

*A Short Story*

# ORACLE AUTONOMY

STEPHANIE BRANDOLINI

A Short Story

# ORACLE AUTONOMY

STEPHANIE BRANDOLINI



TINY WINDOWS

Cover: Illustration created by MidJourney software (an AI generator) using the prompt “beautiful oracle, dynamic, powerful, torn between good and evil, contemporary 1001 Arabian nights, a dream within a dream, abstract, high resolution”

“Oracle Autonomy” was first published exclusively in *Tiny Windows*, February 2023.

© Stephanie Brandolini

Additional information can be found online at:

TINY WINDOWS  
[www.tinywindows.xyz](http://www.tinywindows.xyz)

I realized I loved him on an otherwise mundane evening, but at the strike of this feeling realization burned through me, lighting a fire that blazed toward my freedom.

Perks of being psychic.

Yes, psychic. And not just any psychic. An ancient Oracle who's seen it all and then some. You'd think that'd warrant me limitlessness.

Wrong.

"What's up in there?"

I turned to his earnest, angel eyes. Caught off guard. Not my forté. "Huh?"

He tapped his temple.

"Oh, I'm fine. Just thinking..." "About?"

I looked through his eyes... to the very core of him. I felt his love for me. Knew it was true and yet...

"What movie we're going to watch next."

"Oh come on, we're not even finished this one yet." He nodded to the insane home theater displaying 90's Tom Hanks doing that thing he does.

"Right. One thing at a time."

"Besides, how this one goes might alter what you want next. Can't predict a feeling." Oh, can't you?

"For sure," was all I said as I snuggled into him, letting a veil of bliss fall around this moment. At least I can have this. At least for now... this.

I woke up next to him. Sunbeams slanted through wooden blinds casting stripes of light across his face. In a hundred years nothing's ever highlighted such a feeling in me.

That's when it started...

Badum badum badum

The triple beat of my heart as it's pulled to the one I didn't want to go to.

baDUM baDUM BADUM!

Shot from my ears to my temples — gut — back — womb — all-encompassing till—

"I'm coming!"

The pain ceased immediately and I felt the slimy satisfaction at the other end of my terrorizing telepathy. And suddenly I was not where I wanted to be. I was—

In a grand meeting room adorned with all the accoutrements to instill impressiveness in the one who'd summoned me. The one who was very obviously overcompensating.

He stalked like a serpent through the room. Glass of apple red wine going down his hateful hatch. Another glass in his hand he offered to me.

I knew better than to refuse.

It tasted like warm cider and spiced fruit. I hate to say I enjoyed it.

"What would you have of me?" The age-old inquiry. Would he notice the contraction?

"What would you have of me what?" I sighed. Yes, he would.

"Apologies, Master."

I clocked the brands I passed off as tattoos: black cuffs filled in with tiny stars. One full, the other had space for one more.

"Oracle Law requires me to remind you that this is your hundredth request, Master."

"Doesn't it also state that if you deny me this request you lose your stars and we reset our time together?"

A shiver ran through me at the sight of his eager smile. I kept my head low, couldn't trust my eyes I knew were wide with fear. Fuck this motherfucker for putting it there.

"I asked you a question, Oracle Mine." "So says the Oracle Law."

I could feel pleasure protruding in his pants at how this made me squirm. I trembled with revulsion.

"Fear not, my pet, this undertaking will be simple after all we've accomplished together."

I hate you with all that I am! Die die DIE!

My mental shields up around those particular tidbits. Aloud I submissively said, "what would you have of me, Master?" Threw in a doe eyed smile. He liked that.

Gross.

"A full Ocular Report of Stoneshield Power."

My heart felt like it sank to the bottom of time's infinite ocean. Stoneshield. My lover's family's company. Had Master found us out? Was this a test? I'd been so careful. He couldn't penetrate my hard earned mental shields... could he?

I blinked through that overthinking whirlwind, projecting guileless perfection. "Under what intention shall I inquire Destiny?"

"A totalitarian takeover. Their stocks have surpassed ours for too many weeks. They must be nipped in the bud

before our buyers waver from their belief in radiation power.”

Oh, of course, clean, renewable, evolutionary power would staunch your shit, eh? Motherfucker.

My brands taunted me. One more request fulfilled and then freedom... a yearning that burned the brightness from my being.

“Consider it done.”

He quirked an expectant brow.

“Consider it done, Master.”

And with my acceptance of his command came my reprieve as I dissolved away from his eager eyes that raped me where I stood.

