

Reflection

Chapter Twenty-Eight

Jakob stormed away, his emotions fuming. The feeling of seeing Celeste and having her by his side once again, filled him with excitement. Yet, as they walked away from each other, regret surged within him, like an encroaching darkness he had long suppressed. Thoughts of his mother, his father, and the weight of his responsibilities crushed him. Voicing his frustrations aloud, Jakob muttered to himself,

"She's wrong. I can't return. I can't help anyone. There's nothing I can do."

Seeking solace, Jakob turned his eyes towards the moon, reminding him of the losses he suffered. The premature death of his mother had left a scar, but it was the death of his father that burned him to his core.

"You were supposed to be here for me, but you're not... And it's because of me, it's my fault." he whispered, his voice choked with remorse. The weight of guilt was heavy upon his shoulders as he grappled with the consequences of his actions. Jakob's eyes fell upon his reflection in the water, a distorted image that no longer resembled the person he once knew or wanted to become. Frustrated and angry, mainly at himself, he kicked the shallow water and resolved to retreat into the depths of the jungle. However, he was abruptly interrupted by the sound of a whistle through the air. Jakob ventured closer to the noise and discovered a man reclining on the shore, seemingly unbothered by his presence. Frustrated Jakob demanded,

"Who are you?" His patience was worn thin, and he desired to be alone. The man continued to whistle, his eyes closed, seemingly oblivious to Jakob. Annoyance building, Jakob kicked the man's leg, hoping to provoke a response.

"Who are you!" Still, the man remained unfazed, ignoring Jakob's presence.

Annoyed and ready to leave, Jakob muttered,

"I don't have time for this." He turned to walk away, but the man finally spoke up, breaking his silence. **"The real question isn't who I am, but who are you."**

Caught off guard by the unexpected response, Jakob paused momentarily, before he resumed his trek through the forest, retracing his steps towards where he had parked his rover. However, upon arrival, he discovered it was missing, realizing that Celeste must have taken it. Suddenly, the whistling of the man grew louder, as if the man was following him. Irritated, Jakob turned to confront him, demanding an explanation. The man cryptically replied out of sight,

"How could I follow you when you are lost?" As if he knew what Jakob was thinking. Annoyed, Jakob retorted,

"Listen man! who are you? You don't want to mess with me." Determined to get back on track and dismiss the stranger's presence.

"What matters is who you are," the man replied, his words carrying an air of wisdom.

Jakob sighed, **"I thought I knew who I was, but now I'm not so sure."** he confessed, lowering his head in defeat.

The man's voice resonated through the forest as he spoke again, **"But I know who you are."**

Skeptical, Jakob responded sarcastically, **"Sure, you do."** He pondered how to end the conversation and find his way back to the saloon.

Undeterred, the man persisted, **"I do... You're the King of Legion, Boy."** A smile played on the old man's lips as he locked eyes with Jakob stepping out from the brush. Only to vanish in the blink of an eye. The way the man had addressed him as "boy" stirred a sense of familiarity within him. In pursuit of answers, Jakob called out,

"Wait old man!" He began to chase after the elusive figure, desperate to uncover the truth.

"How do you know me?" Jakob yelled as he ran, his voice echoing through the dense forest.

"I knew a lost boy once, who ran through ma swamp," came the man's voice, seemingly carried on the wind. Jakob felt disoriented, uncertain of which direction to pursue.

"Tyranaz?" Jakob exclaimed, his voice reverberating through the trees. To his astonishment, the old man materialized above him, perched on a tree branch, holding an apple. To his utmost surprise, the man's appearance remained unchanged since their initial encounter in Wulfsrun Woods. It seemed as if not a single minute had passed, leaving his age untouched by the hands of time.

"I told yah once before. The road you choose will have challenges. It was your choice. Still seems like you're runnin away, boy." Tyranaz said, tossing the apple at Jakob before vanishing once more.

