

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 336 - The Soul Stones' Origin

With his stats pumped up like this, Jake's previously damaged Spirit Body was showing distinct signs of recovery despite the slowly worsening headache piling up at his temples. He was already able to release his Spirit Body out of his body.

As he regained his full mental capacity and beyond, he found that the trauma to his Spirit Body had caused him some cognitive damage. He had been feeling normal, but his mental clarity and ability to think had been affected despite not being aware of it previously.

It was only with this temporary intelligence power-up that he finally noticed it. Even with a migraine, he felt more lucid than ever before, and certain options and clues that his mind had previously overlooked suddenly became obvious.

The thought that he could become senile by so carelessly deploying his Spirit Body chilled his heart. By stretching out his Spirit Body, he was expanding his consciousness, making it less compact and more vulnerable. It was only now that he realized the terrible risk involved in such a practice.

It was okay if he was the strongest, but it was like a turtle or a snail fighting without its shell. Utterly moronic.

Instead of crossing the hall as quickly as possible, he stood still with a contemplative frown. With the efficiency of a computer, he replayed the data compiled by his previous scans, dwelling briefly on the Zhorion grimoires that he could not decipher before making a decision.

With a simple thought, he deformed his armor to extract all his green stones, as well as his only Blue Soul Stone. After what he had just experienced, he no longer intended to take these ores lightly. From the first to the last trial of this Ordeal, everything seemed to orbit around these gems.

Many challenges and feats seemed trivial, keeping them busy and challenging them in exchange for Aether rewards or motivating Glyphs, but it was now clear to him that the majority of the Exploration Quests contained all the necessary clues to prepare ambitious participants for the final event.

Even the presence and conflict among the Zhorions of the three tribes that seemed to be the greatest danger to the Players finally served a clear purpose: To give everyone a chance to get Soul Stones. Foolish or lazy contestants could perfectly enter the Phantom Sanctuary by stealing a few stones and being teleported to the platform.

The performance of Jake, Ruby and her party had greatly disrupted the normal course of the Ordeal by eliminating two entire tribes, and therefore he was aware that under normal circumstances it would have been possible to get many more Soul Stones of each type.

In fact, there were more than enough Soul Stones for 100 people. Each tribe originally had more than a thousand warriors, although most were relatively harmless civilians. This meant an equal number of gems of each type.

Adding those that could be mined naturally, a true battle royal would have provided up to 1,000 Soul Stones of each type. In a communist utopia, each contestant entering the Phantom Sanctuary could theoretically have obtained 10 Soul Stones of each color.

Once this ideal postulate was established, it was not difficult for Jake to draw the appropriate conclusions.

Hu opzrut mdd val piozfsamiuo zftafoamr fefar frt hfpevo mru md ovu Gzuur Smpi Somrul ar val zaevo vfrt. Tvu uruzew ovfo nmpzut mpo md ao jfl

aqqutafouiw fglmzgut gw val Snazao Bmtw frt vu duio val qurofi dfoepu taqaralv laeradahfroiw.

However, by lifting the ultraviolet radiation he also felt the Flintium energy contained in his cells spreading through his being, and he felt his body transforming as a chaotic, bestial aura emanated from him without warning. His body resumed burning itself by burning calories at an alarming rate.

Remaining unperturbed, he grabbed in his other hand the Blue Soul Stone that the Zhorion woman had previously exchanged with him. An energy of a very different nature seeped into his body, and as with Naequat and Flintium, his Spirit Body received a lot of it.

His chaotic thoughts and vacillating lucidity subsided significantly, as if he had just poured cold water on fire. His lava veins disappeared and his fangs and claws returned to their normal size. His Berserk State had been completely quelled.

And yet, he was not pleased with this discovery. The rate at which his body was burning calories had decreased, but some of his neurons showed signs of necrosis where the mix of different Soul Energies was most heterogeneous. In addition, his heavy eyelids, tinnitus and phosphenes within his field of vision insidiously reminded him that Orxanium was a powerful sedative and hallucinogen.

After the second test, he placed the Blue Soul Stone in the same hand as the Green Soul Stone and tried to put them in contact in the hope of observing some kind of reaction. Nothing happened, except that these energies refused to mix with each other. However, on contact with Naequat, the Orxanium Stone produced its Soul Energy at a much higher rate, while the Green Soul Energy was significantly weakened.

Nevertheless, once out of their respective stones, the two energies rarely interacted, even when Jake forced them to collide with his consciousness. Just as when water and oil are forcibly mixed together, the mixture would

eventually settle to form two distinct layers. Each time, though, the Blue Soul Energy came out stronger.

The same was true when he repeated the experiment with the Red-Green, Blue-Red and Blue-Green-Red combinations. The three energies were difficult to mix, but the resulting C  cktails were deadly.

The worst reaction was the Red-Blue C  cktail. The stones repelled each other violently and spiritual sparks formed when they came into contact, emitting a distinct radiance. The calming quality of Orxanium did not neutralize the exciting quality of Flintium.