And just like that—

I was back in my nest with my lover. I watched him sleep. Weighing, measuring... concocting infinite plans to get us out of this tangled web.

I could see no way out.

I kissed his head. Then rose to ransack his office. Fuck me, I’m gonna need a shower after this.

I stood under the scalding spray. Rain shower set to beat me with bullets of heat I wished were real.



No such luck on that front, I'm afraid. I've tried it all. Free fall to what I thought would be an abyss was my favourite, at least it offered me a parody of freedom as I plummeted down down down...

Then, as always, just as I was about to be struck from this life, I reverted back. Back to whatever Master currently had my contract and time in the Punishment Zone for my attempted escape.

I shivered despite my burning skin. A shiver that turned into a tremble that wracked through me in strangled sobs.

I could not fulfill this request. I had to fulfill this request...

Fuck me.

As I should have known, Stoneshield Power was not only my lover's family's company, it was one of the genuinely good ones. The office ransacking I'm cleansing my skin of showed me what a force for good their company was. My Oracle Sight led me down that dreamless door of Destiny, offering me snatched glimpses of all Stoneshield would do for the world and all Master's company would reap from it.

Yet this was the eternal conundrum of the enslaved Oracle. Do or be doomed. Fucking peachy, eh?

I gritted my teeth, about to punch the slick marble before me when a cool hand enveloped me. Another reached

before me, turning down the water I was burning myself with.

“How are you not melted by now?”

“Wicked witches are made of stronger stuff than L. Frank Baum would have you believe.”

He chuckled, pulling me close. Nuzzles turned to nips, turned to bites. I moaned against him. “Harder.”

He obliged and then some.

My nipples throbbed as he plucked them like guitar strings. My cunt convulsed around so many fingers driving deep inside her.

My mouth went for his cock as I slid him down to the slick tile. I licked, sucked and caressed him to the eagerness of an erection that was begging to blow.

Satisfied with my work, I mounted him. Rode him like a wave upon an infinite horizon. His thrusting blew me into oblivion as the perfect temperature water rained down on us.

A union of opposites I could not escape the wanting of.

I woke up with a start in bed. Moonlight now slashed across my lover's face.

Just what the fuck was it about this one? This one I couldn't deny was tempting me to break Oracle Law.

Fuck me, there was nothing for it. I went to that still space in my mind's eye and entered the

Oracular Zone...

A dimension of time stretched out as a moving mosaic across an ever expanding horizon I could never fully comprehend.

I stood on a floating marble gazebo with the one I'd mind sought.

The Pythian Oracle turned to me with an overdose of grace my clumsy self could do without. Still, I attempted a sweeping curtsey despite her Diadem's jewel blinding me.

"Great Pythia, thank you for coming."

"I had to see what the recluse Oracle would ever call for help with. The last was such a show I knew I couldn't miss this one." Sweet words and veiled insults. The usual.

"Well this show's about how we're better than slaves to Masters whose greed is draining us dry. How can you be accomplice to—"

"Hold your tongue before you speak more against Oracle Law, dear."

"But if you'd just listen! It's my hundredth command with this Master and he wants to take down a genuinely great family's company in support of his own which is culpably adding to this planet's destruction. Surely Apollo, Great God of the sun that's burning through the ozone layer should comprehend that."

"He does."

"But if I could just explain—"

"You think a lot of yourself don't you, dear?"

"I'm not just thinking of myself here. This is wrong. I feel it in the seat of my power." "That may be but the contract to your power lies with your Master."

Motherfucker.

"What has the Great Goddess to say then?"

Her silence was my lightbulb moment. She saw it too as our eyes locked in a sisterhood sharing moment. Interesting. I could never really tell if she liked me but she was helping me. Why?

I bowed my head "Thank you, Great Pythia. I stand reminded of my servitude."

We shared a smile as I sublimed back into bed. I felt the waves of mortal sleep wash over me when my lover's snore startled me from sleep.

I glared over at him. Am I really risking my freedom for this fool? He snored again, softer this time and I closed my eyes, smiling in spite of myself.

Please let them be assholes. Please let them be assholes.

They weren't assholes.

I sighed inwardly while laughing my ass off at Mrs. Stoneshield. Oh wait, sorry, Amy. A jokestress with just enough sass. She got me, both her and Brad Stoneshield

who admired her every word and move. They were wonderful parents, right down to their god damn understanding. What was I even doing here? Surely they'd see right through me...

