

The Oracle Paths

Volume 5: The Last Tutorial

Chapter 517 - Slum

‘A Dungeon Digester? The hell is that?’ Jake repeated with a puzzled look.

The term Dungeon could connote many things, but not a living creature. A Digester Dungeon would still have made sense in his mind, but he had the hardest time visualizing the opposite.

‘I don’t know.’ The refugee showed for the first time his limitations as an informant, and to his anxious tremors he was aware that he had lost his usefulness after revealing all he knew.

Jake did not hold his ignorance against him. He had already learned more than he expected.

‘Either of you have anything to add?’ He stared blankly at the other refugees in the group in turn, but they all remained silent, including the young woman who had finally calmed down.

‘Very well.’ He resumed in the face of their silence. ‘I have one last question. Whatever your answer, I promise to give you enough Aether to get out of here, but you’ll have to sign an Oracle Contract with me where you promise not to reveal anything about our conversation.’

Upon hearing that they would get enough Aether to leave that place, the three humans’ faces lit up brightly. The other humanoids and the four-legged creature also showed some enthusiasm, although their facial muscles were quite different.

As soon as the balding man leading the group knelt and bowed low, the others followed suit without hesitation, agreeing to sign the contract. Once the latter was signed, Jake finally got to the heart of the matter,

‘Have you ever seen this woman?’ He questioned them coolly while transmitting them the photo of Maeve and her brother through his bracelet.

More than their answer, Jake carefully monitored their body language, looking for any hint of a lie, but he was quickly disappointed. These refugees didn’t know anything.

Al nzmqalut, Jfcu tat rmo gfhc tmjr frt efsu ovuq ovu Auovuz vu vft nzmqalut ovuq. Fasu ovmplfrt nmarol ufhv jfl rmo usur nmhcuo qmruw dmz vaq, gpo dmz ovulu Casaiafrl ao jfl f hvfrhu dmz f dzulv lofzo. Od hmpzlu, ad ovuw nuzlalout ar guare lm hmjztiw, ovuw jmpit dfii gfhc arom ovu lfqu nzuhfzamplrull suzw ypahciw.

The young woman seemed to hesitate briefly as she saw him walk away, but under the pressure of the balding man, she lost her courage and let herself be led by the group toward the Transportation Tower. She had come close to overcoming her fear, but the reassuring attachment to this misfit group had stifled that spark.

Perhaps months later when she relived a similar script she would remember that moment and find the strength within herself to change. But it had nothing to do with Jake anymore. Everyone had their own path to follow and he couldn’t guide everyone.

After this exchange, Jake resumed his exploration of the Outer Shelter and the stench of bodily fluids and feces that he had almost forgotten came back to haunt him. As he strolled along, he got a good look at the lives of those civilians ostracized for their cowardice.

Too cowardly to leave the Shelter to hunt and too poor to live in an Oracle City. Too weak to be of interest to anyone, and generally too stupid to find any other way to get rich.

There may have been a few talents here like Will, who for lack of having met the right people at the right time had missed their chance. But unlike them, Will was a fighter. Jake was convinced that even if they had never met, the businessman would have done his best to survive and thrive. He wasn't a reckless person by nature, but he hadn't hesitated to participate in his first Ordeal, unlike Amy who had failed them at the last minute.

Kyle, Tim and Sarah weren't exactly battle-hardened people when they first met, but they too had the drive to not let themselves be pushed around. Deep down, they had ambition.

Sadly, there were also talented people here whose talents had been seriously devalued after their arrival on B842. This was the case with certain professions like doctors.

Whereas before they were respected in their home world, in the Mirror Universe it was much harder to earn that precious title.

First of all, because magic existed and Light Mages and Healing Spells were not that uncommon among Players with two or three Ordeals behind them. Green Cubes also met this demand for care by providing absolutely flawless healing to anyone who could afford them.

Bpo qmlo aqnmzofroiw, ovuzu jfl mru fgprtfro zulmpzhu mr B842 frt ovu Mazzmz Urasuzlu ar euruzfi ovfo qftu ovulu nzmdullamrl mglmiou: Daeulomz Bimmt.

This precious silver liquid could easily heal most wounds and diseases in record time, including those considered lethal and incurable in the conventional medicine of most worlds.

