

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 5: The Last Tutorial

### Chapter 514 - Outer Area

‘Remember. We’re not here to save everyone.’ Jake warned them sternly. ‘Whatever you see, it’s not our concern. We’re saving Kyle’s sister and then we’re leaving.’

In giving this warning, Jake was also addressing himself. Whatever they were going to see in this Oracle Shelter, it was not going to be pretty. The rest of the group winced, but all nodded emphatically in agreement. Svara looked completely indifferent.

He then turned to the playboy and asked,

‘By the way, what does your sister look like? Do you have a picture to show us?’

Kyle immediately put on an embarrassed expression before handing over some photos from his old smartphone, the contents of which he had long ago downloaded to his Oracle Device. In front of them appeared a photo of a young woman who was barely of age, who bore some resemblance to her older brother, but not that much either.

In the photo, the two siblings were standing side by side, hugging each other in front of the camera. They were smiling and looking a little younger and naive, but mostly happy. Kyle was wearing his American Football Club jacket, a white tee shirt and slim jeans, while the young woman was beaming with happiness. The siblings were both photogenic and would have been perfectly at home in a fashion magazine.

The little brunette was half a head shorter than her brother, or 1 m70, in this photo, and had a long bob as a haircut. She was exquisitely made up, but not overly so, and her look was casual like her brother's, yet exuded incredible charm. This girl was definitely popular at school and the crush of many boys her age.

Jake imprinted the young woman's features in his memory, then averted his gaze from the photo. He refrained from making any pessimistic comments, but the likelihood that his sister would still look like the jovial, blossoming woman in the photo was extremely low.

Not to mention the hell and abuse she had probably been through, Kyle himself was unrecognizable. Between his Myrmidian Bloodline and the Myrtharian Body Passive, his appearance had changed significantly.

'What's her name?'

'Maeve.' Kyle answered hastily with the greatest difficulty in hiding his anxiety.

His brain had already envisioned the worst a thousand times. He would be satisfied if his sister was still alive, but he couldn't help but hope for a miracle, which kept his anguish burning because of the low probability of that happening.

Seeing his distress, Will patted his shoulders without saying a word, while Svara kept her stoic facade. She had seen this kind of drama a thousand times in her life, and to her, Maeve's fate was nothing special. If she was still alive, it could be considered a happy ending. Among the Nawai, that was the fate of all women who were unable to emancipate themselves.

Jake took one last look at Kyle to make sure he wouldn't make any mistakes because of his feelings, then they set off. Just before jumping off the top of the platform, he gave his final instructions, 'Let's split up for the moment and keep a low profile by mingling with the Shelter's inhabitants. We'll stay in touch via our bracelets. I remind you that violence is forbidden by the Oracle here, so don't lose your temper unnecessarily. Before we save anyone, we need to understand the situation here, to identify this Bhuzkoc and his minions. We need to know everything about their habits, mannerisms and rituals. The big challenge will not be to meet him, but to convince him to give us back Maeve. If he refuses, we'll have to find a way to get him out of the Shelter to kill him, and it will be much harder if he is wary of us. Am I clear?'

'Very clear.'

'Then let's go.' Jake nodded, then jumped down.

Except for Will, who humbly decided to take the elevator, Svara, Kyle and the felines dove in head first like a commando squad of skydivers. Within seconds, they tumbled down the huge skyscraper before landing soundlessly despite their prodigious inertia. Even Mufasa and Shere Khan, who were both massive, managed to land without attracting the slightest attention to themselves.

It must also be said that there were not many people in the Oracle Shelter's inner area where the various Oracle Buildings and Cubes were located. This inner area could be considered as the gateway to the Oracle Cities and the various Oracle facilities, and crossing its protective shield required paying a small fee.

At the time it was only a few Aether points, but now it was required to pay 50 Aether points just to be able to walk around in this better

protected area. For the civilians, who refused to leave the Shelter to hunt and had no Aether points to show for it, this was already too much.