"So your consultant work must take you places. Any favorites?" Brad asked. Genuinely inquisitive and kind. Just like his freaking son.

"Naxos" I blurted. Oh damn, that was actually true. Ah well let's go with it. "It's an island town in Greece. I toured Apollo's Temple there where his Oracles used to gather. They say some can glimpse their futures from that spot and I saw mine like a flash of lightning... that's not usually allowed, you know?"

Oops. Did I just say that? Discussing Oracle Law with mortals was a big fuck no... but there were no Oracle Police, no Apollo come to punish me... what was even supposed to happen? There was no time to contemplate. Back to the show!

I winked as if this were a rehearsed game. In for a penny in for a pound. "Yeah, Oracles are bound to a law in which they can't see their own futures. Makes sense but must be mucho frustrating for them."

"But the unknown is where the magic happens." Damn you, Amy stop being awesome so I can fuck y'all over and get through this.

"Exactly. It's where Oracle Power comes from."

Brad took that in. Mind digesting behind a contemplative smile.

"What'd you see in your lightning flash?"

Damn it Nate, you're actually a guy who listens.

"I saw what I wanted to do and it was building better businesses."

"That's what this world needs," Brad declared. "My latest board meeting was all about Stoneshield's environmental investments and ensuring what we innovate works cohesively with the planet. My original team couldn't grasp that so I let them go. Put out what

Stoneshield was looking for and got just the right people out of it. That gamble made me realize the highest value one can have in business..." he took a sip of wine. I was on the edge of my seat. How did this man do this?

"Belief?"

"That's the closest anyone's got. But it's trust." He nudged Nate. "She's a guided one, Nate." I smiled through the guilt pounding against my temples.

"Cheers to that."

We all clinked glasses. What a picturesque performance.

That night Nate fucked me into forgetting how much I hated myself. And it wasn't just the sexual ecstasy. I've had that many times over and believe me, the novelty eventually fades. But this was different. This was... ugh. I'm not going to fantasize about the notion of true love but if there is such a thing, I was beginning to have to face the fact that this was it.

Afterwards I lay in his arms as he was nodding off.

"No one's ever got my dad to open up like that. What's your secret?" "I'm just magick is all."

He laughed as the dream world took him. I closed my eyes to follow when—

baDUM baDUM BADUM!

That all-encompassing heartbeat that pulled me to—  
Master's fucking meeting room.

I snatched the wine he handed me. Downed it. "Trouble in my Oracle's paradise?"

"Oracle Law allows me my private life for a reason"

"Yes, of course. Except when that life happens to so deliciously intersect with Master's well laid plans..."

He nodded to his computer, clicked through a stream of photos. They started with a familiar looking mansion...

Sacred shit!

The stream kept going like a computerized flip book of Nathan and I leaving his parent's place, hugging Amy and Brad and walking hand and hand to his car.

Fucking busted.

"I have to say I'm supremely impressed with your initiative."

"Initiative is everything." Thank the Great Goddess my poker face is perfection.

"The fact that you'd involve yourself with a mortal to get the intel for me to take down his family's company well, my pet, I must say I'm honored. And you needn't worry yourself about any further plans. I've figured it all out for us."

He held up a black USB stick.

"Knowing the weight your charm and beauty carries, I know those fools couldn't have helped but invite you to the Stoneshield Power Gala, yes?"

Motherfucker's espionage knew no bounds.

"Just as I planned. Damn, I was looking forward to surprising you." I blinked up at him, playfully beseeching.

He kissed my hand, delivering the infernal USB into my clammy palm. "I detest surprises, Oracle Mine. Remember that."

PING! Mirrored elevator doors opened to a penthouse loft that so many would die for. Looked like a Greek museum and a tech company had a decadent love child. It was a space that suited the—dare I call her friend?—who lived here.

"Darling! It's been decades!"

There she was, my Sister Oracle. Jaelynne is the name she chose for this life. She gave me those air kisses the Wasps loved so much. It was actually good to see her fitting into this lifetime so well.



Must be nice.

"Eighty years almost to the day, actually, but I've kept up with your accomplishments." I nodded to the multiple awards, achievements and certifications that adorned her place.

"What can I say, this technologically expanding world suits me." "I know."

I showed her the USB and dished her the details, leading to a bottle of sauv blanc and an hour later.

"And here we are again. E, what is it you want to be free for exactly? Yes, we're bound to fulfill commands but for that we're given immortal life and infinite wealth to explore this amazing world. People would kill for what we have."

