

The Oracle Paths

Volume 4: The Purgatory

Chapter 362 - Apologies

Not everyone was particularly receptive to Jake's feelings, but Will and the women in his group did not miss this radical change in mood. Jake never really exuded much joy, at best a listless phlegm, but that was exactly why his mood swings were so easy to spot.

At that moment, his glare and the explosive growth of his fangs and claws left no doubt as to the nature of his true feelings. A barely repressed murderous aura was leaking out of him, the Soul Glyph Apex Predator expressing itself in all its splendor.

The veteran soldiers in the base were stunned, but sadly not everyone was. Ruby's aunt bore a solemn face despite her tough disposition, while a number of humans visiting Thelma for the first time were about to faint and were shivering from sheer terror.

Perhaps because a woman knew better than anyone how to recognize a rival in love, Sarah followed directly where Jake's gaze was pointing to and cast daggers at Ruby who was trying to make herself as small as possible behind her aunt.

However, Jake's hostile insolence had finally provoked the ire of these veteran soldiers. One of the two soldiers leading the march with a captain's badge (double silver rectangles) on his shoulder pads and a huge assault rifle in his hands retaliated with his own aura, his dense Spirit Body instantly dispersing the oppression his Soul Glyph was exerting on his comrades.

"Not bad, but if that's all you've got, you'd better lay low and not walk out of an Oracle Shelter on your own." The soldier taunted him dismissively.

"Is that a threat?" Jake said each word distinctly without averting his eyes.

'If you think you can threaten me because you've done a few more Ordeals than I have, you can keep dreaming.' He sneered inwardly.

"Take it any way you want." The captain snickered slightly before probing the face of the middle-aged woman in uniform, whose silver eaglet this time testified to her rank as a colonel.

Colonel Hale nodded appreciatively and then took over. Firmly grasping the arm of the white-haired young woman who was trying to keep a low profile, she walked towards Jake, forcing her victim to come along.

Once in front of Jake, she tugged at Ruby's arm and pushed her in front of him mercilessly, as if she was offering her up as a gift. The young woman, who had considerable physical strength compared to her aunt, didn't dare resist.

"Apologize." Colonel Hale ordered in an icy tone.

"I can't..." Ruby murmured red with shame as she suddenly became the center of attention. She didn't dare cross Jake's unforgiving gaze and continued to stare at her aunt

in despair. It was clear to all present that she was living an extremely uncomfortable moment.

Among the veterans escorting her aunt was her instructor Alef Smith, as well as some of her Ordeal teammates. Craig in particular, the chubby black man, had no idea what was going on.

Why did her aunt want her to apologize to the man they had cooperated with to defeat Bawopi? Most shocking of all, he couldn't remember when was the last time Ruby had behaved like this.

Over the years, her character had gradually darkened, gradually turning her into a cold and calculating little tyrant. Entering the Mirror Universe had accelerated this personality transition and he never thought he would see the fearful, introverted Ruby he had grown up with again.

While Craig recalled some old memories he thought he had forgotten, Ruby was still standing stiff as a pole with her back to Jake, her gaze still begging for help from her aunt. The deadly silence in the base made the situation even more awkward.

Seeing that her foster daughter had no intention of apologizing, Colonel Hale's already frosty expression darkened even more and a graveyard atmosphere set in within the embassy courtyard.

It was not for nothing that Ruby called her aunt rather than mother. Her adoptive mother had always kept a distance from her adopted children, and she was not the only False World War orphan in her care. "Aunt" was the affectionate term that all the wards of the nation raised by this stern woman used to call her, as her conception of maternal love was very special, even though she took good care of them.

What Ruby feared eventually happened. Her aunt's barely contained fury exploded, pounding their eardrums with the overwhelming savagery of a tidal wave.

"RUBY!" She yelled out as she made the closest people, including Jake and his companions, grind their teeth. The woman was startled and trembled slightly, her face livid and appalled.

"I didn't raise you like that. "Colonel Hale took a softer tone, but the lull was only a brief respite. "Repaying kindness with enmity?! Where's my face?! The rest of the government is already laughing at me and I have endured the endless admonitions of three generals because of you! So you're going to apologize right now before you do any more damage! Hurry up!"

At this point, even Jake felt bad for Ruby. His resentment was nowhere near gone, but he was glad he didn't have an aunt like that. Nevertheless, that didn't mean that he didn't feel intense satisfaction at seeing this bitch publicly humiliated.

Sarah alternated between Jake and Ruby with suspicion, but she was careful not to make any comments. She didn't want to incur the wrath of this military woman in the midst of a menopause crisis.

To her, this colonel was much too inflexible and reeked of frustration. The best remedy in such cases was a good fuck to relieve the tension and this woman soldier clearly needed it!

