

The Oracle Paths

Volume 1: The Oracle

Chapter 13 – Expectations and reality

His first reaction seeing the content of this mission was to ask Xi if the Coaching ability could joke. Of course, the answer was negative. The Coaching missions were always considered as great opportunities by the Oracle. It would be a regrettable mistake to ignore them in the long run.

Holding eye contact or doing push-ups were more like daily challenges than real missions. They were beneficial to him, but they were simply trying to push him out of his comfort zone. Encouraging him to become a better version of himself.

According to Xi, Missions with a defined objective were different. They concerned his future. Prediction couldn't tell him to what extent they would be relevant in the years to come, but they definitely couldn't be tossed aside.

One main rule of the Oracle was that the purpose of its existence was to serve the interests and ambitions of his owner. It could have other secret agendas but this one rule couldn't be broken.

Then what did all this mean? Was the person that would enter his true soul mate or was it someone so important for him that it should assuredly be treated as such? Regardless of the truth, he couldn't fail this mission.

However, Jake had butterflies in his stomach right now. If it was his soul mate, he could only assume she would be super-hot. He couldn't describe with certainty the ideal girl of his dreams, but she should be a ten out of ten.

It didn't matter whether she had white, black or blue skin, she had to be cute, with beautiful long hair, big breasts, and nice bottom. She should have a thin athletic

body, but still look feminine. Of course, she would also have perfectly smooth skin. If she could also be intelligent but not too much, obedient but with just what is needed of temper, and at last share the same hobbies as him...

Damn, it was so contradictory just to imagine it. Could such a girl really exist? Men fantasized about such women because they couldn't exist. It wouldn't even be a good thing for such a person to exist.

She would be destined to be toyed by the lucky man that would capture her heart. Strong and smart, but submissive, loving but not jealous, devoted but not possessive. An absurd life, whose ambitions and dreams would have been sacrificed in the name of love.

Ir hmrluypurhu, val lmpiqfou, ad lvu ukalout, jfl tudaraoui w rmo f jmqfr ovfo hmpit gu dfroflaxut fgmpo. Al dmz Hfzzw frt val luuqareiw tuduhoasu A.I, val lmpiqfou jmpit nzmfgfiw gu suzw tallaqaifz om ovu mru dzmq val uknuhofoamrl. Tvu zufi ypuloamr jfl om jvahv nmaro.

Indeed, his instincts were sharp for once. His 'soul mate' was nothing like the beautiful babe he was expecting for. When the new customer walked into the VR center hall, or rather rolled, Jake almost got a fright.

Yes, it was a young woman early twenty-something. But, damn! She was so ugly! If not for the mission reminder, he would have probably failed right from the start. He was not the kind to be mean or disrespectful based on appearance, but there was something repulsive with this girl.

In any other situation, he would have served this customer with his most apathetic look, maybe a slight smile. It would have been a relief for both of them. He didn't have to fake his attitude and she wouldn't have felt judged. That was how handicapped people wanted to be treated most of the time.

They wanted their handicap to become accepted and seen as something normal, but at the same time, they would rarely laugh if you tried to joke openly about it.

Very few of them would be able to mock themselves. The reason was that their greatest complex, their deepest dreams, would often be related to their handicap.

It was not unusual to hear paralyzed people dreaming about walking, running or biking. An armless person would be a hardcore basketball fan, a mute would dream of becoming a superstar singer. It was the very definition of a human being to lust after what couldn't be obtained.

This young woman was lying in a wheelchair. Her legs looked like hairless chicken drumsticks. It was not just some stumps, but more like if the legs had stopped growing midway. If you had seen how ugly could be a nestling chick at birth, you could probably relate.

She suffered from grave scoliosis, making her spine strangely twisted to the left. If it was the only asymmetrical detail it would have been fine, but she was as flat as a chopping board and her nose warped to the right this time.

Her skin was not smooth at all. It appeared to be callous, rough like some badly made cow leather. She was obviously younger than him, but her skin was already showing early signs of wrinkling. Her long wavy hair was white like snow. Though, not the beautiful winter snow you imagined, but rather the one after someone peed on it. It was hard like straw but thin like the hair from an old hag.

Damn, she was truly ugly!

