

The Oracle Paths

Volume 5: The Last Tutorial

Chapter 501 - Third Ordeal Rewards

As Jake waited patiently for the results of his Ordeal in utter darkness, he had a sudden surge of hope when the Oracle System interface popped up in his face, but he soon regretted it.

[Participant: Jake Wilderth, Earthling]

[Assessment of injuries in progress...]

[...]

[Assessment complete. Serious injuries have been detected and treatment will begin imminently. The cost of treatment will be deducted from your Ordeal Credits and if not sufficient from your Aether points. Keep in mind that the care performed in the Red Cube post-Ordeal is 100 times cheaper than in a Green Cube outside.]

[Will you accept the care?]

What could Jake respond to that, frankly? He was down to one head, his Soul had suffered badly after all his suicidal spirit attacks, not to mention the fact that his Myrtharian Bloodline was at its lowest level since he obtained it. It hadn't regressed in levels, but it was indeed nerfed. If he refused the healing, it would be great if he could produce the power of his Level 1 Myrtharian Bloodline.

Bloodline Ignition used so abusively came at a price, not to mention the fact that it would take time to raise the Bloodline level of his new cells to the same level as those in his head.

But above all he remembered perfectly the outrageous prices displayed in the Green Cube. Restoring a body with only a head left cost 100M Aether points at the time and that was with his stats, Bloodline and biomass from back then. It would probably cost a lot more today. As for spirit wounds... He didn't want to know.

His only consolation was that the Ordeal Credits doubled in value with each Ordeal and one credit was already worth 100,000 Aether points at his First Ordeal. Now, each credit would be worth a grand total of 400,000 Aether points.

With a fatalistic sigh, Jake accepted the offer. He couldn't win every time. The previous Ordeal he had netted 27 tons of liquid alloy and this time he would have to spend his Ordeal credits to heal himself before even knowing how much he would earn.

[Physical Body Restoration. Cost: 7.5 credits]

[Spirit Body Restoration. Cost: 57 credits]

[Soul Restoration. Cost: 247 credits]

[Bloodline Restoration. Cost: 48 credits]

[Total Care Cost: 359.5 credits.]

'Fuck!'

Fmz f luhmrt, Jfcu vft fiqmlo ovmpevo vu jfl emare om euo fjfw jaov ao, gpo zufiaow vft ypahciw opzrut mr vaq. Tvu Ozfhiu jfl loaii fl hprrare frt vfoudpi fl usuz, frt vu vft imre larhu salpfiaxut vaq fl f ezuutw, arozhofgiu gplarullqfr mz f hzmmcut tahofomz.

In any case, Jake had to admit that the care was impeccable. This was the first time he had ever enjoyed the services of a Green Cube, or at least the Healing Magic they were equipped with, and he had to admit that it was just awesome.

Although he couldn't feel his body in the Red Cube's dark space, the recovery of his Soul, Spirit Body and Bloodline was the most delicious thrill he had ever experienced. Not even the Oracle Heal he had used during the Ordeal could compare to this.

Less than 10 seconds later, all his wounds had been healed and the Oracle System immediately proceeded to report the results of his Third Ordeal.

[Third Ordeal concluded]

[Type: Horror/ Space Travel]

[Aether density: *20 or 200 pts]

[Number of participants: 6,694,729]

[Main Mission: Discover the truth behind the premature awakening of the Titan Pearl's crew and passengers as well as the mystery behind the call for help.]

[Penalty for failure: None.]

[Esfipfoamr md ovu Oztufi ar nzmezull...]

[...]

[Evaluation complete. The result is as follows:]

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

[-First Side Mission: Go to the command room and make sure all your companions are safe and sound : Rating: Perfect= +50]

[-Second Side Mission: Escape the creatures of Yotai Shien 3 for as long as possible: Rating: Perfect: +100]

[-Third Side Mission: Find a way to leave Yotai Shien 3: Rating: Perfect= +100]

[-Fourth Side Mission: Discover the truth behind what really happened on Yotai Shien 3: Rating: Perfect= +100]

[-Fifth Side Mission: Try to keep the people under your protection alive as long as possible : Rating : Average= +50]

[Exploration; Rating: Very Good= +30 pts]

[Pzmfhoasaow; Rfoare: Ekhuiuro= +50]

[Fighting; Rating: Very Active= +25]

[Other exploits:]

[Exploit n°1: Acquisition of the Purgatory : Rating= +100]

[Exploit n°2: Inquisitor Massacre (5/8) : Rating= +100]

[Exploit n°3: Survive a 1vs1 duel against Nylreg : Rating= +200]

[Exploit n°4: Attend the fight of Verxes and Faeyr and live to tell the tale : Rating= +100]

[Special Exploit n°1: Rescue a ghost: Rating= +10]

[Special Exploit n°2: Win a Round of the Monster Game: Rating= +10]

[Special Exploit n°3 : Recruit a Fluid Grand Master in his Faction : Rating= +30]

[Snuhafi Eknimao r°4 : Dudufo Nwizue fl f oufq : Rfoare= +50]

[Total rating: +1205]

[This score is ranked first in this Ordeal and in the top 0.000 000 000 01% of all Third Ordeals combined. Congratulations!]

