

The Oracle Paths

Volume 2: The First Ordeal

Chapter 73 - Farewell

Once the jostling and messing phase was over, a proper line was put in place, each person eagerly awaiting to receive their ten Aether Crystals of welcome. Sophie and Loana were part of this line.

Very few people stood back, contemplating the mob of weak and fearful people so happy to have finally found a lifeline in the worst of their misfortune. Jake understood Sophie and Loana's reactions after the night she had just endured. They were not made to fight.

Especially Loana, who had already lost the fingers of her left hand and withstood more than the nerves of a spoiled young woman of her age could afford to endure. Sophie was a nurse on Earth, and her skills were not to be disparaged, even on B842.

Digestor blood did speed recovery, but some operations still required human intervention. There were bound to be medical personnel living well in Oracle cities who had never set foot on a battlefield.

Jake was surprised, however, to see Amy nibbling her thumb, gnawed by an obvious inner conflict. She wanted to join Cho Min-Ho's faction, there was no doubt about it. After a while and not daring to look at him because she felt guilty, she started to line up. She had found her way.

Feeling his gaze and flushed with embarrassment, Amy still found the courage to come and apologize after a while, aware that she must have looked like a real ingrate.

But to be honest, Jake didn't blame her at all. That she followed him because she thought she had a better chance of surviving was a credit to her. That she preferred to join a larger group on good terms and led by one of her idols was no more objectionable. In the end, they had only known each other for two or three days and their exchanges were limited to a few sentences.

Their paths had only blended together for a short time before they quickly diverged again. If destiny so desired, they would meet again some day, or perhaps not.

When it was Amy's turn to receive her ten crystals and shake Cho Min-Ho's hand, her expression made it clear to everyone that this was the most wonderful moment of her life, which strongly discredited the image of a capable and rational woman he had of her until now. Fanaticism, whatever its object or cause, made humans stupid.

Terry, the farmer, and his wife Maria decided to join the Korean star's fledgling organization, but it was a sensible decision. Terry was handicapped in his legs and absolutely incapable of performing well on his Ordeal. As for his wife, after a night like that, she did not feel ready for further challenges either.

Noticing that a few outsiders had chosen to stay away, his middle-aged bodyguard, with a body as sharp as a leopard, made his way to meet them. He went first to Sarah, who seemed torn between joining them and trying her luck with the Ordeal.

Quite clearly, she didn't care much about this celebrity and therefore only had to weigh the pros and cons between ease or freedom. As

opposed to Amy and the other two women, that night had taught her that she could only rely on herself.

By entrusting her safety to strangers, her life was flipped a coin. Aslael had insisted on it. The good Evolvers were respected, but those with the most prestige and privilege were certainly the Players.

Even if she could join this group and wait until she was more prepared to increase her chances of success, it should not be forgotten that the Ordeal only lasted one day on B842, for at least two months of experiences with the certainty of surviving inside the Cube. In two months, you could learn and master many things.

Many people seemed to forget that this new planet was dangerous, not only in comparison to the Digestors, but in comparison to other aliens and humans constantly fighting each other in an evolutionary race.

Two months ahead, even with an average performance, it was impossible to catch up. By taking part in this First Ordeal, she might emerge the next day as Jake capable of defeating entire groups of Digestors. This would allow her to accumulate Aether at full speed, increasing her advantage.

If she joined Cho Min-Ho's organization, she would be safe as long as no monsters or aliens superior to them appeared. On the other hand, she wouldn't get much Aether. Even if their plan was to prepare them for their First Ordeal, it would take weeks.

Sarah didn't think she had that much time to waste. That's why, when Cho Min-Ho's large bodyguard tried to recruit her in person, she made her final decision and refused.

The bodyguard, far from being offended, approached her bracelet less than a meter away from her, before saying sarcastically.

‘Average Aether: 10.4 pts. That’s not bad, but it’s not enough. You’re making a mistake by refusing our offer.’

‘I’m sure of my choice.’ She coldly confirmed, then ignored it completely.

‘Since it’s your choice, I won’t insist.’ The bodyguard abandoned his polite tactics, then added, ‘My name is Kang Jun. If you ever join our group and serve me well, you’ll be under my protection. Think about it. »

From the way he ogled her cleavage, it was not difficult to understand what he meant by ‘serving’. What made Jake cautious was that he was also able to scan their Aether level.

