

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

### Chapter 195 - Oracle Mission Hall rewards

Jake didn't stay with the three young women to chat afterwards. Girl talk was a real torture for him and he felt that they were well on their way to chitchat for a long time.

He said goodbye to them right away after giving the two sisters the number of his booth and adding them to the contact list on his bracelet. With his current rank, communication via the bracelets was limited to 500 meters, but this would no longer be true once his rank had been promoted a few more times.

Quietly heading back through the various Orange Cubes, Jake could only marvel at how quickly his legs had healed. In addition to being fast, the healing had left no after-effects or discomfort.

He also noticed that unlike the low-level Digestor blood, the effect of the lvl7 blood was much shorter. His Vitality had already returned to normal, despite the large amounts he had consumed.

He suspected that the low-level Digestor blood had a limited effect on his body. After all, his Aether stats were currently much higher than those of a Rank 2 or 3 Digestor. The energizing and attracting effect of Aether was still present, but it didn't seem so miraculous anymore.

It was clear that Vitality was a strong point of the Digestors, physically or Aetherically. His scan did not give this crucial

information, but it was easy to guess given the properties of their blood.

He had never had the experience, but he was certain that an injured Digestor, if not devoured by its fellow Digestors, would be up and running again in no time if its energy and food reserves were sufficient.

Once out of the pyramid-shaped Oracle Bunker, Jake first went to the pentagonal building where the two Mission Halls were located. He had massacred a large number of Digestors and he hoped the reward would be worth his efforts.

Upon entering the Pentagon, he returned to the cold, metallic atmosphere of the Oracle Mission Hall. The room, still vast and filled with information terminals and drones, was emptier than when he had come the day before. Even though it was lunch time for the Earthlings, he doubted that the aliens in the Mirror Universe practiced the same customs.

The most likely hypothesis was that the Players and Evolvers, who had arrived at the same time as him, had already recovered their missions. Those present were either stragglers, people like him who came to collect their rewards, or recruiters or informants watching for newcomers.

Martare val mjr gplarull, Jfcu npo val vftr fefarlo ovu quofi ouzqarfi himlulo om vaq frt lmmr f qurofi vmimezfq nmnnut pn ar val qart.

‘I’ve come to collect my reward.’ Jake said in a low voice.

He wasn’t afraid to be heard in the Oracle Shelter. The Oracle was a hell of an asshole, but the security was top-notch, you had to at least give it credit for that.

[Reward calculation in progress:]

[Since accepting the mission, Jake Wilderth has exterminated:]

[2225 Rank 2 Digestor worth 0.5 points per head, or 1112.5 pts.]

[712 Rank 3 Digestor worth 2 pts per head, or 1,424 pts.]

[46 Rank 4 Digestor worth 10 points per head, 460 pts.]

[Your total reward is 2996.5 points. Would you like to renew your mission?]

It vaguely reminded him of the repeatable missions in MMORPGs, he couldn't help but get ironic. He had no idea how many Digestors he had massacred last night, but he was still surprised by the result. Unconsciously, he thought he had killed a lot more than he remembered from the original horde, but it seemed that Sarah, Kyle, and the two princesses had contributed much more than he imagined.

Either way, it was still an acceptable Aether bonus, boosting his Aether savings to over 17,500 points. Deep down he hoped that Rank 4s would pay more, but apparently for the Oracle they weren't that scary, even though the price difference between a Rank 3 and a Rank 4 was still significant.

The good news, however, was that the bonus reward also translated into a gain of experience in the Oracle Rank gauge. He now had over 17.5M pts as well, which was still far from the 100M needed for his promotion.

With the container full of Digestor blood in the hands of Will and the group of felines accompanying him, Jake didn't need to worry about getting a good price. However, he knew from his visit to the Mission

Hall the day before that the demand for Digestor blood and corpses was high.

Selling blood and corpses at the Oracle Store was a very bad idea, but on B842 the price of a liter of fresh blood was worth 0.5 points for a Rank 1, 1 point for a Rank 2, 2 points for a Rank 3, 5 points for a Rank 4 and 20 points for a Rank 5. Beyond that, the market was not yet well established and prices for higher cadavers were open for negotiation.

This provided a good benchmark for Jake to estimate the dangerousness and the number of Digestors of each type. Up to Rank 5, prices remained affordable even for someone like him struggling to eliminate a Rank 5 Digestor. This meant that for the human and alien factions that had joined B842 over the past several years, these Digestors posed no difficulty for them and they had no difficulty in obtaining supplies.

The price went up exponentially from Rank 6 and this indicated that from this level on, it was not so easy to procure them. Either the Rank 6 and higher Digestors were too scarce or there were not enough qualified troops to hunt them.

Since Jake had crossed a Rank 7 Digestor and a potential Rank 8 Digestor after only one outing, he favored the latter. This then raised the question of why these factions, having had a two-decade head start on this planet to prepare, were so weak.

From his point of view, it was theoretically possible to run the first four Ordeals in four days. After these four Ordeals, he wasn't sure if he would be able to face a Rank 7 like the Pterosaur, but he was confident that he would have a chance of survival against a Rank 6 Digestor. It was unthinkable for these old factions to not have qualified troops to hunt these monsters.

There was one last possibility, though. The one related to their arrival. Because there were few living things on B842 except Digestors, the Aether density in the air had slowly increased, which also slowed down the Digestors' evolution.

With the completion of the merging of millions of exoplanets, trillions of potential Players and Evolvers had appeared on B842 and each Ordeal made them stronger, which radically increased the density of surrounding Aether.

Jake didn't realize this at first because of his high Strength and Constitution, but it wasn't just the Aether density that had changed.

He could feel that gravity was increasing as well, although a bit late compared to the Aether density. Generally speaking, everything seemed to be increasing. The lights were brighter, the sunlight warmer, and even the noise was louder.

The difference seemed negligible right now because his stats were out of proportion to the magnitude of the phenomenon, but the situation was evolving rapidly. Civilians refusing to fight couldn't notice the difference, since their Aether stats were increasing along with the planet's Aether density.

However, for the Players and Evolvers it was a real race against time. Because what made them so strong was their Aether advantage.

With Aether stats at 100 points where the density was 10, they were literally 10 times better than normal. But if the density increased to 50, they would only be twice as strong as normal and their initial advantage would be greatly diminished.

To be frank, Jake even suspected that the increasing Aether density might be affecting his actual cognitive abilities. He wasn't getting

dumber, but just as 10 times the normal gravity would slow him down, his brain might not be spared either.

Gravity wasn't the only fundamental force. Electromagnetic force and strong or weak radioactivity also defined the laws of this world, but there were probably other Aetheric laws he didn't know about.

In any case, there was only one valid solution to this problem: Progress faster than the Aether density, faster than the other Players and Evolvers, but above all faster than the Digestors.