

The Oracle Paths

Volume 5: The Last Tutorial

Chapter 509 - Bewitching Spell

‘Then, what should I do?’ Jake asked as he resolved to accept this harsh reality.

He longed for those Oracle Skills, but they were far too expensive for him at the moment. Despite his need to keep the Purgatory in his body, it wasn’t like it was an absolute emergency. If necessary, he could very well carry it around with him in a backpack as he had done up until now with all sorts of items he almost never parted with.

[You’ll need True Miniaturization lv12 to make the Purgatory small enough to be stored in your body without interfering with its function].

In the end, Xi confirmed his doubts, bringing him back to his starting point. The problem wasn’t solved, but at least now he knew the solutions.

‘What’s bothering you?’ A deep, thundering voice sounded in his ears.

Startled, Jake turned around to stumble upon the huge tiger Shere Khan. He was not familiar with the majestic feline, who compared to the lion was usually much more reserved. This was his first conversation with the tiger and his English was surprisingly perfect, as if he had always lived among humans.

‘It’s nothing. As always with the Oracle, I have the solution to my problem, but never enough Aether to implement it.’ Jake lamented with a dejected look on his face.

The lion Mufasa joined the tiger and lay nonchalantly on the dry ground, crossing his front paws comfortably.

‘How much Aether are we talking about? And for what?’ The feline king asked calmly. ‘Maybe we can help you?’

Jake was about to reply that he could manage on his own, not thinking for a second that this pack of felines could solve his financial problems, but he was somewhat taken aback by the lion’s serene demeanor. From the feline’s expression, if it was just an Aether matter, no problem was impossible to solve.

Yet Jake could not simply accept help from these animals. Even if they had the resources to help him, his pride wouldn’t allow it. Taping into his cat’s fortune was a whole different thing. After all, the silly cat had no idea what to do with his Aether other than to sit on it greedily like a dragon brooding over his treasure.

‘We’re talking about billions of points.’ Jake evoked vaguely to dissuade the lion. It was also a way for him to probe the depth of the Aristocats’ pockets.

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After exchanging another glance between them, Shere Khan spoke up this time.

‘You’re probably wondering why we’re offering you our assistance so easily, aren’t you?’ He pointed with a slight smile, which only revealed his long, sharp fangs.

‘That is indeed a question I have.’ Jake admitted honestly. ‘Even after earning all that Aether, I feel like I can never have enough.’

‘Our situation is the opposite.’ The tiger said. ‘Because we only need to devour our enemies and digest their Aether and Soul to evolve, we don’t need all those Aether Skills. Because of our morphology and our natural weapons like our fangs or claws, we don’t need weapons, armor, or machines like you humans do. Our fingers do not allow us to manipulate them easily and we are not used to these technologies. Comparatively, it’s much easier for us to depend on a human to take care of these kinds of things.’

Jake understood their perspective, but he also had a lot to say about it.

‘Why not just buy the Aether Skill Telekinesis to replace your fingers? Why not just familiarize yourself with these technologies now that your intelligence is sufficient? Even if you evolve effortlessly by devouring your victims, I doubt it will be enough. Pardon the expression, but in the end you are just fat cats. You may have gotten bigger and stronger, but your anatomy hasn’t fundamentally changed. Do any of you even have an Aether Skill to speak of?’

‘What for?’ Mufasa growled disdainfully. ‘My claws and fangs are enough to rip my enemies apart. I need no outside help.’

‘No Digestor armor has ever resisted one of my bites.’ The tiger shrugged proudly, snapping its jaw menacingly.

Jake suddenly felt awfully tired as he listened to the various felines extol the greatness of their natural assets. Even his cat Crunch swore

only by his crystal-clear claws and hard-as-steel fur. After a while, unable to take it anymore, he uttered,

‘Please tell me that at least one of you got a Bloodline?’

‘A Bloodline? I am and will remain a glorious African Lion.’ Mufasa roared solemnly.

The other felines soon professed their pedigree one after the other with the same verve. Somewhat dispirited, Jake looked up at the sky, barely holding back from facepalming out of frustration.

‘So if I understand correctly...’ Jake recapped, massaging his temples. ‘None of you have any Aether Skill?’

All the felines shook their heads except Crunch, who briefly raised his paw before hastily lowering it. A mischievous glint flashed in his eye as he snuck a peek at the female leopard a few feet away.

Suspicious, Jake exercised his privilege to access his pet’s information and barely held back a snort when he found out that Crunch had picked up the Grade 2 Aether Encodings of both Charm and Charisma. He also had an Aether Skill that worked exclusively on females and by capitalizing on his Charm, Charisma and natural pheromones could affect their opinion of him, making him more credible and desirable.

