

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

### Chapter 313 - Soul Spell

Since brute force didn't work, Jake readily tried another method and it turned out to be the right choice.

Determined, he released the claw from one of his index fingers and directed the Grey Aether from his other claws and fangs to that claw. The claw, which he could now extend up to 20 centimeters thanks to the evolution of his bloodline, now seemed to be wrapped in a ghostly grayish light sheath.

Next, his lava veins and his entire body began to glow with intense heat. Calmly, he concentrated all this heat towards this single claw and very quickly it began to shine as bright as a mini sun.

The radiant heat of his claw was such that his own skin was somewhat itchy just by coming into contact with the heated air. Right now, he wouldn't have dared to touch his own claw without a thick layer of Constitution Aether for protection.

Finally ready, he placed the tip of his index finger against the armored door and started scribbling with his claw as if he was trying to write something onto the door. The metal held firm and there was no sizzling or burning sound, but after his claw moved past, a fiery red furrow remained in its wake. Moreover, he had felt almost no resistance.

This method worked!

Since the blowtorch or plasma claw method was effective, the rest of the process went off without a hitch. He patiently pressed his claw into the thick

metal plating and when the metal started to soften and melt, he slid his finger along the structure to spread the damage.

The alloy making up this door was ridiculously resilient but it also had a melting point. After about an hour, the armored door had been reduced to a glowing sludge-like state, reminiscent of the magma pouring down just above him.

With an additional ram strike using all his weight, the armored door collapsed with a screeching rusty sound . Jake stepped over the puddle of molten metal with a small leap and was finally able to discover the treasure for which such a safe had been created.

To be honest, the room was pretty empty, about twenty square meters. Had it not been for a sort of shelf full of old grimoires in a corner, and a stone pedestal in the center topped by a circular table, the room would have been completely empty.

Cmrofarare val talfnmaroQuro, Jfcu Qmsut hfpoampliw omjftz ovu hurouz ofgiu jaov f ojarciu ar val uwu. Irlnuhoare ovu lomru dpzraopzu dzmQ fii freiul, vu rmoahut ovfo ovu gflu jfl zmmout ar ovu ezmprt. Tvu lpzdfhu md ovu ofgiu jfl zuifoasuiw lQmmov iacu nmialvut gifhc Qfzgiu.

Surprisingly, his Spirit Body was unable to perceive what was inside, but he would have bet his life that what he was looking for was there. He found some sort of switch under the stone cabinet, but nothing else.

Before activating it, he first studied the room from top to bottom and was immediately reassured when the feedback from his Spirit Body confirmed that he had not made all those efforts in vain.

Looking up at the ceiling, Jake materialized some light with his hand, which allowed him to recognize the grooves and furrows through which the metallic liquid extracted from the participants had trickled down under the altar. The

network of inscriptions and carvings that had purified the altar's energy seemed to stretch all the way to the table in the center.

Having already found the switch hidden under the table, Jake activated it with his telekinesis, and the smooth table surface quickly warped to form a series of boxes reminiscent of the keys of a keyboard.

While testing a few buttons, a three-dimensional light hologram filled with unknown symbols appeared in front of him and he couldn't help but growl in frustration when he realized that he didn't recognize a single one. It was not Oraclean, but a different language. Probably the native language of the Zhorions. Moreover, these symbols were changing and frequently switched from one form to another, obeying mysterious laws he didn't know anything about.

And yet these symbols were not totally unknown to him, but they were also different from those he knew. Before he could check his assumptions, Xi's hologram appeared at his sides with a pensive expression.

'They are Soul Aether Runes.' Xi explained after a while when she saw his confusion. 'Your Novice Aether Manipulation Manual did not cover these runes. It's too advanced for now. The Soul Glyphs you received are made up of similar runes, my artificial consciousness as well.'

'Once your soul and Spirit Body exists in an Aetheric form, the information of your memories, thoughts and characteristics are contained in such Soul Aether Runes. Each new thought or memory automatically generates new runes, since the Aether and your spirit are always in perpetual motion. We all behave in a certain way according to our education, mood and past experiences and all this can be read in these runes.'

