

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

### Chapter 224 - The Eve of the Ordeal

‘Why three days and not now?’ Jake inquired coolly. Three days was already too long.

‘Because some family members are still missing. I haven’t given up hope. If I don’t hear from them in three days... I’ll make up my mind.’

‘Three days gives you time to prepare, train or relax if that’s what you want. You need to be mentally in the best conditions at the start of the next Ordeal.’

Jake could read a degree of grief and anguish on his grandfather’s face, but sadly he was unable to share these feelings. There were people missing from the meeting, but none of those absent evoked the slightest spark of empathy in him.

At first, Jake intended to refuse to wait for those three days, but then he became aware as he looked at Sarah’s brazen gaze that the assimilation of their bloodlines had only just begun.

Three days could finalize their physical transformation and, in Sarah’s case, allow her to regain control of her body, or at least come to terms with the behavioral drifts it was causing. He could also keep himself busy by continuing to read his Aether or Genetics manual, or practice creating his Aether Core. These three days of waiting had more benefits than drawbacks.

‘I will wait three days, not one more. ‘ Jake eventually said when his grandfather had already left the room.

Anya, apprehensive of her cousin’s reaction, exhaled loudly with relief, startling them all, Jake included. She was so tense that she had forgotten to breathe. With her Constitution, fifteen–twenty minutes of apnea wasn’t an issue.

‘Follow me!’ The young woman cheerfully exclaimed, waving to them to walk with her as she walked out of the room, pushing the two doorknobs they had entered by.

She then led them down one floor to a wing of the mansion with many guest rooms. Jake got his own room, Sarah and Will got theirs, and Tim had to share his room with Kyle. The two sisters shared another one.

The Playboy grumbled for a few seconds, then realizing it was a waste of time, he disappeared into his new room and slammed the door with a snort.

Having no desire to socialize with the rest of his family, let alone make up for lost time, Jake thanked Anya and then retired unceremoniously to his own room.

The room was spacious and the king size bed of excellent quality. Compared to his cabin in the Oracle Bunker it was the difference between day and night. As he threw himself into the bed with his arms and legs spread out like a starfish, he repeated to himself that finally it was actually well worth waiting a few days.

Although it was finally quiet, Jake didn’t relax for long. If there was one thing he had understood since his death battle with his first Digestor, it was that he hadn’t been able to relax or procrastinate since then.

He constantly felt a pernicious sense of urgency that drove him to train and prepare constantly, as if he was bound to die if he relaxed even for a few moments.

Jumping out of bed, he closed his window and drew the curtains to insulate himself from the outside noise. He didn't want to feel spied on, nor did he want to attract the attention of his family with his training.

Hu ovur lfo hzmll-iueeut ar gut frt himlut val uwul. Hal Snazao Bmtw ovur ulhfnut dzmq val gmtw. Wvuzufi gudmzu val hmrlhamprull jfl iaqaout om f zfreu md 10 quouzl, guhfplu md aol iaqao md 100 nmarol md Ekozflurlmzw Puzhunoamr, vu talhmsuzut jaov bpgaifoamr ovfo oval qurofi gfzzauz rm imreuz ukalout.

His Spirit Body expanded to fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, and finally thirty meters, encompassing practically the entire mansion and part of the garden before ceasing to stretch.

He was amazed by his new awareness, but realized that it was only a property of his Myrtarian Spirit Body lvl1 that gave him a spirit three times stronger and more stable than a normal human Evolver.

As he expanded his consciousness, his Spirit Body passed through and perceived different Aetheric signatures, the blue-violet Aether forming his consciousness colliding even with the Spirit Body of other individuals in the mansion who had also deployed their extrasensory perception.

Jake was afraid to compete with these individuals for Aether, but it turned out that no matter how much Aether he drew to create his Aether Core, the density of Aether in the atmosphere did not drop one iota.

He had seen this phenomenon before, but it was still extremely mysterious. The only logical explanation was that the infinite source of Aether that the manual spoke of was constantly renewing the Aether that was being stolen at such a speed that the Aether density seemed constant to his current senses.

He felt with his mind that he was not the only one absorbing Aether in the mansion, but by choosing wisely to ignore these individuals and the Aether they were manipulating, he was able to concentrate on his own training.

Nevertheless, it was clear that none of them were trying to create an Aether Core. At first glance, these individuals, who were probably relatives of his, were simply practicing the Aether or Bloodline Skills they possessed to become more familiar with them or simply to further perfect their skills.

Jake thought that creating his Aether Core would be as complicated and painful as the last week, but with the increased range and firmness of his Spirit Body, the training took a very different turn.

The Aether from 30 meters away flocked towards his belly button at a blistering speed, far faster than his previous attempts. The Aether that he had trouble compressing below the size of an olive was compressed with a single thought to the size of an apple seed. The progress was striking!

Nfopzfiiw, fdouz f duj qarpoul, fr Auovuzah BOOM lmprtut ar val qart, jvahv jfl rmo f zufi lmprt, frt ovu Auovuz qfl lhfoouzut om ovu jartl fii msuz ovu qfrmz. Hu vft qftu nzmezull, gpo vu loaii vft f imre jfw om em.

Over the next three days Jake continued to practice creating his Aether Core tirelessly, steadily refining his control of the Aether and

gradually building up his Spirit Body and mental force, which was already above normal.

Thanks to the 'multitasking' cognitive ability of his Myrtharian bloodline, he quickly discovered with joy that he could easily disassociate his mind to read his manual in the background, while his main attention continued to be focused on creating his Aether Core.

He was obviously more efficient if he devoted his mind fully to a single task, but reading required virtually no effort with his current mental faculties. Cultivating himself at the same time therefore only marginally affected his Aether control.

His training in isolation was seldom interrupted during these three days except when his cousin brought him his meals and on two other occasions when the ruckus forced him to stop and check what was going on in the manor.

The first event occurred on the second day after his arrival when Daniel Wilderth and his daughter Lily reached the manor in a terrible state. Their clothes were scruffy and filthy and their faces slimmer, but they were unharmed.

His wife had apparently committed suicide before their very eyes after breaking her ankle while fleeing from a pack of Digestors.

Daniel was another uncle of Jake's who was about 50 years old, while Lily was a 13-year-old teenager who looked slightly like Anya.

Upon meeting her, Tim's attitude changed completely, falling victim for the first time to his boiling hormones. It was love at first sight. Alas for him, not reciprocated. The poor girl hadn't even mourned her mother yet.

However, it was decided that she and her father would participate in the next Ordeal with them.

The second disturbing event was the evening before the Ordeal, when his grandfather knocked on his door to inform him with a gloomy appearance that his cousin Stephen and his aunt Maeve had been pronounced dead for good. The commotion in the manor was the rest of the family grieving and discussing their fate.

Fuuiare rmovare fgmpo ovuaz talfnnufzfrhu fnfzo dzmq ovu dufz ovfo ao hmpit vfsu guur vaq, Arwf mz Kfiur ar movuz hazhpqlofrhul, Jfcu vft laqniw ovfrcut val ezfrtdfovuz gudmzu himlare ovu tmmz om em gfhc om val ozfarare. Hu jfl fizuftw tpii dzmq fii ovmlu tufovl f imre oaqu fem.

By the morning of the third day, when the artificial sun of the Oracle Playground rose, his transformation into Myrtharian was complete and he brought his training to an end. He donned his brand new armor, Wormak's leather boots and equipped his new machete black as night. He'd already transferred the Grey Aether from his old machete to the new one.

Wearing his trusty backpack, he then left his room without looking back. A new Ordeal was waiting for him and he had every intention of making it through to the end.