

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 331 - The Aether Core's Significance

‘Hakkrasha...’ Jake mumbled without knowing who or what she was talking about.

He had barely had time to sit down in the tavern to exchange a few banalities before they were beamed to the platform. At that moment, he had simply thought that the alien sleeping next to them had simply chosen that bench by chance. Seeing it guide them to him, he didn’t need to be a genius to know who she was talking about.

‘Here are three of them.’ Jake complied without flinching.

If Enya and Will trusted him enough to ask for help on his behalf, he had no reason to refuse. At least he knew that Hakkrasha was the name of the former top 1 in the Player Rankings. The likelihood of another participant having the same name was laughably low.

No wonder Enya had accumulated so many points in such a short time. Even Jake didn’t know how to get so many points without killing other Players. Hakkrasha’s low number of kills was a mystery, but suggested that he was not a bloodthirsty psychopath. He could give him a chance.

Once the bronze-skinned alien received his three Red Soul Stones from Jake, he nodded his head in recognition and then grabbed Will and Enya like flour sacks before sprinting in the opposite direction.

Hakkrasha was so fast that a supersonic shock wave resounded less than a second after his first step, piercing the eardrums of the nearby Zhorions. Jake

and George maintained their indifferent facade, but inwardly they were extremely shocked.

The alien, nonetheless, had done them a great service. Some of the encircling Zhorions lost interest in them and raced after the trio in the hope of intercepting the group at another gate. As terrifying as Hakkrasha may be, they would need three gates to enter. It was three opportunities to steal the stones from them.

George didn't dither either. As soon as the cordon of encirclement had slackened, his cousin had without hesitation exploited one of the breaches to get away, neither seen nor known.

For a brief moment, only Jake, the Wengols and a hundred Zhorions looked at each other like bloodhounds. He was already tired of fighting the Wengols, and eliminating these Zhorions was hardly tempting.

He had already amassed a hefty bundle of Green Soul Stones. Killing these Zhorions no longer gave him any special feat reward except the meager Aether bonus to boost his bloodline and stats.

Jake was still hoping that some of his cousins or companions would come to him in search of the Soul Stones, but when he didn't see Kevin, Kate, or anyone else, he decided it was time to end it all.

Just as he was about to activate his Bloodline Ignition skill, a young Zhorion woman with Sapphire and Emerald shades of irises made her way through the crowd to get to him.

She was not very beautiful, even by Zhorion's beauty standards, and was taller than most males of her species. Her huge dark metal armor shared the same dubious aesthetic of Jake's, and her jaw was rather square. Add to that a short military haircut, and it was a miracle that he had identified her gender correctly.

Jake wondered what she wanted, but luckily she was rather rough around the edges. She immediately made him an offer.

‘I need a Red Soul Stone. I can give you a Blue Soul Stone in exchange. It’s not worth the real Orxanium, but it’s close enough.’

To prove her good faith, she threw a spherical gem resembling a sapphire directly at him. The gem was the size of a hen’s egg and emitted the same fluorescence as other Soul Stones.

Sozfreuiw, vmjusuz, rm ruj gipalv vfm jfl ftut om ovu zuttalv iaevo
qfzcare fizuftw ursuimnare ao. Io jfl fl ad ovu Sfrhopfzw Bpggiu tat rmo
zuhmeraxu oval Smpi Somru fl nfzo md ovu usuro.

Either way, it was still better than nothing and Jake lacked anything but Soul Stones. After inspecting the gem from every angle, he let his armor absorb it and threw one of his own Red Soul Stone to the Zhorion woman. Satisfied that the exchange went smoothly, her body dissipated and Jake realized that this Zhorion woman had never been physically present from the beginning. It was just an illusion produced by some unknown method.

What was most intriguing was that the gem she had given him was very real. This unique energy that made him want to sleep and dream on the spot was impossible to fake. Likewise, the Flintium Stone he had thrown to her had also vanished.

After the departure of the Zhorion woman, who seemed to have an important status, all the Zhorions gathered around him abandoned their last scruples. In the same way, the Wengols present pounced on him with beastly cries to give themselves courage.

‘Fuck!’ Jake cursed their brazen behavior when he saw the mass of mobs charging at him and casting all the Aether Spells they were capable of.

At that moment, he really felt like a maiden victim of an organized gang-bang. If he showed the slightest weakness or made a mistake, he would pay dearly for it.

Jake still thought he could retreat into the Phantom Sanctuary, but he was shocked when he felt his hair bristling with sharp, unpredictable static electricity.

‘...The hell is that?!’ Jake panicked as he reformed a thick force field around him.