When Kang Jun came towards him, Jake took a step back, keeping a distance of more than one meter at all times.

‘Oh? You don’t want to get scanned? That’s interesting. »

The bodyguard then took a look at the client under his protection, awaiting instructions on how to proceed. His expectations were disappointed, however. His boss had no intention of creating a conflict for so little.

‘Leave him alone. If he wants to keep his information private, I have no problem with that. Everyone is free to decide their own destiny.’ Cho Min-Ho answered him in a kindly tone, continuing to shake hands with the new recruits.

The truth was that after the first Ordeal, his Oracle rank had been promoted to Rank 4. With this promotion, the Aether scanner unlocked at rank 3 had expanded its range to 10 meters. When Kang

Jun's scan attempt failed, Cho Min-Ho had crept up on them slightly, scanning Jake with his bracelet unknowingly.

The values he read were alarming. 'Average Aether: 21.4 pts, highest Aether value: 38 pts.' Even with the reward of his First Ordeal and his Aether Skill that he was secretly hiding from everyone, his stats were barely higher.

Id Jfcu vft emoor fr fsuzfeu Auovuz md 20 nol, jaov val vaevulo lofol fo 120, vu jmpit vfu crmjv ovfo ovu epw jfl bplo f qmzmr vfare arsulout usuzwovare ar Sozureov. Bpo ad val vaevulo lofo jfl ovfo imj, ovur ovu qfr jfl tfreuzmpl.

At no time did he consider the possibility that someone might have bet everything on intelligence or perception. It was impossible and stupid.

As a precaution, the Korean star took the opportunity to also scan the other recalcitrant people refusing to join his faction. Will and Kyle would have been ideal recruits for his group. Above average levels of Aether, and a willingness to evolve, but not a direct threat to his authority.

However, when he scanned Yerode and Lamine, he broke into a cold sweat. Those two guys were monsters, capable of taking on Kang Jun and Lee Yoon one on one. How many Digestors or aliens did they kill in a few days to accumulate so many Aether? It had taken them a whole Ordeal to reach those levels.

Nevertheless, he wasn't worried. They had their Aether Skills and the rewards of the Ordeal. They just needed to be patient while their organization grew and developed so that his Aether Skill could finally shine.

The recruitment process lasted a good hour, during which Cho Min-Ho handed out the Aether crystals and continued to reassure and shake hands. His two bodyguards watched over those who had refused their offer, and the other members of his faction welcomed their new comrades.

Of Jake's original group, only Will, Kyle, Sarah, and the child named Tim remained with him. With the exception of Will, who had followed him from the beginning, who would have thought that they would be the only ones ready to enter the Red Cube with him? Life was full of surprises.

Once the recruiting phase was over, Cho Min-Ho said goodbye to those who refused, reminding them one last time that they would find him in the Oracle City in the East if they wanted to apply in the future.

Amy, Loana, and Sophie bid them farewell, both relieved and embarrassed to abandon them at the crucial moment. There was no guarantee that they would meet their friends in the Ordeal world, but the fact that they were entering through the same Red Cube ensured that their starting points would be close. The one who performed well could definitely help his allies to do well too.

Amy seemed to want to add a few words, but finally she abstained and left in silence with her two friends. She was not ready for the Ordeal, but she would not forget to whom she owed her life.

Adouz ovu tunfzopzu md fii ovmlu fiaurl frt vpqfrl jvm vft guur
zuhzpaout gw ovu sahomzAMPL dfhoamrl md ovu Oztufi, ovu hwfr
lftr tprul fzmprt ovu Cpgu vft hiufzut hmrlatuzfgiw.

Jake could again make out the pride of felines led by a giant lion that his cat Crunch had joined. Crunch came to him one last time, rubbing his leg while purring. He also ate one last bowl of his

favourite kibble before returning to his new feline friends. They would not see each other again until after the Ordeal.

Jake then turned his gaze to the gigantic ruby-colored cube towering over them with apprehension. It was their turn to enter the structure. It was time to face the unknown, and overcome the Ordeal that the Oracle had prepared for them.

Failure was not an option. Neither was simple victory. He had to be the best. Seeing the determined and eager eyes of Yerod and Lamine, he knew it would not be easy. Among thousands of Earthmen, fighters like these, there were bound to be many more. And yet, it would be up to him to surpass them.