

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 322 - Being Heavy Isn't That Bad

‘Damn it!’

Jake’s exasperated wail suddenly broke through the silence somewhere deep in the lava-flooded cave. The lava had long since submerged the old city houses and the vault of the cave was not so far from the lava waves that periodically rocked the walls.

In the midst of all this lava, a miserable-looking human was struggling valiantly toward the surface. Jake could have escaped much sooner if he had wanted to, but he had given up the easy way out. Who cares if he left this place prematurely, if it meant facing all kinds of threats without being able to move an inch?

With telekinesis and his other powers, Jake wasn’t actually that helpless. If he really focused and activated his Spirit Body at full power, breaking out of here was perfectly feasible and he could even fight. However, he would become so exhausted that he would be exposed to many dangers when using this method.

The reason Jake chose to stay here despite the rapidly rising lava level was because the environment was extremely beneficial to him. After his bloodline had evolved, his Accelerated Healing had developed a passive property that was automatically triggered in favorable environments.

This underground cave, the lava, the high temperature and the Flintium crystals illuminating the vault were all elements creating a perfect environment for him. Even though his body was not tempered as quickly and

efficiently as if he was buried immobile underground, the effect was far from insignificant.

With thirty tons of liquid alloy weighing down his body and a stimulating environment like this, Jake was determined to get the most out of it before the Phantom Sanctuary arrived.

Jake had already given up the idea of accomplishing any further feats or missions. At first, he planned to return to fight the Abyss behemoth, but this was no longer possible. Not to mention if he could make it to the beach in time, he had a good chance of sinking like a stone with no chance to try anything.

Disappointing as it was, Jake had already accepted the idea that he couldn't win it all. Perhaps that was the goal of all those Feats and Missions. No matter how a Player spent his time on the island, whether he was weak or strong, he would be rewarded for his efforts one way or another. No matter how Jake judged his current predicament, he felt that he was one of this Ordeal's big winners. Therefore, he had nothing to complain about.

Moreover, it was not as if Jake was going back to the surface empty-handed. In addition to the liquid alloy slowing him down, he hadn't forgotten to scan the Zhorion Grimoires inside the Treasure Room before he left.

Even though the language was unfamiliar to him, there were precious Aether Spells models inside. A myriad of Soul Spells, certainly inspired by the study of a Red Soul Stone by one of their ancestors. Although he couldn't make use of it at the time, it was certainly a significant gain.

Because he didn't speak Zhorion, Jake was beginning to regret not having invested in a Universal Translator. Perhaps the analysis would have allowed him to improve the rating of his current exploration mission.

Jake still hadn't asked for his rewards and the final verdict was still pending. He was dying to scan the entire city to satisfy his curiosity, but the expense of Aether would undoubtedly be high. He wasn't sure it would be worth it.

[Do it.] Xi coldly encouraged him. [Even if the rewards of the quest itself prove to be lousy, it will certainly influence the final rating of your Ordeal. In my opinion, your Aether points exist to be spent. On the other hand, knowing you, you'll be consumed with regret if you don't. An Evolver should never regret his actions.]

'Xi... Do you remember your financial situation from your old life?' Jake asked suspiciously. If his Oracle AI was drowning in debt, overspending, or suffering from a gambling addiction in the past, his decision to listen to her or not would certainly be affected.

'I think I was... Hey! Is that really what you think of me?!' She grew instantly angry, as if he had hurt her self-esteem. 'Tsk, do what you want, I don't care.'

And so, Xi fell silent, leaving him alone to make his decision amidst the tumult of the lava waves. Jake uttered a humph, but having just realized that his Oracle AI had a more fragile ego than he thought, he immediately applied her advice to show his good faith. Anyway, she wasn't wrong. With his curiosity, if he didn't go through with it immediately, he was sure to dwell on it again and again in the future.

Jake apprehensively set the Oracle Scan range to maximum and then mentally activated the bracelet's feature. A powerful ripple, visible only to him, pulsed briefly from his body and vanished soon after.

Aiqmlo laqpiofrumpliwi, ovu lhfr zunmzo uqzuzeut sazopfiiw gudmzu val uwul. Tvu qfll md tfof jfl lphv ovfo vu aqqutafouiwi gueeut Xa om dmzeasu vaq frt iuo vuz ofcu msuz ovu lmzoare md fii oval ardmzqfoamr. Tvu Ozfhiu Swlouq hmpit nzmsatu f imo md ardmzqfoamr gflut mr val Ozfhiu

Rfrc, gpo ad vu vft om lufzhv dmz ovu pludpi ardmzQfoamr mr val mjr, ao jmpit ofcu vaQ lusuzfi tfwl fo ovu suzw iuflo.