A microsecond later, a huge blue lightning bolt hit the telekinetic force field. The lightning was as wide as a tree trunk and the resulting thunder roar briefly stunned him. The intense light blinded him momentarily and without his Apex Predator Glyph he would certainly have been dazzled for long minutes.

Despite the force field, Jake’s body began to convulse and he felt a portion of the voltage travel through his armor, carbonizing his soft tissue as it passed. Noting that his telekinesis had not been enough to completely neutralize this energy, he was unsettled, but he didn’t let this setback make him lose confidence.

Hu arsmcut val jaiinmjuz om euruzfou f qmzu hmQnfho dmzhu dauit frt fhoasfout val Hufo frt Rftafoamr hmrozmi lcaii om fglmzg fl qphv md oval ukhull uruzew fl nmlagiū gudmzu val gmtw jfl omm vufsaiw tfqfeut.

Not even a tenth of a second later, Jake was pleased with his promptness, as several dazzling yellow plasma projectiles hit his new force field immediately afterwards, causing a characteristic BOOM on impact.

Jake stumbled three steps back before stabilizing, but during this time many more projectiles and Aether Spells fell on him, overcoming his defenses in no time. The mental shock waves shattered against his Spirit Body, and to cope he had to gradually retract it to preserve the integrity of his brain.

Alas, it was through the deployment of his extrasensory awareness and perception that Jake was able to channel the surrounding Aether to fuel his Aether Skills. When he was forced to retract his Spirit Body, the amount of Aether under his control was reduced and his force fields became more fragile, to the point where they became so wobbly that a mere enemy arrow could defeat them.

When his Spirit Body was driven back into his body, heavy enemy fire continued to fall on him, chipping away at his huge armor. Jake considered moving at this point, but he realized that his telekinesis had become too weak to significantly affect his movement speed.

Without deploying his consciousness around him, he could only harness the Aether in direct contact with his skin. The power generated was derisory. Although he could hardly move, for the first time he lifted his hands to protect his face.

Tensing his muscles under the armor with all his might, he tried to move back step by step until he finally stuck his back against the door behind him. Throughout the process, he withstood the attacks and his Grey Aether-reinforced armor became more and more fragmented, until it became so thin that the ruby reflection of a Soul Stone shimmered in plain sight, letting his opponents know that they were close to the goal.

At this point, they had all understood that for some mysterious reason this human was unable or unwilling to move. They did not intend to pass up this chance.

However, the majority of the Zhorions and Players present were quite shaken deep inside and a hint of fear was lurking on their faces. This human was so tough! Each one of these Aether Spells could have blasted them to tiny particles, but as incredible as it sounded, he was still very much alive.

Jake's appearance at that moment may have been pathetic with his armor destroyed and his skin charred and blistered, but he was far from dead. His gaze was still vivid and the predatory, murderous aura emanating from him was still dense. It made them feel that at the slightest fault, he could leap to their throats and devour them alive.

A juazt ezmji, mr ovu movuz vfirt, jfl qfiahampliw iufcare dzmq val ovzmfo frt val ianl vft hpziut pn, zusufiare imre ozfrliphuro dfrel md mQarmpl mQur. Adouz ofcare fii ovulu gimjl, ovu nfar frt freuz vft Qfradulout val ifsf suarl. Hal emitur frt laisuz azalul zftafout iacu ojm efikaul, frt val uwul luuQut om gu daiiut jaov zfeu frt lnazaopfiaow.

By the time his back hit the wall of the Phantom Sanctuary, Jake was not far from turning Berserk, without even having gone through the Bloodline Ignition activation.

After the devastating beating he had just received, Jake had finally come to realize his limitations. As strong as he was, he could do nothing against many. He had also understood first hand that all his Aether Skills were worthless if he didn't have any Aether to activate them.

When all those Zhorions had taken control of the surrounding Aether by force, his options had suddenly become as limited as those of a normal human. Even the few steps to get to the door he had to take had been achieved by muscle power alone.

This failure had just reminded him how important it was to create his Aether Core. If he had it, he could have kept using his spells without worrying about running out of energy. The only reason he had been so confident until now was because his Spirit Body was exceptionally strong compared to the average participant.

Until then, no one had been able to force his Spirit Body to retreat. All of the Aether entering his spiritual domain had therefore naturally always been

available to him. He now knew that it was a delusion. This Aether abundance could be taken from him at any time by a bunch of capable enemies.

Aware that continuing to fight would bring him no benefit, if not more injury, Jake finally released his Bloodline Ignition glyph, and as expected, the three empty sockets emitted an intense red light, which fully covered his body.

By the time the light faded, the wall where this door was located had become perfectly smooth again and Jake was gone, leaving all those Zhorions and other Players dumbfounded.