

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 5: The Last Tutorial

### Chapter 530 - Expedition

‘I’m right here motherfucker!’

Turning his head in a certain direction, Bhuzkoc recognized the runt he had tortured moments earlier. Except this time he wasn’t alone. Another frail human, as well as a huge tiger, a baby dragon and several other imposing felines, accompanied him. The presence of the other human was negligible, but the other creatures could not be ignored.

Especially the gigantic tiger. His instincts warned him against this creature that did not look like much behind its false sense of serenity and elegance.

Despite his visceral urge to slit the throat of the defiant vermin, Bhuzkoc restrained his impulses, wisely choosing diplomacy over violence on this occasion. Glancing quickly at the condescending Shaktilar and the filthy Melkree, who were gorging themselves on his mood swings like moviegoers with their popcorn packets in front of a good movie, reality mockingly reminded him that nothing good would come of this conflict.

Helplessly, he had to let Kyle, Will and the felines join Jake and his group. Svara arrived a short time later under the protection of Mufasa and Duchess.

Bhuzkoc had not yet said his last word. He still had one more card to play to beat the crap out of this newborn faction...

‘My slaves! Come back to your master!’ The Nawai leader exclaimed in a regal tone while extending his hand to them as if he were imbued with divine authority.

His inviting hand and gentle, reassuring crooked smile were about as believable as a pedophile offering candy to young children outside the school.

And yet, many of the refugees who had recently joined Jake’s group responded to this call with helpless faces. Their betrayal inevitably awakened the insecurities of the other survivors and they began to panic again.

Kyle was not at all comfortable with this situation, thinking that the Nawai had just ruined Jake’s recruitment efforts while he was away, but he relaxed when he noticed that Jake still wore an indifferent expression. Will, who had not yet been briefed on the origins of all these refugees either, was equally impassive, content to memorize the remaining faces for their future plans.

After retrieving the slaves under Contracts graciously saved by Jake, Bhuzkoc chuckled gleefully. The number of refugees following Jake had nearly dwindled by a third, and a good half looked torn by a difficult choice, as if they were about to switch sides any second.

Getting the hint, the other two faction leaders also recalled their own slaves. Only then did Jake and the others realize how much influence these three Evolvers had in this Oracle Shelter.

‘Hehe, please come back over here.’ Melkree giggled melodiously, almost bashfully. Her voice was far more delicate than her appearance suggested.

‘Hmmp, what an honorless piece of livestock.’ An alien of the same species as Shaktilar and wearing the same type of ceremonial garb harrumphed without hiding any of his contempt.

Uriacu Muiczuu, Svfoaifz tat rmo nmiaouiw flc ovuq om bmar vaq. Hu jfl dfz omm imdow om lommn om lphv qutamhzaow. Hal fnfovuoah frt hfihpifoare immc fl ad vu juzu usfipfoare hmqqmr hmrlpqfgiul jfl urmpev om qfcu ovuaz gimmt zpr hmit. Waovmpo f jmzt, ovu lifsul hmrhuzrut vfloaiw hvfreet latul.

After all these slaves were claimed back by their respective factions, the number of refugees behind Jake was down to a third of his original members. But Bhuzkoc had no intention of stopping there. He wanted to punish this impertinent human to the fullest. He wanted to make him understand that no outsider was free to act as he wanted on his turf.

‘As you can see, by staying with this human, only death awaits you. The Nawai chief declared wickedly as he revealed his long fangs. ‘I know you fear me. Many of you even hate me, but you also know how I treat my men. I promise you that. Anyone who serves me loyally during this difficult time will be entitled to a membership in my faction and the same treatment as the veterans under my command from my native tribe. Make your choice. You have five minutes. If after that you change your mind, the terms will not be so favorable...’

Jake held back from applauding after listening to Bhuzkoc’s engaging speech. For an alien who only a few months earlier had been the equivalent of a decerebrate, lecherous homo erectus, such an evolution could be considered praiseworthy.

Perhaps because Jake’s face was frozen between mockery and admiration or simply out of complacency, but the Nawai chief interpreted this human’s constipated countenance as fright and drew

deep contentment from it. 'In the end, you're just another pathetic human.'

