

The Oracle Paths

Volume 4: The Purgatory

Chapter 360 - Faction Skills

"Oh my gosh, you really submitted that?! "Will was this close to tearing his hair out of his head in horror. His business plan was ruined!

"You all pissed me off, bickering over a name. "Jake said with a contented expression. "It's not the name I dreamed of but I see it as a good middle finger to your pointless efforts. This name is no worse than any other. We may not be taken seriously, but I'd rather be underrated than the other way around."

"You have a point..." Will grumbled as he tried to stay positive in defeat.

Regardless, he didn't forget to cast a reproachful glance at the idiot who had come up with the idea. The culprit in question, Kyle, disregarded the businessman and started whistling as if nothing happened. He made no secret of his delight, either.

For the three women, the name didn't pose any real problem. Sarah had never been a nerd and anyone who saw her would refuse to believe that, while the two sisters still didn't know what it meant. Sarah had to whisper the definition of the word to them and their mouths cracked open in disbelief.

"So Jake is a nerd?" Esya chuckled with an enlightened face. "That explains a lot."

"Hum hum. "Enya nodded with a smile.

Jake's ears twitched when he heard the three women talking behind his back. Did they think his Perception stat was a joke?

So what if I'm a nerd? Jake ranted inwardly. While nerds may have been seen as technology junkies, socially awkward, pimply, and mostly virgin, that didn't mean everyone was. There were exceptions.

Nerds could also be computer geniuses, so much smarter and more talented than the average human, that they were disillusioned and simply couldn't fit in. Jake preferred, for the sake of his own ego, to think he was such a person.

To avoid losing his temper, he refocused on the hologram of Agent Keru opposite him, who he had to admit was admirably patient.

"How do I choose these Faction Skills?" Jake asked nicely.

"Now that the Myrtharian Nerds Faction has been created, a new tab has been added to your Oracle Device. You will be able to manage all the parameters of your new faction via this tab."

"Hmm, so in theory I don't need your help anymore? "Jake questioned hesitantly. He was afraid it might sound harsh.

But the alien Keru just grinned brightly, revealing her perfect white teeth.

"That's right. However, I have been summoned to assist you personally by the Oracle Palace. Not everyone is so lucky."

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"How is the normal faction founding procedure going in this case?" Jake posed another question instead, rather than confronting her head-on.

"It's an Oracle AI that handles the process from start to finish." She explained soberly. "My presence here to answer your queries is just out of consideration. Any Oracle Drone could perform these tasks."

"So why make an exception in my case?"

"This is no exception." Keru kindly contradicted him. "Anyone whose performance attracts the attention of the Oracle Overseer is treated differently. By discovering the presence of Digestors as well as identifying one of the System A16 deserters, the Oracle Overseer memorized your name a long time ago. Your first place during the Second Ordeal reinforced this first impression. We hope that your future performances will be as good as your previous ones."

Jake crinkled his eyes cautiously, but he didn't reply. Instead, he accessed the new tab of his Oracle Device as Keru explained.

Unsurprisingly, he found a new "Factions" tab, which when opened, gave him access to a new interface.

[Planet of origin: Earth.]

[Nation of origin: Earth Union.]

[Main Faction: Myrtharian Nerds.]

[Spgdfhoamr: Nmru.]

[Territories: None.]

[Properties: None.]

Jake was not overly thrilled when he found out that he was still considered by the system to be a citizen of Earth, but he immediately relaxed when he learned that he was not considered a citizen of New Earth. The world and nation of origin was simply information of biographical value. It had no direct impact on him except perhaps for the matchmaking of some Ordeals.

"The world and nation of origin is useful in choosing the location of your future Floating Island." Keru guessed his thoughts from his disgruntled expression. "Floating Islands of the same origin are usually placed in the same area, and before you make your choice, the area dominated by your native people will be roughly indicated, including the dominant faction. This does not mean that there are only Earthlings there. Even in case of bad relations, it is better to establish your territory close to species with similar interests, and similar anatomy. In your case, humans."

Jake nodded coolly. He wasn't worried that New Earth would try to attack his Floating Island. B842 was so big that it was just too cumbersome. In any case, he was not able to do it at the moment and he doubted that the Earth Government would have the desire or the time to waste its resources on him.

With this short explanation from Keru, he at least knew that the officer sent to assist him was competent. An automated AI would have left him in the dark without clarifying his doubts.

He then clicked on the [Main Faction: Myrtharian Nerds.] sub-tab and another interface popped up in front of him.

[Faction Name: Myrtharian Nerds]

[Faction level: Lv1 (Promotional conditions: 1M Aether pts, Oracle Rank of Sergeant First Class or higher)]

[Ffhoamr Auovuz Somzfeu: 0 nol]

[Aether production: 0 pts/s] [Aether production: 0 pts/s]

[Faction Skills: None (3 Skill slots available.)]