The inevitable consequence was that Jake and the others ran into hardly anyone. There were of course a few Evolvers of various alien species that looked dangerous, but very few of them managed to arouse his sense of foreboding.

It was the Shelter's animals that were more to be feared. Like the felines, they were not good at integrating into civilized societies and their intelligence was often limited if not completely lacking.

Some of these animals were just monstrous in size and appearance, and next to some of these behemoths, even Mufasa looked tiny. And yet, there they were, wandering desperately in this dingy Oracle Shelter, unable to understand that a better world was waiting for them within reach of Yellow Cubes if only they could grasp the notion of currency.

Of course, not all of these creatures were stuck here because of their limited brainpower. There were also packs of various predators and other solitary beasts that were here for the same reason as the felines, to hunt Digestors for food and a living.

However, even with all of these factors, Jake found the Shelter's inner area to be a bit too empty. Even emptier than the first Oracle Shelter he had visited. With the exception of a few experienced looking individuals, most people, creatures included, were crowded outside the inner shield and were scrambling and begging to get in.

Unfortunately, their yelling and efforts did not help. Without those 50 points of Aether, they were doomed to remain on the other side of

the barrier. Jake couldn't help but have doubts, though, when he saw the huge, ragged crowd.

Their agitation betrayed intense panic and most of the humans present had dark circles under their eyes, betraying their severe sleep deprivation. It was as if they had been waiting there for days, so anxious that they couldn't even close their eyes at night.

'What's going on here?' Jake wondered inwardly as he made his way towards the crowd. He didn't really have a choice. His goal was to explore the Shelter's outer area by blending in with the crowd.

Jake still reported what he saw to Will, who immediately volunteered to investigate the local Oracle Playground instead. He wasn't thrilled with the idea of walking through such a rowdy crowd and wouldn't really be able to show off his excellent negotiating skills.

As they reached the gate, Jake, Svara and Kyle exchanged a quick glance before heading off in different directions. They would meet up later after completing their investigations. The felines, however, dispersed into four groups. Shere Khan returned to protect Will, while Mufasa stayed with Kyle and Duchess with Svara.

Crunch tried to tag along with the leopard, but a stern look from Jake dissuaded him. Ears lowered and looking sheepish, he had to go with his hated master. As for the other felines, they also followed Svara except for Thomas'O Malley, the cheetah, who stayed with his prankster buddy Crunch.

'You don't mind if I tag along.' Thomas purred as he trotted alongside Jake with a wink. God only knew where he'd picked up that mimicry.

'Fine for me...' Jake muttered without much enthusiasm. That cheetah probably meant more trouble for him.

Jake then walked with a yawn towards the crowd and not seeing them move aside on his way an annoyed frown knotted his forehead. Figuring that this would not be considered violence, he released some of his mental power and his Apex Predator Glyph.

The effect was felt immediately. The restless crowd ceased to holler and bustle with activity and a shudder of absolute horror ran through them, compelling them to step aside. In the blink of an eye, an avenue wide enough to accommodate three cars aligned opened up before him.

‘Impressive.’ The cheetah whistled admiringly.

Crunch rolled his eyes as if it were perfectly normal, but that didn’t stop him from strutting forward with a proud còcky face. That was Crunch for you.

Jake then walked down the alley with a jaded look on his face and as his aura disappeared, the crowd closed in behind him and his presence was quickly forgotten. If it wasn’t for the two huge felines with him, he could have easily blended in with the crowd despite his unusual appearance for a human.

Once in the outer area, Jake could finally appreciate human misery in all its glory. There were hardly any Earthlings or Egeans here, but Nawais and other primitive and boorish humanoid species. Most of these aliens could barely distinguish their left from their right and he overheard all sorts of shady deals and scams carried out by crooked merchants and Evolvers who saw in these stupid beasts a source of easy money.

While walking through these slums, he also learned why such a crowd had gathered near the inner area fence.

Apparently, this Oracle Shelter was not really safe anymore.