'Like a computer program that would define how we function, but instead of relying on neural networks and our hormones, the Soul Aether Runes take care of that.'

‘It means... that the Soul Glyphs I received as a reward have somehow affected the person I am? Or at least that such Glyphs can do that?’ Jake extrapolated with a disturbed look on his face.

‘Right.’ Xi nodded. ‘The ones you’ve received have nothing but benefits, but they add to the weight of your soul, so to speak. If you compare the human mind to a computer’s operating system, you can install all kinds of software on it, change the source code of the system itself, or even put a virus in it. It is also possible to fill your mind to saturation like a computer crashing because it can’t run a game. The soul and all these types of manipulations are the Zhorions’ specialty. Of course, those you faced were too young or incompetent to perform this.’

Jake was chilled to think that by accepting these Soul Glyphs, he may have willingly let in a mental virus capable of lobotomizing him from within.

‘Don’t worry, the Oracle wouldn’t let that happen.’ Xi reassured him with an intangible pat on the shoulder, but that only made him more gloomy.

If there was one thing Jake doubted in terms of efficiency and transparency, it was the Oracle System. In this Ordeal alone, he had been nearly eliminated several times because of its unreliability.

While he was languishing, the multitude of holographic symbols continued to whirl in front of him by repeating nonstop the same patterns. By dint of observing them, Jake noticed that there seemed to be spaces appearing sometimes in the middle of all these symbols. Some of them were missing.

‘So this is how they check their identity...’ Jake whispered, stroking his chin.

Jake hadn’t formed his Aether Core yet, but with his bloodline evolution and all his training he was confident that he could reproduce some of these Aether Runes. The hologram in front of him was several meters wide. To create runes of this size required little effort.

After having observed at length the hologram in front of him, Jake's keen perception finally identified a certain number of Aether Runes and his memory and calculation powers did the rest. Subconsciously, he began to visualize the hologram with his own spirit and the Aether circulating in his Spirit Body began to reproduce the Aether Runes in front of him by mimicry.

The closer he came to a perfect execution, the more he felt his mood changing. With each symbol he was able to reproduce, he got a little closer to the goal and his aura changed accordingly. Then suddenly, when the whole picture and the thousands of runes were completed, he felt like a trigger in his mind an intense killing intent erupted from the depths of his soul.

Hal dfrel frt hifjl iureovurut frt dmz f gzaud QmQuro vu sfepuiw nuzhuasut ovu Auovuz hmQnmlare ovu Qmiour Quofi md ovu fzQmzut tmmz fl ad ao jfl prtuz val hmrozmi bplo iacu zmhc mz ufzov. Io jfl fr fgaiaow ovfo val MwzQatafr Bimmtiaru tat rmo wuo vfsu frt tulnaou val tēlīzē om caii val iphataow jfl arofho.

'I understand what it is!' Xi exclaimed with a confident voice. 'These are the Soul Aether Runes contained within the Flintium's energy. Only a fraction, but it was enough to create such an effect. The Zhorions of Chaos are what they are because they have mastered a Soul Spell.'

'A useless spell, though...' Jake sighed as he returned to normal with an exhausted face.

As soon as he had paid heed to Xi's words and was distracted, the Aether pattern he had visualized with his Spirit Body had naturally dissipated. Although the effects were incredible, the drawbacks were not negligible either.

In a few seconds of experimentation, he had just lost almost three kilos and his mind was tired as if he had just pulled two sleepless nights in a row. Not to mention the fact that fighting while maintaining such a stable Aether

structure was currently impossible for him. For now, using the energy of a Red Soul Stone was still better.

The good news, however, was that as soon as he managed to perform the Soul Spell, a gear noise was heard and the round surface of the table had suddenly tilted to the side, revealing his precious haul.

When Jake saw the astronomical amount of metallic liquid inside, his eyes bulged instantly out of sheer surprise. It was just beyond his wildest dreams.

The tank starting well below the table, there was enough metallic liquid to fill a small swimming pool. Jake could barely imagine how many Players had been sacrificed here over the past few years.

A single Ordeal was not enough to create that kind of accumulation.