

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 350 - Rewards (part 2)

It may not have been the first time Jake had encountered the familiar darkness within the Red Cube, but it was still a mind-bending experience. The darkness was bearable, but the silence and lack of sensory feedback as if he had no body was just too disturbing for him to adjust to. Somehow he felt as if he no longer existed.

[Participant: Jake Wilderth, Earthling]

[Second Ordeal concluded]

[Type: Simulation/Battle Royal (Humanoid species)]

[Aether density: 4 or 40 pts]

[Number of participants: 11,658,435]

[Main Mission: Enter the Sanctuary Bubble.]

[Penalty for failure: None.]

[Evaluation of the Ordeal in Progress...]

[...]

[Evaluation complete. The result is as follows:]

[-Main Mission; Rating: Perfect= +100]

[-1st Trial: Reach the Shore; Rating: Fair: +50]

[-2nd Trial: Spend a night on the Island: Rating: Good: +75]

[-3rd Trial: Surviving on the Island until the descent of the Phantom Sanctuary (Battle Royal)): rating: Perfect= +150]

[-4th Trial: The Phantom Sanctuary Maze, Follow the Luminous Arrows and survive until the end: Perfect= +150]

[Eknimzfoamr; Rfoare: Gmmt= +15 nol]

[Proactivity; Rating: Excellent= +50]

[Fighting; Rating: Very Active= +20]

[Other exploits:]

[Exploit n° 1: First in the Player Rankings ; rating: +50]

[Exploit n° 2: Looter and slaughterer of the Tribe of Chaos: +50]

[Exploit n° 3: Meeting the Ancient Designer; Rating: +0]

[Special Exploit n° 1: Inadvertently cooking your comrade to death: -20]

[Special Exploit n° 2 : Save your soul mate at the risk of your life : +50]

[Total rating: +740]

[Tval lhmzu al zfcut dazlo ar oval Oztufi frt ar ovu omn 0.000 000 001% md fii Suhmrt Oztufil hmQgarut. Cmrezfopifoamr!]

[Distribution of rewards in consequence:]

[Reward n° 1: Oracle Rank + 5= Sergeant|Staff Sergeant(-100)|Sergeant First Class(-100)| First Sergeant(-100)| Master Sergeant(-200)| Sergeant Major(-200)]

‘Only five ranks...’ Jake mumbled with the expression of a pawnbroker who was owed money.

Xi, who knew exactly why he was ranting like that, could not help but jest at him in a mocking tone,

[What did you think ? That you were going to be promoted 7 Ranks at once because your rating was over 700 points ? You've got quite an appetite! Junior Officers ranks are worth 400 Rating pts, while Field Officers ranks are worth 800 Rating pts. I'll let you imagine the ranks of Flag Officers. To be honest, your current Rank is already higher than some of the Fifth Ordeal Players, even if they are mostly small fry.]

'Ugh, actually, that's exactly what I imagined. 'Jake grunted grumpily.

[With such logic and ratings like that, you'd become a Supreme General of the Mirror Universe after just a few Ordeals. The Oracle would never let that happen. Those ranks don't just serve to give you advantages or reputation. They also serve to legitimize and coordinate the participants in certain Ordeals. If everyone has an absurdly high rank, the magic no longer works.]

'Is there at least a maximum Oracle Rank ? 'Jake asked curiously.

[Hmmm... No idea.] Xi conceded after a long hesitation. [The Oracle Rank hierarchy is quite complex. At the same time, there are the Oracle Ranks of those directly representing the Oracle, such as Oracle Guardian and Oracle Overseer, which form a separate system.]

[Hmjusuz, ovuzu fzu film Nmgaiaw Rfrcl, jvahv euruzfiw ofcu nzuhaturhu msuz ovu hifllah qaihofzw Ozfhiu Rfrcl. FzmQ ovu Fadov Oztufi mrjftzl, ao guhmQul taddahpio om qmoasfou Pifwuzl om hmroarpu ofcare zalcl. Tvu lfqu al ozpu ar ovu Mazzmz Urasuzlu tpzare qfflasu Daeulomz arslamrl. Sarhu ovu Ozfhiu fglmipouiw ruutl Pifwuzl dmz ovulu Oztufil, ovu Nmgaiaw Rfrcl juzu hzufout om msuzhmQu oval nzmgiuQ.

