

The Oracle Paths

Volume 2: The First Ordeal

Chapter 89 – Exchange of information

‘Teaming up?’

Jake and Kyle peered at each other for a second, pondering the idea. It was definitely better to have a few allies watching their backs, but the real question was whether or not they could trust these two complete strangers.

‘What do you mean by teaming up?’ Jake asked seriously, trying to clarify the proposal. ‘We don’t know each other. How can we trust you?’ »

‘It’s simple. It won’t be necessary.’ Lu Yifeng answered without hesitation, having clearly thought about it beforehand. ‘Before we get to know each other better, the first step is to make use of one another. If possible without harming each other. For example, by exchanging information.’ »

‘Oh... it’s an honest proposition. But what makes you think we have interesting information, or even that we’ll tell the truth and vice versa?’ Kyle stepped in, pessimistic about the chances of such an alliance working.

‘The Oracle. As long as you activate a Path in order not to be manipulated, you’ll be able to avoid the main pitfalls. You can’t tell if we’re lying, of course, but that would be counterproductive.’ »

Kyle turned slightly red with shame, suddenly feeling like an idiot. Since becoming a Throsgenian, he was having trouble concentrating. The Paths he had activated so far were being ignored. Lu Yifeng's words had just reminded him of his bracelet.

Jake didn't have that concern, but the Prediction function was still fallible. The Oracle, by its omniscient nature, obviously knew whether a person was lying or not, but it would not reveal the answer like that. The Prediction function always served a concrete purpose, which Jake himself had to fulfill. For example, if he wished, 'I don't want to be lied to,' the Oracle would give him a Path that would literally prevent anyone from lying to him.

He had done the test just now for fun. A Path did exist, but it was completely overlapping with the Path to become stronger. Without being a seer, to prevent a person from lying, one had to be either so powerful and intimidating that no one would dare, or be directly able to read or control people's minds. Since the Path existed, this was definitely possible, but it would undoubtedly be a long process.

'All right, let's start by establishing a relationship of trust by exchanging information.' Jake agreed to partner up. 'One question each, what do you say? »

'That's fine by me. We'll leave the first question to you guys as a show of good faith.' Yifeng, as a good prince, let them have the privilege to begin. Lu Yan also nodded her head in agreement. She didn't seem very talkative by nature.

Jake already had a ready-made question in mind:

'What is your Oracle rank?'

‘I’m Rank 3, Private 1st Class, just like my sister.’ The young Asian replied in quick succession. ‘My turn. You’re stronger than us, so why are you only Rank 2? »

Jake frowned, remaining silent for a while before answering. From the beginning he was under the impression that he was weaker than Yerode, Lamine, and the Asian siblings, for the simple reason that his Oracle rank was lower than theirs.

Lamine’s accuracy with a gun and his Aether skill Perfect Sight was extremely impressive, but with hindsight a trained marksman on Earth could probably pull it off as well. Even he, who had never used firearms before his arrival on B842, hit his target every time over short distances thanks to his Agility.

He had begun to change his mind after fighting Yerode in the dungeon. Yerode was a little faster and his technique much better, but the African mercenary had not been able to take the advantage. Jake’s body was awfully resilient and his vitality beyond his expectations.

It took a lot more Aether points to increase his Vitality compared to Strength or Agility. If Jake’s build had been different, he most likely would have won the fight. This meant that his total amount of Aether points was higher than the mercenary.

Now that he was giving it some serious thought, three logical answers came to mind.

The first was the proto-soul of Digestor that he had absorbed. He was certainly not the only one to have accomplished this feat, but most had probably followed the warnings of their Oracle. Besides, it was not without consequences. His character had been irretrievably affected. Considering that 95% of the Aether was lost when

absorbed by the Oracle device, this Digestor alone was worth more than 50 points of Aether. This was not counting the beastly instincts of the creature he had partially inherited.

The second was the slaughter at the farm. That was a sizeable amount of Aether altogether. He doubted that many other humans had had such an opportunity.

The third was his deal with Enya, the pink haired young woman. 100 Red Crystals was enough to make him Rank 3 if he had obtained this Aether by killing Digestors. His experience to pass rank 3 was still only 23,600/100,000. That was 23.6 points of Aether obtained by killing those monsters.

After mentally recapitulating his situation, he realized that his circumstances were in fact exceptional. If he was a book character, he would have thought that The Plot Armor God's blessing was with him.

He then repeated the details of his adventures to the gawking siblings. He was not afraid that this information would be used against him in the Ordeal. Outside, it was even less likely, since he was just a needle in the middle of a haystack on B842. His journey could not be unique on a large scale, and some fortunate ones were certainly even luckier than he was.

'It's absolutely unbelievable. This negotiation with this alien girl was a fluke, but you didn't waste the opportunity. If you didn't have spare firearms with you, that chance never would have come up anyway.' Lu Yifeng praised, realizing that everyone had their own share of opportunities.

‘ Second question. Why does your sister have such a special identity for this Ordeal ? And why a second Blessing ? ‘ Jake raised another question.

Lu Yifeng glanced at his sister, not knowing if he could answer that question.

‘ You can tell them, it’s not really a secret. ‘ The young woman gave him the green light. Her voice was barely audible.

‘ Okay. To answer that question, I’m going to have to explain our circumstances on Earth and thereby give you a bonus piece of information that will change your view of these Ordeals. ‘

Kyle and Jake raised their eyebrows, intrigued. Did Earth have anything to do with these Ordeals ?

‘ First of all, have you heard of the virtual reality game Trial Worlds ?

‘ Lu Yifeng checked out their video game culture before continuing.

‘ Of course I have. ‘ Kyle and Jake responded in one voice.

If Jake, who used to work at a VR center had never heard of such a famous game, he’d be the ultimate idiot. As for Kyle, he was a big consumer of virtual reality games, like the vast majority of mankind in the 22nd century.

Trial Worlds was an unpopular game for cheaters like Jake. The maps were random, never repeating themselves. You had to complete all sorts of missions and puzzles, and these missions required a considerable time commitment. After a while, the map would change. If you died, you would lose all your account progress and you had to start from scratch. A game for hardcore gamers.

In 2106, very few people were still playing it. And if he wasn't mistaken... The game came out in the late 2080s, a few years after the False World War III.

'Now that you mention it, the concept of this game is very similar to those Ordeals.' Jake remarked, doubting it could be mere coincidence.

'You're right. There is a connection. It's a game designed by the government, which they used to recruit potential recruits. Every professional player who performed well on this game was approached for an interview in the past.

'If they accepted the job offer, they had to sign a secrecy clause. Everyone who signed the contract immediately stopped playing and left the professional gaming scene.

'My sister, Lu Yan, is one of those players who was approached by the government. Our parents refused the offer in her place at the time because she was too young, but she had an exceptional talent for this game. When she received her Oracle device like everyone else a few months ago, her Oracle rank was already rank 2, and her seven Aether stats unlocked.'

'Seven?!'

Jake and Kyle were stunned on the spot by the revelation. They only had six from the beginning: Strength for Red, Agility for Orange, Constitution for Yellow, Vitality for Green, Intelligence for Cyan and Perception for Indigo. Jake had been given the Gray Aether option as a gift from Aslael, but that was for items only. Even then, in order to unlock the Aether Status, he had to be promoted to Rank 1.

'That's right. She has the seventh stat. The Violet Aether.'

