The Oracle Paths

Volume 5: The Last Tutorial

Chapter 507 - A Real Body

The first thing he did was to connect his mind to the Purgatory to activate the Purgatory Dream Feature. In the blink of an eye, his entire Floating Island disappeared, replaced by a telluric world covered in dark ash and scarred by multiple rivers of lava pouring out of the earth's bowels like overflowing manhole covers. As for the sky, it was devoid of stars, in a sad and desolate blackness.

Jake quietly observed his surroundings and noticed that he was alone. The felines had not followed him inside. Thinking about it, he realized he hadn't willed it.

On Yotai Shien 3, the Purgatory was still a Fluid Artifact, and some settings had been set by Nylreg so that everyone nearby would be sent back inside if activated. Even after Jake stole the artifact, some of these settings persisted.

By the end of the Ordeal, what was once a custom Fluid Artifact had been converted to an Aether Artifact and reset to eliminate Nylreg's influence. The original features of Sigmar's Fluid Artifact had been retained, however.

Jake walked around his 'territory' for a bit and was amazed at the seemingly omnipotent feeling he got from that place. If by default the Purgatory appeared to be a favorable environment for his organism, albeit nonsensical, he could change it with a thought.

Closing his eyes, he visualized a snow-covered mountain and a mountain identical to the one he imagined arose from the ground before his eyes. With another thought, the rivers of lava froze, then turned into melted chocolate. Tempted, Jake dipped his finger in the chocolate and carefully brought it under his nose, then licked a tiny drop with the tip of his tongue.

'It smells like chocolate, tastes like chocolate, but...'

Jake swallowed and did feel his stomach fill up, yet his Oracle Status failed to detect anything in his stomach other than a shapeless mass of Aether formed by multiple Runes. That chocolate taste was only in his head.

'Yet the food in Nylreg's Purgatory was real.' He muttered with puzzlement.

He soon found out what the problem was, though. Chocolate was not present in the database contained in the artifact. He was too lazy to memorize the entire database, so he left the menial task to Xi, who was far more adept at procedural work than he.

After a while she popped up in front of him in her holographic form, a complicated expression on her face.

'The database is relatively complete.' She summarized succinctly. 'Almost every possible type of environment has been correctly recorded, which is to be expected from a well-traveled Fluid Grandmaster like Sigmar. I suspect, however, that the Grade 4 Aetherist Nytisus who modified it supplemented it with his own experiences. As for the flora and fauna, once again it is fairly complete but limited to that of the Seed World of your Third Ordeal. Nytisus has once again completed the list by referencing a wide variety of Digestors as well as the creatures and plants that have impressed him the most during his life. Food, weapons, clothing,

materials etc... same story. This is once again limited to Sigmar's experience or Nytisus's. '

Why, do I get the feeling you're moved?' Jake raised an astonished eyebrow. He found it hard to understand why Xi was so affected by such an ordinary report.

Xi remained silent for a long minute before answering,

'Because here I could have my own body.'

Jake gasped in disbelief at this shocking revelation. He hadn't considered this possibility, but if it were possible to bring his fantasy to life, Xi could indeed create a tangible illusion of her body inside the Purgatory.

This body would be insubstantial and would not be able to leave the confines of the Purgatory, but inside it would be just as real as any other individual. This was something he had already been able to verify with the chocolate.

Of course, all this would cost Aether. Once the Dream was created, it would continue to exist even in Jake's absence. By default, the billion Aether that the Purgatory generated each day was enough to power the Dream of a 10km radius dimension, but if he had fun simulating energy-intensive scenes or scenarios, he could quickly exhaust that capital.

Adding a mountain of snow or converting lava into chocolate, for example, had already wasted over 100M Aether points. That was already 10% of what the artifact could produce in a day, and if he didn't reduce the size of the Purgatory Dream to reduce the maintenance cost, he would be forced to completely disable the artifact for at least two hours if he refused to pay the difference.

It was clear, though, that for Xi all these financial details meant nothing compared to the possibility of getting a real body. And Jake was far too attached to his Oracle AI to disappoint her. As cheap as he was, he couldn't deny her this opportunity. Especially since he was curious to see how it would turn out.

