

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 318 - Oral Promise

‘Are you fućkīnġ kidding me?’

Jake nearly drowned in the lava sea when he heard the solution proposed by the Zhorion woman. Obviously, she had anticipated his reaction because her lips had curled up into a smug grin.

‘Don’t turn me down without knowing all the details.’ She explained when she saw that her lack of transparency could put an end to their exchange prematurely. ‘It is I who will sign the Servant Contract.’

‘You?!’ Jake gasped when he heard such an absurd promise. ‘What’s in it for you to be willing to make such a sacrifice?’

He had already grasped why she had offered to turn him into a Zhorion Viscount. Based on his folkloric knowledge of mythical creatures like vampires or werewolves, he knew that there was usually a form of subordination from the transformed to the transformer.

If the young alien signed a Servant Contract with him, the fact of having turned him into a Zhorion would have effectively given her leverage against him. The contract and the subservience instinct associated with his new bloodline would have undoubtedly canceled each other out.

Bad luck for her, Jake had refused. It was thus all the more surprising for him that she was still ready to take such a risk. A few minutes earlier they were complete strangers and the Zhorion woman far surpassed him in every aspect. Agreeing to sign such a contract made no sense.

If Jake could come to that conclusion, so could the Zhorion woman. That is why she did not waste her time in useless chatter and immediately stated her reasons and the nature of the contract.

‘You’re clueless, aren’t you? You don’t know anything about the Zhorions’ situation on this asteroid. On the surface, those like me who were born in System A0 should have exceptional abilities from birth, but we are actually exiled from the Mirror Universe. That incredible Aether density that you perceived on the asteroid’s surface, it *****, that’s why anyone with the ability to leave this dying world will agree to sign a Servant Contract, even if it means giving up their full freedom.

‘Most of the ordinary Zhorions from the three tribes would even accept a Slave or Pet contract if it could allow them to escape from this *****. Anyway, if we do nothing we *****. Considering the time flow difference between B842 and my world, this represents only 5 to 10 years on B842.

‘System A0 has long since fallen and is so ancient that most stars and solar systems have already gone extinct. Apart from black holes and a few rare white or brown dwarfs at the end of their lives, there is nothing left. You surely didn’t believe that this asteroid was just an asteroid, did you? This lump of rock is currently ten times more massive than B842... Without the support of the Oracle and its Guardians, such a technological miracle could not possibly exist. This is one of our 7 ***** in System A0.

‘... This is why I am ready to sign such a contract with you, despite the restrictions it imposes on me. Uh... Why are you making that face?’

Jake currently had the expression of a dead fish, slackjawed with his eyes opened wide. A somewhat puzzled frown filled occasionally with curiosity would show up on his face as if he was witnessing an occult black magic beyond his comprehension.

‘Sigh... Was I censored?’ She asked, fearing the worst.

‘I’m afraid so...’ Jake replied with an apologetic smile.

‘Your Oracle Rank is too low. Just remember that I didn’t try to hide anything and that the contract is in your favor. Among the Servant Contracts, you know the Slave Contract where the slave must obey unconditionally the commands of his master and the Pet Contract where the pet is given more freedom of action, but its resources and body still belong to its owner. It is essentially the same thing, but more nicely put. A Pet Contract nevertheless has advantages for both parties when the relationship between the two parties is close enough.

‘Among the Servant Contracts, there is the actual Servant Contract, but there are also less restrictive contracts such as the Subordinate Contract and Employee Contract, followed by the Serf Contract. The one I want to sign with you is a real Servant Contract, just below the Slave Contract.

The more Jake listened to her, the less he could understand her intentions. Was the situation in System A0 really so catastrophic that a brilliant and admired person among her people was willing to accept such a disadvantageous deal?

‘Tell me how it is signed, what clauses you want to add, and why this particular contract and not another less restrictive one?’

‘I like to negotiate with intelligent people.’ The young woman laughed with relief when she saw that the human had implicitly accepted the deal. ‘The Servant Contract obliges me to obey every one of your orders with the exception of those that oppose my fundamental values which I must include in the clauses of the contract. If you accept these conditions, the contract can be signed automatically, but not now because I don’t have my own Oracle Device yet. If I were to sign a contract with you now, it would actually be like signing a Servant Contract with my father. If he finds out, he will probably skin me alive.’

Jake had also realized the problem. Contracting a creature without a bracelet was probably possible, but it certainly required some precautions.

[It's possible, but it relies on Summoning, Sealing or mind control techniques.] Xi suddenly spoke in his mind with a pedagogic tone. [For a true Oracle Contract, you would have to provide an Oracle Device to the future contracted.]

'How do we proceed in this case?' Jake inquired with a certain weariness in his voice. Once the Ordeal was over, they were not likely to see each other again anytime soon.

'I'll contact you when your Ordeal is over. I must first bring back the liquid alloy and complete the sacrifice to receive my Oracle Device. Once I have a real bracelet, I'll take care of the rest. In System A0, we're running out of everything but Aether.'

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'Fool! My fortune does belong to you, but my first clause will be that you cannot freely dispose of it until you are stronger than me. In any case, diplomatic immunity on B842 works both ways. The other planets and systems can't harm you for the next five years, but we can't help you either except with a special authorization from the Oracle System.'

'Shit...' Jake cursed as he lost interest in the young woman.

He still had many questions, but they would have plenty of time to discuss them in the future. Phone calls across the Mirror Universe probably cost an Aether fortune he didn't dare to imagine, but she would pay for it anyway.

‘Where are you going?’ The Zhorion woman was startled when she saw him float out of the lava with difficulty toward the stairs at the entrance to the city.

Now that he had nothing more to fear, he no longer had to try to escape from the cave ceiling.

‘You can’t do anything to me, we have a deal and if you want me to find out the truth in the Phantom Sanctuary I’m going to have to get out of here first. At my current travelling speed... It will take a few days.’

‘Oh... Hell, no, not again!’

Jake, who had barely made it a few meters, suddenly heard her screaming in rage for no reason. When he turned around, he saw that her eyes were riveted in another direction, that he estimated to be where the island’s snowy mountains stood.

‘What is it?’

‘Another bastard just like you! I need to go! What’s wrong with the Players of this Ordeal... First you and now this... ‘

Jake didn’t even have time to say goodbye to her that she had already vanished into the distance like a shooting star. If it wasn’t for the discussion they were having, he might have thought that this whole encounter had been nothing but a dream.

He didn’t know her name yet and this Servant Contract was only a hollow oral promise. If the Zhorion woman did not recontact him, all this talk would have been useless.

Nevertheless, he was still alive, and that was certainly the greatest victory of all! Now that the cave had been deserted and the rest of the alloy had been stolen, Jake had no more business here.

After a few hundred meters, he let himself fall back into the lava and let himself drift like a starfish on the lava sea surface to recover. He then checked the Player Ranking and his status to take stock of the situation.

Next, his eyes popped out of his head when he discovered why the Zhorion woman had left in such a hurry.

[1st place: Ruby Hale (Species: Human): 266,845,569 pts (186 kills)]

[2nd place: Alef Smith(Species: Human): 224,347,862 pts (77 kills)]

[3rd place: Jake Wilderth (Species: Human): 224,248,994 pts (127 kills)]

During the few hours he had spent in the catacombs absorbing the liquid alloy, he had dropped out of first place. He wasn't even second either...

Given the Zhorion woman's reaction and the changes in the Player Ranking, Jake instantly understood what had transpired. Another tribe's headquarters had just been wiped out and the Player(s) responsible had started looting the alloy stored there.

And without a doubt, Ruby Hale was the prime suspect.