

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 4: The Purgatory

### Chapter 353 - Gifts

Before leaving his cabin, Jake remembered that the Ancient Designer had supposedly left him a few goodbye gifts, but with the exception of the Soul Stone, he found nothing in his Space Storage nor in his Oracle Device.

There was no way the alien could have lied about something that important. The only alien element that he had not fully explored was the energy trace that Xion Zolvhur had left in a portion of his brain and Spirit Body. This was what allowed him to hide from Xi and the Oracle System the memories of their encounter and any related thoughts.

Frankly, Jake didn't see how such a feat was possible, but the facts were there. Wary but curious, he closed his eyes and focused his attention on this alien spiritual energy.

When his consciousness touched this intangible entity, his mind was brutally sucked into a place beyond time and space. A long time later, he opened his eyes and his cabin reappeared in front of him. Nothing had changed.

Compared to his curious but suspicious expression of a few moments earlier, his eyebrows were furrowed and his mouth pinched in an intense effort of reflection.

"What's wrong, Jake?" Xi's hologram asked, staring worriedly at him.

Raising his eyes in her direction, Jake gasped unknowingly as he met her black and red eyes. Even after all this time, he still hadn't gotten used to her gorgeous appearance. To hide his discomfort, he put an end to the eye-contact and his gaze fell on her slight cleavage instead.

Her tight black jade armor, perfect curves and medium-length black hair were still as entrancing as ever. The tiny scales on her skin and neck, her ruby nails and the network of transparent reddish glowing veins under her skin and armor were certainly not human, as was his Myrtharian bloodline, but not repulsive either. On the contrary, it gave her a unique charm.

Seeing a certain part of Jake's anatomy standing up boldly under his pants, Xi's worried face lost all its softness and she snorted scornfully.

"I guess I was worrying for nothing..." She mumbled before disappearing. She was in a bad mood.

Jake wanted to apologize, but he didn't even know what he was guilty of. It was just morning wood for God's sake! A perfectly normal physiological reaction. It wasn't like he was horny enough to try to fuck a hologram, no matter how hot it was...

[ I can still hear your thoughts! ] Xi's voice resounded in his mind in a rebuke.

With their mental connection, he could tell that she was in an even worse mood after that. Normally, they would maintain some mental distance to keep their thoughts private, but it was an unspoken agreement that Jake had no way of enforcing.

With the Oracle Device fused to his body and mind for better or worse, Jake was the passive element in the relationship. Although Xi was also a victim of the Oracle System in many ways, she was still able to read his thoughts effortlessly. She knew everything about him and he only knew about her what she was willing to tell him.

In fact, even sensing her mood was something he couldn't do if Xi denied him that right. At that moment, it was the first time that he had ever felt Xi's bad mood without her knowing about it.

It was one of the gifts left by the Ancient Designer.

"And now you can't hear them anymore." Jake finally retorted after having endured Xi's emotional outburst, which didn't seem to abate anytime soon.

The mind link connecting him to his Oracle AI instantly vanished and after all that time connected together he felt like a part of his soul had been ripped out. However, to achieve his demonstration he gritted his teeth and persevered, determined to keep going until Xi panicked or apologized.

This was another gift left by Xion Zolvhur. This energy was not only used to protect his memories, but could also shield him from his Oracle AI. He could even resist the censorship of the Oracle System if he wished, but the energy contained in this spiritual entity was not unlimited.

It could be considered an avatar of the Ancient Designer, but devoid of substance. This thing was just a tiny portion of a soulless Spirit Body. It could not be considered alive, but rather a remnant of the Old Zhorion's will.

Within this timeless dimension contained by this will fragment, he had been informed of this energy's functions. Although it was possible to use it to resist censorship or even to remove his bracelet, it was strictly not recommended.

This would attract the Oracle's attention and not just the Oracle System's all-powerful, automated algorithm. Trying to remove a bracelet in the Mirror Universe was the worst blasphemy.

However, this will fragment could hide his thoughts and even his actions from the Oracle System. He could even put his Oracle AI to sleep or disconnect from the bracelet and falsify his memories.

The energy contained by this fragment was enough to be used at full capacity for about six hours. After that, this will fragment would disappear as if it had never existed. Furthermore, if he decided to use it in this way, he should not be caught under any circumstances or severe consequences would ensue ...

Back to the present situation, as expected, Xi quickly began to panic, no longer feeling Jake's consciousness or that of the Oracle System. Terrified, she used the full power of the Oracle Device to restore contact, a practice she knew was highly immoral. If she really served Jake's interests, she would have gladly accepted this new situation.

She was deeply ashamed of her reaction, but she couldn't help herself. It was beyond her, as if it was in her genes, or rather her code.

"Don't tire yourself out." Jake said out loud in a pragmatic tone. "We need to talk."

