

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 345 - Not Helpless Anymore

Too weak to move, Jake didn't even try this time to embark on a slow and winding regeneration of his injuries and missing arms. He simply lay on the floor and closed his eyes to explore his options.

When Jake mentioned suicide, of course he had no intention of killing himself out of desperation or despondency. In fact, he wasn't willing to die at all. Unfortunately, he knew that dying was the most likely conclusion after what he was about to do.

Nevertheless, the time had not yet come. For he had to be able to carry out his doomed plan, and for that he had to be mobile, and stronger. Much stronger.

With each passing second, the Thralls and other prisoners were getting more powerful, becoming more terrifying and imposing with each passing second, their abilities evolving in unpredictable ways. Even if Jake could find a way to unlock the doors to return to the ultimate room, defeating these creatures had become impossible.

At the same time, the walls themselves were becoming more durable, their resilience gradually approaching that of the first hall where the Players had gathered around a long table.

For this reason, Jake was fairly relaxed when he made his decision. Being too weak to hunt the Thralls, full recovery was impossible anyway. His bloodline had not yet evolved to the point where he could regenerate his limbs from heat and radiation alone.

Without quality soil and minerals, the resources needed to grow back both arms would be naturally drawn from the rest of his body. He would come out of it, if he survived the healing process, much too weak.

In that case, he might as well give up the idea of healing. In any case, he would be fully healed at the end of this Ordeal. That was why Jake lay on the floor like a charred log with his eyes closed, immersing himself in deep meditation.

By defeating Bawopi, he had collected all his points. Although they had all spent astronomical amounts of Aether points over the past few days inside the maze to overload their stats or use certain Oracle Device skills and Spells, Jake now had over 400 million Aether points. His first place in the Player Ranking was fully consolidated.

Saving Ruby had also given him 1M xp points by completing the Coach mission, but it was a paltry reward, leaving him extremely bitter. In principle, with his Ordeal rating his Oracle Rank should be promoted quite a few times, making such an amount of xp completely meaningless.

At this very moment, of all the Players having entered this Ordeal, only Jake, Hakkrasha, the Krish leader and George were still alive. Those who had failed to enter the Phantom Sanctuary had been kicked out of the Sanctuary Bubble a long time ago.

Well aware of George's character and abilities, Jake knew that his cousin was utterly helpless. Unless he had hidden some secret tricks - which was not impossible - George was probably like him stuck somewhere in a room at the edge of the maze, surrounded by hordes of Thralls.

The Krish leader had fled, but Jake hoped not to meet him in his current state... Fortunately, by fleeing through a hall full of Thralls, the alien was probably as wounded as he was. He didn't have to worry about his safety for the moment.

Unaware of how much time he had left, Jake made the most of every second. Once his stats were overloaded, he released his Spirit Body at maximum range and attempted for the umpteenth time to create his Aether Core.

He was already close to success before his bloodline evolved and after his recent adventures he had made another good step forward. Whether it was his Aether and Body stats, his Spirit Body, his Aether Control or his resolve, they were all peerless to those of his former self.

As he sank deeper and deeper into his meditative trance, his struggle against the Aether vortex he was trying to compress became more and more fierce. His senses and consciousness were fully engrossed in this savage battle and he quickly forgot about the outside world and his resentment of Ruby and the Oracle System.

The hours passed slowly, soon growing into days, then weeks under the vigilant and supportive gaze of Xi, whose hologram watched him in silence without ever tiring.

One day, when the struggle to compress the Aether reached its climax, Jake opened his eyes and roared with defiance. A man without arms and lying on the ground yelling like this for no reason would have evoked pity or even mockery under normal circumstances, but in this instance no one would have dared to do so at the sight of the thick Aether torrent swirling around his body.

In that fateful moment, Jake unleashed his Myrtharian bloodline at full power, activating his Myrtharian Spiritual Warrior Trance skill to once again double his strength to face the final assault.

The Aether bead located in his lower abdomen had been compressed to such an extent that the flesh originally residing there had long since disintegrated, returning to the Aether. Prodigious energy was contained within and many Aether streams were still congealing around it as the marble spun rapidly on itself at a speed hardly imaginable.

The Aetheric laws were complex, but in some ways similar to the laws of classical physics. Since no force existed that could stop the rotation of this Aether, the Aether's rotational speed had only accelerated in the last few weeks.

Tvu Auovuz turlaow vft film guepr om euruzfou fr Auovuzah ezfsaow vaev urmpev om lpmnmzo aol mjr ukalourhu. A suzw lqfii darfi uddmzo frt aol Auovuz Cmzu jmpit hmQu om iadu.

However, this was the most perilous moment, if Jake gave in before this gravity reached the required point, the backlash of this Aether explosion could kill him. Normally, at this point, failure was impossible because the spin velocity and the Aether Core's own mass already provided most of the force required to hold the structure together.

The problem was Jake's mind, which had long since reached its limits. No rest or mental break was possible during the creation of an Aether Core. As his Aether Core grew stronger, his mental strength had gradually dwindled, his Spirit Body being on the brink of dissipation. His body was also at its limit after undergoing such treatment.

