

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 164 - Weird Feeling

Reappearing to another Orange Cube in an empty corridor, Jake stood still for a moment, his arms trembling.

‘Fuck!’ Jake yelled as he punched the wall to his right.

He was mad as hell. One, he had failed to save the young woman, and two, he had gotten carried away with no direct benefit except a few pieces of information that he could surely have obtained on his own.

Jake was neither an angel nor a Saint, but to see two criminals take a young woman away to **** her without being able to do anything when he had the strength to prevent it was a horrible feeling combining anger at oneself, guilt and feelings of powerlessness.

He was not deluded, he could feel it. If he had tried to control the bodies of Yerode and Lamine with the intention of executing them outside, the drones would have moved in before he could take action, like in a bad remake of Minority Report.

The Oracle drones didn’t need to wait for a crime to occur before making their move. Because of the Oracle’s prediction system they knew from the start when a violent altercation would occur. No matter how hard you thought about hurting or killing someone, as long as the drones let it happen, it meant that you didn’t really have the courage or foolishness needed to take action.

What the Oracle System considered to be violence wasn't clear to him yet, but what was certain was that verbal or psychological violence was not part of it. The only thing that mattered was the notion of physical harm.

Using the mindfulness technique he had become accustomed to during the Ordeal, Jake took a deep breath and calmed down. Now that Yerode and Lamine knew what he was capable of, he could no longer afford to hang around.

As long as his mental faculties remained considerably superior to theirs, Jake was confident that he could control them as he had just done earlier. The important thing was that what he had just done to them, other more advanced Evolvers or Players could do to him in return.

Tvu ojm quzhurfzaul vft hiufziw rmo fjfcurut ovuaz Susurov Sofo mz ovuw hmpit fo iuflo vfsu zulalout gw hmrozmiare ovuaz Auovuz dimj. Jfcu larhuzuiw jmrtuzut jvfo ovuaz Oztufi zujfztl vft guur plut dmz jvur ovuaz qurofi lofol juzu lm imj.

And yet, when he really thought about it, it wasn't really a surprise. The two mercenaries had mediocre intelligence to begin with and the intelligence malus associated with Throsgenian Physique had made them moderately stupid during this Ordeal. They probably only thought about increasing their physical abilities.

Only out of the Red Cube could they have realized what mistakes they had made whether it was out of stupidity or impulsiveness. On the other hand, they had brilliantly accomplished what the Oracle expected of them by poisoning the gladiators of the Ludus and stealing the Myrmidian blood supply.

He didn't know what rewards the two fellows had chosen, but it could only be something good. Yerode and Lamine simply couldn't use it easily in the Ludus unless they had chosen to obtain the Myrmidian Bloodline, in which case the effects wouldn't show up right away, but their progress would be greatly accelerated.

Once again Jake calmly retraced his steps back, taking a multitude of Orange Cubes to finally reach the outside of the Pyramid. He had hesitated to notify the rest of his group, but everyone was in different booths, it would have taken him forever.

The sky above the Black Cube was still full of dark clouds with red lightning, but a rain shower had begun to drum against the translucent walls protecting the Oracle Shelter. It reminded him of the feeling he had at home when he looked out his window at a storm, and for some inexplicable reason it gave him a sense of relief.

There were many things Jake wanted to do right now, but in the end he decided to visit the Mission Halls first. He intended to go out of the Shelter to collect Aether, so if he could get paid at the same time, he wouldn't miss the chance.

There weren't many real buildings in the Oracle Shelter. The two Missions Halls were easily recognizable because they formed a sort of pentagon empty in the middle, in the center of which stood a huge Red Cube comparable to the one in which he had completed his First Ordeal.

Each side of the Pentagon had different symbols on its facade and these corresponded to the two Mission Halls and the three Halls for Civilian, Evolvers and Players respectively. These Halls were connected to each other to facilitate communication between different types of missions and individuals.

An Oracle Mission usually required powerful Evolvers or Players, but occasionally a Civilian with a particular area of expertise might be needed. In this case, being able to get the information to the relevant halls as quickly as possible was crucial.

Tvu hurozfi fzuf md ovu Svuiouz jvuzu ovu gpaitarel jaov ovu tadduzuro eumquozahfi lvfnul juzu imhfout jfl zuifoasuiw lqfii. lo mriw omme f duj qarpoul om jfic fzmprt ao. lo jfl ovu lnfhu jaovar ovulu gpaitarel ovfo jfl eaefroah.

A moment later, Jake was in front of the pentagonal building and ran directly into the vortex in front of him without checking if it was the right Hall. It didn't matter since all the buildings seemed to be connected inside the Oracle Buildings by different transporters.

Once inside, a warm hall greeted him. Varnished wooden floors, burgundy red wallpaper, chandeliers on the ceiling providing subdued light, round tables and an American bar with a multitude of bottles and barrels stored behind reminiscent of a tavern.

The only difference was that this tavern was thrice the size of a football stadium, while the ceiling was high enough to accommodate even the most imposing creatures.

Jake looked around the lobby with curiosity, then decided to go straight to the bar to ask for information. After all, the few people and aliens present didn't seem to want to be disturbed.

The American bar, just like the tables and chairs, had different heights to accommodate all kinds of customers. Unlike the drones he was used to, a real person was standing on the other side of the bar ready to serve.

It was an elderly man with long salt-and-pepper hair wearing an old, shabby leather armour, completely worn down at the sleeves. A long

broken horn in the middle grew from the right side of his skull, curved just enough to give him the charisma of a coat rack.

The base of his nails, or rather his yellowish claws were blackened by dust, but paradoxically the bar was sparkling clean. The barman was actively rubbing the surface with a brand-new cloth in a monotonous gesture, spitting on it from time to time before starting to rub again.

‘Hello, sir... Could you please tell me which hall I’m in?’ Jake asked tentatively.

The old man stared at him for a long time without saying anything, then pointed a long hooked finger in another direction. Jake gazed in the indicated direction and came upon a group of humans coming out of a dark corridor.

Jfcu lyparout frt zuhmeraxut ovu ojm lmitauzl vu vft quo f duj vmpzl ufziauz, gpo ovuzu juzu ovzuu movuz numniu jaov ovuq. Hu zuhmeraxut ovu dazlo mru. lo jfl Waii.

It seemed that the former businessman couldn’t rest either. Or maybe it was in his nature to look for opportunities by building new relationships in places like this.

The two individuals bringing up the rear, Jake had never seen them before. At first glance, they were a woman and a man, both wearing New Earth Government Special Forces uniforms. Their aura, however, was different from that of Alima and Patrick walking in front.

Over their armour they wore long hooded coats and a sort of mask with an opaque visor that made it impossible to see their faces hidden behind. And yet, Jake had a strange feeling when he saw them.

As they got closer, this feeling became stronger and stronger and when the group got in front of him, it became unstoppable. Ignoring the cheerful greetings of Alima and Patrick, he stared at the woman in the mask for a long time, frowning, uncertain as to what he felt.

‘It’s good to see you alive, Jake. Aren’t you even gonna hug your cousin?’ The woman suddenly said as she removed her mask.

Jake’s eyes suddenly widened as he heard this voice he thought he’d never hear again.

‘Anya?’