

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

### Chapter 166 - The Truth (part 1)

The hall with a saloon atmosphere they were in was the Player Hall. The reason there was a bar, dining tables or doors leading to private lounges was simply because it was a good way for Players entering or exiting an Ordeal to wait or take the pressure off, but also to recruit teammates.

From the fifth Ordeal onwards, the Red Cube sometimes recommended forming a team. Even more rarely, in the more advanced Ordeals, having a faction was required. Being a Solo Player was of course possible and in the case of these Ordeals, these Solo Players would come together to form a new team.

The reason why the Red Cube left such information and the possibility for Players to organize themselves in the more advanced Ordeals was sadly obvious: The higher the Ordeal number, the fewer potential participants there were in the running.

The stakes being very high, even for the Oracle itself, it was essential to ensure that there were enough Players, since the enemy was usually Players from another Mirror Universe and under the supervision of another Oracle.

Beyond that, Jake didn't know the other details, since that was all Xi was able to reveal with his current rank 5 of Sergeant. He would only be able to get more information on the subject after surviving

his Fifth Ordeal, which many considered the First True Ordeal because dying became possible with real goals and stakes attached.

Accepting Anya's proposal, Jake and the rest of the group sat down at one of the tables, with a drone flying quickly to their side to suggest a drink after transferring the list of available drinks in the language of the Mirror Universe to their wristband.

'Ugh, more weird symbols...' Jake and Will grumbled at the same time.

Seeing their reaction, Anya and Charles were shaken by a slight laugh.

'I almost forgot you'd just arrived in the Mirror Universe. 'Her cousin said in an amused tone. 'You don't speak Oraclean yet, but neither do we. Order anything, and the drone will bring it to you. The bartender is just for special orders. '

'It's not the ordering that worries me, it's the price. We've seen what it looks like in the Oracle Playground. 'Will replied with a face tortured between his desire for a drink and that of being satisfied with the water from his canteen.

'No worries. Today's on me. 'Anya offered with a smile that was meant to be encouraging. 'I can at least do that for our reunion! '

Jake remained silent, feeling slightly awkward. He wasn't used to his cousin being so generous. Thinking about what she had just said, he took the opportunity to change the subject.

'The Oraclean? I thought you'd have started to learn by now if you'd gotten to B842 so long before I did.' Jake commented falsely surprised.

‘I know a few words and symbols, but that’s not my thing. ‘Anya confessed without shame.

‘In New Earth, there’s only Earthlings, so all the buildings and cubes, even the Oracle Store is in English there. You can also choose other languages of Earth origin as translation options, so learning the Oraclean wouldn’t have been of much use. But some specialists speak it fluently, as do most Evolvers and Players at the top. Charles speaks it a little bit, too. ‘

Charles, who was already sipping his coffee delivered by the drone, proudly straightened up, hearing Anya’s compliment. Some habits had a hard time, although the new scar across his face had greatly reduced his arrogance.

Having no idea of how much Aether a coffee costs nor of Anya’s savings, Jake and Will opted for a coffee as well. So did Alima and Patrick. The reasoning was that if Charles allowed himself to take such a hot drink without hesitation, it must not have been that expensive. Only Anya took a juice.

‘I was planning to go to New Earth one day to see if I could find a cheap Oraclean dictionary there. Please tell me that even exists. ‘Jake probed with another question.

‘Of course it exists. ‘Anya nodded. ‘ I even have one on me if you’re interested? I don’t use it much, and it’s free for government personnel. ‘

Putting her backpack on the table, her cousin rummaged around inside looking for the so-called dictionary. Jake was surprised that Anya could carry such an item, because the dictionary was supposed to be an absolutely huge book, even with a tiny font.

In the end, the young woman found what she was looking for and took a USB flash drive out of her bag in a victorious manner.

‘Tada! It’s all in there.’ Anya said as she handed him the flash drive.

Jake looked confusedly at the thumb drive in his palm. Then he remembered that he had been able to merge his smartphone with his Oracle device and therefore, it must have been possible to transfer the contents of a flash drive.

”Xi?”

[Just put the flash drive connector against your wristband. The contents should be transferred instantly. You can also directly let the wristband swallow the flash drive, but I think your cousin would like it back, so we’ll skip it.]

Following her exact instructions, Jake snapped his flash drive into his wristband, whose molten alloy shifted to form the proper opposing plug. A second later, the ‘Download complete’ notification rang out. He was then able to unplug the key and return it to his cousin.

Jake made two or three mental attempts to check if the contents were accessible and at one thought an English/Oraclean dictionary appeared before his eyes. This was good news for Xi as well since her memories of the language were no longer limited to immediate comprehension and translation. She could once again understand and speak the language fully.

Meanwhile, the rest of the coffees and juice were also served and the drone left, sailing to another customer. As the silence settled again, Jake grew serious and returned to the main topic. Namely, why she and her uncle hadn’t given him any news and hadn’t tried to warn him.

‘So?’

Anya sighed again when she saw her brother’s expression, but this time Charles patted her shoulders to signal that he could handle it.

‘It’s very simple. Did you try talking to some local natives about the Mirror Universe during your Ordeal?’ Charles asked all of a sudden.

Jfcu mnurut val qmpov jfroare om lfw lmquovare, ovur himlut ao fefar. Waii, gulatu vaq, himlut val uwul dmz f qmquro frt ovur mnurut ovuq fefar ar sfar.

‘So, unfortunately, you do not know. ‘Charles concluded coolly. ‘I give you the answer loud and clear. You can’t. ‘

‘What do you mean ? You mean the Oracle forbids it?’ Jake assumed with puzzlement.

‘No. The Oracle is stopping you. Literally. ‘

Jake thought back to what he had just learned about the Slave Contract and his face became gloomy. Seeing his cousin’s expression, Jake confirmed his hunch with a nod. Will, for his part, was still confused, but on seeing their expressions he suspected that the explanation would not please him.

‘That’s right. If you try to reveal anything in any way, the bracelet will stop you by taking control of your will. ‘

‘What do you mean?’ Will inquired more and more confused.

Jake took the opportunity to recount his recent experience and what he’d learned about the Slave Contract. Anya, Charles and the other two soldiers listened silently with a jaded look that showed they were used to this kind of thing.

Will, like Jake earlier, was horrified, but his businessman's mind focused instead on the positive aspects of this. It made it possible to have reliable employees, partners and customers. Especially in the Oracle Cities.

'The bracelet does it differently in this case, since we are not slaves.

' Charles nuanced what Jake said.

'It's, quite frankly, much more vicious. At first, the bracelet will simply block the vocal cords or scramble sounds by forcing unintelligible speech. If the individual persists, for example by attempting sign language, the bracelet will crack down...

'By manipulating neurotransmitters in the brain, the liquid metal in the bracelet will then directly attack motivation by modulating dopamine and serotonin levels. If that's not enough to discourage the person, it prevents him or her from doing so by making him or her forget the idea.

'When the urge to reveal anything comes back, it starts all over again. For those who really insist and cling to the idea of revealing everything by writing down what they need to do or recording everything on a computer or paper, the same principle applies. The Oracle prevents them from doing so and they come to their senses a little later wondering what they were doing.

'Those who really insist, have huge black holes in their memory after trying a few dozen times, because the bolder the trick to reveal information, the more memories are lost. The Oracle doesn't go into detail. If an engineer tries to build a machine to reveal the truth, he simply won't know how to build it before he even starts. These forgetfulnesses are irreversible. '

Jake and Will were chilled when they heard those last words.