During these brief clashes, Chaos and Dream became one. His mind would lose its sense of reality, being both awake and asleep at the same time. Immersed in a dream blending with reality, while at the same time his body would be swiftly consumed by his Berserk state. He now knew what had killed him during his second trial. At least he had a pretty strong clue...

Tvu iflo oulo vu nuzdmzqut jfl om sfzw ovu tmlfeul. Fiaroapq frt Ozkfrapq guare omm tfreuzmpl, vu hfzzaut mpo oval uknuzaquro jaov Nfuyyfo. Tvu darfi suztaho jfl ovfo ar lpdahauro ypfroaoaul, ovu Gzuur Smpi Somrul hmpit hmQniuouiw zunzull ovu movuz lomrul gw uknimaoare ovuaz imj Qalhagaiaow, gpo ufhv fhhaturofi hmrofho jmpit arouladw ovu movuz ojm uruzeaul.

After a few tries, Jake got the hang of it and without hesitation he grabbed as many Green Soul Stones as he could. A torrential flow of Green Soul Energy from his fist holding the stone engulfed his body, his soul, and then his Spirit Body, and a comforting feeling of indescribable peace overwhelmed him.

His mental fatigue instantly disappeared as his mental clarity reached such heights that for the first time in his life he felt enlightened.

But this could not last. Faced with so much Green Soul Energy, the Flintium in his body began to glow more beautifully, the frequent contact between

these energies amplifying exponentially the intensity of his Berserk state. Likewise, the illusory energy of the device hidden somewhere in the hall gradually increased in intensity, feeding off his NaeQuat.

At the same time, his Spirit Body was accumulating energy so quickly that he envisioned for the first time the possibility of seeing his own body and mind implode. The feeling of peace and serenity continued to build and he felt as if he was returning to the embrace of mother nature, his drives and desires being washed away as his mind and body went numb, becoming as stagnant and selfless as an old oak tree.

When Jake became aware of this strange transition in his mindset, he was scared shitless. Terror brought him back to the present moment and he noticed that his Spirit Body had begun to stiffen, forming strange crystalline reflections.

His Soul was turning into a Soul Stone!

As soon as Jake took note of these multiple dangers, he cut the current and put away his Green Stones in a hurry, but during this brief moment his Spirit Body had cracked in several places. Yet, his mental energy was still overflowing. The cracks closed in a split second, leaving no apparent trace that he had just come close to death.

‘Phew’ He breathed heavily as he wiped the sweat from his forehead, a hint of fright still lingering on his face. His gaze on these Soul Stones was now much more solemn.

Until proven otherwise, he was holding soul fragments in his hands. People had died so that these stones could exist. But were these people really dead? It didn’t feel exactly like dying...

Io jfl f himlu hfii oval oaQu, gpo vu jfl tmru jaov ovu nzunzfomzw nvflu. Aii ovulu lomrul juzu tfreuzmpl, gpo ovuw juzu film nzahuiull ozuflpzul. Hu jfl usur Qmzu tuouzQarut om gzare ovuQ gfhc jaov vaQ.

All these manipulations seemed to have taken a considerable amount of time, but with his current cognitive abilities a few dozen seconds were enough to test all these combinations. It was an acceptable delay.

Much more cautious, but also more confident, Jake stamped on the ground and sprang forth like a meteor as he delivered his first supersonic BOOM.

The long, pitch-black hall that seemed unfathomable before didn't put up any resistance. With his new mental stats, he easily overcame the first illusion by sheer willpower.

The trap only stretched for a few hundred meters, but Jake came across several corpses during his crossing, but Brice, Enya and Will's were not among them. To be exact, he didn't identify any of the other 36 contestants.

These bodies, although intact, belonged to individuals he had never met before. Probably Players from previous Ordeals. Incredibly, everyone had passed the first trap.

[They probably overloaded their Aether stats when they got here. The other possibility was that they were already in contact with a Green Soul Stone. Unlike you, they can't produce ultraviolet radiation to defend themselves against it. There also remains the possibility that they were prepared for that first trap.]

Jake nodded, but frowned at the possibility that Will and Enya had kept this information to themselves. In the end, he shook his head to dispel this thought. Even if they had, they hadn't gotten enough time to discuss anything. They had been teleported to the platform far too abruptly and the fourth trial started immediately afterwards.

Once the first trap was cleared, his sight and hearing came back to him at once. In addition to the luminous arrows, he could easily distinguish every detail of the corridor in front of him. He understood that the previous sensory deprivation had been intentional.

With his senses restored, Jake discovered another door identical to the previous one. As he passed through it, a huge room the size of a soccer field presented itself to him. Despite the resilience of the walls, the place was irreparably damaged, as if thirty tanks had decided to play bumper cars together.

Aiqmlo fii ovu hfrtatfoul juzu ar ovu zmmQ frt fl vu uknuhout, ovu luhmrt ozfn jfl fizuftw fo jmzc. A Rut Smpi Snuii.