



The Oracle Code

Marieke Nijkamp

Manuel Preitano, Illustrator

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A teenager adapts to her new condition while solving a sinister mystery in DC's newest graphic novel *The Oracle Code*.

The name Oracle might be familiar; it's the crime-fighting alias of the wheelchair-using technology expert, and daughter of Commissioner James Gordon, who often aids Batman. In this new origin story, Barbara begins as a fully ambulatory teen, but is involved in a shootout that robs her of the use of her legs. She is sent to The Arkham Center for Independence, a medical rehabilitation facility in an old mansion, and soon discovers that strange things are afoot.

When Barbara's new friend Jena goes missing, Barbara is left to solve the mystery while also dealing with the confusing, complicated reaction of a friend to her injury, interpreting her father's well-intended but not always helpful advice, and conquering her own self-doubts. There's plenty of suspense as tech-savvy Barbara navigates the secrets, and secret passages, of the mansion on her way to realizing that, when it comes to defeating criminals, she's as capable as ever.

Manuel Preitano's excellent artwork, masterful across several styles, is evocative as it illustrates Jena's disturbing bedtime stories. A cartoonier form, set on looseleaf page backgrounds, is supposed to be drawn by Jena herself.

Discussion points abound. A debate is framed over the idea of "fixing" a disabled person—which implies that they are somehow broken—versus a more optimistic and accepting outlook toward physical challenges. *The Oracle Code* is a creepy mystery adventure that's thoughtful about sudden changes to physical capabilities.

PETER DABBENE (March / April 2020)

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