

Renewal

Chapter Ten

The conversation with the Magister had provided some clarity, yet it had also sparked a multitude of new questions within Jakob's mind. The notion of having such importance resonated with him and he was eager to learn more. Jakob made his way down the remaining stretch of the hallway towards the kitchen. He grabbed a leftover piece of bread and devoured it; his brief sleep having made him hungry. However, he was cautious of lingering too long in the kitchen, as he wished to avoid encountering anyone else. Exiting the kitchen, Jakob veered away from the staircase this time, to a footpath to his left that ascended a gentle slope towards the garden. The walk granted him the much-needed solitude to untangle his thoughts. Every step he took along the path brought back memories. The moments when he would hold his mother's hand and embark on this familiar route. The footpath initially began as a simple dirt trail, but as he ventured further, he reached an old rock path. The rocks themselves had transformed into solid stone over time, yet blades of grass defiantly broke through. Some of the stones cracked and were uneven. Alongside the path, there were the plants that Jakob's mother had planted long before his birth. Among them were snake plants, their sword-shaped leaves standing tall. Jakob walked for a while up the path, talking to himself as usual.

"Maybe that vision I had earlier wasn't just my imagination, but like a memory from my past lives. I'm pretty sure the man I saw was Luehtaz. I don't know who the other man was though. Hmm, whenever I do look at the statues of Derrick Stryder and even Flint Stryder, I always felt something, and now it makes sense." He rambled to himself.

As Jakob reached the summit of the hill, his eyes were fixed. Placed between two serene ponds, a small stone bridge stood. Wisps of steam gracefully rose from the warm pools. A

sense of warmth washed over his body, as if he had arrived at a sanctuary where peace was. On the other side of the bridge, a tree extended its branches, casting a shade over a weathered brown bench and a third pond flowed seamlessly into a stone wall. To his left, a pool of vibrant koi fishes gracefully glided through the clear waters. As Jakob came to the bench, his eyes were drawn to a remarkable stone carving on the nearby wall. It was his mother. The details etched into the stone brought her spirit to life. It was as if she was watching over him. Jakob sat down on the bench close to the warm pool and took his shoes off. After a few moments of the water warming him up, Jakob leaned down to pick up a few pebbles. One by one he tossed them in and stared at ripples of the water. He could see his reflection. Caught in the moment, his thoughts long gone, he was just there. Jakob sat there for what seemed like a long time, but then he heard a voice call to him,

“I knew I’d find you here.” The voice commanded.

It was his father’s voice, he sounded somewhat angry. Jakob knew his father was upset and he didn’t want to say anything to make him angrier.

“I am disappointed son. You disobeyed me and to make it worse, Celeste and Aleki were with you. What if the pirates took you, what if they had taken Celeste? By your decisions you put other people in danger!”

To Jakob's surprise, he did not anticipate being on the receiving end of shouting. After the conversation with the Magister his spirits were lifted, and he had developed a newfound curiosity about The Guardian and his role. He had finally gathered the courage to have a conversation with his father. Now Jakob chose to remain silent, an overwhelming tension weighed on his chest as his frustration grew by his father yelling at him.

“What if I lost you like I lost your mother!” The King continued.

“You wouldn’t have done nothing, just like you did nothing when mom died. She’s gone and you don’t even talk about her!” Jakob yelled.

In an act of frustration, Jakob grabbed a hefty rock and hurled it forcefully into the nearby pond. The rock crashed into the shallow depths, creating a splash as it found its way to the bottom.

The King, realizing now that he handled the situation wrong. He sat down on the nearby bench while Jakob paced anxiously back and forth. As a father, the King should have been more attuned to his son's struggles. He had deliberately kept Jakob in the dark about his destined role as the Guardian. The King's recent heated exchange with his brother only added fuel to his own uncontrolled anger, which unfortunately spilled over onto his son. Both father and son were in their own contemplative silence. Jakob eventually turned his gaze towards his father, noticing the intense gaze fixed upon his mother's statue. Joseph began, his voice filled with vulnerability,

"When your mother passed away, I was terrified. I never anticipated facing something so difficult." Jakob, intrigued by his father's rare openness, let his guard down and leaned in to listen. His dad had never spoken much about his mother death.

"She fell ill, a strange sickness. Even the Magister couldn’t help. But it wasn't just her who was sick," Joseph continued, a hint of sadness in his eyes. **"You were also battling the poisonous sickness, although you may not remember it clearly."**

Jakob had memories of his mother being there, and then suddenly she was sick, and then she was gone.

"We knew that the sickness was taking its toll on both of you, and we weren't sure if either of you would make it." Joseph explained.

"But you, my son, proved to be resilient. As you grew stronger, your mother grew weaker. And she accepted it with grace, knowing that her strength was being passed on to you. After she left us, you continued to be strong. You carried her spirit within you. Your mother meant everything to me. Just like you, when I was your age, I wasn't sure if I wanted to be the King. But your mother encouraged me and helped me grow, so that I became capable. But when she was gone, I lost my anchor. I had to find courage again, to learn how not to be afraid. Today, for the first time in a very long time, that same fear gripped me. I thought I would lose you." Touched by his father's heartfelt words, Jakob felt a surge of love and longing for his mother. Hearing his father speak of her with such affection brought him comfort. But deep in his heart, Jakob also knew how much his dad had always been there for him. His dad had done everything in his power to support and protect him. Jakob admired his father and aspired to be just like him.