Ignoring everything about the alien's narcissistic delusions, Jake instead observed the other two leaders, studying their reactions and comparing them to what he knew of their character.

Taking a cue from Bhuzkoc, Melkree also tried to poach refugees from him by offering favorable terms, but with limited success. Her faction was already a bit weaker than the other two leaders and her appearance was, unfortunately, neither charismatic nor charming.

On the other hand, her faction was known for its neutral position in this Shelter. She could intercede and express her opinions, but as for her ability to fight against tides of Digestors, nobody was optimistic...

Shaktilar, on the other hand, remained true to himself. His fascism and racism made him particularly smug, and he refused to relax his recruitment conditions. With this kind of mentality, it was a miracle that his faction still had so many members, but it was mainly thanks to a few qualified subordinates that he had reached this point. If he had relied on himself, it would have been an accomplishment if he could make his own food.

And despite this spoiled brat temperament, this alien was still one of the three most powerful Evolvers in the Shelter. To be able to do that, he must have had some undeniable qualities, and from what Will and Svara had told him, it all boiled down to two words: power and intelligence.

Although the Roganeans were rather large, in terms of raw strength, Shaktilar was not that dangerous and Second-Ordeal Evolvers specialized in physical strength and hand-to-hand combat could best him. However, to get there, they would have to get past his close

guard and protective magics. With his excellent mastery of Water and Ice magic, this mage was a walking fortress. He usually didn't need to move an inch to defeat his opponents and was a perfect counter to Bhuzkoc's brutal and straightforward style.

Eventually, by the time Bhuzkoc and Melkree were done with their second round of recruiting, there were only 600 refugees left in Jake's group. Most of them were humans or aliens rescued by Jake whose Slave Contracts had been transferred to him. For the few others, they either hated the faction leaders or were deeply attached to their freedom.

Among these loyal refugees, the prostitute and the old man were still present. Jake also recognized the group of individuals he had seen being harassed by Grash. The balding man, the young woman and the boy had obviously not managed to leave the Shelter in time either. Grateful for his help, they had chosen once again to place their hopes in him.

In the midst of these refugees, there was also a frail human actively trying to make himself smaller. Grash had already spotted him and been pointing him out to Jake for a while now, identifying this individual as the 'exceptional hustler' who had shamelessly sold that cleaning alcohol to this alien powerhouse.

For the moment, Jake had no intention of acquainting himself with this weirdo, but in the face of this human's crystal-clear, piercing gaze, the hustler felt as if all his secrets had been laid bare.

Moreover, although their appearances were exotic, he knew how to recognize fellow earthlings when he came across them. Right now, he was extremely tense, fearing that Jake would explain to Grash the real value of this 'vintage stuff.'

‘That’s it?’ These words from Jake brought the trickster out of his inner monologue.

At that moment, Jake was shooting a scornful and contemptuous look at Bhuzkoc and the other two leaders. His scruffy group may have been at a severe numerical disadvantage, but he was not afraid. Grash, Mufasa and Shere Khan were at his side, and worse comes to worse he had his Purgatory to escape.

Noticing that the human was still as arrogant as ever, Bhuzkoc retracted his smiling facade to display a cold face.

‘You really don’t understand what you’ve gotten yourself into, do you?’ He snorted. ‘Keep pretending to be better than you are. Reality will catch up with you soon enough. In a little while, if the Digestors haven’t eaten you, you’ll wish you were dead.’

Turning to his men, he raised his fist in the air and barked, ‘We’re leaving.’

Shaktilar and Melkree’s armies also began to move after this signal. Keeping a good distance between them, all three factions headed in the same direction: toward the entrance of the Black Cube.

Their plan was to leave the Shelter.

This was different from the discussion he had hoped for, but Jake had no intention of staying behind. He needed these faction leaders in the know to show him the way and cover his back, or at least his front...

Now he just had to hope that it would be enough.. Taking one last look at the dimmed Yellow Cube, Jake and his group sighed and set off as well.