

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 4: The Purgatory

### Chapter 367 - Sarah's Tears

At first, Esya's half-open eyelids did not react, still too dazed and confused to really take the full measure of the situation. But when the fog of confusion lifted from her gaze, giving way to clarity, her eyes suddenly widened in disbelief.

Her face turned poppy red, and Jake almost felt his soul fleeing out of his heart as he faced her fully lucid glare. Her frail body shivered ominously between his arms, and it wasn't from the cold. She was undoubtedly in the throes of her greatest existential crisis.

Feeling a disaster coming, Jake immediately distanced himself from her, and leapt back in a preventive manner, but the young woman's fruity fragrance and the taste of her lips remained vividly in his mind. His righteous and honest expression was not as convincing as he had hoped, and his "victim" didn't miss a thing of his bad acting.

Nevertheless, perhaps because she knew that he had just saved her life or for other reasons, she chose to remain silent, although this did not prevent her from flashing a dark look of warning at him.

"It was only mouth-to-mouth..." Jake justified himself awkwardly. Perhaps feeling that this explanation wasn't enough, he added, "You stopped breathing and your heart stopped beating. I just resuscitated you, so please don't misunderstand."

Esya was still red and it was clear that she was still angry, but now he could read some gratitude, panic and perhaps a bit of contentment? Why was it so hard to understand people's emotions? It was beyond him.

In any case, he was pretty sure she wouldn't swallow his excuse. And neither would Xi...

[ You could have used your telekinesis to guide the air into her lungs. Although the intention behind the mouth-to-mouth was commendable, it was not necessary.] His Oracle AI teased gently. Apparently, she had enjoyed the show and that was why she had not stopped him.

Listening to Xi's quite obvious and workable alternative, Jake felt deeply embarrassed for a short instant and suddenly made sense of Esya's shy reaction. Coming from a world where magic existed, she knew the medical applications of telekinesis.

To her, Jake had undoubtedly used her critical condition as a pretext to kiss her, as mouth-to-mouth resuscitation in her world was a barbaric method of reanimation used only by commoners incapable of magic.

If only she knew that in that moment of urgency, Jake had just spontaneously applied his first aid notions, maybe she would have been more forgiving. From Xi's untimely burst of laughter, it was definitely a disgrace for an Evolver with such cognitive faculties and he had better not boast about this last-minute rescue.

'Shit! I hope she doesn't think I'm in love with her.' Jake became agitated inside. If she did, he wouldn't know how to interact with her in the future.

"Thank you for saving me."

Esya's delicate and shy voice, which was usually the most cheerful of the group, brought him back to life instantly. The young woman was worthy of her noble status because she had already regained her poise and her face was back to its normal color.

To his great relief, she also intended to maintain a normal relationship between them. If she had asked him to take responsibility, he would not have known what to do.

On Earth, it was not a big deal, but in the Velsyos Empire from which the two sisters came, love relationships were very codified and had a very important symbolic value, especially for noble families and even more so for the mages.

Jake was aware of this and that was why he was all the more impressed that Esya was able to make the distinction. He was about to justify himself once again when Enya regained consciousness as well.

On discovering that her sister was well, she broke out in tears and sobbed. The two sisters threw themselves into each other's arms and began to cry together. For Jake, it was the most awkward moment ever. He didn't know where to put himself anymore.

Now that Enya was awake too, Jake used the first excuse he could think of to end his anguish. He asked the two sisters to come closer to him, then he reduced the diameter of the air sphere the three of them were floating in and focused on propelling it towards their Floating Islands, which hadn't been in sight for a long time.

Enya may have been unconscious during her sister's rescue, but as a respectable woman she had a radar for this kind of thing and by the intense stare she was giving him during the flight, he knew she was onto something.

Her sister's awkward silence did nothing to help. It was in those moments that Jake congratulated himself for successfully mastering his poker face. It was the only acting technique in his arsenal that he mastered perfectly.

"Enya, I have a question." Jake said halfway back as he thought about something.

"Yes?"

"If you can produce those red flames for so long, why didn't you use them to propel you and your sister?" It was a simple question, but her puzzled face spoke volumes. Feeling that she didn't quite understand, he elaborated, "If you had used those flames in time, you never would have drifted that far and chances are you could have reached your island in less than a minute."

"What do you mean?" Enya asked with an authentic puzzled expression.

Jake was taken aback by her reaction, but he noticed that her sister Esya shared the same confusion. He stared at them alternately for a few seconds wondering if they were retarded, and then he understood.

Both women had no concept of physics, especially in space. Their world was technologically backward, so they used magic in a crude and basic way. For them, their flames were probably just a way to attack or to warm themselves.

To test his hypothesis, he stopped focusing on the air bubble and gave them a direct demonstration.

"Just like that." Jake said, trying not to sound offensive.

