

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 4: The Purgatory

### Chapter 371 - Crunch is Back

When Jake opened his eyes, a bright white light came out of his hands. As he lowered them, the dazzling sphere of light kept hovering in front of him.

Thrilled, he controlled the Aether mass to position it in the center of his island at a height of 20 meters. Technically, anyone could still take control of this Aether Core. He had refused to anchor it to a point in space or an object permanently so that he could move it as he wished in the future.

This artificial sun created only white light, but as the Aether Core became stronger, the brightness would only increase until it could illuminate a much bigger Floating Island.

He might even add more complexity to the Aether Symbol by adding the Heat Aether Spell to it. At that moment, this Sun would truly become one.

"Nice work, Jake. You may really have the talent to become an Aetherist." Xi's hologram praised him with admiration as she reviewed the arrangement of each Aether Rune. For a first time, he had done exceptionally well.

"I think so." Jake laughed without modesty.

But as he said these words, his expression took a sudden turn. His voice was unusually deep, and fine ripples ran across the surface of the lava floor as if he had just roared thunderously.

Fearing the worst, he checked the time and date as well as his Status Oracle and his face fell apart. A month had passed in the blink of an eye. He hadn't seen how much time had passed.

His body had long since become insensitive to the lava around him. While he was focusing on these Aether Runes and that second Aether Core Xi had continuously increased the ambient temperature and gravity to stimulate his body. The temperature in the island's center was now approaching 2,000 degrees Celsius.

While his Aether Stats had gained only about 30 points on average, his body had been totally revamped while his Spirit Body had gained two more levels:

[AETHER STATUS:]

[Strength(S): 300.7 points] (251.6>300.7)

[Agility(A): 286.8 points] (260.7>286.8)

[Constitution(C): 317 points] (286>317)

[Vitality(V): 315.2 points] (284.4>315.2)

[Intelligence(I): 298 points] (269.9>298)

[ Perception(P): 257.6 points] (244.3>257.6)

[ Extrasensory Perception(EP): 302 points] (271>302)

[ Aether Core : 188 points ] (157>188pts)

[BODY STATUS:]

[Physique: Silver Myrtharian Body lvl2]

[ Height: 2.53 meters] (2.21m>2.53m)]

[Weight: 486kg (301kg>486kg)]

[ Strength: 203 points (116>203)]

[Agility: 96 points] (75>96)]

[ Constitution: 203.5 points] (129.6>203.5)]

[ Vitality: 202.3 points] (123.7>202.3)]

[ Intelligence: 115.8 points] (57.4>115.8)]

[ Perception: 116.2 points] (51.1>116.2)]

His progress was immeasurable. The quality of his body had improved so much that he couldn't believe it. The difference between Myrtharian and Silver Myrtharian was also beginning to be felt. The growth rate of his intelligence and perception had surpassed that of his physical attributes.

So why was Jake so horrified? In four words: His height and weight.

He now weighed almost half a ton and was definitely out of the confines of a normal human size. He was already a small giant.

With trepidation, Jake pulled a mirror out of his Space Storage and confronted his new face. He almost burst into tears at that moment.

"Thank God, I'm still handsome!"

If he had looked like a ferocious beast, he probably would have suffered from a nervous breakdown. However, he was still deeply worried about his future love life.

Somewhat reassured, he inspected the rest of his body extensively and was surprised to find that he hadn't bulged abnormally like some doped-up bodybuilders. Alas, his armor was now a little too tight...

Thanks to the flexible and resistant leather, the component had not torn, but he now looked quite ridiculous in it. Fortunately his Wormak Boots had the marvelous ability to adjust to his shoe size.

Hal qplhiul luuqut om vfsu omrut pn frt guhmqu oaevouz iacu ovmlu md f zuepifz qfzoafi fzoalo.  
Hu jfl tudaraoui w f vufswjuaevo, gpo vu jfl tusuimnare tadduzuroiw hmqnzfut om ovu Karovfzafz  
Guzpid.

[While you were busy creating a Sun for your island, communications were blocked.] Xi reminded him fondly. [A month is a very long time. Will and the others must be worried sick.]

Xi's advice was like a cold shower. He instantly forgot about the future problems concerning his growth spurt and jumped out of his lava bath.

He briefly deactivated the internal force field of his island to reach the living area, retrieved the radio transmitter from his Space Storage and turned it on at once. Not even ten seconds later, Will's voice rang in the handset.

"At last! We almost thought the Digestors had gotten you. "Will exclaimed in a sanctimonious tone. "If you only knew how worried we were! We are only waiting for you for the Third Ordeal. The situation is pressing!"

"Mmm? What's happened? " Jake worried with incomprehension.

"Seriously?! Look around you! "

Hearing Will suddenly scream in his head, Jake covered his ears with a wince and let the businessman get everything off his chest.

