

The Oracle Paths

Volume 1: The Oracle

Chapter 26 - Agression

Disgusted by the conclusion of the evening, Jake decided to leave without telling anyone. He was so close to kissing Camille and because of his drunkenness he had ruined everything, giving the chance to someone else.

Nevertheless, he wasn't naive for all that. Camille was almost as drunk as he was, but she was not such an easy girl as far as he knew. Thiru, despite his obesity and a more than exotic body odor, had always been the most confident and sociable of their group. Unlike him, Thiru had known Camille for years.

Yet, since all this time, nothing had happened between them. If Jake was angry with himself, he refused to believe that Thiru hadn't premeditated his move from the beginning.

Every time he thought about the fact that Thiru had patiently followed his Path, which had probably kindly advised him to wait for Jake to sabotage himself, he couldn't help but grit his teeth in fury.

If he hadn't left like a tornado without saying goodbye to anyone, he might have pulverized that spice-smelling pile of fat. Naturally, he was mostly ashamed of himself, Thiru being just a scapegoat to protect his ego.

So Jake found himself wandering the sidewalks of New Paris at 5 o'clock in the morning, walking slowly and staggering from time to time. He had already sobered up quite a bit, but a hangover due to dehydration was starting to set in.

At such an early hour of the morning there was not a single person out on the roads, and the lack of moonlight that night made the streets he roamed look ominous and

frightening. Nevertheless, with his bad temper, he didn't give a damn about all this.

If he had been more attentive or a little soberer, he would have realized that the way back was about twenty-five meters shorter, or that the number of buildings jumped abruptly from '14' to '18' on the even side and '13' to '17' on the odd side of the street.

He also failed to notice the hooded individual following him a few minutes away from his home, licking his lips thinking he had found an ideal prey.

Once Jake started rummaging through his pockets looking for the keys to his apartment, he heard the sound of thumping footsteps approaching at full speed. As his blood alcohol level had already dropped during his solitary walk, he somehow managed to react in time.

He stepped aside as he turned around, surprised for a moment by his own dexterity. Within a millisecond he picked up the characteristic shine of a knife. A visceral fear gripped him head-on, the adrenaline rush that followed increasing his level of vigilance and making his heart beat hard enough to raise his body temperature by one degree.

By sheer reflex, he managed to grab the attacker's arm at the cost of being stabbed in the right hip. Out of survival instinct, he had managed to deflect the attacker's blow to a non-vital area.

Unfortunately, he was poorly positioned and could do nothing to stop the momentum of the assassin's charge.

As he fell to the ground, tackled by his assailant, he struck hard with his elbow on the forearm carrying the blade, causing the assailant to drop his weapon with a 'Hmff' of choking pain. Once on the ground, Jake rolled backwards, then in pure rage crushed his attacker's nose with his foot. That was enough to make the attacker let go, giving him the respite he needed.

‘Fuck!’ Jake growled, painfully getting up with his hand pressed against his wound, the knife still stuck in his belly. It bled a lot, it hurt like hell, but he would survive. Only if nothing worse happened, though.

Huffing and puffing like a smoker with terminal lung cancer and fully focused on the killer in front of him, he didn’t notice that they had left the main street. Under other circumstances, he would have recognized the alley where two stray cats had been devoured before his very eyes three weeks earlier. After all, it was only a stone’s throw from his house.

The assailant in front of him had also stood up and cackled like a psychopath despite his deformed nose and the blood coming out of it. He was obstructing Jake’s path, preventing him from leaving the alley and going home.

‘Hahahahaha! Finally, a prey worthy of me! Oh my Oracle, give me the strength to defeat this heretic!’ Psalmodyed the lunatic as he spoke to his bracelet as if it were a sacred goddess.

‘What the fućk is this maniac?!’ Snarled Jake, cursing his bad luck. One, the world was coming to an end, two, he had his One Night Stand stolen by a guy he physically outperformed on every level, and now an attempt on his life?

He was so enraged, that he momentarily forgot that in front of him stood a Serial Killer, wanted in vain by the police force. He was part of a small class of criminals who saw the Oracle’s missions as divine orders.