"My name is not boy!" Jakob yelled after him, fueled by determination as he continued to chase the fading echoes. As Jakob followed Tyranaz, he couldn't help but notice the cold air seeping into his bones, causing him to slow down his pace. As he pressed on, a transformation unfolded before his eyes. The once-lush forest now stood with frozen leaves,

clinging to the trees. The ground beneath his feet was blanketed in a layer of white snow. With each exhale, his breath materialized into a visible mist from the cold that was beginning to envelop the air. Pushing past the frozen leaves, he unveiled Tyranaz seated in a meditative position on weathered stone steps. At the heart of the clearing, there lay a circular pool, its surface covered in a layer of thin ice and dark blue water. As Jakob surveyed his surroundings, a chill crept into his bones.

Jakob's curiosity got the better of him as he started firing off questions, **"How did you end up here? Wait, why are you here? How are you still alive?"**

With eyes closed, Tyranaz replied, **"Ma dear boy, your energy is still killin me. Take a moment to quiet yo mind."**

Jakob wasn't pleased with being called "boy" and snapped back, **"I've already told you. My name is not boy."**

A hint of understanding crossed Tyranaz's face, **"Ah, it seems you're still searchin for your true identity."** Silence fell upon Jakob as he contemplated his words. Tyranaz, sensing his unease, spoke softly, **"I know the fear that lurks within you, the fear of closin your eyes. The darkness is nothin to be afraid of, from its depths is the best version of you."**

Confused by his surroundings, Jakob asked as he began to shiver, **"Where exactly are?"**

"This place holds a mystical force, ma friend. The water was ova the face of the deep before the beginnin of man. It is here now. The water holds the warmth of healin and the cold sting of pain. The cold never relents, for it is the ally of the Shadow. The depths of the underworld are far from heat and flame. The Shadow embodies coldness, darkness, and

loneliness. To become the person, you are meant to be, you must confront the darkness that resides in your past. The cold serves as a path." Tyranaz finished.

Doubt crept into Jakob's mind, questioning Tyranaz's guidance, **"Why are you here?"**

Gently, Tyranaz reminded Jakob of his purpose, **"I've told yah before, I am here to guide lost souls."** Jakob stood at the edge of the ancient ice-cold pool, its surface shimmering with a layer of frost. The pool seemed to hold a presence, inviting him into the deep.

With a sense of urgency in his voice, Tyranaz spoke, finally opening his eyes and locking his gaze onto Jakob, as if peering into his very soul, **"It is your time. Will you conquer the darkness, or will you let it swallow you."** Jakob continued to analyze his surroundings, he reached down to touch the icy water, a rush of coldness coursed through his body, instantly awakening his senses. The biting chill pierced through his skin, drawing his attention to the physical discomfort, and momentarily distracting him from the turmoil within. It was as if the water demanded his full presence, urging him to let go of the burdens he carried. The weight of his troubles had become too much to bear, and he knew in his heart that he could no longer continue this path of despair. Though unsure of what steps to take, he was resolute in the knowledge that he had to act, no matter how uncertain the outcome may be.

"I'm ready." Jakob was willing to take the chance to change. As Jakob tiptoed into the pool, he immediately sensed his heartbeat intensify and his focus sharpen. The icy water seemed to sear his skin, causing him to take deep rapid breaths. He tried to calm his racing breaths as he submerged himself in the water, only allowing his face to peek out. Jakob closed his eyes and took a deep breath, allowing himself to be enveloped by the numbing cold. The icy touch seeped into his bones, freezing the chaotic thoughts that consumed him. In this frozen sanctuary, the

stillness mirrored the stillness he sought within himself. As Tyranaz led Jakob through the process, his voice filled with a soothing resonance, urging him to follow along.

"Let the cold embrace you, Jakob. It will take you to a place, a realm within your mind that you have yet to fully explore. You must choose." Jakob closed his eyes, surrendering himself to the experience. The cold enveloped him, seeping into his bones, but instead of feeling discomfort, he felt a strange sense of tranquility. It was as if he was floating, suspended in the in-between, awake and yet asleep. Jakob focused on the words of Tyranaz, his voice guiding him through the process.

