

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 5: The Last Tutorial

### Chapter 519 - Found Her

Once dragged into her pavilion, Jake was pleasantly surprised. It wasn't as filthy as he had feared. The mattress and blankets on the floor had a few questionable stains, but overall it was clean. There was no weird smell inside except perhaps cigarette smoke.

'So handsome, what do you want me to do?' The redhead teased him while already getting lasciviously undressed. 'For 1 Aether point, I'll give you the treat of your choice, for 2 points you can cum inside me, and for 10 points you can do whatever you want with me until nightfall. So what will it be?'

There was something almost desperate in her gaze and manner as she announced her rates, but Jake braced his mind to keep himself from giving in to compassion. If he allowed his empathy to flow, he risked falling into the insane and painful trap of trying to save everyone.

In the end, Jake did not live for others. His benevolence ended where his altruism began to harm him. He was obviously willing to sacrifice himself for people he cared about, like Anya or his uncle Kalen, but in a way it was a selfish act. These people were simply more important than his own life.

'1 Aether points for a treat...' Jake repeated thoughtfully.

'I can't go any lower. I need to eat too.' The prostitute began to freak out, mistaking his words for hesitation over her prices. Some even

more desperate prostitutes were agreeing to get laid for as little as 0.5 points, and she feared she would have to lower her prices again.

Realizing that her reaction could be misinterpreted, Jake looked up at her, raising his hand to placate her,

‘ I think there’s been a misunderstanding. ‘ He said calmly. ‘I’m not here for sex. I just have a few questions to ask.’

Upon hearing this, the redhead’s friendly facade instantly disappeared, replaced by an icy mask.

‘Get out! If you’re not here to fuck me, we have nothing to talk about.’

In response, Jake simply sneered as he disdainfully tossed a handful of Red Aether Crystals onto the covers. From the looks of it, there were at least 50 points worth after conversion.

‘I don’t think so. I think we have plenty to talk about.’

He preferred bracelet-to-bracelet deals, but he didn’t mind being a little flashy from time to time showing off his Aether Crystals. Will had already told him that many Evolvers favored the latter over dematerialized Aether for their transactions.

The redhead seemed to be torn by an inner conflict for a few seconds, then she made her decision and hurried to pick up the crystals before Jake could change his mind. To avoid having her fortune stolen or misplaced, she quickly absorbed and purified the Red Aether from the crystals in her Aether Storage.

The more or less 50 Red Aether Crystals that looked like tiny polished rubies became translucent like ordinary glass again, and only then did the prostitute regain her poise.

‘So, what do you want to know?’ She asked politely with a smile meant to be comely.

‘Before I ask my questions, I first want you to sign this Oracle Contract of Non-Disclosure.’ Jake informed her in a businesslike manner. He was getting used to these formalities.

The redhead carefully perused the contract before her eyes and finding nothing suspicious finally agreed to sign after a few minutes. 1000 extra Aether points were promised in the contract whether she was able to answer his questions or not. She was not allowed to lie, however, which was fine with her. It had been a long time since she had any taboos.

‘First question. Have you ever seen this woman?’ Jake asked straight away once the Contract was signed.

As with the previous refugees, he transferred the photo of Maeve and Kyle to her and watched her mood changes carefully. This time he noticed something different. The redhead had stiffened slightly when she saw the young woman. Her eyes unconsciously misted with tears, while her chin had started to tremble under the emotion. She recognized her!

‘I think I’ve seen her before, but I’m not 100% sure.’ The prostitute confessed, discreetly wiping her tears with the back of her hand. ‘Her appearance was already quite different. If these are indeed the same people, it’s hard to imagine that she could have been such a blossoming young woman... I think her name was Maeve.’

Jake initially thought she was moved as she recognized the young woman, but it was more the echo of her own past that had stirred her melancholy. This jaded prostitute had also lived a wholesome, perhaps happy, life before she was stuck here.

‘Where is she now?’ Jake asked, trying hard to ignore her emotional turmoil.

Snapping back to the subject of their conversation, the redhead pondered for a short while, her index finger resting on her chin, before flashing a rueful smile.

