

The Oracle Paths

Volume 5: The Last Tutorial

Chapter 539 - Welcome Pack

Jake felt a pang of guilt as he thought about what might transpire if someone were to treat his uncle the same way under similar circumstances, but he quickly shrugged off his remorse.

He would never let that happen. The difference between the late Barty and his uncle was that he had no one to rely on. Also, his uncle Kalen was not so weak-minded. When necessary, he could even be devilishly perceptive and callous when it came to his own personal affairs, his loved ones and most especially his daughter.

The reality was that there were no weaklings amongst the Wilderths.

However, Jake surprised himself by considering the possibility. If tomorrow his sister Anya was judged as worthless or too weak by a bunch of Evolvers considerably stronger than her, would she be left to her own devices and doomed for the same reasons? This eventuality could not be ruled out.

Despite his hypocrisy and outward composure, Jake knew he was no different from Kyle. If it was his sister who was being abused and she died because some bastard refused to protect her, this guy's faction would have to suffer his wrath. That was just the sort of petty and resentful guy he was.

In the end, it wasn't the death of this Uncle Barty that tugged at his heart strings but the streaming tears of the two orphans stricken by grief. As he stood there gazing at them as they wept their eyes out, his throat choked with shame and he felt the need to apologize.

‘I’m sorry. Really.’ He croaked in a hoarse voice. ‘Maybe Barty did deserve to live and I’m in the wrong. Weakness or cowardice shouldn’t be flaws that dictate whether people live or die. In a less chaotic time and setting, I’m sure his other qualities would have shone through.’

Surprised by his sincerity, the two orphans stared at him dumbfounded.

‘To us, Uncle Barty shone like a beacon in the night. His qualities were always evident to us.’ Kelly retorted as she stopped sobbing.

Closing the eyes of the balding man to let him rest in peace, she grabbed Khal by the hand and stood up. It was only after she dried her tears and regained her surly, rebellious look that Jake noticed she was actually quite pretty. In her high school or college, she probably would have made people turn heads. He couldn’t help but feel homesick when he thought back to his own school days.

Sensing his insistent gaze, the young woman glared at him scornfully, and Jake immediately carried the body of the deceased into the Faction Vault to ease his awkwardness in front of their shocked eyes. It was the first time they had seen someone use a Space Storage Skill right before their eyes.

‘We’ll give your Uncle Barty a decent burial if we get out of this hellhole alive.’ Jake chuckled embarrassedly. Regaining his seriousness, he changed the subject. ‘I have a question. Why are you still alive? Even though Barty sacrificed himself to push you out of the crater, you were too close to the Rank 9 Digestor. Will, who was even farther away than you were, almost died instantly because of that monster’s shriek.’

Realizing that their virtually unharmed survival was indeed suspicious, Kelly began to panic and unconsciously squeezed Khal’s

hand that she was holding, making him squeal in pain. The child immediately started bawling again, but Jake had seen enough.

‘I had forgotten that small children receive an Aether Skill from the Oracle to compensate for their low odds of survival.’ He commented unconcernedly before patting the kid’s head in sympathy, which shrank shyly at his touch. ‘You don’t have to worry. There are other kids in my faction. Whatever your Aether Skill is, it means nothing to me.’

With a nod, he greeted Kelly and then finally headed back to his tent. Kyle, who had not said a word during the whole process also ruffled the boy’s dirty hair, then threw a compassionate look at the two orphans before leaving them alone as well.

‘Are you really planning to help these refugees?’ The Playboy revealed the crux of his thinking as he followed him back to the entrance of his tent.

Although Jake was usually cold and aloof, Kyle obviously knew he was more empathetic and caring than he let on, but he had a long way to go to deserve the title of saint. In his opinion, Jake’s guilt was undue. He didn’t have to apologize to these people.

‘Why not?’ Jake replied vaguely. ‘I initially had no intention of moving a finger before sorting the wheat from the chaff, but in the end it doesn’t matter. I can help them and it won’t cost me much. Whether they are grateful to me, helpful or not, or even traitors in the making, none of that is relevant. If they want to disobey or betray me, I will kill them no matter how strong and reckless they become because of my generosity. If it increases the chances of survival for the good guys then it’s worth it.’

