

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

### Chapter 314 - Oracle Device Upgrade

The first question that came to his mind at that time was why all this liquid metal had not been used. Was the Zhorion priest unable to perform the incomplete Soul Spell displayed by the hologram?

On closer examination, Jake found this hypothesis less and less absurd. These Zhorions possessed incredible Soul Skills and a superior mind to most Players, but from the beginning they had shown no truly unique expertise in Aether manipulation.

From the priest, to the guards, to the civilians, the mental techniques employed were much the same. Only their power differed, which could be explained by the difference in their stats as well as the density of their Spirit Body.

Their methods of subduing their enemies were relatively diverse, ranging from mental domination to the very manipulation of the enemy's emotions and desires. These techniques could be straightforward like the Killing intent of their Berserk mode or insidious like the invisible aura of charisma pulsing forth from the priest's speeches.

Yet these techniques were so complex that Jake was unable to reproduce them, only to defend himself from them with great difficulty. It seemed highly unlikely to him that these Zhorions were that much more talented than he was.

Therefore, the only conclusion was that just like him with his Myrtharian skills, they were using their bloodline to accomplish all these feats. This kind

of mental attacks were as natural to them as breathing or walking and their talent had little to do with it.

In this context, it would not be at all surprising if the priest himself remained unable to perform this Soul Spell. After all, even Jake was barely able to do it after memorizing all the Aether runes from his manual and having strived to increase control over his own Aether over the previous two months.

However, what was even more confusing was that no Zhorions had managed to do so during all that time. This was evidenced by the liquid that had accumulated through all these sacrifices.

But if the priest was not benefiting from these sacrifices, then why was he working so hard to continue this barbaric practice? Had someone ordered him to do so, or was it part of a tradition that these Zhorions were required to maintain?

Whatever it was, it didn't matter. What mattered now was that all this metal belonged to him!

Not quite sure how to retrieve all that metal, Jake grabbed the void in front of him and an invisible force field captured the equivalent of a pot of liquid metal just like a fishing net.

Pfoauroiw, vu npiut val hfohv pn om val dfhu, ovur luuare ovu iadiuull flnuho md ovu iaypudaut fiimw, vu plut ovu lhfr md val gzfhuiuo om ozw om euo lmqu tfof mpo md ao.

[A mysterious alloy that makes up the bracelets given to the living beings of the Mirror Universe by the Oracle].

When he saw the report, Jake snorted with contempt. He should have expected it. If it was possible to find out where this alloy came from and how to make it, everyone would have tried to get their hands on it.

There was of course the possibility that his Oracle Rank was insufficient to access this information, but it was still frustrating.

[ I don't know more about it. ] Xi immediately excused herself when she felt the Question coming up.

'Hmmff.'

He should have known! He knew she had nothing to do with it, but this Oracle System was really too unreliable. Sometimes it motivated him to work his way up the ladder as quickly as possible, but most of the time he was so repulsed by it that he wanted to get rid of his bracelet by any means available so he wouldn't have that sword of Damocles on his neck.

Since the scan was useless, Jake then just absorbed the liquid alloy in front of him. Based on his past experience, he simply materialized his bracelet and dipped his arm into the liquid alloy in front of him.

Instantly, as if a suction mechanism had just been activated, a kind of mini whirlpool appeared above his bracelet and the liquid was sucked inside, swirling faster and faster as if someone had just flushed a toilet.

It was different from his first experience where the metal had passively crept into his bracelet before disappearing completely. Maybe the amount of metal to be absorbed explained that, or maybe the improvement of his Oracle Rank and the capabilities of his bracelet had something to do with it? At the time, he was only Rank 2. In other words, nothing much...

Adouz f duj ourl md luhmrtl, ovu iaypat vft guur hmQniuouiW fglmzgut.  
Jfcu lvmpit vfsu guur uhlofoah, gpo rmj vu jfl talnifware f zfovuz tfzc frt  
artaerfro uknzullamr. Hal zaevo fzQ, jvuzu vu jfl jufzare val gzfhuiuo, jfl  
lvfcare liaevoiw frt f ozahciu md hmit ljufo jfl dimjare dzmQ val dmzuvuft,  
artahfoare ovu arourlu uddmzo vu jfl qfcare om cuun val zaevo fzQ  
lozuohvut mpo ar dzmro md vaQ.

‘Ugh, don’t tell me that my bracelet now weighs as much as all that liquid metal? Jake grumbled in frustration.

It was a rhetorical question. He knew it was the truth or his arm wouldn’t have become so heavy. A glance at his Oracle Device data told him that this was indeed the sad reality.