‘If Maeve is still alive, she should be in Bhuzkoc’s stronghold in the Oracle Playground, or maybe in his Oracle Booth or that of one of his trusted men’ She revealed gloomily. She wasn’t envious of her fate at all. ‘Maeve... wasn’t really cut out for the life of a prostitute here... After she threatened to kill herself, Bhuzkoc asked to subdue her personally.’

Jake’s face sank when he heard this. It was getting close to the worst case scenario. The probability that Maeve had not suffered was already practically zero. He was already wondering in what condition they would get her back.

‘How did she manage to threaten them with suicide? If she’s on Slave-Contract she should be unable to refuse a direct order, or even take her own life.’ Jake suddenly recalled with some perplexity.

‘I’m not too sure.’ The redhead shrugged. ‘I heard she was so bad that even the customers didn’t want her anymore and she resisted orders until she was spitting blood. She was quite a stubborn one. If she had kept resisting like that, she would have actually died of a ruptured aneurysm or whatever in no time.’

Jake had never been enslaved by a Slave Contract so he wasn’t in a position to verify her claims. He had only used this type of Contract to cover his back, and he had not given any orders that went against the interests of his temporary slaves either. Consequently, he could not

say with certainty whether it was indeed possible to resist certain orders.

Even with True Will or some other mental technique, in his opinion, it was impossible. After all, it was the Oracle who had created this magic and it was not something that Evolvers of their level could influence. However, if it worked just like a Curse, the distance would weaken the Contract's effectiveness and disobeying it might become possible.

If he remembered correctly how the Slave Contract worked, it didn't change the personality of the slave, but it did create in him or her a seed of unwavering loyalty to their master. Disobeying orders was theoretically impossible, because the person simply did not want to.

Now, loyalty was different from love, idolatry or admiration. Slaves could hate their masters and what they ordered them to do with all their heart without questioning the orders they received.

The case became more complicated when those orders touched the slave's deepest ideals and values. A virginal, prudish girl from a good family might, for example, be mortified at the idea of having to prostitute herself. One could imagine that her subconscious would then strongly resist this order despite the irresistible compulsion to obey.

However, Jake also saw the limits of this relative free will. Because of the unwavering loyalty and inability to disobey orders, it was relatively easy to deal with these problems of insubordination. All that was required was to give orders phrased as suggestions such as 'Don't be a prude anymore. Be excited and enthusiastic about every order I give you. Feel disgust towards yourself every time you resist my orders, etc.'

This was a form of conditioning that was already used on Earth with certain antabuse drugs for example, to disgust alcoholics from drinking. With this type of injunction, it would not take long to reparameterize the personality and values of a slave. When Bhuzkoc spoke of ‘personally subduing her,’ he was surely planning something like this, but crueler.

Now that he had his answer, Jake had no more reason to stay here. Time was running out. Standing up, he grabbed the redhead’s wrist and transferred the promised points to her.

‘Thanks for the information. If you’re free, you should take the opportunity to get out of here while you still can.’

Seeing him turning to leave the tent, the prôstitutè panicked. Talking to this man, she had sensed that he was different from the local refugees and Evolvers. Grabbing his arm, she begged,

‘Please let me come with you. I wasn’t always a prôstitutè. I, I was a lawyer! I have two children with me and I can’t keep putting them through this hell.’

Jake shook her hand off impassively and gave her a stern look.

‘I’ve held up my end of the bargain. I don’t save people who refuse to save themselves.’ He replied coldly, pointing to the Inner Shelter. ‘Your salvation is in that Red Cube over there. You may have lacked Aether before, but now you have what it takes to get to the Inner Shelter. You will suffer and toil in these Ordeals, but you won’t die. You and your children have no excuse. I have two children in my faction who had that courage and they live proudly today. Finish your First Ordeal and you will be welcome in my faction no matter the outcome, I promise.’

Then he left. He had barely made it a few steps outside when he got a call from Will.

‘Anything new, Will?’

‘I found Maeve...’

Jake sighed. From his tone, it didn’t sound like good news.