherian runes.

The necessary technologies were listed, but were not developed in detail, suggesting that this was not the purpose of this novice's manual. The price of these technologies was not discussed at all, and Jake couldn't help but feel a twinge of anxiety about how much Aether it would cost him.

When Jake finished the Introduction, he moved on to the first chapter and from the very first words he knew he had made the right choice in buying this manual.

It was with unabashed excitement that he discovered the title, which single-handedly overcame all his bad moods and made him realize that he had actually hit the jackpot. Because the title of the first chapter was literally 'How to breakthrough your Aether limits.'