But it wasn't time yet. To be exact, it was likely to be expensive in Aether. Not being in the database, Xi's body would be entirely supported by the accuracy and stability of her visualization. Even for a high-powered AI, this would be a challenge.

No, the real solution was to learn how to enrich the database, but again he had the feeling that adding a specific human was not that simple. The animals and plants listed were completely filled in with their genetic code, their chemical composition, their Fluid Core or Aether Core and Runes ect... There was no detail missing.

In fact, with all this information it was even theoretically possible to make them from scratch from the Aether by strictly following the instructions. Therefore, it was not exactly wrong to say that inside the Purgatory these illusions did exist.

'It's not urgent, don't worry.' Xi hastened to reassure him before returning to her professional self. 'What you need to do first is to make the Bronze Artifact yours. Fluid Artifacts are made from the amalgamation of one or more Fluid Cores, but after the post-Ordeal modifications made by the Oracle System, these have been converted into Aether Soul Cores. This is a material resembling the Soul Stones of your Second Ordeal, which are none other than the crystallized energy of the Spirit Body of Zhorions who died in the past. In other words, these Soul Stones were naturally imbued with the energy and will of their original soul. Since Zhorions are a mental oriented species, their Bloodline was expressed primarily through their Soul

and Spirit Body. Even if they lost their body, their actual power would not be greatly impacted.

'Your case is different. You have only just awakened your Will, and you only know one Soul Spell. On top of that, this Soul Spell is not a Bloodline Spell. You have to do it manually every time and it's not instinctive. Your Bloodline has some hybrid skills that could be called Soul Spells, like Aether and Soul Tribute or Accelerated Growth and Decline, but they are conditional on your mental state and your victories. If a Soul Stone were to be condensed from your soul, it would be these Skills that an Evolver would temporarily obtain from drawing in its Soul Energy, but it would also be affected by your mental state at the time of their creation and the True Will within.

'What you need to do is assimilate this Purgatory into your Spirit Body and keep it soaked in it for as long as necessary so that the Aether Soul Cores inside are imbued with your Will. Since Nylreg's influence has already been wiped out, this should be pretty straightforward, but since your mind and True Will are still in their infancy, it will take some time to strengthen this link to a satisfying level. Eventually, it could allow you to do like Nylreg by commanding the Purgatory remotely with your mind, but most importantly avoid having it stolen from you. In this respect, Nylreg was indeed a beginner. He may have been strong as a Digestor and Fluid Grandmaster, but he was never formally trained despite his father's efforts. Sigmar himself didn't learn all of these skills until after he received his Oracle Device.'

Jake calmly digested all this knowledge, then probed,

'Wouldn't it be better to simply set up an encrypted password or security key to make the artifact unhackable? I can't believe that such

advanced technology could be used against me so easily. Even my computer is more secure.'

Xi chuckled wryly before replying with an exasperated look,

'Some people have tried, but believe me, once the mind gets past a certain level it can do amazing things. Even though the Purgatory is an incredibly advanced technology, it's still a bunch of Aether Soul Cores amalgamated together. All of the Aether Runes dictating its operation can be considered a very long computer code with its advantages and disadvantages. Adding a physical password wouldn't do much good, since the complexity of your Soul and Spirit Body are the best protection. Whether it's your Spirit Body or your Soul, they are composed of trillions of Aether Runes, which are constantly recombining with your every thought. No computer can compete with that.

'The best Aetherists have a good understanding of the Soul and the Aether Runes that govern its workings, but very few have the guts to tamper with it. You saw this with Cekt Mogusar, who was not at all confident in his ability to remove Accelerated Decline from your Myrtharian Bloodline without causing problems elsewhere. Still, there are Soul Spells that are designed to create additional layers of security. True Will may be considered one of them, but there are plenty more.'

'I understand...' Jake sighed defeatedly. 'Basically, this Purgatory will obey me at the drop of a hat, even remotely as long as an enemy with a stronger mind than mine doesn't erase my influence. Unless I learn some defensive Soul Spells intended for this kind of situation.

' Precisely.'

'Then I guess I just have to hit the ground running...'

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'It's done.. From now on, the Purgatory is truly mine.