It was not a perfect panacea either, as the Blood Rank had a direct impact on its effectiveness. Rank 1 and 2 Digestor Blood had miraculous effects on Jake and his comrades before their first Ordeal, but now the effects were far less noticeable.

Because of his very high Constitution and Vitality, not to mention his biomass and the energy contained in his cells which were much higher, the regenerative power of Inferior Digestor Blood was no longer enough. To get the same results, he now needed Rank 6 Digestor Blood or above.

However, this was not a problem for those cowardly Civilians who refused to take any risks. Low-rank Digestor Blood was more than enough to cure them of all their ailments. As for the more powerful Evolvers, they usually had no trouble getting the Digestor Blood they needed.

As he kept wandering, Jake's imposing figure drew many stares, but he tried to ignore them. He saw a few alien children playing together with some kind of worn leather ball, but more often than not they were silent and bony, huddled in front of a tent or makeshift hut built with their belongings.

Periodically, he would also hear muffled cries of pleasure or pain. Mostly of pain. In the Outer Shelter, prostitution was rampant and not limited to beautiful women. Children, men, animals and aliens, there were virtually no moral barriers here and the harsh reality before his eyes was just disgusting. Although he had toughened up over the past few months, the urge to leave this place had assailed him more than once. If he hadn't promised Kyle to save his sister, he might have turned back by now.

Jake didn't want to go into these makeshift brothels where the dregs of humanity were unleashing their darkest instincts, but he realized

that this was his best option. If Maeve wasn't here, that would be great news for Kyle, but if this Bhuzkoc was as vile as they feared, the worst scenarios were to be expected.

Evolvers like Grosh, there were hundreds of them teeming in this slum area. Without intervening, he had already witnessed several similar scenes of extortion where naive and penniless refugees were forced to sign a strict Slave Contract or Servant Contract for a few Aether points.

Sometimes they would refuse or try to stall like the previous group, but more often than not they would sign when threats and intimidation finally overcame their reluctance.

Fzmq ovu gaol md hmrsuzlfoamr Jfcu vft qfrfeut om eiufr vuzu frt ovuzu, vu vft fizuftw aturoadaut lusuzfi tadduzurhul ar ovu qmtpl mnuzfrta md ovu ovzuu imhfi gpiaul. Bvpxcmh frt Svfoaifz juzu gw dfz ovu hzpuiulo. Adouz ovzufourare frt vfzflare ovulu nmmz zudpeuul dmz lmqu oaqu, ovu mriw jfw mpo jfl fijfwl f Sifsu Cmrozfho easare ovulu gpiaul fglmipou hmrozmi dmz f vfrtdpi md Auovuz nmarol.

This might have worked if it were simply to ensure the reliability of their employees and recruits, but these two Evolvers were clearly not doing this to prevent the risk of betrayal. They were acting exclusively in their own self-interest and in the worst possible way.

Healthy men would usually be escorted with fake kindness to the Inner Shelter, but their lives were often miserable after that.

According to rumors, it was not uncommon to find them dead a few days later or forcibly conscripted into the factions or subfactions of these tyrants. Occasionally, one of them would survive and by overcoming his fear would eventually become stronger and get better treatment without ever achieving emancipation.

Grosh and some of the bullies here had such a history. They couldn't leave the Shelter without permission either, but were complacent enough in their current position that they didn't think much of it. Their ambition was simply to enjoy life from day to day, and it didn't matter if it destroyed the lives of these scummy refugees.

The fate of young men, women and children with decent beauty was even less enviable. In these cases, the harassers would not even try to hide their intentions. The refugee groups that signed these contracts would simply sacrifice these individuals for survival.

If these people had no other skills of interest, they would be sent to the brothels of the Outer Shelter or directly to the Oracle Playground depending on their 'value'.

This value depended of course on objective factors such as age, size or beauty, but also on more subjective ones such as novelty or rarity. After serving some time in the Oracle Playground, some prostitutes who became unpopular or too damaged could then be demoted to one of the Outer Shelter's brothels where the living conditions were even worse.

In the midst of all this, there was also voluntary prostitution. These Civilians, women or men, had simply chosen to sell their bodies for money. Their situation was not much better, but at least they were free to choose.

As he made his way down the main alley of such a district, Jake scowled, as he muttered darkly in his head,

'I hope Maeve isn't here....'