

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 4: The Purgatory

### Chapter 372 - A Small Boost

At the time, Jake thought he was under attack. His machete popped into his hand and he thrust forward with all his might. It was only when he recognized two familiar yellow eyes in the middle of this gigantic hairball that he finally understood who he was dealing with.

At the last moment, he pulled back his weapon and opened his arms to receive his "pet" in his arms. Bad idea.

On impact, his lungs emptied out and he was pinned to the ground like a three year old child being tackled by a 100kg adult American footballer. Moreover, his cat's fur, far from being soft and comfy, gave him the strong impression of bumping into a wall of brambles. Extremely painful!

Jake, who was trying to make sense of the situation, fully flexed his muscles to free himself, but a huge, rough tongue, abrasive enough to scrape the coral under the hull of a liner with a single stroke, savagely licked his face.

Several liters of drool soaked his hair and the rest of his body, and that was the last straw that broke the camel's back.

"Crunch, fuck the hell off!" Jake yelled out.

Bending one knee and squirming his way out, he managed to free himself enough to send a violent upward palm stroke into his cat's chin, followed by a fearsome frontal kick into his diaphragm.

The overexcited hairball in turn spat out all the air in his lungs, his eyes bulging out, his tongue hanging down, and the giant feline took off like a lousy rocket for several dozen meters before crashing on the roof of the villa built by Will and the others.

Mflouz fit hfo hpevo ovuaz gzufov dmz f imre oaqu gudmzu darfiw lofzare fo ufhv movuz tudafroiw. Jfcu jfl tware om gufo pn Czprhv jvm vft rufziw caiut vaq, gpo luuare ovu fjdpiiw vpqfr uknzullamr md val hfo, oufzl zmiare tmjr ovu hmzruzl md val uwul, val dpzw fgfrtmrut vaq.

Crunch was still Crunch. Although this black cat was now the size of an adult elephant and his fangs and claws were slightly enlarged and shiny like diamonds, his face still looked as silly as ever and his paws remained chubby and short compared to his size.

The original features of a Himalayan Persian cat could still be guessed. As fierce and imposing as Crunch had become, with this head it was just impossible to stay angry. To be honest, Jake was already refraining from bursting out laughing.

"It's okay, you can come..." Jake grudgingly forgave him before laughing openly. "But don't jump into my arms anymore. If it was anyone but me, they would be dead."

He wasn't kidding at all. He was even deeply surprised that no one else had been hurt.

Crunch timidly leapt off the roof, not forgetting to peel off a few tiles with his claws, then cautiously trotted towards his master and when he saw that the latter had indeed no intention of attacking him, he rubbed his enormous head against him and started to purr.

Jake wasn't used to this subversive behavior, let alone from such a rude and cocky beast. Not knowing what to do, he stroked the top of his cat's skull a couple of times, but with its thick fur he wasn't even sure if his pet felt anything.

"Hahaha! Who would have thought that even Jake had a tender side. "A deep and vigorous voice exploded next to him.

Turning his head in that direction, Jake recognized his cousin Kevin, who was smiling at him. Before, he would have gladly made fun of his giant appearance and his hairiness more like a bear's than a man's, but now they were both the same size.

For Jake, it was a huge relief. He was not alone in his misfortune! It was a petty and puerile thought, but it no doubt helped to lift his spirits.

"What? Aren't you going to greet your cousin?" Kevin said, spreading his arms out as if to ask for a manly hug of reconciliation.

But Jake had no intention of granting his wish. Patting his cat's head, he gave the decisive command,

"Crunch, attack tackle!"

He didn't know if it would work, but it was worth a try. At his greatest shock, Kevin displayed a horrified expression and immediately started to run away in the opposite direction. Unfortunately, even with everyone's joint investment, Will's island was only fifty meters wide and he soon found himself in a dead end.

"Noooooooo!"

BOOM!

The next second, his cousin Kevin had vanished under a huge fur ball, only the tips of his legs flailing wildly once in a while to remind them that he was still alive. Crunch sitting on his butt was looking attentively at his master with a smug face in anticipation of a second order.

Jake was for the first time elated to have such a cat and all his pent-up frustration was immediately dispelled.

Vincent, who was about to arrogantly greet his cousin and had just witnessed the scene, slammed the door and immediately returned to hide in Will's store. He intended to lay low for a while.

"Crunch, leave him alone. "Lily suddenly chided the cat as she ran towards him with her hands akimbo. Tim was running after her.

The most shocking thing was yet to come. The cat's ears flattened with guilt and he grunted "Okay," before hopping aside. Still, he had first discreetly wiped his paws on his "victim" like in the litter box before letting his poor cousin breathe.

Crunch could talk! Well, it was more a kind of articulated meowing than a real voice.

Maybe because his Agility was remarkably high, his cat seemed to have found the trick to distort and manipulate his vocal cords. Jake used a similar method when he roared to intimidate his enemies.

Meanwhile, Will and the others had finally left the building and the other felines napping nearby had been alerted by all the commotion. Since Will's Floating Island was limited in size, the place was definitely crowded.

The huge lion, which hadn't changed much, walked calmly towards Jake, shaking the island with every step, and a curious expression invaded the feline's face.

"Your appearance changes almost as fast as we felines do. Maybe you're not human, but one of us?" The lion declared with a voice as powerful as the PA system in a concert hall.