If a woman like Sarah thought this, she was definitely not the only one who shared this opinion, but at that very moment the expressions of all the soldiers present were constipated and solemn, as if they were the ones undergoing a sermon.

Finally, against all odds, the miracle took place.

"Sorry..." Ruby whispered in a barely audible voice, staring at her toes.

"What?" Jake couldn't believe it. He had heard it the first time, but he felt like playing deaf today.

"Louder, we can't hear anything!" Her aunt hollered as if to add insult to injury.

"I am sorry." Ruby sobbed a little louder as she stared indifferently into his eyes this time.

That might have been enough to forgive her, but when Jake compared her sobbing voice to the scornful, resentful look in her eyes that was light years away from the guilt and regret he thought he would find there, he changed his mind. He just couldn't tell if this reaction was meant for him.

These surface negative emotions almost overflowed, but these were not the only nuances these blue, amethyst eyes held. Alas, he was not able to interpret them correctly and had no intention of doing so.

Because Ruby was facing them, only Jake and his comrades were aware of her bipolarity. To her aunt and the other soldiers, the young woman was on the verge of tears and deeply embarrassed.

"It's okay." Colonel Hale grunted as she beckoned her to join the ranks. She, too, had exhausted her anger.

Before she turned her back on Jake and his group, she rubbed her eyes as if she was wiping away her tears, and it was indeed a face with swollen, red eyelids that she presented to her aunt and the rest of the crowd, as if she had indeed cried.

Such an actress's performance gave them chills. But for the young woman's aunt, by forcing her to apologize, her goal had been achieved. She could now continue her mission.

"Jake Wilderth, I'm Colonel Hale and Ruby who just apologized is my foster daughter. She introduced herself concisely. "I realize that your experience with our recruits may have left a very bad image of our methods, but we want to officially recruit you. If you accept, you will join the Prodigy program which Ruby and Craig, whom you have already met, are part of and will immediately receive the rank and benefits of a captain.

"In addition to a residency on New Earth, you will be able to access at a discounted price much of our database, genetic and Aetheric technologies and breakthroughs that we have obtained from the Oracle Store, not to mention your equipment and ammunition, for which the Earth Government will take full responsibility. George, who already works for us as an analyst, will be able to tell you the rest of the details, but it is definitely worth it. Your other cousin Brice has also joined us, not to mention your cousin Anya who has also been working for us for several years. You clearly have a career ahead of you among us!"

Will and Kyle were deeply shocked by the generosity of such an offer. No matter how resourceful and talented they were, it was difficult to match an entire nation. But Sarah and Tim chuckled inwardly as they envisioned Jake's next response. And indeed, he didn't disappoint.

"I do appreciate your generosity, but alas, I regret that I have to decline. I value my freedom."

The polite formulation of his reply and his falsely saddened grimace far exceeded their expectations. Who would have thought that this antisocial bumpkin could be so tactful?

Holding his breath, Jake expected Colonel Hale to insist a second time or even explode with anger, but she surprised him with her great calmness. Instead of taking it the wrong way, she simply took a form out of the inside of her jacket and placed it in his hands with an affable smile.

"Take some time to think about it, okay? All the details are inside." She intimated him in a kind tone before walking slowly towards the building that Jake and his group had just left.

"Jake?" She stopped abruptly after a few steps, turning her head towards him.

"Yes?"

"Don't do anything you'll regret. You're young and you may think the world is your own, but in the end, alone, you're not much. We already have all the details of your psychological profile and we know how you think and what you are capable of. Your distrustful nature could turn against you one day."

Jake squinted as he listened to this subtle warning, but he didn't jump on it. Quietly, he followed the officer with his eyes until she and Ruby disappeared inside the building with their escort.

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"You're the guy from the other time who accompanied Ruby." Jake commented when he saw the two men stop in front of them.

"Hehe it's me Jake." The chubby man was relieved to realize that Jake was not hard to talk with. "I wish we could have met under different circumstances. I don't know what Ruby has done to you, but please bear with her. She didn't have an easy childhood."

"I imagine..." He muttered with a thoughtful air.

Seeing Jake withdraw, Craig suddenly realized that they had never formally introduced themselves.

"I'm Craig and he's Ryo. We grew up with Ruby and were also part of the Prodigy military program."

"Oh, nice to meet you." Jake replied bluntly.

Luckily his comrades were more sociable and introduced themselves, quickly breaking the ice between the two groups. It turned out that Craig and Ryo were friendly and full of humor.

Just like them, their team was apparently there to officially create their faction. Even the main Earth Union faction could not accept everyone. The new teams had to create their own subfaction to benefit from these advantages.

The main disadvantage of subfactions was that they were tied to the main faction. If one day they decided to leave the Earth Union, they would have to leave their subfaction behind. They could not simply leave, bringing their faction with them.

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