‘But...’ Kyle protested before pausing, not really sure how to get his point across.

‘I know what you are trying to say but it’s not necessary.’ Jake cut him off calmly. ‘If I was running out of Aether, I obviously would have acted differently. But Kelly convinced me, or rather Barty convinced me. Some of the most despicable losers can hide a heart of gold beneath the grime that covers them. Others may be mischievous and hateful, but they may have a unique talent that we may sorely need in the future.’

‘They say that goodness ends when you start harming yourself. Giving a few million Aether points to boost their stats can’t hardly be considered a sacrifice on my part. The Purgatory produces 1 billion Aether points a day, Kyle, you know? My previous stance was simply shallow and immature and it reminds me of the aloof and condescending attitude of those multi-billionaires that I loathe. Even though I’m selfish and don’t care about the rest of the world, I still don’t want to become a person like that.’

Kyle furrowed eyebrows relaxed as he heard his whole reasoning. He thought Jake was acting on a whim, but apparently he had thought it through. His caring nature also proved that he was not indifferent to what he and his sister were going through. Reassured, he wished him a good night and retired to his own tent.

The rest of the night went smoothly and when they woke up, it was the same stormy sky that greeted them. It wasn’t as dark as last night, but there was barely enough light for them to find their way without tripping or falling into a ravine.

The refugees ate their breakfast in silence, deep in thought as they waited for their leader to give the order to set out again. With all the Digestors they had killed, they had no shortage of fresh meat, but it

was a shame they weren't allowed to light a campfire or they would have definitely started a barbecue.

Will and Svava had not slept a wink, as had most of the felines, but they were the ones who had volunteered to do so. The merchant didn't trust anyone to tally and count the loot, and the felines had long been trained to butcher and process Digestor's remains without damaging any of the materials.

Kyle woke up an hour after sunrise, followed closely by Jake. The refugees held back from rebuking them for sleeping in, but their faces spoke volumes. Of course, neither of them had closed an eye all night.

Kyle was too restless thinking about the horrors his sister was going through to relax, while Jake never wasted a second practicing. He put on a brave front for his peers and those ignorant refugees, but only he knew how little those victories meant.

His magic may have seemed awesome and all-powerful to weaker Evolvers, but that was because they didn't understand how his powers worked. To Jake, generating fireballs or telekinetic barriers was as simple as moving his arm or leg.

As long as the power of the spells or his mental exertion did not exceed a certain limit it was exceedingly hard to affect his stamina. But once he encountered an opponent forcing him to fight seriously, this fatigue threshold could be crossed very quickly.

Tvu mriw zuflmr vu immcut lm eimzAMPL frt msuznmjuzut feFarlo val uruqaul jfl laqniw guhfplu vu vft rmo wuo vft ovu qaldmzopru om quo fr mnmruro md val iusui. Tvu Rfrc 9 Daeulomz hmpit vfsu uqgmtaut oval talflouz, gpo ovu qmrlouz vft hvmlur om zuqfar nufhudpi om val poqmlo tuiaevo.

Therefore, he had to keep training to prepare for this contingency. Xi had already told him over and over again that his fighting techniques were inferior and that he lacked experience. He fooled the world with his high intelligence and agility, but there was a limit to what natural talent could accomplish. Facing a martial arts master with the same stats as him, he would undoubtedly be at a disadvantage.

As soon as Jake appeared in plain sight, all eyes locked on him and remembering what he had planned to say, he cleared his throat.

‘Good morning everyone.’ He smiled as he glanced briefly at Kelly who was munching on her meat at a distance. ‘First of all, congratulations to everyone for still being alive. I know how hard it was for some of you to overcome your fears.’

A few refugees cheered as they received the compliment.

‘Unfortunately, the losses we suffered could have been avoided. After thinking about it, I decided to make a gesture. After all, I am now your leader and you are part of my faction.. Now, come forward each in turn to receive your welcome pack.’