‘What a wretched cat...’ Jake cursed inwardly with a disgusted expression.

There was something very alarming about the mere fact that such Aether Skills existed. Although Jake had been browsing the Oracle Store in his spare time, the number of Aether Skills was as broad as his imagination. Depending on their creator and intricacy, thousands of similar Skills could be listed under different names and the Oracle System would simply assign them a rating, a price and some requirements for obtaining them such as the Oracle Rank.

Inspired by his cat's example, Jake specifically went looking for these types of immoral and despicable skills in the Oracle Store and indeed found hundreds of spells and techniques in the same vein. With some trepidation, he discovered that his cat's Aether Skill was rather meek compared to some techniques that could only be described as demonic.

The scariest part was that they still existed in multiple versions: One working on each specific gender, another working on an entire species and others working on all living things.

As Jake read through all of these Aether Skills, he quickly noticed that the more specific the target of these Skills, the more powerful they were for the same price. For example, Crunch's Aether Skill for female felines was twice as effective as the Aether Skill of the same name for all feline species.

It may have seemed harmless and predictable, but Jake immediately understood the terrible implications that this kind of Skill could have. These dark techniques were not Curse Magic, but they shared some of the same traits.

If the number of requirements were high, cheap Aether Skills could generate extraordinary power against the right target. With a knot in his stomach and a niggling feeling of foreboding, Jake rummaged through the long list of Seduction Spells until he found one that chilled him to the bone.

[Bewitchment Spell n°8546 : Seduction spell working specifically on humanoid males between 20 and 30 years old, possessing the following Bloodline(s): Myrmidian Bloodline, Eltarian Bloodline, Beskyrian Bloodline, Kintharian Bloodline. The presence of several of these Bloodlines in the same organism will increase the victim's vulnerability to this spell. Its effects are also enhanced by the caster's

natural attractiveness, Charm, and Charisma. The victims of this spell will feel an unreasonable attraction to the caster comparable to love at first sight, will trust him/her blindly, and will be naturally inclined to believe and obey any of his/her commands, even if they are detrimental to their own person. Extremely difficult to notice and counter and can be cast from a very long distance (100 times the range of the Spirit Body). Once the spell has been successfully cast, its effects linger over time due to the profound neurochemical and spiritual changes in the victim's brain and soul. Aether Cost: 25B pts]

The existence of such a technique came as a shock to him, reminding him for the umpteenth time of the immeasurable danger of the Mirror Universe. The very idea that someone somewhere had specifically created a technique to control him was horrifying.

'Xi, why are there all these techniques? What's the point of creating all these immoral and ethically questionable Aether Spells?'

Jake couldn't help but voice the doubts that plagued him. Now that he knew such techniques existed, he felt insecure. Had the Oracle, the New Earth Government, or even passersby he'd crossed paths with on Thelma shamelessly cast such a spell on him without his knowledge? The very idea could give him nightmares.

[Because it's possible.] Xi answered with a sigh. [The Mirror Universe is vast. As soon as an Aether Spell is created by the holder of an Oracle Device, it is added to the Oracle Store with or without the creator's consent. If it is a low-level spell, the Oracle System can model and customize them on demand for an exorbitant fee, but for advanced skills, the creator gets royalties. The same goes for knowledge or mastery manuals. An Aether Skill involves transplanting a set of Aether Runes into an individual's Aether Code to automate the process, and some techniques are so complex that

their accessibility is limited. They can also be ripped from an enemy and marketed once the Aether Code has been purified of its unwanted elements.]

‘I see...‘

[Don’t worry. The probability of an Evolver casting such a spell on you is extremely low. Just because a skill exists doesn’t mean there is no way to prevent it. You could, for example, wrap your brain and Spirit Body in liquid alloy permanently to keep your mind from outside influences. It will cost you a permanent mental effort, but it should be within your reach on B842. Having an overwhelming advantage in Intelligence, Extrasensory Perception and Spirit Body will also make it harder to perform these techniques.

[Your True Will is also an excellent countermeasure, although it is limited to the principles and values it was created with. As long as it exists, it will be difficult for such a spell to force you to betray yours or the values you hold most dear. Just keep in mind that some enemies can imbue this type of Aether Skill with their own True Will. Some people and creatures are wicked enough that their deepest desire and ambition is literally to enslave and control others. They don’t really care about their own mental integrity as long as they continue to experience the thrill of manipulating the destiny of the people around them like marionettes.]

As she said these last words, Xi’s tone was extremely serious, and Jake sensed that she was speaking from experience.. Clearly, the original Xi had encountered such individuals before.