Jake also felt a little bit of sadness in his heart when he saw his precious Aether points magically evaporate. That one maximum range scan alone had cost him over 1M Aether points. It was more than he thought, but he was already mentally prepared for it.

Xi had explained to him beforehand that the alloy increased the bracelet's performance, but had little effect on his energy levels. Only the Oracle seemed to master this technology. The only known way to increase the energy level of his Oracle Device was via a promotion of his Oracle Rank since this energy was one of the perks.

This was how high-ranked Evolvers' Oracle Devices could continue to become more and more powerful, while having Oracle Skills at a reasonable activation cost even if the weight of their wristbands had changed little if at all over time. Ultimately, it was the combination of the two aspects that had to be sought and that created yet another reason to depend on the Oracle.

'It's done.' Xi muttered resentfully before pouting again.

Jake paid no attention to her fake grudge. With the age and experience of his AI, there was no way she could sulk as long as an immature teenager. She was just pulling his leg.

Knowing that her bad acting had been exposed, Xi stopped shilly-shallying and summarized the most important information for him.

'No Players, no life forms nearby. There was another building hidden behind the temple. According to my data, it was the biological factory where many of the creatures inhabiting the island are engineered. Another section seems to be a laboratory where the crystals controlling these creatures are designed. Unfortunately, lava has already begun to infiltrate the building. Apart from the crystals, everything of value has already been destroyed.'

Jake lamented missing this secret laboratory, but if he had explored it he might not have had the opportunity to harvest the alloy. At least his curiosity was sated and he knew he hadn't missed anything too crucial.

If he had cleared his mission without doing this scan, his rating would probably not have been so close to perfection. For the missing points, he knew that it was due to his lack of knowledge of the Zhorion language.

Xa luiuhout frt mztuzut fii ovu zuiusfro tfof, ovur Jfcu lpgQaooout fii val dartarel frt darfiw hmQniuout val Qallamr.

[Side Quest: The Tribe of Chaos Completed: Rating: 98%]

[-Rewards: 50M pts, Zhorion Language manual.]

[-New title : Harbinger of Chaos : Not content to have exterminated single-handedly the Chaos tribe, you also fomented the complete extermination of the city by the lava while appropriating their most precious treasures and knowledge.

[Effect:Passive Soul Skill: Better tolerance and performance when exposed to the energy of a Soul Stone and Soul Energy in general. Your body is less exhausted and remains lucid in a Berserk state.

Active Soul Skill: Bloodline Ignition: Your Bloodline will be temporarily enhanced to the next level in exchange for an equivalent sacrifice of life energy and Aether.]

No sooner had he finished reading than the Aether around him suddenly condensed under the influence of an unknown mystical force and took the form of a brilliant Red Soul Glyph very similar to the Soul Spell hologram below the altar.

As for the preceding Glyphs, the strange symbol composed of millions of Aether Runes floated towards him, then disappeared in a flash of light upon contact with his Soul.

When he came back to his senses, Jake realized that he had momentarily cancelled his telekinesis and had sunk miserably to the bottom of the lava. Cursing the bad timing of this Soul Glyph, he deployed his Spirit Body forcefully to reach the surface, but deep inside he was ecstatic.

For one thing, he was once again first in the Player Ranking. Jake didn't consider himself superficial and preferred to remain low-key, but Ruby and Alef had stolen his first place so fast that he had kept a bitter feeling. Getting back his first place could be considered a meager revenge, however pointless and petty it might be.

Waov val Qmoasfoamr gmmlout gw val zuhuro fjfztl, Jfcu dmprrt ovu uruzew frt jaii om hmroarpu val bmpzruw om ovu lpzdfhu gw ljaQQare. Io opzrut mpo om gu f ezufu jmzcmpo, fl udduhoasu fl vu vft vmnut.

By the time Jake breathed in the fresh air outside the volcano, four more days had passed. Although his muscles were excessively congested and his face was red from the effort, he was now able to move around without the help of his telekinesis.

A nearby T-Rex was immediately baited by this trembling and immobile prey and a stream of saliva immediately began to dribble down his jaw. Excited, the dinosaur charged towards its future meal with its jaws wide open and reveling in the sight of the human still trembling in terror as it approached.

'Fuck off!'

Jake dodged the charge with a sidestep, then slammed down his fist like a hammer on the monster's huge skull. His attack wasn't particularly fast, but when his fist landed on the T-Rex, the dinosaur felt like it was being trampled by a huge Brachiosaurus.

A loud crack sounded and the T-Rex's eyes rolled back as its head sank into the ground generating a shock wave. Just before he died, the dinosaur's gaze landed on the cracked rock where Jake's feet were embedded in several

centimeters deep and only then did it realize that this prey had always been the predator.

Being heavy... wasn't all that bad.