[Intermediate Grade]

[Weight: 848kg]

[Oracle Features:]

[Status: No change]

[ Guidance: Computing capacities are increased. Can improve the performance of the Shadow Guide as well as the Oracle AI when access to the Oracle System’s main network is impossible or fails].

[Aether Vision: No change]

[Logging, Mapping: No change]

[Scan lvl3: Range 50m=| 2200m]

[Auto densification: New skill, allows the bracelet to keep the same size regardless of its mass.]

[Passive Aether absorption from the atmosphere = Aether density\*1/day] (In this world: 40/day compared to 0.4/day before)

[Oracle skill slots remaining: 6]

[Aether Encoding slots remaining: 22]

The changes were not obvious, but those that did occur were impressive enough to completely change his impression about his bracelet. The scan in particular now had a range that was interesting enough to be life-saving in situations where previously he would have been completely blind.

Scanning had the merit of being a relatively neutral technology. A complex Aether Code produced a specific wave that Jake interpreted literally as the bracelet's Spirit Body.

The detailed report came from the Oracle System databases, but Xi and Jake were also free to access the feedback from the scan itself. Detecting Players with a higher Oracle Rank than his was now possible.

Of course the farther he wanted to scan, the more Aether it would cost him, but it was still an interesting trump card. A scan at maximum range required 10,000 Aether points. It wasn't that much with his new fortune, but it could quickly bankrupt him if he abused it. That was to be reserved for exceptional circumstances.

Communicating with allies or any Evolvers in the area was also worthwhile, since the communication range was 10 times greater than the scanning range. In the past, it was limited to 500 meters and this function had been completely neglected. In fact, such a distance could be covered in a few seconds by the current Jake.

Aifl, ovu gzfhuio jfl bplo omm vufsw... Jfcu zufiiw jfrou om fglmzg fii oval Quofi, gpo vu jfl fdzfat ovfo vu jmpit urt pn prfgiu om Qmsu ad f lareiu nmo juaevut qmzu ovfr 800 caiml. Tvu turlaow md oval fiimw jfl himlu om ovfo md emit.

On the other hand, he didn't want to leave anything behind. He was convinced that this amount of metal was extremely valuable and that some very high level Players had never seen so much of it before. Improving the Oracle Rank did increase the energy levels of the bracelet, but it was impossible for a remote energy transfer to match such a mass of liquid alloy. At least not in Oracle Ranks close to his.

In addition to the horrendously excessive weight, Jake also had another regret. There was no Aether at all!

[The Aether contained by all these bracelets must have dissipated after all this time in this liquid form]. Xi explained succinctly with a tone of condolence.

[ The Aether Storage is a bracelet's ability. Without the bracelet, the contained energy can only be dispersed.]

'I know, but it's still depressing. ' Jake grimaced as he repeatedly flexed and stretched his arm as if he was working his biceps with a dumbbell.

After repeating the same movement a number of times, his biceps had become congested due to the weight of the bracelet, but he had made up his mind.

'Eh Xi, do you think it's a good idea if I absorb all this metal and give up the Ordeal?' Jake asked for his AI's opinion with sincerity. Her experience in the matter was still considerably superior to his own.

He had thought about it and selling the excess metal to the Oracle Store or other Evolvers could certainly fetch him a fortune, even if he got ripped off. It could be his seed money to develop his own Floating Island and Aetherist laboratory.

Xi didn't respond immediately, which reinforced his belief that the answer wasn't that simple. Even his AI was not entirely sure about it.

After a while she said tentatively,

[ First you can distribute the absorbed metal evenly throughout your body, it will make wearing the bracelet easier. I don't have a clear answer to your question, but I'm sure that such an amount of alloy is priceless. Even in the Mirror Universe the materials making up the bracelet are a valuable resource with a price, but no market. On the other hand, if you take all this metal you will die instantly. There is too much of it. It's just too heavy. Dying in an Ordeal always affects the final score, even more if it's suicide. If you can avoid it it's better. Remember that if it happened in the Fifth Ordeal, it would indeed be suicide. It is better to start good habits now.]

Jake nodded unconsciously as he acknowledged Xi's words of wisdom. Preserving his life above all else was common sense, even though he would not actually die. He could not predict how suicide would affect his future rating.

In that case, he would absorb as much metal as he could without compromising his survival. And he did exactly that in the hours that followed.

By the time Jake left the catacombs a few hours later, he had become so heavy that calling it a human tank would not have been overkill.