"You're not afraid of anything." Jakob said loudly in a much better mood.

"I was today." Joseph said softly.

Jakob looked down,

"I'm sorry Dad, I know I should have listened to you. I just wanted to be able to have some fun and be free."

"Jakob you are free to do as you please." Joseph answered.

“I’m not free.” Jakob was speaking truthfully to his father for the first time. He turned around and continued,

“I’m the Kings son and now I’m the Guardian. I have responsibilities. I didn’t choose any of this and you knew this whole time.” It was tough for him to say but he got it out. They were both quiet and Jakob looked to his father,

“What if I can’t do it, what if I fail and disappoint everyone.”

“Jakob, you won’t. Listen son, everything is going to be okay.” Joseph grabbed him, hugging him as Jakob was holding back tears.

“I didn’t choose your mother to be gone, the same way you didn’t choose this, but everything happens for a reason. Even if we can’t see it just yet. You are Jakob Stryder. Regardless of what anyone labels you, you’re you. You can accomplish anything you set your mind to, just like your mother told you. There’s nothing you can ever do that would make us not love you.”

Joseph let go of Jakob and guided him to sit down on the bench together.

“Your mother knew about you being the Guardian, that’s why she would come up here to read stories to you. She would tell me how much you loved the stories of epic adventures of people who changed the world. I didn’t approve of it at first because your first duty in my mind was to the Legion Nation. But your mom coming from the south, understood how important the Guardian was for the hope of this world.”

“Really mom knew?” Jakob asked.

“Yes, and even when you were in her womb, she knew you were destined for great things. Being the Guardian is special son, it makes you different, unique.”

Jakob calmed down as they talked more about his mom.

“Your journey started today. And look at you, you already faced off against pirates and ogres. You had them running for the hills!” They laughed together.

“I think you scared them more than anything Dad.” Jakob did enjoy seeing his father in action.

“You have to show me how you did that trick blowing that pirate back?”

Joseph asked.

“I don’t know how it happened it just did. I felt just felt energy pull through my body and then a blinding white light.”

“Well with some proper training as you travel around the world, I’m sure you’ll learn a thing or too.” Joseph said with a smile.

“Travel around the world?” Jakob asked.

“Yes, a part of the Guardians Journey is traveling to each of the nations to learn their ways and foster peace.”

“No way! Yes!” Jakob's excitement bubbled up inside him, urging him to jump up from his seat. With a wide grin on his face, he dashed around, unable to contain his joy.

“You will finally get to do all that traveling you want. You leave tomorrow.”

Jakob stopped,

“Will I be able to see my friends?”

Joseph lowered his voice,

"Son, this is your journey," his father's voice resonated in his ears. **"Aleki and Celeste have their own paths to follow for now. But you have a choice. If you wish to embrace the path of the Guardian, you can. However, if you chose to not follow the Guardian's path, that is up to you. At the end of the day, we are all blessed with our own unique journeys that shape and mold us into who we are meant to be. The path you choose may lead you to everything you desire, only to suddenly veer and take you exactly where you were destined to be all along. You will surpass your own expectations, regardless of the challenges and triumphs along the way."**

Jakob sank into thought as his dad continued,

“But who knows Son with you being the big bad Guardian, your paths might cross again. Maybe you and Celeste can sail across the Southern Sea and fight off Ogres.” Filled with excitement, Jakob turned towards his father, and both rose to their feet. Laughter filled the air as they engaged in a playful pretend battle. With invisible swords clashing, they embraced the joy of the moment. In a sudden burst of energy, Jakob tackled his dad, causing them both to fall to the floor in a heap of laughter.

“I’m getting to old son, sooner or later you’ll be a better swordsman than me.”

“Dad, I think I can be the Guardian. If I have you by my side anything is possible.” Jakob finished.

“I might not always be here physically son, but just like your mother I will always be right here.” Joseph pointed to Jakob's heart.

They both stood up together and brushed themselves off.

“Put your shoes on, we will head back to the Palace. Aleki and Celeste are waiting for you around the fire, today will be your last night with them before you say bye tomorrow morning.”

“I can't believe I really am the Guardian; I get to travel. Ha I can guarantee William will be jealous.” Jakob thought to himself. He quickly ran to catch up to his dad who had already walked down the pathway.

“Tomorrow, I have final business to deal with down in the Ford Accommodations before we leave. It would be nice for you to see your uncle one last time before you leave, I know you two are close. He said he could meet us down there.” Joseph said as Jakob came to his side.

“I bet he would be good to ask questions about the Guardian.” Jakob thought to himself. The evening continued to unfold favorably for Jakob. Joseph guided them to another section of the Palace, where a cozy fire pit awaited. Master Hanes and Master Frizela joined them, along with Tita, who brought Tiberius alongside Aleki and Celeste. Gathered around the crackling fire, they shared stories and laughter, enjoying the banter between Hanes and Frizela. Jakob's confidence as the Guardian shone through, even playfully taunting Celeste to get a rise out of her. As the hours passed, Jakob finally embraced the importance of his role and felt a sense of acceptance. Before leaving for his room for the night, his mind was consumed with the desire to make his mother and father proud.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

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