[Main Floating Island affiliate: None.]

Jake quickly did the math and realized that 1M Aether pts was the Aether a person could accumulate by exterminating only Digestors to be promoted from Staff Sergeant to Sergeant First Class.

Staff Sergeant (Oracle Rank 6) was the minimum rank for creating a faction or buying a Floating Island, and this indicated that the growth of a faction was closely related to that of the Oracle Rank and even encouraged.

Already tired of choosing a name, Jake stopped dithering and went to the Faction Skills interface to make his choices.

He was presented with an incredibly long list of Faction Skill lv1. Thanks to his Sergeant Major's Oracle Rank, he had a relatively wide range of choices. However, he was quickly taken aback when he found that the options for the first Faction Skill were limited and extremely familiar to him.

These skills were none other than his own! Moreover, this first skill was a passive skill with permanent effect! The effect was much lower than the genuine Aether Skill, about 10%, but still significant. He could give some of his resistance to heat or radiation to his comrades, including giving them a fraction of his Myrtharian Body.

For a normal human like Will, this could mean the difference between life and death. The most incredible part of all this was that he also benefited from this first passive Faction Skill. The chosen Skill or bloodline property would be enhanced all the more.

He didn't know how the Oracle System handled such a miracle, but he assumed that it must be similar to the Throsgenian Blessing he had received at the beginning of his first Ordeal. If a person left his faction, he would automatically lose that privilege.

After sharing his findings with Keru, the young woman proceeded to confirm his suspicions in a kind and professional manner.

"That's why your faction name was a good choice. It's the best advertisement. The appointment of the faction leader is always of paramount importance, as his or her skills become available to members of the entire faction. In the Mirror Universe, the leader brings as much to the faction as its members bring to it. The more powerful the leader is, the more his subordinates benefit.

"Other Faction Skills are not permanent and must be activated. Outside of Ordeal, the cost of activation is high and should be reserved for exceptional situations where the faction is threatened. Some Skills can only be activated by the leader, while others can be activated by all members if they can afford the cost."

After asking Keru for further clarification, he turned to his companions who had remained silent and invited them to join his new faction before sharing the Faction Skills list before his eyes.

Indirectly, this gave them a glimpse of his true abilities, and they were all envious. Enya and Esya's eyes almost popped out of their heads while Kyle was green with jealousy.

He and Sarah were also Myrmidians, but only Sarah had acquired the Self-Encoding Skill. Unfortunately, this was not such an interesting choice of Faction Skill, as it was dependent on other Myrtharian Skills, such as Accelerated Myrtharian Growth and Decline. Without these complementary passive skills, the effects were likely to be severely diminished.

Will was already deep in his own world, his face tense with intense concentration as he tried to memorize all these skills in record time. He was interested in all the skills, especially those for getting discounts in the Oracle Store or optimizing the yield of sub-factions or Floating Islands in various ways, but he knew that Jake was not so magnanimous.

Jake would certainly refuse to choose a Faction Skill that didn't directly increase their chances of survival in an Ordeal or the Mirror Universe. Sub-factions were there for anything that wasn't combat-related. Myrtharian Nerds may have been a peace-oriented faction, but all of this was still to survive in this hostile world.

Tim was interested in Jake's Telekinesis, while Enya and Esya wanted to choose his Heat and Radiation Control. The synergy with their own abilities was just perfect.

In the end, after a short argument where everyone compromised, it was Jake who made the final decision by choosing the passive skill Myrtharian Body (10% of the leader's ability). In addition to allowing their bodies to gradually strengthen by absorbing heat and radiation, their stats would be boosted by about 40%, since Jake's Body stats were four times that of a normal human.

After a few more minutes of lively debate, the other two Active Faction Skills were also chosen. The first one was an extremely versatile faction skill and could also be considered permanent, although not for free. The last skill was the most important and had been chosen to protect their lives:

[Faction Skills:]

[Permanent Passive Skill: Myrtharian Body (10% of the leader's capacity): Body stats boosted by 40%. (only 10% for Jake or character with similar body-stat boost.)

[Faction Space Vault lv1: 10 cubic meters of common storage space accessible to authorized members and which can be compartmentalized into several blocks depending on the level of authorization and trust. Activation cost: 100 000 Aether pts/day. The daily cost can be shared by the faction's members.]

[Vitality Link lv1: Allows the temporary transfer of member vitality to the Skill Activator. An injury can also be transferred to another member with its agreement. Cost: 1M Aether points per minute.]

All he had to do now was to choose the location of his future Floating Island.