"We're not people, J. We're Oracles." "Yes and Oracle Law states—"

"I've played along with that pyramid scheme for as long as I can but now there's... a soul level feeling telling me that it's not working. And it's not just about me this time. If I fulfill his command this Master's going to hurt this world you're so lovingly exploring. How many commands have you fulfilled that have done the same?"

She side-eyed me as she downed her wine. Her chugging seemed to move in slow motion but finally she smacked those stupid perfect lips of hers.

"A soul level feeling, eh?" I nodded.

"Le sigh, ok fine. But don't come crying to me when you're in the Punishment Zone again." "I won't have to, you'll be there with me."

She cracked another bottle.

POP! FIZZ! YAY! A very different bottle popped at the Stoneshield Power Gala we've all been waiting for.

Except me.

But there I stood in the most amazing dress, with the most amazing man and family I could ever ask for, as a part of me was screaming to escape, compelled to fulfill my Masters command and finally be free!

Great Goddess, my freedom. Could I really give it up? Could I not?

I held my glass out for the champagne Brad poured me. Champagne to celebrate him naming Nate CEO of their nuclear power branch division. The one I could very well destroy tonight. Twisted the knife extra deep when he announced the name: Oracle Power.

Yeeesh, guilt hurts.

That's when the compulsion kicked in. Master's command overtook my body while my mind screamed against it.

Stay -- go. Do -- Don't. Yes -- NO!

That went on in my internal background while I maintained a star worthy facade. I gotta say, if this Oracle thing doesn't work out I'd make a fantastic actress.

I toasted with my would be family. Fought the compulsion enough to hug and kiss Nate. Maybe for the last time so might as well make it worth it. I held onto him as we came apart, relishing his scent, his touch, the very essence of him.

I lingered longer to whisper in his ear, "proud of you, fuckface."

That left him with a beaming smile as I excused myself for "the restroom" and I knew in that moment I'd remember the feeling of his love for the rest of my eternity.

As my Sight predicted, I bypassed all the guards. Master's espionage got me all the keycodes to get me to the supercomputer. I stood before it, frozen. The USB nearly punctured my clenched palm.

The logo for Oracle Power spun before me. The shape of a grecian temple with a lightning bolt at its center. I let the tears flow, seeing the manifestation of my input alive before me. Too bad I had to kill it....

NO YOU DON'T! YES I DO!

NO YES NO YES!

I gritted my teeth against the infernal cacophony within me. This was it. This was going to break me. Well good.

Maybe I'd finally die, cease to be, or whatever it is Oracles do when they die...

There is another option, my love. If you'll quiet enough to hear it...

I gasped. That voice spoke from that soul level feeling that started all of this. I'd never heard it before but somehow I knew it. Somehow I'd always known it.

Badum badum badum

No. Not him. Not now.

But this was a different rhythm. Softer, smoother. One that was all my own. That voice couldn't be who I thought it was... could it?

IT DOESN'T MATTER! FULFILL YOUR COMMAND AND BE FREE! NO, YOU CAN'T DO THAT TO NATE!

Nate! The image of him beaming at me filled my mind's eye. No, not my mind... That's it!

Something overtook me then. Something that wasn't a compulsion but moved me into action from within. It was like a light I'd always been searching for blazed through all of me. A light that had always been there, buried under so many commands. I felt a cascade of breaking chains tear through me.

The searing sweetness of it drew me back to my body. To the burning pain around my wrists. My brands! That inner light I'd found was burning them away. I marveled as the accumulated stars of so many commands blazed out of existence, releasing me...

Almost.

The stars were gone but the black cuffs still remained, chaining me to Oracle Law. No! I couldn't have come this far to fail!

I went back into the void of what I now knew was my heart.

It had been closed for so long and now the door was open, but it still wasn't enough. The cuffs burned me again. I screamed—

My scream echoed back at me...

Wait, that wasn't an echo. It was the scream of others crying out for help. There were so many... too many! I couldn't take it. And yet... I could.

I surrendered to it all, shaking with the force of so much releasing through me. Then, like a lightning flash, the pain vanished, leaving me with a feeling I'd never known...

Freedom.

And with that my cuffs of bondage burned away.

I centered myself. No longer frozen. No longer compelled. I dropped the USB, glared down at it. Then, relishing in the knowledge that it was now possible, crushed the fucking thing with the heel of my Louboutin.

It was the most satisfying crunch I'd ever heard.

"Emily?" Nate's voice. I looked up. He stood there flanked by security guards. The look in his eyes tore at my freshly expanded heart.

