

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

### Chapter 167 – The Truth (part 2)

‘After a few unsuccessful attempts,’ Charles continued. ‘The government yielded and chose to keep the secret. The only way that has ever worked to reveal the existence of the Mirror Universe is simply to take someone there. But once they go in, they too are subject to secrecy, as they immediately receive a bracelet.’

The explanation was even more creepy and sordid than they imagined. Jake still preferred his view that all politicians were bastards. At least he could blame someone.

‘Well, what? Did you really think everyone in government was a self-centered asshole who only served his own interests?’ Anya scoffed at him sweetly.

‘Even if that was true for 99% of them, there’d always be one to try and tell the world everything. Especially since New Earth’s most powerful Evolvers and Players were originally simple soldiers. They have no political interests and no one to blackmail them or force them to keep quiet.’

On second thought, it kind of made sense. Without the concept of Evolver or Player, Jake thought it was plausible for the government to hide the truth by controlling information. It was unlikely, though, but definitely not impossible. In fact, that’s what he’d always thought until now.

However, with the Evolvers and advanced Players, that justification no longer held. The Earth Government had no way to track down each and every one of these elite soldiers unless all of these Evolvers and Players were all without exception extremely loyal, which Patrick and Alima said was not the case at all.

So he had to face the facts. The Government was incapable of fully revealing the truth unless it brought each person one by one on B842. Stopping on this line of thought, Jake faced a problem.

‘Why not just take the whole of humanity to B842?’ He asked. ‘I imagine you came straight to New Earth or at least a government controlled base, right?’

Alima answered this time.

‘Two reasons. It’s expensive, and New Earth doesn’t have enough space. You have to remember that even today New Earth is only the size of a small country.’

‘By the way, how did you get to B842 before we were all transported here?’ Will asked with genuine curiosity. ‘A Cube?’

‘Yes, a Yellow Cube.’ Anya confirmed between two sips of juice. ‘The cities supposedly destroyed in the False World War weren’t all blown up and not many nuclear missiles were actually fired. The Digestors simply barged in from a spatial rift and we defended ourselves.’

‘The Oracle Guardians then intervened, leaving a Cube behind after eliminating the Digestors and cleansing those areas of radiation. Whether it was Paris, London, Tokyo, New York or Beijing, there were large Yellow Cubes there that the Government could use as they wished.’

‘The Oracle Guardians donated a few bracelets as well as a large quantity of Aether corresponding to the Digestors that our armies and missiles had eliminated, which made it possible to finance the first uses of the Yellow Cube which, like here, are fixed at 50 pts of Aether per person. ‘

Jake’s neurons were in turmoil. There was a hint in his cousin’s words that was deeply distressing to him.

‘If very few cities have been completely destroyed... Was Paris one of them? ‘ Jake asked coldly, as if allowing himself to hope might extinguish that hope again.

Anya replied with a sorry expression.

‘When I learned the truth, that was the first thing I checked. Paris was practically destroyed by the Digestors before the Oracle Guardians arrived, but there were many survivors. Unfortunately, I haven’t been able to get any news about your parents.

‘It’s not impossible that they survived and then were taken away by an Oracle Guardian. They did indeed bring some survivors with them, but the probability is too low ... ‘

Anya didn’t dare to tell him clearly that his parents were dead for good, but he got the message. They were neither military nor specially trained in combat. There was no reason for an Oracle Guardian to take enough interest in them to take them with him.

Seeing Jake’s face fall back into despair and then turn deadpan, Anya freaked out. Remembering why she had come in the first place, she immediately mentioned something else.

‘You were talking about going to New Earth? Why don’t we go there now. Uncle Kalen will be glad to see you again and grandfather will also be relieved to know one more Wilderth survived.’

‘Did any of them die?’ Jake caught the subtlety in what his cousin was saying.

‘Some of them yes...’ Charles growled. ‘My brother and my mother, for starters, but most of them are just missing. We’ll have to wait a few days to be sure.’

On hearing this information, a deadly silence fell over the group. Jake wasn’t particularly close to Charles and his family originally, so he didn’t feel particularly sad, but it was still a depressing moment. He was probably not the only Wilderth orphan anymore.

‘To New Earth, I’ll go, but not right away. Now that I have a dictionary, there’s no hurry.’ Jake said, as if nothing had happened after a while.

‘Why?’ Anya complained in a disappointed tone. ‘You’d be safe there and the government wants to record the new Players’ Second Ordeal scores. If you get a good result, it’ll be a credit to the family. Especially Grandpa. How the government treats the new Players depends a lot on that result.’

Jake and Will frowned in response.

‘The results of Ordeal are given only to the Player himself. How could the Government record anything?’ Will asked aloud the question that Jake had been wondering about.

‘Come with me and you’ll find out.’ His cousin answered with a false air of mystery.

‘It’ll be a chance to see if you’re a loser or not for real.’ Charles added jokingly. ‘Vincent holds the family record for the moment, holding 48 minutes and 16 seconds inside. If you do better, it’ll sure make you look good in the eyes of the family.’

‘Ugh, I lasted five minutes and eight seconds, I think...’ Patrick lamented, scratching his head in embarrassment.

‘And I 21 minutes!’ Alima bragged to the side. ‘But it’s the worst memory of my life.’

Jake and Will were getting more and more confused. Their talk didn’t sound at all like the kind of Ordeal they’d just finished.

‘I don’t understand a word you’re saying...’ Jake and Will said after they exchanged looks.

‘Every Ordeal has a training theme that comes back in different forms each time.’ Patrick explained patiently. ‘The first one has a fitness and combat theme. Depending on the world you’re sent into, it can include the use of firearms or explosives, but hand-to-hand combat remains at the heart of the learning process.’

‘We’re talking about the second Ordeal. The simplest and the most difficult of all.’

‘No one can fail this Ordeal.’ Charles completed without joking this time. ‘I mean, failing the main objective. It’s also the shortest Ordeal we know of. And yet... it is undoubtedly the hardest...’