

The Oracle Paths

Volume 1: The Oracle

Chapter 29 - New features

After Xi's recall, Jake turned his attention to the remaining notifications.

[New Oracle features unlocked.]

[The new features unlocked are as follows:]

[Compress, Encode, Aether Storage, Logging and Mapping]

As he discovered the new features, Jake mentally focused on his wristband link, memorizing all the information about the new functionalities in an instant.

Jake got a mild headache from absorbing all this data, but nothing his brain could not handle. After a moment of digesting all this information, he finally got the gist of it.

The Oracle device was able to passively absorb the Dream Aether to function. That explained how his bracelet was getting its energy. He had originally made several hypothesis, such as solar energy, or even his own body heat, but never received a clear answer from XI. Well, that was it.

In spite of this, he did not clearly understand the use of certain functions, for lack of examples.

Compress was supposed to compress the Aether into its original, undenatured form, while Encode was supposed to transform this energy into another, more easily usable form.

Aether Storage spoke for itself. The Oracle device stored the harvested Dream Aether whether for its own use or to encode it into another form. He was surprised to discover that his Aether Storage was not empty.

[Aether Storage: 0.2 points]

It seemed ridiculously little, but he had no reliable reference to refer to.

‘Xi where did the Aether in my bracelet come from?’ Jake asked, genuinely curious for once.

[Half of it corresponds to the Dream Aether passively accumulated in the Earth’s atmosphere. The other half was obtained from the Digestor’s remains.]

Jake frowned, adopting a contrite expression. It was blatantly obvious that the Oracle wanted to encourage them to exterminate the Digestors rather than twiddling their thumbs and doing nothing.

‘Why has the Oracle bracelet recovered so little in all this time?’ Jake asked again.

[Two reasons. One, Dream Aether’s density on Earth isn’t very high.] Xi explained patiently. [The second, the Oracle device evolves with its wearer. At Rank 0, most functions are disabled or limited, including the absorption of Dream Aether. Now, with rank 1, the rate of accumulation should have doubled.]

[It’s different when the Aether is retrieved from a victim. Other forces come into play to make the Aether more accessible. Even so, about 95% of the Dream Aether is considered wasted during Compression.]

‘Okay, it’s already clearer. What about the Encode function? And what use can I make of this Aether once it’s been processed?’

[The Encoded Aether is your ticket to evolve beyond human limits.] Xi revealed, marking a moment of silence.

[Everything you humans would call supernatural like soul or magic cannot be explained by the laws of conventional physics. Otherwise, you would have long recognized their existence.]

‘Wait a second.’ Jake stopped her, suddenly flabbergasted. ‘You mean the soul and magic aren’t just fairy tales?’

For an agnostic like him, it was an extremely reassuring epiphany. At least there was something beyond his death. Death was no longer the end of the road.

[Yes and no. I’m sorry to disappoint you and all the believers of different religions on Earth, but the soul as you understand it is not so simple to acquire.]

‘You mean when we die, we’re done for?’ His enthusiasm had just been snuffed out like a candle extinguished by a bucket of water.

[Fmz ovu Efzoviarel prdmzoprfoiw wul. Aii wmpz zuiaeampl hmrhunol fhermjuteu ovu ukalourhu md ovu lmpi, gpo qmloiw om hmqdmzo wmp. Ar arulhfnfgiu ifj md ovu Urasuzlu al ovfo jvfo hfr gu hzufout hfr gu tulozmwut. Esur ovu Smpi fl ovu Ozfhiu prtuzlofrtl ao al rmo arsarhagiu.]

[Actually, you don’t have a soul either. All your memories, your emotions are mostly contained in your brain. If I change the hormonal balance, the levels of neurotransmitters or surgically remove/destroy parts of your brain, your personality will change irrevocably. Even cases of amnesia recovery are not valid proof of the soul, since these recoveries are biologically explainable.]

‘In this case, how do you get a soul?’

[In dying, there is a residual trace of electrical or quantum activity in your brain. If nothing is done to conserve it, it will eventually disperse for lack of energy. However, if this proto-soul could use the Dream Aether for sustenance, it would have a chance to survive and grow stronger.]