Tim, Will and Lily had pre-emptively plugged their ears, but Kevin, who had just gotten up and had the keenest hearing in the group yelped with pain. His head was buzzing and severe tinnitus was tormenting him.

For Jake, it wasn't a big deal. The vibration rattled his body, but his eardrums held strong. For Sarah and the two sisters who were a little further away, they winced, but it wasn't as bad as it was for his Werebear cousin.

As their eyes met, Sarah immediately looked away, which rekindled his bad mood. But time had passed since then, and if she wanted to play it that way, he had no intention of stopping her.

Nevertheless, upon discovering his appearance, his companions were astonished. Esya, in particular, thought of something and started to blush for no reason while squeezing her legs and her sister mercilessly pinched her waist to call her to order. It seemed that they had discussed at length the exact circumstances of her "rescue".

Ao f eifru, vu rmoahut ovfo val dzaurl vft film hvfret f imo. Wvuovuz ao jfl Waii, Kwiu, Szfzv, ovu ojm lalouzl, Taq mz Laiw, fii luuqut om vfsu gurudaout dzmq val Mwzovfzaf Bmtw.

All of them had grown between ten and twenty centimeters and for the three women this meant that they were now much taller than the average human woman. He would definitely not be alone in worrying about how to find clothes to fit him in the future.

Their skin had darkened slightly, their stature had subtly widened and their canines had also lengthened slightly and their nails had sharpened by becoming slightly translucent. Their hair had become paler and gold and silver highlights were clearly identifiable.

Enya and Esya in particular, who had an innate affinity for fire control and a natural tolerance for heat, had benefited greatly from their new constitution. Their Fire Core was bursting with energy.

Jake was unaware, however, that Hakkrasha's brew had played its part. Perhaps because it was what she needed most, she had received a whole pot of the drink as a special reward at the end of her Ordeal.

Although these changes in his companions were inconspicuous compared to the magnitude of his, they would not go unnoticed. The "Myrtharian" in their faction name made perfect sense.

The most interesting was the felines that had joined their faction. The Myrtharian Body Faction Skill also affected them and it manifested itself differently in them. The silver and gold reflections showed up in their mane and fur, their fangs and claws were more translucent if they weren't already, and their bodies were just as warm as a heater.

Apart from that, they suffered no visible side effects. The overall conclusion was that the Myrtharian Bloodline was not only compatible with the human genome.

"Here I am, as requested. "Jake spoke to Will after confirming that they were all fine.

"You got here fast! "Will nodded with satisfaction. "If you hadn't shown any sign of life over the next three days we probably would have started the Third Ordeal without you."

Jfcu jfl liaevoiw ofcur fgfhc gw ovu pzeurhw ar val smahu.

"Why the rush? "He asked with obvious puzzlement.

The alarming increase in gravity and Aether density was definitely cause for concern, but it wasn't to the point of putting them in immediate danger. On the contrary, it could even benefit them.

"I think it's best to discuss it calmly indoors. "Will smiled as he invited him in. "Your cousin Vincent is better qualified than I am to explain everything. By the way... Where did he go?"

Will looked incomprehensibly for his cousin, remembering that he was supposed to have left the villa before them.

" Whatever... "

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As Jake and his group sat down together to discuss their future plans, a few dozen kilometers away a vortex suddenly opened in the middle of the void.

A moment later, a small alien reminiscent of a gremlin floated out of this dimensional portal. Although the creature was old and wrinkled, and a sort of cross between a small koala bear, an imp and a lizard, an overwhelming aura leaked out.

This alien, not looking impressive at all, was Cekt Mogusar, the Rank 3 Aetherist having accepted Jake as his disciple.

Buimj ovu fiaur, f lqfii Fimfoare Ilifrt jaov f ifsf-hmsuzut hurouz tzadout lufqiulliw ovzmpbev ovu hmlqml. A zuhuro fzoadahafi jvaou lpr jfl hfloare aol iaevo msuz ao.

Like a specter, the gremlin-like figure flew towards this artificial sun and circled around it, stroking its long goatee with an appreciative air.

"My instincts did not deceive me. This child is really promising. He passed my second test. "Cekt spoke aloud, seemingly addressing the silence itself.

The alien remained silent for a few seconds, then spoke again.

"All right, if they can instantly cast an Aether Spell I'll take them under my wing and start their training."

Cekt stared at the artificial sun again, nodding a few times to who knows who, and suddenly raised a startled eyebrow,

"I can do that..." The alien grumbled in a capricious tone. "A gift? I guess I can give him a little boost."

Cekt Mogusar posed his tiny hand without warning against the mass of white light and a deluge of mental energy fell on the new Aether Core and its Light Aether Symbol. This mental force was so thick that it seemed almost solid.

As soon as the artificial sun was shrouded by it, new runes combined with those already present as if the goal was to complete an unfinished puzzle. An Aether torrent pouring out of Cekt itself converged on the Aether Core powering the Light Spell and it began to rapidly build up energy, with the surrounding Aether accretion disc dramatically expanding.

The artificial sun, which until then had only been producing a modest amount of white light, began to shine like a real sun with a complex electromagnetic spectrum and unimaginable heat radiated from it.

After a while, the Aether Core stopped growing and the new Aether Symbol stabilized. Cekt Mogusar disappeared as he had come, leaving behind him a new, authentic sun.