[The main advantage of these Nobility Ranks is that with equivalent Oracle Ranks, the one with a Nobility Rank will be considered higher ranked. I let you imagine the repercussions on the Shadow Guide and the Oracle Paths

calculation. The other advantage is that the Oracle will never mobilize a Noble or his faction on the battlefield against his will. This can happen when a System's situation becomes critical.]

After Xi's brief clarification, Jake took a look at the number of points required to be promoted again through the normal channels, but he instantly regretted it:

[Oracle Rank 10, Sergeant Major = 0/10,000B pts]

'Forget it... At this point I think that the advantage of a faction or a military group to be promoted faster becomes almost worthless.'

That was the only consolation. At least he no longer risked running into Players with ridiculously high Oracle Ranks in their first Ordeals. Even if he was slaying Digestors all day long, it wasn't realistic to get promoted by this method in a short period of time.

[It is actually possible to accumulate experience points quickly by commanding a large group of units. If your orders or strategies allow the units under your authority to eliminate a large group of Digestors, you will receive a significant fraction of their points. Until now, you have been unaware of this because you have fought Digestors head-on. Depending on your Oracle Rank, you may have a number of units under your command sharing their accomplishments with you.]

Upon further reflection, Jake found that this made perfect sense. If these military ranks were only honorary, it would not have been necessary to name them so. More neutral, flattering titles would have achieved the same result.

After a short interruption, a new notification appeared.

[Reward n°2: Xion Zolvhur's Soul Stone.]

[Rujfzt r°3: Oztufi Somzu. 740 hzutaol om Inurt.]

Jake was momentarily disappointed when he received only one Soul Stone as a reward. He was hoping to receive at least one of each type. If Ruby hadn't robbed him, he probably would have gotten a much better haul.

However, when he recognized the name of the Ancient Designer, he was instantly cheerful again. No matter how many regular Soul Stones he brought back, a Soul Stone from Xion Zolvhur's Spirit Body outshone them all and much more!

The old alien's colorful Spirit Body at least proved that such a Soul Stone harboured plenty of secrets.

Now that the special rewards had been distributed, Jake was finally able to devote himself fully to his online shopping spree. Currently, with 5 credits left from his previous Ordeal, he had a total of 745 credits at his disposal.

[Categories:]

[Aether/Genetic Code Enhancements]

[Knowledge and skills]

[Aether Skills]

[Oracle Device Skills/Upgrades]

[Ogbuhol/ Mfhvaruzw/Vuvahiul]

[Organic/inorganic materials]

[Miscellaneous]

Jake was already familiar with the different categories and like the previous time, he ignored all of them directly and went straight to the Oracle Devices Skills/Upgrades section without hesitation.

After acquiring three Oracle Device Skills from Xion Zolvhur and experiencing firsthand the devastating explosion of Bawopi and Ruby's

last-minute betrayal, he finally understood how vital these Oracle Device Skills were.

Now that his bracelet contained such a large amount of liquid alloy and his Oracle Rank had been promoted substantially, he was determined to put this advantage to good use.

There were plenty of Oracle Device Skills that he would have liked to get previously and the choice had been awfully difficult. The reason he had chosen AD Promotion, AD Oracle Cloaking and AD Space Storage was because their effects were double what their conventional counterpart was, so their potential had both immediate and long-term repercussions.

Each upgrade cost twice the price of an identical Oracle Skill of the same level, but this was definitely not a disadvantage in the long run. Indeed, upgrading an Oracle Skill cost four times the price of the previous level, but the performance did not necessarily change by that much.

For example, AD Promotion lvl2 was equivalent to the standard Promotion lvl4. Except that to upgrade Promotion to lvl2, only 400 credits were needed, while not to mention the price, which was counted in thousands of credits, upgrading Promotion to lvl4 was currently impossible because of his insufficient authority level.

Fortunately, Jake soon noticed that the value of these Ordeal credits had doubled compared to the previous Ordeal. The Aether Skills and materials he remembered inspecting the previous time were now half their previous price.