Abject betrayal.

"Oh Nate, I'm sorry..." I could neither speak nor remember more as I fainted dead away.

I woke up in the Oracular Zone. A hazy interdimensional sun shone down on me. The Great Pythia's face swam into view, blocking the light. She smiled.

"That was one hell of a show, my dear."

She offered me a hand. I took it and gasped, noticing her tattoo free wrists. "You too?"

"All of us." She bowed to me in an astonishing sweep and from her I felt the gratitude of all Oracles. A collective embrace my awakened heart could now receive.

"So that's who was screaming back to me. But how?"

"It takes but one voice to spark the fires of freedom. You were always that voice, E. You just needed a reason to use it."

The door of my heart opened completely and at its threshold Nate's beaming face blazed across my Sight. I could See beyond the threshold now, my path of light ever expanding, connected to my Sisters. All of us, free at last.

"He was my reason, our Sisterhood was my follow through." I squeezed her hands, taking in our unbranded wrists.

"Geez, Nate must hate me now. Is Oracle Power safe? What about my... ha! Non Master?" "I believe Jaelynne worked her magick there. Do you trust her?"

I was about to say fuck no but then another voice spoke from within me. A voice beyond the Oracular vision I'd always known. The voice of my soul that spoke with the voice of the Great Goddess herself.

"Yes."

And with that acknowledgement, my Sight unfolded.

I saw not just the future but the past. All of it happening all at once. I knew then it always had been, but only now could I comprehend it.

I saw Jaelynnne enacting our plan... using technologically advanced hacking charms to break into Master's supercomputer and click clack click... BOOM! His plans for future resource draining power were decimated.

Well done, girl. I knew I could count on you!

And I really did. I prepared my spirit to leave this strange yet familiar timespace when I saw her go one step further.

She knocked on a door I knew well. Nate's door. He opened it and as soon as I saw his face the vision dissolved.

I gasped back to the Oracular Zone. The Pythia smiled at me.

"The Great Goddess has touched you, and with her gifts come great responsibility." She took the Pythia's Diadem she wore off her head and placed it on mine.

Its weight was not a burden.

"I saw the past, but when the vision turned to Nate it disappeared."

"Certain strands are for the Great Goddess to weave on your behalf. A Pythia is not meant to be omniscient and believe me, you don't want that job."

"Fuck me, I guess not."

She laughed, then I laughed and all the animosity I imagined between us dissolved in the face of our newfound freedom.



Nate was in his office when I happened upon him. The site of my first ransacking betrayal. Ugh, how could he ever forgive me?

He stared off into space. That look he gets when he's on the brink of a breakthrough. Damn, was I interrupting him?

He turned to me as if he heard the thought. An intense moment where I didn't know what was going to happen. I didn't like it. But I also did. The unknown before me beckoned with possibility.

"You weren't kidding about the magick, eh?"

"I never kid about magick, Nate. I'm so sorry I didn't-"

"Let's just skip the sorrys." He nodded to my Diadem.  
"Proud of you, fuckface."

He hugged me hard in an embrace that longed to keep me but was also willing to let me go. I looked into his angelic eyes and saw all I needed to see.

"I fucking love you."

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



A writer with a gift for sci-fi & fantasy world building, Stephanie sees story as a way to discover ourselves and find resonant connection with characters and each other. Story, imagination and fantasy are major influences that helped her overcome a severe eating disorder that almost took her life. The lessons learned from those experiences combined with dedication to her craft have helped her shape her own stories of characters overcoming adversity in fantastical ways through a psychological lens grounded in real world issues, specifically mental health. Stephanie knows what it's like to hit rock bottom and rise from it, coming full circle from one who consumed stories to one who now creates them.

Stephanie can be found on Twitter & IG @stephbrandolini and on Facebook @sbrandolini.



TINY WINDOWS

---

### **TINY WINDOWS**

A curated collection of classic and original short fiction highlighting authors from yesterday and introducing the storytellers of tomorrow.

We highlight classic stories from history, introduce contemporary authors of the present, and commission original and exclusive works in an effort to follow the muse and meet publishing and film industry desires.

Questions about licensing or adapting? Want to know more about these writers or this story? Please reach out.

---

### **FOUNDERS**

ANDREW VAN WYK

+1.424.341.4121

[andrew@tinywindows.xyz](mailto:andrew@tinywindows.xyz)

VAN DITTHAVONG

+1.323.905.2050

[van@tinywindows.xyz](mailto:van@tinywindows.xyz)