"Breathe in, breathe out, exhale, breathe in, through the stomach." The instructions echoed in his mind, grounding him in the present moment.

"From the depths of darkness, extract the finest versions of yourself, and fear shall never restrain you again. Find the Light in the Darkness." Tyranaz continued. As he followed the rhythm of his breath, Jakob found himself transported back to the platform from his recurring dreams. The two doors stood before him once again, the choice between Light and Shadow, between facing his fears or running away from them. Tyranaz's voice resonated within him,

"You must face it Jakob, you must face the darkness within. Darkness is not the end, but rather the beginning." As he approached the black door, a powerful force pulled him below, engulfing him in waves of water,

"Nooooo." Panicking, he let out a desperate cry, afraid of being consumed by the darkness that awaited him. Jakob found himself transported back to the rooftops of The Colonies, where he saw his younger self sitting on the edge of the building, overcome with tears. It was a

significant moment for Jakob, as it marked the first day he arrived in The Colonies and the realization of his pain. Suddenly, he noticed a dark figure standing behind his younger self, and a voice emerged from the figure,

"We should have died here." The voice whispered. In a horrifying turn of events, Jakob witnessed his younger self jump from the building. Desperate to save him, Jakob rushed to the edge, only to find that his younger self had vanished. Confused and distraught, Jakob turned his attention back to the dark figure, only to realize that he was staring at his own reflection. The reflection had dark black eyes and a wicked smile. The voice from the reflection taunted Jakob,

"Your weak!" The voice began **"You deserve everything you have gotten. You deserve to be alone, your worthless."**

Jakob, however, refused to believe these words. He mustered the courage to confront the reflection, declaring, **"That's not true!"**.

But the reflection continued its assault, **"You're not the Guardian. You're just an insecure little boy, who could never be King. You should have drowned!"**

The shadowy figure pushed Jakob over the edge of the building, and he plummeted into the water, struggling to breathe and fighting against drowning.

"No, you are wrong!" Jakob tried to scream.

"What can you do, the Darkness has you. You ran. You can't face the truth." The voice fired back. Amid the turmoil, Jakob found a newfound strength within himself. He shouted back at the voice, **"You may be right, I did run. But that doesn't matter, it's what I choose to do now. I used to be heartless, but I will find my balance, I know the person I can become. I**

was made for this!" As Jakob's determination grew, the water began to subside, and amidst the chaos, the voice of Tyranaz broke through.

"Breathe, Jakob. Bring your focus back to your body. You're in the eye of the storm, find your peace, find your reason." His words were a lifeline, a reminder to find calm amidst the storm. Jakob took a deep breath, fighting against the instinct to panic. Slowly, his body relaxed, and the raging waters began to recede. As the water dissipated, Jakob's ears caught the sound of familiar voices echoing in the darkness.

First, his father's voice spoke, **"The Guardian does have remarkable gifts, but such blessings do not come without their sacrifices."**

Then, Magister Alderete reassured Jakob, **"You have nothing to fear, for Mata is the one who is in complete control. Darkness cannot touch you unless he permits it."**

Lastly, before a blinding white light enveloped him and whisked him away from the darkness, Jakob heard the comforting voice of Gabriel, **"This is the life we have chosen. I just try to find the good things in every situation."** Memories of his life began to flash before his eyes. He witnessed his mother playing with him as a child in the garden. Her voice resounded in his ears.

"Jakob, my sweet boy, you are destined for greatness, and I couldn't be prouder of you." Suddenly, another memory emerged, one he had never experienced before. It was his mother on her deathbed, speaking to his father, **"Tell him, tell him please. There's nothing he can do that will ever make me stop loving him. No matter what happens. Even if he stumbles, even if he falls, as long as he picks himself up."** He was transported through various moments in his life, experiencing both joyous and challenging moments. Memories with his

uncle, adventures with his loyal pirate crew, and every single choice he made to escape from his past.

