

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 280 – Body Tempering

Once in the volcano, Jake immediately ceased to care about the existence of Lu Yan. She had been warned. If she still decided to betray them after that, it meant that she was ready to pay the consequences, but with his understanding of the young woman he strongly doubted it.

After falling a few dozen meters along the inner wall of the volcanic chamber, Jake had quickly grabbed the first bump to prevent his body from speeding up excessively. Like a caffeine-fueled jumping spider, he then began to descend the volcano in a series of incredibly skillful somersaults.

Once he had scaled down several hundred meters, the suffocating heat coming from the lava fumes in the heart of the volcano began to be felt and he had to slow down his progress. A feeling of pleasant warmth was caressing his skin and he knew that the temperature in the room had already exceeded 100 C°.

In an Ordeal World with an Aether density of 40 this was absolutely not to be underestimated. On Earth, such a heat would have been the equivalent of 400°C. To be exact, the summer temperatures on the island would have been lethal to a normal human if the Aether level of the weakest participants had not been raised to the same level as the Aether density for the sake of fairness.

With an Aether Constitution of about 100 points, a human Player could endure temperatures close to 100°C on this island, but Lu Yan was already sweating as they were climbing the volcano. With their Agility and

Intelligence improving their Body Control, it was relatively simple to control their sweat glands to sweat at will.

That's why he knew that Lu Yan had been faking her exhaustion by pretending not to be able to stand the heat. She could easily have followed him in the volcanic chamber to his current position. But beyond that, he was confident that none of his companions could follow him.

With every meter bringing him closer to the lava sea, the temperature would increase by a notch, and it did not take long for the temperature to approach 200°C. With such heat, no human would be able to venture out here with impunity. And those who could, would soon become dehydrated before gradually being cooked.

At this temperature, the scorching, oxygen-depleted air surrounding him was beginning to threaten him. His skin became moist and he soon started sweating profusely. A little more and he would reach a depth suitable for tempering his body.

'Almost there!' Jake exclaimed as he gazed down at the lava lake a few dozen meters below him.

Hal gmtw vft guepr om eimj iacu f ipqn md quofi aqquzlut ar difqul frt ovu suarl frt fzouzaul prtuz val lcar juzu fizuftw dpiiw fnnfzuro, iacu zasuzl md ifsf hzallhzmlare ovu lpzdfhu md val gmtw.

Even without doing anything and despite the overwhelming feeling of asphyxiating heat, Jake could feel how his cells were absorbing this heat and transforming it into another form that could be used in an unknown way. His Kintharian bloodline was at work.

If he just stayed stuck to the wall of the volcano where he was, hanging a few dozen meters above the lava, he knew that his body would gradually strengthen until the heat was no longer a challenge for him. But that would take a considerable amount of time and that was not what he wanted.

Heat and radiation were just two of the ingredients needed to truly nourish his Myrtharian Body. He also needed rich, nourishing soil to support his body. The lava would have been perfect for this, as it was literally molten rock and soil, but unfortunately it was too hot for him. If he came within a meter of it, he was sure to finish roasted in a matter of seconds.

Besides, the reason why he did not dare to descend to less than twenty meters was not due to the heat of the air, but because the lava lake was periodically ejecting geysers of molten rock, as if the volcano could not help but release a big fart from time to time.

[I think this is the ideal depth to start at] Xi commented in a placid tone, corroborating his own intentions.

Lately she spoke little, but she was not idle nonetheless. When Jake was training, she was the one monitoring his surroundings through the feedback from his Spirit Body and bracelet. This was one of the reasons why Lu Yan had no chance to catch him off guard.

Talking about the Oracle Ais seemed to be a taboo subject among Evolvers, but with the information he had gleaned here and there, Jake had come to realize that not all Ais were necessarily kind or friendly.

These consciousnesses provided by the Oracle System generally matched the personalities of their hosts, but that didn't mean that they felt any attachment or compassion for them. Many simply answered their hosts' questions about the Oracle System and nothing more.

As such, Jake was lucky with Xi. Her personality was relatively empathetic and she was really trying to help him. Maybe it was subconsciously what he was looking for, a trustworthy person, and her behavior was just the result of a program, but for now it didn't matter.

Listening to Xi's instructions, Jake began to drill a tunnel in the rock wall against which he was leaning. Unlike the soft earth of the jungle, the rock

was too hard for him to control it by force, but it was still a mineral material of which he could perceive and affect the Aether.

With the help of his sword and by thermally agitating the nearby rocks to raise their temperature, he soon cut himself a cave of about one cubic meter. This was just enough for him to squat in there, but it was more than sufficient to keep him safe from untimely lava splashes.

From there, Jake started digging down with his sword and his Earth manipulation skill and little by little, he got closer to the lava lake. By the time he was only a few meters away from the lava lake, the rock tunnel he had dug had become as hot as an oven and the stone in the walls was glowing slightly red without him needing to transmit energy to it.

Knowing that he was unable to advance any further, Jake stopped digging and began pounding with the pommel of his machete and his free fist the rocks he had excavated to prepare the soil in which he intended to bury himself. As his body was feeding on these ores, the minerals had to be small enough to be assimilated.

After that, all that would be left for him to do was to start a long meditative nap.

The process of crumbling the burning rock took a few hours and by the time he finished the task, Jake's skin and lips were so dry that he was already regretting his idea. The real question was not whether he could train here, but whether it would be possible for him to survive at this depth for more than a few hours without water.

[Once buried, the Kintharians' accelerated physical growth skill should become active and your water consumption should be drastically reduced]. Xi explained calmly. [A few days should not be a problem. In the worst case, you can always go back up to the surface to replenish your supplies].

'Right.' Jake nodded with an enlightened face. He and Lu Yan had indeed crossed a stream before arriving at the base of the volcano.

The slight doubts and nervousness he felt dissipated after hearing the speech of his Oracle AI and he recovered his usual composure. Inhaling deeply, he buried his body in the earth and closed his eyes with a resolute expression. It was a bet on the future!

Soon, his body covered with scorching gravel began to develop a kind of fever and his mind turned cloudy, quickly leaving him in an altered state of consciousness. Instinctively, he activated his Accelerated Healing Skill and the pores of his charred skin opened up to let in more heat and nutrients.

Tvu dazlo duj vmpzl juzu ukhzphafoare, gpo fo f huzofar nmaro ar oaQu ovu nfar lpflatut, easare jfw om f zusaofiaxare ozfrhu-iacu lurifoamr. Tvu Bmtw TuQnuzare jfl jmzcare.

Time passed slowly and as he was growing accustomed to this training method, Jake suddenly noticed that the heat was no longer so unbearable and that a kind of warm air draught was running regularly over his skin, sending shivers down his spine. Confused, he opened his eyes and as he saw the tunnel around him, he almost got a fright.

‘What happened? Jake asked without moving, knowing that Xi never slept.

[The rock in this volcano seems to fit perfectly with your Myrtharians genes. Your body assimilated all these minerals without any difficulty].

Even without Xi’s report, Jake could see for himself that the soil covering him had disappeared. His body hadn’t changed visually, but his veins weren’t glowing as much. The tunnel also looked a little narrower, but that was probably just an impression.

Having no idea what time it was in that cave, he was even more shocked when he heard his AI’s answer.

[You have been unconscious for three days. If you hadn’t tried so hard to dig that tunnel, you might have stayed awake, but you were apparently suffering

from some kind of heatstroke after working so hard in such an environment.
You have been feverish during the whole process.]

Not feeling particularly different from before, he took a look at his Body
Status and his eyes widened abruptly when he saw the familiar notification.

‘What... the heck?!’