

The Oracle Paths

Volume 4: The Purgatory

Chapter 361 - Buying a Floating Island

Selecting the location of his Floating Island turned out to be much simpler and more intuitive than he had imagined. Keru materialized a hologram representing a three-dimensional map of B842's orbit and let him make his choice.

In addition to the sound insulation barrier erected by the three Oracle Drones, the barrier also began to vibrate violently, blurring their looks for the curious outsiders. When Jake allowed Keru to share the hologram with his comrades, the privacy of their choice was guaranteed.

The first thing that Jake noticed when he discovered this space map was how empty the sky was. Although thousands of factions had already been created, with their own Floating Islands and Territories on either side of B842, whether in the sky or on earth, this map was desperately empty.

Although he couldn't know the exact location of each Floating Island, the distance separating them from each other was ridiculously vast. With the exception of clusters of Floating Islands made up of individuals of the same faction who trusted each other completely, the distance separating each Island was at least hundreds of light years.

While the area mostly dominated by New Earth and the other Earth-origin factions was clearly delineated, this did not prove that Earthlings trusted each other in the slightest.

The zone of the Earthlings alone extended over a thousand light years and was also occupied by a few human factions from other planets. A much larger area encompassing the Terran zone included all physiologically human species, while an even larger area included all humanoid factions.

However, with the exception of New Earth, whose position in space was clearly marked, it was impossible for them to determine the exact location of the other islands. All they could know from observing some of the shaded areas was that these areas were potentially occupied.

Potentially, because in order to protect these Floating Islands and neophyte factions, a space about a light year in diameter was automatically allocated to each Floating Island to mask their position.

Jake was seriously tempted to place his Floating Island in the middle of the void, in an area without any Floating Islands around it for tens of trillions of light years, but Keru and his companions vehemently dissuaded him from doing so.

According to Keru, it was a very bad idea, which could backfire and jeopardize its growth. The reason was that if he intended to trade or expand his territories, he needed to be close enough.

A few tens or hundreds of light-years was far from being an impassable distance for some advanced civilizations. A few hyper-spatial jumps could overcome them. But a trillion

light-years was a different matter. As long as he was not really able to grasp what such distances really meant, it was better not to make such an ill-considered choice.

If a million was one second, a trillion was 31 years. Carried over a distance, it was just unimaginable. If he really decided to set his island that far away, he would really be on his own for better or for worse.

Naturally, Jake had a ready-made objection,

"What's the big deal? They can just use a Yellow Cube right?" He replied bluntly.

Keru stared him in the eyes for a long time before answering,

"That's true, but the price of teleportation would no longer be the same. While Oracle technology has no trouble transcending time and space, that doesn't mean that no energy is required. These Cubes are powered by highly advanced Aether Cores that absorb a large part of the cost, if not all of it over short distances.

"The Aether Fee that you are currently paying to move around with these Cubes is seriously discounted, with the price remaining just high enough for you to afford it. As the average wealth level of the Evolvers continues to increase, these prices will continue to escalate until they become proportional to the distance once the Aether Cores are no longer sufficient to provide the required power."

Jfcu frt ovu zulo md val ezmpn juzu lvmhcut om vufz oval zusuifoamr. Id ao jfl ovu ozpov, ao jfl artuut lpahatu om nifhu ovuaz alifrt lm dfz fjfw. Jplo emare gfhc om B842 mz Tvuiqf jmpit guhmqu fiqmla aqnmllagi u frt ovuw jmpit gu hmqniuouiw almifout.

"Then what is your suggestion?" Jake asked with a much more humble expression this time.

Will pointed directly to a location straddling several human zones, "This place!"

Because Enya and Esya were not from Earth, they could not see the position of New Earth like the others without their permission, but they could see the area occupied by the Egeans, including the Floating Island of the Velsyos Empire from which they originated.

They were not particularly attached to their native people, but they had family and friends. If their faction could stay close to the Egeans, it was ideal.

"Why not here instead?" Enya suggested in another junction area after explaining her reasons to them.

"Jake?" Will sounded out his new leader in search of a reaction. At the end of the day, the final decision was still up to him.

"I don't care." The concerned one shrugged off with disinterest. "If we can't really hide, we might as well choose a position that minimizes our future costs and is conducive to our future business relationships."

"Yay!" Esya jumped up out of joy before remembering the appropriate behavior of a lady.

Her older sister Enya was visibly relieved and also found it hard to repress her smile. Will seemed indifferent, but it was clear that he was delighted with the location. Kyle and Sarah hid it better, but it was plain to see that they were pleased as well. Only Tim didn't seem to give a damn.

For Jake, to whom the island's location didn't matter, it was disturbing to see such a wide range of reactions. Esya's exuberance especially had deeply struck him.

It was in those moments that he realized that not everyone was as stoic and solitary as he was. His way of reacting was not normal in many ways. Although he missed Anya and his uncle, he didn't feel an urgent need to have them around.

Regardless, the chosen location still turned out to be in the middle of nowhere, more than sixty light-years away from any Floating Island. According to Keru, this was only temporary. As other factions emerged, the orbital space of B842 would gradually be claimed.