He reached out an arm behind him and a small jet of flame shot out. Unlike the two sisters, his flames weren't magical, he needed to consume the oxygen in the bubble to sustain them and control the direction of the heated gas, but it was enough.

His body began to slowly accelerate in the opposite direction to the flames and from the enlightened expression of the two sisters it was worth it.

"Uh, actually, to be frank, fire mages don't fly in our world." Enya explained slightly ashamed. "It's a talent traditionally reserved for wind and psychic mages. Only Archmages can levitate after they have acquired a stronger connection with the surrounding mana. A mage's body is not much stronger than a human's. Only a madman would use his flames to try to defy gravity."

"But you were drifting in space..." Jake couldn't help retorting, but he fell silent when he saw their miserable expressions.

"Ahem, all right, it can happen to anyone." He ended up saying. "Think about it for the next time and practice flying if necessary. Your bodies are now strong enough to withstand a few falls."

The two sisters promised to work on it as soon as they returned and a disturbing silence settled over the trio. Jake had a good coping mechanism and resumed his focus on the sphere to bridge the distance between themselves and his island as fast as he could.

Controlling both the air bubble and the two sisters' bodies was more complicated than when he was traveling alone and it took him almost twenty minutes to make it back.

Upon arriving a few kilometers away from their Floating Island, Jake and the two sisters became aghast with horror. The cloud of dust and asteroid had miraculously stabilized around their islands and crossing those last few kilometers was like passing through a minefield full of Digestors.

At first glance, these rocks looked perfectly normal, but only an idiot would believe that. At least, he was pretty sure that no asteroids were supposed to remain static like that, following their cluster of Floating Islands in good order.

Besides, as soon as the Digestors felt the trio's presence, many of these rocks and pebbles started to converge towards them threateningly like a school of curious piranhas. Jake had to painstakingly control the sphere to slalom between these monsters and when he finally arrived at his island, his forehead was dripping with sweat.

He deactivated the shield for a split second, then Jake and the two sisters rushed inside before reactivating the protective force field just after.

**BAM, BAM!**

Just after the shield reappeared, the rocks chasing them continued to strike the energy field for a few tens of seconds before giving up.

Seeing that the shield was holding firm, Jake finally relaxed and dispersed the air bubble. Enya and Esya dropped abruptly like dead weight and their outraged screams of surprise trumpeted, bringing a little life to his island covered with Digestors' guts and an anxious Sarah, who had been awake for a while.

While the two sisters rubbed their buttocks while cursing in their native language, Jake walked to the edge of the island and sighed as he contemplated the condition of Sarah and the two sisters' islands.

There were so many Digestors clustered on their island that you could almost form a small hill. Not to mention the fact that many of these monsters were creatures almost as terrifying as the Butterfly Digestor they had once faced with complete helplessness.

Jake was confident in his fighting abilities if he was dead serious, but battling such a horde in space was just not an option. It wasn't just the Digestors on those islands he had to be wary of, but all the "rocks" hovering around them.

As he was lost in thought he heard footsteps approaching to his left and recognized Sarah's muffled gait. As he met her grave look, he noticed her tense body and crossed arms as if she was struggling to keep herself warm.

He knew what was troubling her but there was nothing he could do. After checking her Floating Island's status, she knew better than anyone what was going on there.

"It's over..." She whined as she gnashed her teeth out of helplessness. She hid it well, but her eyes were slightly wet. This was a rare occurrence for this woman who hadn't even cried when he had steamed her alive.

Enya and Elya shared the same expression when they looked at their own island a few seconds later. Jake didn't know what to say to console them and so chose to keep quiet, rather than utter something stupid that would have the opposite effect.

"The Oracle Constructor has been destroyed and they are now devouring the Yellow Cube." Enya revealed after a moment of silent contemplation. She couldn't stay depressed like that and had already moved on. "They almost reached the Aether Core inside. I don't know how, but they also began to corrode the metal disk that serves as a base. If my judgment is right, it's going to blow up soon."

Indeed, the two islands blew up a few minutes later.

**BOOOM! BOOOM!**

Two light mushrooms rose up simultaneously from the two monster-flooded islands. The brightness was so blinding that even Jake lost his sight for a short while. The shield protected them from the blast and the shock wave that followed, but both his and Will's Floating Islands were violently shaken.

Their Floating Islands were knocked back several dozen kilometers away, widening the distance between his and Will's islands. As for the islands of Sarah and the two sisters, they had been wiped off the map.

The only good news was that the Digestors, including the asteroid cloud, had been completely pulverized. Apart from their two Floating Islands, there was nothing left at a radius of several tens of kilometers.

Sarah, who had been holding on pretty well until then, started bawling her eyes out without warning and Jake immediately perceived her Aether fluctuations weakening significantly.

As a Myrmidian, this was the first time she had suffered a defeat that she felt was entirely her fault. Thus, she was punished.