The Oracle Paths

Volume 5: The Last Tutorial

Chapter 504 - Lagging Behind

Moments later after Jake finished explaining the Purgatory's features, a new flurry of disbelief swept through the group.

'Let me repeat that a second time and tell me if I'm wrong.' Will said, rubbing his hands together like a merchant sniffing out a sweet deal. 'This Purgatory is a Bronze Artifact that produces 1B of Aether per day for free, can be used as a space ship, troop and machine factories, training facility, private space dimension, offer Soul Glyphs as a reward and all weapons, maps, monsters and scenery etc... inside are considered real illusions. Did I forget something?'

The businessman was slightly out of breath after saying all this in one go, but the twinkle in his eyes conveyed his excitement.

'That's a good summary.' Jake chuckled in high spirits.

'Can we visit?' Lily exclaimed enthusiastically before being rebuked by Daniel with a pat on the head.

'Later. Right now it's just a volcanic desert. I haven't had time to familiarize myself with it. As soon as I do, I'll invite you on a tour.'

After another blank, Enya reignited the conversation with another troubling topic.

'Am I the only one who is concerned about the Aether density of B842?' She asked concernedly.

When she brought up the matter, the faces of the adults present grew noticeably darker. Compared to the Aether density of their Third Ordeal, the current Aether density of 62 was insignificant. The thing was, they had theoretically only been away for one day.

This meant that the Aether density had risen by more than 10 points in a single day. That was a lot faster than before, considering it had taken over a month for it to go from 15 to just over 40.

Although they all felt much lighter, stronger and smarter on B842, this was only true for those who had the Aether Self-Encoding skill. With the exception of Sarah who had just left them, everyone else would see their Aether stats drop from 200 to the current Aether density within a few hours. The only exceptions would be for those who had purchased a higher Grade Aether Encoding for one or several specific stats, but this method would quickly become obsolete or exponentially expensive.

For those who had chosen to retain their Fluid Core or had an epiphany similar to Jake's, perhaps they would be able to store a considerable amount of Aether in their Aether Soul Core or cells, but this energy would only be usable to replenish their body or spam Aether Skills without having to draw Aether from their environment through their Spirit Body.

As a leader, Jake was keenly aware that this was a problem he needed to solve. Thanks to his Myrtharian Body passive, his comrades were not limited in their Body Stats growth, but their Aether Stats were lagging behind.

In fact, even their Body Stats were not keeping up since they did not have the associated Bloodline Skills like Accelerated Healing or Heat and Radiation Control. These two Skills boosted considerably his training speed.

Compared to his current Oracle Status, his companions were indeed a bit lacking...

[AETHER STATUS:]

[Strenght(S): 626.2 points] (324.7|626.2)

[Agility(A): 596.5 points](315.3|596.5)

[Constitution(C): 632.5 points] (333|632.5)

[Vitality(V): 618.7 points] (329.8|618.7)

[Intelligence(I): 654.1 points] (426.6|654.1)

[Perception(P): 715.5 points] (341.4|715.5)

[Extrasensory Perception(EP): 768.3 points] (400.2|768.3)

[Aether Core: 312 points] (191|312 pts)

[BODY STATUS:]

[Physique: Silver Myrtharian Body lvl3]

[Height: 2.71 meters] (2.54|2.71m)]

[Weight: 742kg (491|742kg)]

[Strength: 248 points (215|248)]

[Agility: 125 points (101|125)]

[Constitution: 267.4 points (235.2|267.4)]

[Vitality: 256.1 points] (228.5|256.1)]

[Intelligence: 179.8 points] (154.9|179.8)]

[Perception: 174.6 points] (167.5|174.6)]

[Aether Soul Core : Lvl 5 : Can contain up to 5M Aether points. Amplifies mental attacks, Intelligence, and Extrasensory Perception by 50% when the Soul and Spirit Body are merged with it. In addition to protecting the Soul, it can be considered a proto Soul Artifact. As it evolves and becomes imbued with the thoughts of its host, it will develop its own abilities.]

[SOUL STATUS: Myrtharian Soul lvl 3(Intermediate Heat, Earth, Radiation and Metal attributes), 4 Soul Glyphs: A Fish in Water, Apex Predator, Extreme Diver, Harbinger of Chaos.]

[Spirit Body lvl17(15|17) (Ghost): Its density is such that the Spirit Body begins to have tangible effects on the physical world and can temporarily separate itself from its carnal envelope. Out-of-body journeys are now possible, but keeping in mind that in this form the soul is extremely vulnerable and the physical body abandoned in a state of clinical death. The soul is now partially resistant to heat and radiation and can extract a portion of the energy it contains.]

[True Will: 2 points.]

These Stats were absolutely normal. With the advancement of his Myrtharian Bloodline to level 3, all his Skills had moved up a notch, including Accelerated Growth as well as Aether & Soul Tribute. Concomitantly, Accelerated Decline which was triggered by negative emotions had been nerfed.

