

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 162 - Happy?

Jake wasn't the dithering type anymore. It was a defect that had been ingrained in his character in the past, but the intensive training of the last Ordeal had definitely corrected this bad habit, as well as his lack of self-confidence.

There was no point in thinking about what else his Aether could have been used for. He had several choices, and he decided to choose power without hesitation. He only had a hundred crystals and about 1600 pts of Aether at his disposal. Therefore, his possibilities were limited.

If he could get more crystals, he would have produced 100 Red, Orange and Yellow crystals, which would have given him enough to immediately double his Strength, Agility and Constitution in case of danger. Unfortunately, that was not possible.

In the meantime, Jake made do with what he had. Thirty Red, Orange and Yellow crystals, as well as ten Blue crystals for his Intelligence. He still had the crystal that Aslael had given them upon their arrival, which he decided to keep in case of unforeseen circumstances.

After preparing the crystals, he only had 1230 pts of Aether left. Since this was his next objective, he then used 640 pts to increase his Extrasensory Perception by another 10 pts, raising it to 30 pts.

When the operation was complete, Jake had only 590 pts left, but his perception of the surrounding Aether was finer and the range had

increased by a good meter. He could now feel and control the Aether within a radius of 2 meters around him, which was enough to control the Aether flow of a spear without any problem, not to mention his machete which was much shorter.

The crystals were useless if he didn't use them and therefore he absorbed the Aether they contained in his body, his Aether Strength, Agility and Constitution reaching 130 pts, while his Intelligence peaked at 110 pts.

The improvement of his physical condition did not give him any particular sensation except for the fact that he had better control of his body and felt much lighter, as if gravity had less hold on him. In contrast, the Intelligence gain was an experience that he never tired of, like healing a headache that he hadn't even been aware of in the first place.

Once his first goal was accomplished, Jake didn't really want to stay locked in his booth to read a textbook about Aether, whose chapter 2 recommended at least 100 pts of Extrasensory Perception, which he was nowhere close to having.

Checking his cat's situation in the next cabin, he was able to confirm that Crunch was sleeping peacefully with all four paws up in the air, completely unconcerned about the world around him. Feeling a little peckish, Jake looked in his backpack for the dried Digestor meat he had prepared before his Ordeal as well as his gourd full of silvery blood.

The smell of the meat and the sounds of Jake's chewing woke the black cat, whose snout began to wriggle as he smelled the fragrance of his upcoming meal. Seconds later, Crunch was at his feet, humming like an airplane turbine in the hope of getting some leftovers.

Luckily for the cat, Jake had no shortage of food, while the Digestor blood had long since become ineffective. By tasting the dry, rubbery meat and sniffing the slightly nauseating smell of the partially clotted blood, he felt that he was finally not so hungry anymore.

He thought he would rest for a few days, but in the end the last few months had been so hectic that those few hours of silence and peace in a monochromatic cabin paradoxically made him feel uncomfortable, to the point of feeling mildly claustrophobic. He needed action!

No sooner said than done! The day was far from over. He could well make a quick outing to stretch his legs and who knows, maybe bring back some fresh meat for tonight.

‘Wanna come along, Crunch?’ Jake asked by connecting his mind to the cat’s via his Blue Aether.

It was a skill that came naturally to him after he scanned the cat with his Aether earlier. When his Blue Aether reached the cat’s brain, he was able to vaguely distinguish the animal’s emotions. Naturally, he could also transmit his intentions and even images and smells if he focused.

This ability did not really come from his brain, since however smart he was, he could not yet perceive the signals and the electric field of his neurons, which were about a micrometer in size.

lo jfl f hfnfhaow hmqare dzmq val Pzmom-lmpi ovfo jfl fgmpo om lofgaixu. Efhv oaqu vu ukourtut val hmrlhamplrull om ovu iaqaol md val Ekozflurlmzw Puzhunoamr, val qart iudo val gzfar om guhmqu f qfl md Auovuz.