Tval qufro ovfo ovulu hzutaol jmpit rusuz gu tusfiput msuz ovu hmpzlu md ovu Oztufil frt ovfo ao jmpit fijfwl gu nmllagiu om gpw gzufcovzmpev zujfztl zuefztiull md ovu lofopl mz darfrhafi laopfoamr md ovu Pifwuz fo ovfo qmquro. Tval jfl frmovuz arhuroasu dzmq ovu Ozfhiu om qmoasfou ovu Pifwuzl rmo om easu pn tulnaou ovu urmzqmpl zalcl.

Evolvers refusing to participate in these Ordeals were doomed to put in an unquantifiable amount of effort, perhaps spanning years or hundreds of years,

to achieve what a high-ranking Player could achieve in a single Ordeal of just a few months, even with a poor Ordeal rating.

This time Jake didn't intend to upgrade his Oracle Skills, but to acquire three more, namely :

[Oracle Shield lv11: An indestructible spherical force field enveloping the owner of the Oracle Device will be generated. Maximum range: 0m. Effect duration: 5 seconds. Aether Cost: 200M Aether pts per activation. Price: 100 credits]

[Oracle Heal lv11: The owner of the Oracle Device will have his injuries, regardless of severity, treated instantly. Number of uses: 1 times per Ordeal. Outside Ordeals: the Aether Cost is 2000 times that of the Green Cube. Price: 200 credits]

[Portable Oracle Store lv11: The owner of the Oracle Device can access the Oracle Store from anywhere, including during an Ordeal, and his purchases will be delivered instantly. However, the prices of the goods in the Oracle Store will be 200 times more expensive. Regardless of the item purchased, a shipping fee of 20M Aether pts will be charged. Price: 200 credits]

Although these three Oracle Device Skills were far inferior to those of the Ancient Designer and their activation cost was doubled, their essence had been retained. The Oracle Shield remained indestructible and the Oracle Heal could still instantly heal him from any injury.

The Portable Oracle Store was a skill he could have done without, but he had a nasty hunch that he would use it soon enough. In this Ordeal alone, there were a bunch of situations where it could have been helpful.

With 245 credits left, Jake didn't know what to buy. As the apprentice of the Aetherist Cekt Mogusar, he intended to suck out the little alien's knowledge to the core. Moreover, he was far from fully mastering the contents of the two manuals he had purchased during the previous Ordeal.

After all, after several months of Ordeal, he had barely created his Aether Core, which was essentially the absolute prerequisite before he could really start his learning journey.

At the same time, his Bloodline was already providing him with all kinds of versatile Aether Skills and he felt it was better to focus on his bloodline evolution rather than spreading himself too thin. The Aether Encodings were undoubtedly interesting, but there was still the possibility that the old Aetherist could provide him with some of them at a reasonable price.

Finding no knowledge, materials, or objects that he needed right away, Jake flipped through the categories at length to satisfy his curiosity and open up his horizons. Eventually, he returned to the Aether Skill category and found an interesting auxiliary Aether Skill:

[Aether Conversion lvl1: Gives the holder of this Skill the possibility to transfer momentarily the Aether points from one stat to another, with a variable efficiency. Price: 200 credits.]

This was definitely an interesting Aether Skill, but of limited interest to low level Players and Evolvers because of the low efficiency, but because he had an Aether Core, this skill was perfect for him.

An Aether Density of 100 did not mean that his intelligence would be amplified by 10. As energy levels increased, the Strength or Constitution would naturally increase, but not fundamental physical constants such as the speed of light. The propagation of an electric current was not much faster, and therefore intelligence was not profoundly changed. For this, it was necessary to use Aether Intelligence Encoding, which used Aether in a miraculous way to achieve these results.

The passive radiance of an Aether Core was like the world's Aether Density. It gave his body an overall boost, especially if the Aether Density of the

world around him was much lower, but its gross usage remained limited. With Aether Conversion, this problem was solved.

After spending 700 credits and finding nothing else of interest, he decided to save his 45 credits for the next Ordeal. Their value doubling with each Ordeal, this could be considered a long-term investment.

Jake waited patiently in the darkness, talking with Xi, that the Red Cube finally released him, then after a lengthy period of time, which he estimated in hours, light appeared in his field of vision and he was finally able to proceed to the exit.

A moment later, he was back inside the hall where the gigantic Red Cube stood. He was finally back on B842.