

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 165 - Jake's Cousins

‘How?’

It was the first word that came into his mouth after reuniting with his cousin. Of course, finding his uncle and his cousin had always been a top priority for him.

When he had a few seconds to spare, he would wish to find them as soon as possible via the ‘Prediction’ function and a Path would thus be generated. Whenever he felt like it, a Path could show him how to find his uncle as quickly as possible. But when it came to finding his cousin, the Oracle device was always silent.

When he arrived in the Mirror Universe, a Path still existed, but when he tried again a few hours later, he received only silence in response. He had not panicked, because he himself was unreachable during his Ordeal, unless the person wishing to find him was in the same Ordeal as him.

There was also the possibility that she was in an area under the control of the Digestors where the Oracle was probably blind, or that her Oracle Rank was higher than his, or that she had a Cloaking device or skill that could conceal her existence from the other bracelets. He had seen several of these awards in the Oracle Store.

In response, Anya hugged him, almost cracking his bones despite his new physical stats. After lifting him off the ground briefly, Jake

returned her hug by gently patting her back to signal her that he needed to breathe.

Realizing that she was crushing his ribs, she loosened her embrace slightly and he was finally able to breathe again.

‘Sorry Jake. You have no idea how good it makes me feel to see you alive. ‘Anya apologised with slightly watery eyes, although she kept smiling. ‘ I couldn’t find you with the Oracle since yesterday, but when you magically reappeared this morning I rushed over as soon as I could. ‘

Jake’s face relaxed visibly as he discovered his cousin’s emotional reaction. It was rare to see such an expressive response from her. Usually, she was protective of him, but she was cordial enough not to appear cold.

Anya was the perfect example of a good Wilderth. Pretty, medium-length chestnut hair, green eyes, athletic, with an exemplary academic background that allowed her to directly obtain a key position in the government with her uncle Kalen’s string-pulling.

Jake didn’t know what her job consisted of, but he was probably the only Wilderth who had settled for a mundane job before acquiring his bracelet. Unlike him, who couldn’t handle the family pressures and competition, Anya had embraced them, feeding off them to move forward.

A good part of the reason why the rest of his family didn’t bother him was, of course, because he had lost his parents young, but the other reason was Anya’s achievements.

Because he had been a positive influence on her, driving her to excel, he hadn’t been pushed hard. The contempt and taunting of her other

cousins had nevertheless been enough to make him feel that he didn't belong there anymore.

'I really thought you were dead for a while, but look at you! If I wasn't guided by an Oracle Path, I probably wouldn't have recognized you...' Anya exclaimed, pinching his toned biceps in amazement.

'I guess your first Ordeal went well?'

Well, she was not wrong. The last time Anya saw him Jake was a few centimetres shorter, and was somewhat out of shape with a total lack of physical fitness. His hair hadn't seen the shadow of a barber for over six months and his skin was suffering from mild acne due to his junk food excesses.

The Jake in front of her was a tall man about 1.88m tall, 7 centimetres taller and significantly heavier than before. The only difference was that his extra pounds were pure muscle. In addition to the muscle gain from training during the Ordeal, he owed his gain in height and weight to the elevation of his Aether Constitution.

Beyond a certain point, the Aether started to affect his body to a certain extent. The effects were negligible in the short term, but every day that passed his body was transformed to adapt to the ever increasing load of Aether in his body.

'Cough, cough.'

An intentional cough echoed beside the siblings, bursting the bubble of joy marking their reunion. Even though it was only a cough, Jake felt irritated without knowing why.

Fzmjrare, vu hfzudpiiw arlnuhout ovu movuz lmitauz jufzare f qflc, gpo ovuzu jfl rm laer ovfo vu cruj vaq. Tval jfl rmo aqnmllagiu, vmjusuz, larhu vu jfl fhmqnfrware Arwf.

'Do I know this guy too?' He thought mentally with a slight doubt.

'Long time no see Jake. It's hard to recognize the Wilderths' loser when I see you today.' The guy said in a tone of mockery that was hard to distinguish, but it was there.

The vein in Jake's temple swelled violently when he recognized the intonation. Damn, he hated this guy.

'Long time no see Charles. Assholes like you, on the other hand, I recognize them easily even when they hide their faces under a mask.' Jake insulted him ruthlessly, immediately returning the favor.

Maybe a few months earlier he would have tolerated his cousin's jeers or mocking insinuations, but it was different now. Even if this guy turned out to be an over-powered Evolver in the end, he didn't care as long as he was in an Oracle City. With Anya around, he had nothing to worry about.

Especially since he knew Charles's character well. He was the family scientist, working in aerospace at a very prestigious position. His intelligence and ingenuity was undeniable, but when it came to combat he was probably as ignorant as Jake was before his Ordeal.

However, he was no slacker. Whereas Jake was a notorious procrastinator before he got his bracelet, Charles had always taken care of his body, training regularly and following an impeccable diet.

He was a maniacal person, obsessed with his appearance, his health and whose happiness depended on the admiration others had for

him. Basically, a superficial person, but who had gotten this far precisely because of this.

After the insult Jake had just hurled at him, he could easily imagine his cousin's angry congested face under his mask. Yet, contrary to the verbal exchange he had expected, in which he intended to test his over 1000 IQ to deliver the most creative insults of his life, Charles remained calm.

Jplo iacu Arwf f duj luhmrtl ufziauz, vu imjuzut val vmmt frt omme mdd val qflc gudmzu lqaiare jzwiw. A ifzeu lhfz zfr fhzml l val dfhu dzmq val pnnuz zaevo dmzuvuft om ovu gmoomq md val zaevo hvuuc.

Seeing the healed wound on his cousin's face Jake was stunned on the spot for a short while, but he quickly came to his senses. With all the Digestors he had faced since his arrival in the Mirror Universe, it was impossible for all his cousins to escape unharmed. His survival also had a lot to do with luck.

'It seems your balls are a lot heavier than they used to be, cousin. But I like it. 'Charles said before giving him a manly hug too.

Jake didn't know how to react, but he decided to bury the hatchet for now. He wasn't in the mood for revenge anymore. Taking advantage of the reunion, he asked Anya the question that really mattered to him.

'How is uncle Kalen?' Jake asked with a serious expression.

His cousin stopped inspecting his new physique with curiosity and answered in a soothing voice that was meant to reassure him.

‘He’s doing well. You know him, he was in the army before. Using his connections, he made it to New Earth easily before the Earth was fully teleported.

Jake didn’t like that answer and Anya could read the growing resentment on his face.

‘Uncle Kalen and I didn’t abandon you Jake. We just couldn’t join you. ‘ Anya explained, trying to justify their behaviour. ‘ I’d just joined the government and uncle Kalen was retired. By the time we learned the truth, it was too late, we couldn’t contact you.’

‘I don’t understand.’

It was the truth. Jake didn’t get what stopped them from telling him everything, just as the Government could have saved many lives by informing them in advance.

Anya sighed long and hard in response.

‘Let’s sit down at a table first and I’ll explain everything. It’s more complicated than you think. ‘