

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 277 – Aftermaths of the Storm

Lu Yan may have felt repressed inside, but there was nothing she could do about it. Jake was just too strong as things stood. After harrumphing as hard as she could, the only way she had left to cope with this tyrant, she had to resign herself to searching for a way to acquire more Aether as soon as possible.

Luckily, she found it a lot easier than she expected. The next day, on the fourth stormy day, it finally came to an end. The hailstones stopped raining and the sky cleared in less than an hour, replaced in a snap by a cloudless azure blue sky. The sun was hitting hard and the chirping of birds and other pterosaurs made a deafening din.

It was nearly unbelievable that just a few moments earlier an ice storm was raging.

Nevertheless, none of the participants would be able to forget the devastation of the ice storm so easily. The storm had left indelible marks, which were not only environmental. Of the 6,000 or so Players still in the running, more than 3,000 had been eradicated during those four days.

Two other Nosks in the top 50 had been eliminated, reducing their number to 5. The sudden cold had been catastrophic for this species. One of the Krish in the top 5 had also disappeared from the ranking, replaced by an individual named Alef Smith, a human name, possibly from Earth.

This participant who came out of nowhere had about the same number of points as the eliminated Krish as well as a kill to his credit, which left little doubt regarding the course of events. The Krish had been killed.

For Tim and Sarah it was shocking news. The boy still remembered the nightmarish chase like it was yesterday and he could hardly believe that such a Krish had been eliminated so suddenly.

Unlike the Nosks, there were no other Krishes participating in this Ordeal outside of the three in the top 5. In other words, the murdered Krish had a one in three chance of being the one who chased them, and a 100% chance of being one of the three Krishes Tim had met in another refuge area.

Since the leader was significantly larger than the others and ranked second in the ranking, the probability that the Krish who had chased them was actually killed was actually one chance in two.

With the temperatures having returned to normal, Jake, Sarah and Tim immediately resumed their routine as if nothing had happened with a few minor exceptions.

Indeed, after the misadventures of the previous days, Jake had decided to reinforce the defenses of their shelter even more, even if it meant paying a steep price. Naturally, he had no intention of being the only one to get his hands on it, and he had asked for a contribution in Aether as rent to each resident.

Sarah and Tim had readily donated 50,000 points of Aether to help him strengthen and sharpen the various objects, blades and needles that made up the traps. The new door had also been forged from a whole rock this time and had been infused with Grey Aether as well.

Grey Aether had its limits, though. A blunt or completely smooth tool could not become miraculously sharp. On the other hand, this Sharpening Aether could make the slightest asperity as sharp as a razor blade.

Jake and Sarah believed that even a perfectly round and soft object could become sharp with enough Grey Aether, but this was unverifiable, since inorganic matter suffered from the same 100-point Aetheric limit.

Still, they had been able to take advantage of this property to make each stone and weapon extremely solid, without rendering them unnecessarily sharp if that was not their primary function.

Jake was also able to verify a question that had been on his mind for a long time. A point of Grey Aether normally cost 5 points of raw Aether. Whether it was the big door, his machete or a tiny needle, the cost had never changed. 500 Aether points for 100 Grey Aether points.

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A giant needed much more Aether than a dwarf, but those who barely exceeded a certain size/volume were the biggest losers. Because of one extra cubic centimeter, improving their Aether stats would cost them a lot more. As such, it was better not to put on extra weight.

All the more reason to become an Aetherist as soon as possible. A good Aetherist could easily calibrate the Encoding to avoid waste. Since a human didn't even occupy one cubic meter of volume, it might be possible to improve their stats at a much lower cost.

Fortunately, this was not a problem for Jake or Sarah. All they had to do was defeat worthy opponents.

It took them a whole day to improve their defenses. Kevin and Lu Yan helped a little, but the Ziwid was clearly too stupid to perform any task requiring

more than two brain cells. Jake was already happy that he wasn't shitting directly on the tile floor of the house.

The next day, Jake upgraded their equipment. As long as the corresponding pieces of armour were polished perfectly, injecting Grey Aether to make them stronger wasn't an issue.

After his fight against the Nosk, he had realized that a high quality armor could really make the difference. Even using all his abilities, the alien's armor had pretty much taken the brunt of it, with only his reinforced machete being able to chip it.

Until now, Jake hadn't met any other participant with this Grey Aether in their arsenal. Aslael's gift had proven to be far more valuable than he had originally imagined. There were certainly other people out there with similar advantages, but it was clearly not commonplace.

Seeing the results of his forging attempts, everyone willingly paid the Aether required to upgrade their equipment. Lu Yan was sweating profusely when she had approached Jake to make her a sword like Sarah's, but surprisingly he had agreed without batting an eyelid.

He had made one for her willingly, as if he wasn't afraid of being attacked in his sleep. And indeed he wasn't. Jake would always meditate and sleep underground, a few meters under the chimney. There was nothing she could do to threaten his life without him noticing.

Also able to use telekinesis, she could control the needles and traps hidden in the ceiling and walls, but her abilities paled greatly in comparison to Jake's.

Despite the group's apparent willingness to cooperate, they barely talked to each other. Jake was as antisocial as ever, perhaps even more so since the arrival of Kevin and Lu Yan. His silence and sternness was largely responsible for the heavy tension within the group.

The only one who dared to joke and flirt from time to time was Kevin, who had since reverted to his human appearance.

‘Sarah, how about you and me going for a walk under the moonlight one evening? Lu Yan, you can obviously tag along.’

While the group was hunting off the base, Kevin was giving it his best shot. Seeing that the young lady wasn't upset by his constant teasing, he had quickly gained confidence, pushing the bar higher and higher. Walking closer and closer to the blonde to the point of touching her regularly, his ribs had already been pricked several times with the tip of her sword, but that had not been enough to make him give up.

‘Sure. But there are no moons on this planet. You might have to wait a long time...’ Sarah eventually giggled in response. He and Kyle would have gotten along well.

‘Shut up!’ Jake barked a few meters in front as he was struggling against an Orxan python with a paralyzing and soporific venom.

Seriously! While he was fighting for his life, this dumbass of a cousin was flirting with the two women of the group. Plus, it was clear that Sarah seemed to let him do it on purpose. She could have turned him off a long time ago, but she was allowing him to carry on with his old-fashioned seduction game as if she was trying to get him jealous.

‘Fuck, if you think I'm going to take the bait that easily, you're dreaming, baby!’ Jake mumbled between his teeth, not forgetting to gut the snake flailing in front of him.

At least Tim was trustworthy. Lily was still unconscious, so he was redoubling his efforts at his side. Lu Yan was the rear guard of their group and was vigilant, but her mistrust of Jake had naturally led her to Kevin. This

muscular and hairy idiot wasn't quite her style at all, but he would make a good meat shield in case of trouble.

Jake could see through Lu Yan's tricks as well, but he was amused by them. Although Kevin may seem like an idiot, he was a true Wilderth to the core. He may have been arrogant, smug, flirtatious, and moody, but he was nonetheless a gifted man who had once been a genius trader.