Id ovuzu jfl lmquovare zufiiw praypu ovfo hmpit zutuuq oval lmqguz tulhzanoamr, ovfo jmpit gu vuz uwul. Svuvft tadduzuro hmimzut uwul. Tvu iudo uwu jfl f tuun qfzaru gipu jvaiu ovu zaevo mru jfl fquovwlo-hmimzut. Io jfl bplo f tuofai, gpo Jfcu vft rusuz luur lphv uwul. Io jfl urmpev om hfohv val foouroamr.

Despite her terrible appearance, her eyes were full of spirit. She didn't seem to care about how he scrutinized her, as if she had long been used to the reactions her physique could trigger. She determinedly moved her wheelchair to his reception desk.

Remembering the mission and Xi's warning, Jake got a hold of himself, acting as if it was his cousin in front of him. Fortunately, it was not so hard. As an introvert, it would have been impossible to act normally before a top model, but with a woman like this... It was effortless.

'Hello young lady, what can I do to help you?' He asked with a friendly smile.

The disabled woman stopped an instant slightly disconcerted. There was something off with this receptionist attitude. It was unlike anything she was used to. Where was the condescending look full of disdain or pity? It was almost as if he didn't care. Almost.

She owed her cursed appearance to the False Third World War. Her parents lived on the outskirts of London when the city was nuked. Not even fifteen kilometers away from the capital. They had seen the weird multicolored light, listened to the frightened screams reverberating from afar. The couple didn't evacuate immediately. As many ignorant people, they just waited, staying comfy at home.

Then they watched how a military bomber flew above them to finally drop the nuclear bomb that would destroy their future. The couple was not in the impact zone, so they survived just fine.

However, as communications were cut off for a time, they waited again for official instructions from the authorities. This waiting forfeited their lives.

The nuclear cloud reached far beyond London's suburb. Because London had a rainy weather, the radioactive fallout didn't spare them. It rained buckets of radioactive water for days and no one could escape this unscathed. When it stopped raining, nuclear dust had infiltrated everything.

When the nuclear winter officially began and her parents were finally evacuated, it was too late. Her father having been exposed to the rain died a few weeks later from global body necrosis while her mother, less exposed, survived a few months.

At this time, she was already pregnant. She lived the last months of her life in a hospital under permanent medical care. A cesarean gave birth prematurely to her daughter. After her mother's death, she was sent to live at her aunt's home.

At this point, the teratogenic properties of the radiations had already caused irreversible damages. She was certainly not the only poor orphan born like this, but not many of them survived with so many complications.

It couldn't be seen from her exterior appearance, but she also had congenital heart disease. Her heart was misshapen, not strong enough to pump blood efficiently. She had to wear support stocking under her clothes to avoid edemas and was easily tired. She also had a very weak immune system that made her easily fall sick.

Her life was a living hell, but she still wanted to find happiness.

However, Jake was not wrong thinking she desired what she couldn't have. In the 22nd century, it was not hard to regrow some limbs by 3D printing her new legs. Scoliosis could also be taken care of. Even her defective heart could be replaced.

However, all this was under the assumption you could pay for it. Those kinds of advanced technologies would definitely not be wasted on a cripple like her. Most of all, her body was very weak. It was unsure if she could endure such a surgery.

'Are you ok miss?' Inquired Jake with a concerned voice, drawing her out of her thoughts.

'I'm fine.' She answered with an almost inaudible voice. Her voice was surprisingly mellifluous and had nothing of the roughness her appearance presumed.

'So, how can I help you?'

'I am here for the qualifying rounds.' She answered sincerely.

'Oh, have you not seen the announcement on the internet? The VRGF competition has been canceled because of the Oracles devices' impact. Too many competitors asked for a deferment.'

She suddenly grimaced as if she was about to dissolve in tears. This VR competition seemed very important to her.

‘Don’t worry, it’s probably just delayed for a few days. The time for people to adapt. To be frank, you are our first customer of the day.’ He explained patiently to her the situation.

She finally calmed down. It was not easy for her to come here alone with her wheelchair.

‘Can I use a VR room then? They should all be free at the moment.’ She asked with her hope renewed.

‘Indeed, they are. I just need a name for the register.’ Jake confirmed.

‘Ruby. Ruby Hale.’