He suddenly seen himself standing atop a building down at the Boulevards confiding in Celeste and Aleki, **“What if I don't want to be a king?”** In that moment, a shift occurred, and a new memory surfaced, the recent argument with Celeste.

“No one needs me,” Jakob replied softly, his voice filled with self-doubt.

Celeste refused to accept his words, her voice firm and resolute.

“Yes, we do. You're not just the King, you're the Guardian. The one who can lead us out of darkness. We need you. I need you!” In this frozen abyss, Jakob knew he had to delve into the darkness within him. The icy touch, like an ancient guide, called him to embrace the shadows and confront the secrets he had buried deep.

His uncle's voice echoed in his mind, saying, **“Jakob, listen closely, for the world is not as simple as it seems. The Light may entice with its promises of happiness, but it is the Shadow that teaches us resilience, which molds us into who we truly are. We rise from the darkness.”** Finally, he found himself in a cherished memory of his father, a memory he hadn't revisited in a long time. He stood in Legends Row, admiring the statues that Jakob loved so dearly. His father's words vibrated deeply within him.

“Everyone has the potential to achieve something great. Life will smack every one of us in the face. And then we have a choice. We can either run from it or deal with it. We can either give up when faced with challenges or grow through them, becoming who we are destined to be. Even when the path ahead seems dark, there is always a glimmer of hope at the end of the tunnel. All the people you admire, including these statues and countless

others, have dealt with hardships that could have broken them. Yet, they chose to stand tall and face life regardless of how afraid they were. They endured the pain and suffering, making their lives truly meaningful and worthwhile. And that's why they will always be remembered."

Finally, the last memory appeared. Jakob found himself kneeling beside his father's lifeless body. He saw his father lying there and rushed over, gripping his body tightly.

"Dad, please, you have to get up." Jakob's eyes burned with tears, and his heart sank into his stomach.

"Dad, Dad, no, I can't lose you too." He pushed with all his might, desperately searching for help.

"Someone help, please Uncle, where are you? Help!" As Jakob relived this painful memory, the floodgates opened, and he collapsed to his knees, overwhelmed with emotion. Suddenly, his younger self looked up at him.

"Why won't you help me?" Jakob realizing his younger self was he was addressing him. He walked over to his younger self, the pain still etched in the child's eyes. The little boy asked, **"Will we be, okay?"**

Jakob embraced his younger self, holding him tightly, **"Everything will be alright. We'll be okay. We will eventually become pirates, just like we always dreamed."**

"Really?" the little boy asked, hope blossoming in his eyes.

"Yes, we'll have our very own ship."

"Did we make Mom and Dad proud?" the young version of himself inquired. Jakob's voice quivered with regret.

"I'm sorry, I tried, but I'm afraid I disappointed them."

"Can we fix it?" the little boy asked, his voice filled with innocence and hope.

"I don't know. The truth is, I'm scared. Scared to fail, scared to fall. It was easier to run away than to face it."

"But can we try?" the little boy pleaded.

Jakob took a deep breath and looked into his own eyes.

"Yes, I can." he whispered, determination filling his voice.

"I forgive you. I love you," the younger version of himself said, offering forgiveness and acceptance. Within the freezing depths of the pool, Jakob found solace in himself. The biting cold became a catalyst for self-reflection, shattering the walls he had and allowing him to face his deepest fears. It was in this desolate space that he discovered the strength to forgive himself, to release the burden of guilt that had haunted him relentlessly.

"Kill the boy, become the man." Jakob finally heard his own voice emerging from the darkness, and a burst of light pierced through the void. As he emerged from the icy pool, his body trembling but his spirit revitalized, Jakob knew that the darkness had become his ally. It was in the chilling embrace that he had discovered his true strength. The cold, dark, and lonely journey had led him to the light he had been seeking all along, allowing him to let go of the weight he had carried and paving the way for a new chapter in his life.

"I know what I have to do," Jakob declared, determination igniting his face.

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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