"This world is changing too fast... Most of the Players have already completed their first four Ordeals. Even your cat has finished his fourth Ordeal! My God, if you had seen it. It's not a cat anymore, it's a walking monstrosity! He and his gang of felines almost destroyed my island when they visited it for the first time! They even created a subfaction... "

Jake almost choked on his own spit when he heard these last words. In disbelief, he opened the Faction tab and actually discovered a second subfaction on top of Will's.

Wvur vu lfj ovu rfqu ovu duiarul vft hvmlur, vu lptturiw duio dusuzalv frt ukozuquiw jufzw: Tvu Azalomhfol.

It sounded like a bad joke. Their naming sense was even worse than his own, and he refused to believe that his cat had come up with such an idea alone. Someone had inspired them.

"Tell me the truth... Who convinced them to choose this name?" Jake sighed in exasperation.

Will fully shared his dismay and succinctly explained the facts, barely holding back from bursting into laughter.

"The idea came from Tim and Lily. Sarah and Kyle also approved the name."

"Ugh... I should have known. "Jake mumbled wearily. "Is Lily with you?"

"Not just Lily. "Will confessed in an embarrassed tone.

"Who else?"

"Your cousins Kevin, Vincent, and Daniel, Lily's father, have also joined your faction."

Jake cringed upon learning that his two cousins had joined his faction. He was surprised that Kevin had joined, but it was not unexpected. His cousin was already familiar with Sarah, Tim and Lily and with the previous Ordeal their relationship could be considered cordial.

Bpo Varhuro? Tvfo jfl lvmhcare. Krmjare val hvfzfhouz, ao jfl aqnmllagiuv ovfo vu jmpit hmqu md val mjr dzuu jaii. Smqumru vft dmzhut vaq. Gzfrtdfovuz?

"How's your business doing and how are the others?" Jake changed the subject to avoid unnecessary brooding.

This time he sensed Will's delight.

"Not bad. With Sarah and the others who have kept hunting Space Digestors under my supervision, we've made quite a bit of money. Your Myrtharian Body is just too good to be true... Just by raising the temperature a little bit our bodies get stronger. I just wish you would have told us about the side effects before... The muscle gain and the growth spurt is still okay, but the glowing dick as soon as you get a little too excited is just... Only Tim thinks it's cool!"

'Fuck?! That's really your problem?' Jake cursed him for his mannerism.

He was in the middle of an existential crisis because of his exponential growth and all they were worried about was that detail? It wasn't even a real issue.

In the midst of a strong emotion of excitement or anger, the veins produced heat and light. If this excitement was of a certain nature, this symptom could indeed occur.

Unlike him, who could control the heat and radiation to some extent, his comrades had no control over this phenomenon. Not to mention an erection, even blushing with shame could result in a glowing red face.

"I'm on my way." Jake finally said, ending the discussion.

Reflecting on Will's first words, he asked Xi,

"What did he mean when he said that the world is changing too fast? Have I missed anything important this month?"

Xi's response was not long in coming.

[ Apart from the fact that the number of Floating Islands and Factions has multiplied and that most of the impatient Players have already finished their fourth Ordeal, nothing. Ah yes! Apart from that, the Aether Density and gravity have increased quite a bit...]

Because the gravity was lower than in his training area and the increase in Aether Density had been gradual he hadn't noticed anything. When Xi pointed this out to him, a shiver of bad omen ran down his spine.

[ Aether Density of B842: 58 Aether points (21>58)]

[Gravity: 4 times that of Earth.]

This meant that the gravity had doubled during that month and that the Aether Density on B842 had exceeded that of his Second Ordeal. The speed at which this world was changing was indeed terrifying!

It was a perpetual race where stagnation meant being left behind. And falling behind in the Mirror Universe was literally losing control of one's destiny.

For Jake, who didn't want to lose the freedom he had finally gained, it was a brutal wake-up call. His petty worries about his appearance were immediately forgotten.

He was pleasantly surprised to discover, however, that it wasn't all bad luck.

His Oracle Device was now producing nearly 63,800 Aether pts per day. In the course of the month, even while paying the maintenance fee for his island he had earned more than 1M Aether pts.

Earning money without doing anything was always a pléâsurè.

A few seconds later, Jake put his hand against his Yellow Cube and reappeared a blink later on Will's island he had never visited. What immediately struck him was the difference in style.

His island was empty, but functional. With its detection system, a Yellow and Blue Cube, its new sun and the land he had brought back, it was rather austere.

In comparison, Will had made considerable efforts to make his Floating Island as popular as possible. It was his showcase for trading in the Mirror Universe and he had undertaken the necessary work to make it so.

A very decent two-story villa had been built there and a sign read "Myrtharian Scavengers's Store". Through the window Jake recognized several familiar silhouettes, which also became aware of his presence.

He wanted to join them, but unfortunately he knew he would not get through the door... As he lamented about his growth spurt again, a huge mass of black fur suddenly obscured his field of vision.

Crunch was back.