[It is not impossible at the moment of death for a human to have a moment of enlightenment and understand how to save his soul, but these are too rare cases to mention.]

[On the other hand, the Oracle is not all-powerful. It is possible that the concept of an immortal soul as you conceive it exists. But even the Oracle cannot verify these claims. Again, this is a matter of personal faith.]

[But if I can give you some advice to take seriously, forming a stable Soul should be one of your top priorities. Some abilities are just beyond the capabilities of a biological brain or an inorganic processor.]

‘And how am I supposed to do that?’

[First things first. The first thing you need to know is that you can use your Oracle device to apply pure Aether directly to your own body. You only have to wish it with your mind, but I wouldn’t recommend it. It would be the stupidest thing you could ever do.]

‘Why, what’s wrong with using it like that?’ Jake was under the impression that this energy only had benefits.

[The problem is the same reason a newborn on Earth has as much Dream Aether as an old man or a rock. Just as a warm body passively transfers heat to colder bodies, natural Aether flows to less concentrated environments. If you soak in Aether, you’ll lose it like a flame loses its heat in the middle of a blizzard.]

[However, this is also the reason why some life forms are superior to humans. If you lived on a planet with a higher concentration of Aether, you’d see all your faculties increase in a short time.]

Jake thought long and hard about Xi’s words, but he couldn’t find any inconsistencies. The only thing he could think of was that using Aether directly was what some more evolved species could do naturally without the help of the Oracle. The functions of his bracelet were really just crutches until he could do the same.

‘Then how do I use the Encode function?’ Jake asked this time. He was determined not to lag behind on this.

[Encode preforms the Aether in a usable way. Dream Aether is an energy that makes everything possible, but to make use of it the energy must be encoded.]

[To make an analogy, your body is the way it is because each of your cells is governed by a common DNA. You don’t need to know why your blood is red, why your eyes are blue, or how your cells divide. It’s just the way it is. DNA is a genetic code, which regulates your biology.]

[Every living being also has an Aetheric code. But in primitive life forms, this code is extremely simple. It is a simple energy signature. Each signature is different. Even two twins with identical genetic codes do not have the same Aetheric code.]

[Every magical power, cultivation technique with miraculous effects or unexplained psychic powers can be explained by this code. The problem is that understanding this code is impossible for an earthling.]

[After all this is about the primordial laws of the Universe. You have a better chance of altering your own genetic code than venturing to manipulate your Aetheric signature.]

[That’s where Encode comes in. It can transform the Aether into energy that can be used specifically to enhance your attributes. Even though the Aether has no color, the Oracle has assigned colors to these different energies so that you can easily differentiate between them. It is the same for all alien races using the Oracle.]

[Rut dmZ Sozureov, Ozfreu dmZ Aeaiaw, Yuiimj dmZ Cmrloapoamr, GZuur dmZ Vaofiaow, Cwfr dmZ Irouiiaeurhu frt Irtaem dmZ PuZhunoamr.]

[There are other colors, but they don’t apply to you yet. There is a reason why the colors of the light spectrum were chosen. The Oracle device uses more Aether to encode each color. One point of aether for one point of strength, then double that for one point of agility and so on.]

‘I thought that in reality the stats were correlated with each other.’ Jake remembered, grumbling aloud. ‘Like, you need bones hard enough to be strong without hurting yourself, or something like that?’

[And they are.] Xi confirmed. [Hence the cost. Take the example of Intelligence, which needs sixteen times more energy than normal. In human beings, even at rest, the brain, which weighs less than 2% of body mass, consumes more than 20% of the energy produced. This is an evolutionary limit. A more powerful brain overheats and would become too expensive for the organism].

[In order to develop Intelligence primarily with Aether, it is encoded to strengthen certain aspects of the Constitution, Vitality, Nervous System etc...]

[The last reason this color code is so important is because the encoded Aether is the main currency in the Mirror-Universe where you will soon go as Earth is reassembled there.]