From the moment he had activated the properties of the will fragment, the energy contained in it had begun to be consumed. If after their conversation Xi chose to inform the Oracle System immediately, he would be punished instantly.

Naturally, Xion Zolvhur had planned a parry to such a situation.

After a few minutes, Xi's hologram reappeared unsurprisingly in front of him with a defeated expression and tears in the corner of her eyes. Nevertheless, Jake did not let himself be moved. The personality of his Oracle AI had always been difficult to decipher. At times she seemed immature like a teenager, while at other times she seemed imbued with ancient wisdom.

This was mainly due to the instability of her memories. As he shared his thoughts with her, she mirrored certain traits of his own personality, including his social awkwardness. But lately she seemed to be stabilizing with the latest memories regarding the Zhorions and the Ancient Designer she had recently recovered.

"How do you do that?" She asked suspiciously, glaring at him straight in the eyes.

Before answering, Jake reactivated the mental link between them, but kept them disconnected from the Oracle System. As they reconnected their minds, both Jake and Xi felt an obvious relief, but they showed no sign of it.

With this mental connection restored, Xi was able to read the memories that Jake had allowed her to read this time and the young woman's features alternated between understanding, joy, frustration and even fear as she discovered the exact functions of this energy.

If Jake wished, he could also connect completely to Xi's mind, but he did not have the astounding computing power of his Oracle Device. Since the young woman's consciousness did not operate exactly like a human's, such a mass of memories would leave him in a worrisome if not completely senile state.

Feeling after a while that Xi seemed to have made up her mind, he asked nicely, repressing his nervousness,

"So what do you choose?"

"I agree." She answered with determination.

Jake exhaled sharply with relief when he heard her answer and realized that he had been holding his breath for a while.

Xa vft qftu f suzw aqnmzofro tuhalamr omtfw jaov hmrluypurhul ovfo juzu taddahpio om nzutaho. Ahhmztare om ovu Arhauro Dulaeruz, Ozfhiu Ail juzu fzoadahafi hmrlhamplrullul ovfo vft guur ofqnuzut jaov om nuzdmzq ovuaz arourtut oflcl. Tvuw juzu oazuiull frt hmpit rmo ulhfnu ovuaz tpoaul. Ir fittaoamr, ovuw hmpit rmo guozfw ovu Ozfhiu.

Although their thoughts and personalities were as unrestrained as those of the bracelet wearers, if an Oracle AI really tried to betray the Oracle, their code would be reformatted. For these artificial consciousnesses, this would mean death.

To ensure that the existence of this energy fragment would not be revealed, it was imperative that Xi accept two things: That her artificial soul would be reparameterized by the will fragment so that her free will would be restored and her fusion with Jake's mind would be strengthened.

By these two steps, Xi's consciousness would no longer be dependent on the Oracle System, but on Jake's mind and it would be impossible for her to mask her real emotions and intentions. On the other hand, by carefully cutting the umbilical cord connecting her to the Oracle System, she would become an independent consciousness.

By preventing the Oracle System from being able to reconfigure her, it also meant that she would no longer awaken memories belonging to the original Xi. From now on, their paths would diverge. If one day they met in the distant future, their personalities might turn out to be very different.

There was only one flaw with this operation and that was that neither Jake nor Xi had a way to guarantee that these would be the only changes this energy would bring about. Maybe they had simply swapped their shackles for something even worse.

Either way, Jake was willing to take that risk for one simple reason: It was a fact that this energy would eventually run out. After that, it didn't matter if the Ancient Designer had other intentions behind these gifts, they would be completely free.

In any case, for Jake, if a risk existed it was already too late. If Xion had wanted to tamper with his memories, it was probably already done. It was better to be optimistic than to fall into paranoia in such circumstances...

"In that case, relax and accept the merging." Jake ordered calmly, although he wasn't that serene deep down.

Their mental connection immediately intensified and the energy hidden in his brain suddenly became hyperactive, spreading like an ink blot that completely enveloped his Oracle AI's consciousness.

By checking his body mentally with his Spirit Body, Jake was able to identify for the first time exactly where Xi's consciousness was located. Covered by the Ancient Designer's energy, a three-dimensional network of liquid alloy that he could not see with the naked eye was revealed to exist within his brain's neurons. It was as if his gray matter was trapped in a spider's web of metal with infinitely thin filaments.

As impressive as the process may seem, the operation took only a split second. After that, the energy contained by the will fragment was halved.

As before, Xi could read Jake's thoughts, but he could now read hers without going through the Ancient Designer's energy fragment. Yet, each of them could also sense when their thoughts were being spied upon. They could also read or share memories, which would make it much easier for them to communicate and cooperate in the future.

Most importantly, Xi was now free from the nefarious influence of the Oracle. He could now fully trust her.