The great strength of the Oracle bracelets was that in order to promote the best possible evolution of their hosts, the missions and opportunities offered by the Coaching ability were always in accordance with the personal values and objectives, conscious or not, of its owner.

A madman like this serial killer had also received an AI as crazy as he was, behaving like a divine emissary and encouraging him to commit ever more daring and challenging crimes.

Ruefztiull md jvw ovu Ozfhiul vuinut ovuaz vmlol dpidaii ovuaz tzufql, mz guhmqu guoouz suzlamrl md ovuqluisul, qmzfiaow vft rmovare om tm jaov ao. Tvu All juzu rmo hvmlur om lozfaevour mpo tusafrol, mz usur hpzu ovuq md ovuaz qftrull. Qpaou ovu hmrozfzw. Tvu All md ovu Ozfhiu juzu luiuhout om gulo luzsu ovu fqgaoamrl md ovuaz gufzuz.

A rapist would get an AI sharing the same vices, while a pedophile could perfectly receive an AI with the voice of a child, backing him up in every atrocity he would commit.

Between the fear of dying and the excitement of the upcoming battle, Jake could barely feel the pain in his hip. However, he had no idea how to escape from this predicament. If it wasn't for the irrational behaviour of the madman in front of him, he could never have broken his nose so easily.

Still wheezing, he tried to calm himself with deep breaths, looking for a breach in his opponent's guard. The murderer in front of him had pulled out a second knife identical to the one stuck in his hip, presumably overexcited at the idea of a fight to the death against his 'prey'.

The murderer approached him cautiously, one step at a time, whispering obscenities meant to reassure him, as a farmer would do before beheading a hen.

Then came the fateful moment. Ready to get rid of the obstacle in front of him, all of Jake's muscles contracted, his veins doubling in size under the strain. One more step and he would charge like a rabid hippopotamus, ready to clear a path at any cost. After that, all he would have to do was run home, barricade himself in his building and call the police.

That chance never came. As his breathing became more and more jerky from the pressure of failing his dash, a shadow fell on his attacker's skull.

‘AAARRGGHHH!! »

The murderer was screaming his head off, struggling with all his might. The unidentified shadow of about fifty centimeters clung to his neck, lacerating and devouring the pieces of flesh within its reach.

Any fighting will on Jake's part deflated like a soufflé, replaced by a sense of despair out of proportion to his earlier fear. He watched, nailed in place, the so confident assassin being eaten alive by a mouse as big as a bulldog.

But when a geyser of blood splashed down on his face after the mouse had torn out the 'poor' man's carotid artery, he came out of his stupor. Clear-headed again, he took a quick look around him, finally realizing what alley he was standing on.

One nap hadn't been enough to detoxify him from all his alcohol. The walk home had not prevented him from shivering nonstop. Even a criminal wanting his life didn't put an end to his headache. He just ignored it, as he ignored his hip injury.

But the scene from a horror movie unfolding in front of him eclipsed all other feelings. For the first time, he knew what he had to do. Run away? Absolutely not. That monster would immediately fall on him from behind. Stay home? With a carnivorous mutant mouse that had tripled in size in a single month just a few steps away from home? He would rather die now.

[Jake, kill that thing!] Ordered Xi, with a kind of urgency in her scream. [If we don't dispose of it now while it is still busy eating that man, we're screwed!]

Jake's eyes hardened, determination replaced indecision. Weeks of nightmares over a fucking mouse. Did it get a little bigger? And then what? The target would just be easier to nail.

'Either I get out of this alley alive tonight, or I end up in a rodent turd right here.'
' Jake kept repeating to himself, to eliminate the slightest trace of reluctance.

The mutant mouse was now feeding on its victim, paying no attention to Jake, who hadn't moved an eyelash since the slaughter began. The body of its attacker would occasionally twitch from time to time, but the body had already been dead for a long while.

Steady and clenching his teeth, Jake pulled the knife out of his wound, a stream of blood began to flow down his trousers, a small puddle gradually forming at his feet. Gradually, he regained control of his breath and an icy cold composure stifled all his emotions.

The time had come to gamble with his life. Man or mouse, there could only be one.