[Distribution of rewards in consequence:]

[Reward n° 1: Oracle Rank +3= Sergeant Major|Command Sergeant Major(-200)|Second Lieutenant (-400)| First Lieutenant(-400)]

[Reward n° 2: Bronze Artefact : Purgatory. The conversion of the Fluid Artifact into an Aether Artifact will be carried out for free by the Oracle System.]

[Reward n° 3: The Fluid Master Core developed during the Ordeal can be kept as an Aether Soul Core for only 100 credits. In case of refusal, 200M Aether points will be returned to you in compensation.]

[Reward n° 4 : Ordeal Store. 1205 credits to spend.]

[...]

[After deducting the care, and counting the 45 credits you had left, you still have 890.5 credits to spend.]

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Each of these credits could potentially save his life in the future depending on what they would allow him to purchase. Losing 359.5 of them at once was enough to depress even the most upbeat of men.

He was still pleased though when he found out that the 205 extra Rating points had been counted toward his next promotion's progress gauge:

[Oracle Rank 13, First Lieutenant = 5.125/10 Quad pts]

It wouldn't do him much good since Jake didn't have a clue how to earn 5 Quad pts fairly. Unless a Coaching Mission could grant such

rewards, he would probably have to slaughter a planet infested with high-ranking Digestors to have any hope of promotion before he died of old age.

Of course, the first thing Jake did with his points was to spend 100 credits to keep and convert his Fluid Master Core into an Aether Soul Core. This Ordeal had made him realize how important it was to have such an organ.

The first advantage was that it was an excellent protection for the Soul and could be used as a Soul Artifact to launch more powerful mental attacks, while limiting the risks. The second advantage was that it was an excellent Aether reservoir just like the Aether Crystals used as currency in the Mirror Universe but much more performant.

It was a shame that the meridians couldn't be preserved, but he could always learn to create them himself to optimize his Aether flow.

'Any suggestions, Xi?' Jake asked positively as he cursorily skimmed the Ordeal Store's categories with his gaze.

It took quite a few seconds before she deigned to answer him in a grumpy tone,

'Don't you have something to tell me first?'

Jake felt a headache coming on as he heard the words of his AI Oracle. Remembering his obnoxious attitude during the Ordeal's last minutes, he knew full well why she was reacting this way.

'I'm sorry, Xi. I wasn't myself. I promise it won't happen again.' Jake immediately apologized with a sheepish face.

[Hmmp, you better not!]

Her tone was still grumpy, but after that he felt her mood improve. The merciful Xi had forgiven him.

In all honesty, he didn't deserve her. Without her, he wouldn't have accomplished half of what he did, and she tolerated his bad temper 24 hours a day, never judging him and nearly always taking his side.

He wasn't proud of his late Ordeal conduct, but that was all the Corruption's fault. At least, that's what he would have liked to tell himself.

Because he had awakened his True Will stat, what he cared about had been safeguarded during his Ordeal, and his relationship with Xi was most likely not one of them. Perhaps that was what had so deeply pained her, and he fully empathized with her, though he could argue that their bond had not been severed, but temporarily muted.

Luckily, Xi wasn't the type to hold a grudge. After his apology, she stopped mentioning the matter and seriously mulled over his question,

[Considering the last Ordeal's circumstances, I think it would be wise to upgrade the Oracle Skills Oracle Heal and Oracle Shield. An extra Oracle Heal would have allowed you to fully heal yourself during your fight against Nylreg while a better Oracle Shield would have allowed you to protect your comrades and maintain it longer for a lower cost. Depending on the points you have left you can also use the Aether or the Oracle Skill Teleportation. The former will allow you to teleport at will over short distances, while the latter may allow you to run away like Boris did against Nylreg.]

'Boris survived?' Jake hadn't noticed.

[He did. If you and he had been lucid and cooperative with your Oracle Ais, you would have known that we were communicating with each other during your fight with Nylreg.]

Jake refrained from commenting. He had no *désiré* to rub salt in the wound.

Before asking for Xi's advice, Jake had been somewhat tempted to buy new Aether Skills, manuals, or even a weapon, but after hearing her suggestion he realized that she was right.

After spending 800 credits, Jake finished his shopping spree with the following upgrades:

[Oracle Shield lvl3: An indestructible spherical force field enveloping the owner of the Oracle Device will be generated. Maximum range: 10m. Effect duration: 20 seconds. Aether Cost: 200M Aether pts per activation.]

[Oracle Heal lvl2: The owner of the Oracle Device will have his injuries, regardless of severity, treated instantly. Number of uses: 2 times per Ordeal. Outside Ordeals: the Aether Cost is 1000 times that of the Green Cube.]

[Oracle Teleport lvl1: The user of this Oracle Skill will be teleported randomly within a 10km radius, unless a destination has been previously established. Aether Cost : 200M Aether pts per activation.]

[Teleportation lvl1: The user will be able to teleport within their field of vision and extrasensory perception as long as they can provide the required energy for the spell.]

The first three were Oracle Skills and the last one was an Aether Skill. Unsure of what to do with his remaining 90 credits he decided to save them for the next Ordeal. With their value doubling each time, it was a worthwhile investment provided he could survive to reap the benefits.

Jake then waited patiently in the dark, chatting with Xi to make amends or browsing the Ordeal Store catalog. A few hours later, light appeared in his field of vision and he was finally able to make his way to the exit.

A moment later he was back on his Floating Island with the rest of his companions. And unfortunately... A little debriefing was in order.