Aether & Soul Tribute in particular now made no distinction regarding the strength of his opponents and thus he could slaughter any type of enemy, weak or strong, to become stronger by absorbing a tiny portion of their Aether and Soul.

The changes around this Bloodline Skills explained most of the tremendous gains of the last few days, but more so of the last few hours. Not counting the absurd amount of parasites he had wiped out,

his victory over 4 Inquisitors and his survival also 'perceived' as a victory over Nylreg were largely accountable for these changes.

[Just remember not to use Aether and Soul Tribute against the Digestors.] Xi admonished him, as she sensed the dangerous thoughts running through his mind. [You learned this the hard way with the previous Ordeal's Corruption, but the Digestors' Corruption is much more insidious. Your Bloodline isn't strong enough to purify their Aether.]

Jake shuddered at her remark. He had actually been considering slaughtering a couple of Digestor hordes just now to boost his progress. He knew she was right, though, and he promised her he wouldn't do anything stupid.

Shifting his attention back to the Aether Stats issue of his comrades, he briefly racked his brain before selecting two viable solutions.

The first was to give his Blood Essence to his friends so they could acquire his Bloodline with an Aetherist's help, but this was not a quick fix. In addition to being detrimental to his health, it would slow down his progress considerably.

However, this solution was not completely out of the question. With enough heat and radiation, he could now recover extremely quickly. By drawing on his Blood Essence sparingly, he could produce a dose every two-three days without any long-term effect on his health and performance. He would still lose almost a month to provide a sample to each of his comrades.

The second solution was to acquire the technology for various higher grade Aether Encodings.

Each of these Encodings would take up a slot on their wristband and they could unlock an additional Encoding slot with each promotion in

their Oracle Rank. Because Jake carried almost 30 tons of liquid alloy, he currently had over 60 Encoding slots available.

This solution was much more realistic and simple to implement provided they had enough Aether, which given their excellent performance during the previous two Ordeals should not be a problem.

Now it was just a matter of sharing the idea with the others.

'Did any of you acquire any Aether Encoding different from the 7 main stats or of higher grade?' Jake inquired out of the blue. 'I think it's time to stop being individualistic and be a little honest. We're going to need these Encodings to attract, motivate and nurture the new members. You don't have to hand them over, but we need to know who has them for our future needs. Of course, everyone will pay for the Aether Crystals they need.

'I'll start. No Aether Encodings except the Grade 1 Sharpening and Hardening Aether.'

There was a new silence with some self-conscious glances exchanged, but eventually a first volunteer decided to make his mea culpa.

'I have the Grade 2 Strength and Agility Aether Encodings.' Vincent calmly confessed. 'My Water Elf Bloodline and fighting style requires good speed and dexterity, as well as decent strength to support my movements. Because I'm light, I've been able to do without the Grade 2 Constitution Aether until now.'

'I have Grade 2 Strength Encoding too, but I also have Grade 2 Constitution Encoding.' Kevin admitted with an expression full of regret. 'If I had known you had it, I would have taken the Grade 2 Vitality Aether instead...'

Once the confessions began, the misgivings crumbled and everyone started to disclose their trump cards. Well, at least the ones that could benefit the group.

'I have the Grade 1 and 2 Luck Aether Encodings.' Tim said to no one's surprise.

'I have Grade 2 Strength, Penetration and Hardening Aether Encodings.' Daniel added right after. 'The first one is for supporting the recoil of my firearms, the second one is similar to the Sharpening Aether except that it is used to enhance ammunition, while the third one can be used to enhance bullets as well as strengthen the weapon itself and works on any type of non-living object. If it is used on a living thing, it will become abnormally rigid. I don't recommend it.'

Lily, and the two sisters shook their heads apologetically. The first girl had spent all her points in Aether Skills, while Enya and Esya could convert the surrounding Aether into Fire and Light elemental particles to feed their Mana Core. It was an organ similar to an Aether Core, but much more specialized.

The Egaeans had dedicated meridians to supply this Mana to their cells, thereby strengthening them over time. Each elemental mana had different effects on their host, but in general all Body and Aether stats would be enhanced, albeit in the guise of a bonus.

For example, Enya's Aether stats currently looked like this:

[Sozurevo(S): 100(+105)nmarol]

[Agility(A): 100(+38)points]

[Constitution(C): 100(+67)points]

[Vitality(V): 100(+65) points]

[Intelligence(I): 100(+76) points]

[Perception(P): 100(+34)points]

[Extrasensory Perception(EP): 100(+101) points]

[Fire Light Core: 213points]

By the end, putting everything together, they came out with 6 different Grade 2 Encodings, namely the Grade 2 Strength, Agility, Constitution, Luck, Penetration, and Hardening Aether Encodings. Will would seek out the ones they were missing through New Earth, while Jake would try to get Grade 3 Encodings from Cekt Mogusar.

For despite the appeal of Grade 2, it was already practically obsolete.. Grade 2 Aether only allowed them to max out their stats at 1000 points instead of 100, but alas, that would be the Aether Density of the next Ordeal if the current pattern were to continue.