

The Oracle Paths

Volume 2: The First Ordeal

Chapter 114 – Appearances can be deceptive

Just a minute after Jake, Lu Yifeng and Kyle, who hadn't said a word for a while, left the cantina, Lu Yan suddenly straightened up, leaving the bench and table on which she was faking her blackout.

With a completely different expression and under Miya's stunned gaze, who could barely move, the young woman walked with a relaxed step towards Lutex, whose eyes showed nothing but terror. But it wasn't her he was looking at.

Ignoring the direction of his gaze, Lu Yan approached him with the feline gait of a cheetah approaching its dying prey. Throughout the action, Miya contemplated the young woman's behavior, unable to decide how to react.

Once in front of Lutex, whose consciousness was beginning to blur, Lu Yan took the chubby and sweaty face of the dying warrior in her hands. For a brief moment, she seemed to show a brief surge of compassion and the candor that characterized her, then the next second her face changed radically.

An icy coldness replaced the softness of her features, her gaze as apathetic as that of a reptile. Her hands slipped slowly down the partially slit throat of the potbellied gladiator, and after caressing it for a brief moment, pressed it down with her ten fingers.

If Miya could see the young woman's face, she would have noticed that a blue and violet glow pulsed behind her pupils, like an inferno taking with the help of the wind. The indigo glow slowly transferred to her fingers like an invisible flow of energy. When it passed from Lu Yan's fingertips to Lutex's compressed throat, the paralyzed Lutex began to tremble, his eyes suddenly bloodshot. His panic was overwhelming.

The blood that until then had been flowing to his brain through his intact carotid arteries suddenly began to stagnate in the middle of these arteries, preventing his brain from being supplied with oxygen.

The jugular veins responsible for making the blood flow down from the skull to the rest of the body instead continued to circulate the blood it normally contained. In a few seconds, Lutex's brain was drained of blood, his red and congested body containing what little blood it had left. The gladiator stopped trembling and his gaze went blank.

When Lu Yan pulled her fingers from his throat, his head dropped back to his chest now that there was nothing to support it. He couldn't have been dead.

As inexpressive as ever, Lu Yan collected the impressive amount of pure Aether that had just escaped from the body. Likewise, she returned to the corridor leading to the Thermal Baths and executed the gladiator still alive inside in the same manner. Only then did she return to the cantina to be with Miya.

'Wh-what have you done?! How is this possible?! Lutex shouldn't have died by your hand!' Miya suddenly howled in a rage. The symptoms of her cyanide poisoning seemed to have completely disappeared.

‘Oh? I see we’re getting better already...’ Lu Yan commented with a benevolent smile that gave the young woman a cold sweat.

‘Answer my question!’

Lu Yan simply took a model’s pose, hip on her side and akimbo hand on her hip, while she passed her other hand through her hair with the condescending smile of a queen.

‘But it’s quite simple, my dear... The same way you thought you were fooling Jake and my brother.’

‘Oracle Cloaking?!’ Miya blurted out, refusing to believe it was possible.

Lu Yan raised a confused eyebrow when she heard Miya’s answer, which made Miya realize that she had just revealed crucial information that the person opposite didn’t know.

‘No, nothing so far-fetched...’ The pretty Asian girl dismissed the proposed hypothesis with a wave of her hand. ‘I don’t need an Oracle to know a liar when I see one.’

‘What do you mean? My cover was supposed to be perfect. None of you can beat my Oracle Cloaking and my acting was flawless. I even controlled my arteries and breathing to simulate intoxication symptoms. I even consumed a small amount of cyanide to make my performance believable.’

In response, Lu Yan emitted a disdainful sneer, a hand over her mouth in a falsely bashful gesture.

‘I admit that your acting was excellent.’ She gave her credit for it with a nod. ‘But it was the only thing that was right. My brother is too simple-minded to pay attention to all those details. That’s why

I'm staying with him. He thinks he's protecting me, but I'm watching him.

'Jake is different. I can say with certainty he's the most dangerous man in this Ludus, but he has a crucial problem. He's antisocial and focused solely on survival. Despite his desire to grow stronger, he's still naive. He has placed too many filters on his Oracle, preventing it from acting optimally. His morals are holding him back.

'He probably unconsciously noticed many things wrong with the current situation. The frightened look in Lutex's eyes, and the place he was staring at. Or the fact that, despite his state of agony, none of the absent Players, who undoubtedly assisted or participated in the plot, rushed to get the kill.

'A victory against the Ludus' rank 5 combined with a huge amount of Aether on his corpse, which Player who cooperated to poison them could have resisted such a temptation? Of course, there are other details that made me think about it, like some of your micro expressions or simply your Status. '

'My Status? But I never gave you permission and we've never been in physical contact except when...'

'Exactly. When I helped you up, I briefly grazed your bracelet with mine. 'Lu Yan nonchalantly confirmed.

' But that's not enough! You need my permission to view my data. ' Miya vehemently contested, refusing to believe she was fooled so easily.

'And I got it. You just didn't realize it. »

Miya frowned heavily trying to remember when she might have made such a blunder. Regrettably, she racked her brains in vain. Impossible to determine when she had committed such a mistake.

‘You won’t find out. I simply used the Violet Aether to connect my Aether to yours, then my Blue Aether to control your brain for a few milliseconds. For a very brief moment, too brief for you to remember, you gave me that authorization. Rudimentary Mind Control enabled by an overwhelming superiority of my Intelligence stats and the manipulation of my Aether. ‘

The skinny woman’s face decomposed as she heard her explanation. The thought of having been totally controlled for a short time was terrifying.

‘One last question. ‘Miya asked slowly, with a gloomy face. ‘Why didn’t you appear in my Oracle Path? I had the Oracle Cloaking so I wouldn’t appear in yours, but you didn’t know what it was at the time. You’re not the only one who can read micro-expressions. ‘

The deadpan face of Luyan hardened slightly when she heard the remark, but she immediately relaxed and soon regained her relaxed composure.

‘You’re right, I didn’t know and I still don’t know what this is all about and how you got this privilege. But in my case it’s very simple. My Oracle Rank is Rank 4, or if you prefer Corporal. »

‘Corporal? It’s just one rank higher than mine, why is there such a difference? ‘Miya said with doubts.

‘Because it’s the first rank with real authority. AS in a conventional army on Earth, a Private 1st class has no authority over a Private 2nd class, just as a Private 2nd class has no authority over recruits.

They are merely honorary titles marking advancement but have no command authority whatsoever.

‘That changes with rank 4. Corporal is a non-commissioned officer rank. Even on Earth one is empowered to command units. Here the Oracle rank doesn’t allow me to control those with a lower Oracle rank, but it does allow me to shield my existence from their Paths. There are a few other perks with the title, but I don’t see why I should tell you. ‘

Far from being frightened when she discovered that Lu Yan’s Oracle Rank was superior to hers, Miya sighed with relief. It was much less horrible than dealing with a power you couldn’t do anything about.

Maybe Lu Yan could scan her Aether from a greater distance or control her mind for a split second if touched, but that just meant she would have to be more careful.