A bell rang in his mind and in the territories sub-tab, his nameless Floating Island now appeared there. To unlock the tab, he had to spend 100,000 Aether points, but Keru had already warned him. This was the initial cost to form a 100m² island with a low-grade Yellow Cube.

[Floating Island:]

[Island Name: None]

[Estimated Rank: 0]

Number of inhabitants: 0]

[Staff: 1 Oracle Constructor lvl1]

[Aether production: 0 Aether pts/day]

[Aoqmlnvuzah hmqnmlaoamr: Nm foqmlnvuzu.]

[Artificial gravity: None]

[Area : 100m²]

[Cubes : Yellow Cubes lvl1]

[Oracle Cities: None.]

[Oracle Buildings: None.]

[Defenses: None]

All the information about his island was listed there and he discovered, to his dismay, that his glorious Floating Island was nothing more than a one-meter thick metal disc with a diameter of just over 11 meters. The Yellow Cube was already taking up all the space.

Everything was customizable, from the shape and composition of the metal disc used as a base, to the surface climate. In essence, according to Keru these Floating Islands even had the promise of becoming huge spaceships. All you had to do was be rich enough to afford the required modifications.

"At the moment the Yellow Cube is locked to allow access only to you, but you can choose whether you want to set it up in public or private mode, including who is allowed to visit your island." Keru explained routinely. She also added that it was preferable for him to install a Blue Cube (Oracle Store) to simplify his operations.

Oovuzjalu, vu jmpit gu dmzht om zuopzr om frmovuz Ozfhiu Caow usuzw oaqu vu jfroum om pnezftu val alifrt. Hu hmpit luo pn ovu qmtadahfoamrl dzmq val gzfhuio, arhiptare ovu npzhvflu

md fttaoamrfi lpzdfhu, gpo ovulu qfouzafil juzu rm imreuz dzuu frt vu jmpit vfsu om nfw dmz ovuq mpo md val nmhcuo.

To expand their territory quickly, some factions chose to have a thin disc, with cheaper metal, but this could cause other complications in case of a Digestors invasion. Serious factions, on the other hand, preferred to limit the habitable surface to maximize their defenses and the island's resilience.

Taking advantage of the receptionist's tips, Jake spent 1M Aether pts to multiply the surface area by ten, 1M additional Aether points to install a Blue Cube lvl2 with a 10 meters side and 20M Aether pts to acquire two additional Oracle Constructors.

These robots were the workforce accomplishing all the desired modifications of his Island. As long as he had no idea how it all worked, he would be dependent on the technologies provided by the Oracle System.

However, he did not immediately install a breathable atmosphere, artificial gravity, or force field to protect his island from cosmic radiation. He wanted to see with his own eyes what the sky of B842 looked like from a Floating Island with no artifices.

Will, Sarah and the others, though, were much less reckless. After Jake finished shopping, Keru helped them buy and configure their own Floating Islands. Because they were from the same faction, their islands were placed in orbit a few kilometers away from Jake's island. This made moving from one island to another free of charge using an Orange Cube.

Everyone except Jake installed an artificial atmosphere, an anti-radiation shield, and set a comfortable temperature. These additions were not very expensive on small Floating Islands but would constantly spend their Aether. Owning a big island without any Aether Cores or the money/Aether to fuel it could quickly get out of hands.

After saying goodbye to Keru, their group was excited and eager to explore their new islands. Having no desire to waste any more time here, Jake decided to visit his Floating Island straight away.

His Shadow Guide had confirmed that Cekt Mogusar was no longer on Thelma. This could be due to the Digestor threat that had mobilized the Oracle Guardians earlier, or some other reason, but in any case, he had no business being here since the old alien clearly didn't want to be tracked down anymore.

Regrettably, although Jake's desires were usually modest, he rarely succeeded in fulfilling them. No sooner had he left the building than he came face to face with a cohort of soldiers.

Tvulu lmitauzl tat rmo jufz lofrftzt pradmzql, gpo tfzc, nifou-zuardmzhut fzqmqz iacu val. Aii md ovuq, gmov qur frt jmqur, juzu mdour msuz ojm quouzl ofii frt arlouft md hmrsuroamrfi dazufzql, qmlo md ovuq juzu uypannut jaov ifzeu ljmztl, fkul mz hipgl. Aii md ovuq vft f vfzt, hmit immc frt fr mnnzullasu fpzf.

Veterans. Not as soldiers, but as Evolver and Player.

Jake, took a quick look at them, but thinking they weren't there for him or maybe escorting someone important, he simply stepped out of their way and continued walking out the gate. His companions did the same, keeping a low profile.

But at this point, one of the soldiers who had been monitoring the base and had already been watching them extensively when they first arrived suddenly pointed at them and whispered something to one of the veterans. This veteran repeated these words to a fifty-year-old woman in uniform and skirt who turned immediately in their direction.

When Jake met the middle-aged woman's gaze, his heart jolted. Although she was older and her salt-and-pepper hair was tied up in a bun, her features shared 50% similarities with those of Ruby Hale. Without jumping to conclusions, these two women seemed related by blood.

And indeed, when he looked at who was accompanying her, he spotted a stunning young woman with long white hair walking beside her. Because she was slightly withdrawn and hidden by all these soldiers he had not noticed her at first.

If at that moment a glance could kill, Ruby would have long since disappeared from Thelma's surface.