As he captured his master’s thoughts, the cat stopped eating and tapped the booth wall directly in order to get out. A vortex formed

and the cat disappeared inside. Jake chuckled when he saw the cat's eagerness, and then did the same.

Back in the corridor, Jake searched for the nearest Orange Cube, but stiffened when he came across two hatefully familiar faces. Yerode and Lamine. Or rather three. Yerode was carrying a half-naked sleeping woman on his shoulder like a sack of potatoes, and it didn't take a genius to figure out that they weren't planning to talk over a cup of tea.

'Fuck!' All three Players cursed at the same time when they recognized each other.

What were the odds that their booths would be next to each other in a Pyramid so vast that theoretically every Civilian, Evolver and Player in the Mirror Universe was entitled to their own booth? Practically zero, and yet there they were!

If Jake was naive enough to think it was just a coincidence, he wouldn't be Jake anymore, he'd be a complete moron. Crunch sensing the hostility between the three men immediately began to growl with a muffled roar, not far from a lion's or tiger's snarl. His fighting skills were still a mystery, but his Intimidation Skills were up to scratch.

As if an invisible gun had just gone off, the three men drew their weapons. Jake pulled out his machete and a gun, while Lamine aimed his sniper at him. Yerode also pointed a single-handed machine gun at Jake.

Immediately, the trio found themselves stuck in a stalemate, a dangerous balance forming between the two sides. Crunch was the free electron of the group, ready to pounce at the slightest sign of

weakness. However... he was also the most unhelpful. If he took a bullet for Jake, it would already be a victory.

Still, Jake was not afraid. He was already planning to chase them when he got out of the Red Cube, and that idea hadn't left him.

'Let the woman go or this place will be your grave.' Jake delivered the order in a threatening tone.

Jfcu vft fijfwl tzufqut md tzmnnare ovmlu hvuulw iarul frt ovu laopfoamr jfl lpznzalareiw fnnzmnzafou. Nmj ovfo val arouiiaeurhu jfl vaev, ovulu cartl md nprhviarul hfqu fglpztiw uflaiw om vaq.

In response, the two mercenaries burst out laughing, pretending to wipe away some fake tears. But soon, their false laughter stopped, their faces turning into two ugly grimaces.

'Come and get her if you want her.' Yerode sneered dismissively. 'Otherwise, we will fuck her good right now before you. Violence is forbidden in case you've forgotten and I can assure you we'll be extremely gentle with her, haha.'

The two mercenaries burst out laughing again, evidently proud of their joke.

'If you could see your face, haha! It's gold!' Yerode taunted him as he groped the breast of the young unconscious woman with his free hand.

To add insult to injury, he then grabbed the young woman's face resting on his shoulder and lifted it up just enough to place a loud kiss on her lips.

If they thought that a little provocation was enough to make him lose his temper, they were wrong. He hadn't missed any of the nearby drones monitoring the corridor. Since the beginning of their

altercation, more and more drones were floating towards them and he had no doubt about what would happen if he lost his temper here.

Jake walked slowly towards the two mercenaries with a defiant, smug look in his eyes, knowing full well that neither of them would dare pull the trigger. Once within two meters, he deployed his Aether.

His pupils lit up with a Blue and Violet glow and he simply uttered:

‘Kneel!’

Art ovuw cruuiut. Hmzzadaut, luuare ovuaz iue talmguware ovuq, ovu qplhiul md ovuaz ovigvl ozuqgiut om zulalo oval hmrozftahomzw ruzsu aqnpilu, gpo fdouz f gzaud zulalofrhu ovu tpm hmqniuouiw imlo hmrozmi md ovuaz iuel. A hzfhc md cruuhfnl zulmprtut frt ovuaz cruul vao ovu quofi dimmz.

‘I’ve come to get the girl just as you wanted. Happy?’ Jake scoffed back.

At that very moment, to the two mercenaries Jake was far worse than the Digestors swarming outside the Shelter. He was a real demon.