Jake had already been very careful in creating the smallest Aether Core possible, but he still found himself in the critical situation that every Novice Aetherist had to face at least once in his life.

After two hours of hard mental struggle, blood began to gush out of Jake's orifices and his brain started to overheat. His Spirit Body slowly began to shrink, unwillingly reducing the flow of Aether available to him. With less Aether to absorb, the Aether Core lost its momentum and its stabilization noticeably slowed down.

Realizing that he was at risk of failure, Jake uttered another defiant roar and once again exceeded his limits. His veins wriggled like big worms under his skin, and his brain cells also began to necrotize one by one.

Jake heard loud firecracker bangs echoing inside his skull, as he freed up a small sliver of his attention to channel most of his Aether of Vitality and Constitution into his brain to delay its destruction.

The rest of his neglected body suffered greatly and because of the past month's malnutrition, the consequences of starvation and dehydration were felt all the more vividly. His body cells began to die as well, sacrificing themselves so that his brain could continue its task whatever the cost.

At last, when his body was about to exhale its last breath and his heart showed signs of arrhythmia, Jake exhausted his last ounce of willpower. He fainted and the whirlwind of Aether converging on him dispersed as if to greet the arrival of the sun after a long thunderstorm.

But no Aether blast ravaged the hall. The silence and the hologram of a rapturous Xi greeted his success. The Aether Core had been formed.

Tvu oarw Auovuz Invuzu jfl hfiQiW Inarrare mr aoluid jvaiu hmroarpmpliW fglmzgare ovu lpzzmptare Auovuz om lozureovur ovu hmzu. Ao ovu lfQu oaQu, f dfaro zftafrhu zftafout dzmQ ao, nzmsatate fr uruzew ovfo jfl dpiiw val mjr.

Even if he did nothing, his body and its bloodline's Aetheric Code would gradually be nourished and strengthened by it. It was a slow but inexorable process. Hypothetically, if this radiance reached a sufficient intensity, the Aether stats would in turn increase to match the Aether density of this radiation.

In his Aether Status, an attribute named 'Aether Core= 1 pts' had appeared. This meant that as long as this Aether Core existed, his Aether stats would never drop below one point. It was useless on B842 or this Ordeal World, but who knew how many inexplicable evil sorceries this world was full of.

Jake unconscious and his Aether Core formed, the Aether of Vitality and Constitution that he had been controlling returned to the cells of his dormant

body and within minutes his heart resumed its vigorous beating. His skin regained some color and his health condition stabilized.

He woke up a day later feeling thirsty and hungry, but rested and content. He had pulled it off! After this long mental battle, he had long since forgotten the anguish of Ruby's betrayal.

Inspecting his body with his senses, he found the sphere of white light below his navel and the aura of energy emanating from it, constantly passing through his body and slowly transforming it to make it more compatible with Aether.

Channeling this radiation, a ball of compressed hot air of a few hundred degrees popped before his eyes, followed by another one. With a thought, he levitated his body and slowly floated around the room to test his limits. As he performed these feats, his Spirit Body remained retracted inside his brain all the time.

By focusing his mental power on his Aether Core, he tried to boost the sphere's rotational speed and as expected the surrounding Aether converged on his body much more actively. This Aether entering his body, he could make use of it before it was engulfed by his Aether Core.

This meant that he would never again be as helpless as he had been during this Ordeal. Even if he encountered an enemy whose Spirit Body was superior to his, he would be able to use his Bloodline Skills to their fullest potential.

Jake was shaken to discover that he had been unconscious for over a month. According to his bracelet, he was on his 103rd Ordeal day. George as well as the Krish leader had also fallen off the Player Rankings. Only Hakkrasha's name still shone below his own.

Remembering his ultimate goal, he generated a flood of heat and radioactivity by using his Aether Core to trigger his Passive Healing skill. He didn't hope to make his arms grow back, though.

The reason he had created his Aether Core was not to face hordes of Thralls. After all this time, he knew that these monsters had become invincible. Even if he trained like this for years, he doubted that he could overcome the high mutation speed of these creatures.

No matter how fair this Ordeal looked to the Players, he hadn't forgotten the astonishing Aether density and gravity on the asteroid. For this spaceship to keep existing in the desolate System A0, the secrets it contained were unfathomable.

Instead of committing suicide in vain by ending up in the stomachs of these monsters, Jake intended to walk off the beaten track. As he floated towards the non-existent wall that Bawopi's explosion had previously destroyed, Xi's hologram nodded her head in realizing that he was about to take action.

'That's it? You're going to do it?'

Jake stood for a short moment on the edge of the void, staring resolutely at the gears and pistons allowing the miraculous shifts of all these cubic rooms. Then he raised his head and saw in the distance a spark of green light reflecting his destination.

'The time has come to find out if I'm a genius or an idiot. 'Jake finally lampooned himself as he flew off with a psychic thrust into this void filled with cogs and wires.