

The Oracle Paths

Volume 4: The Purgatory

Chapter 389 - Unexpected Twist

When his "Boss" finally retracted the hand compressing the back of his skull and stood up as if nothing had happened, the supposedly mellowed Wilde immediately flipped onto his back and retaliated with an all-mighty kick to the crotch.

GONG!

Whether his target had steel balls or a protective shell, the sound of the impact resonated throughout the hangar and all the men present winced with compassion. The victim's complexion, in particular, went straight to purple and his legs began to wobble for one very obvious reason...

"WILDE! I'll KILL YOU!" The tattooed chief suddenly screamed out, totally infuriated. His eyes were red with fury and he was literally frothing at his mouth like a ferocious beast contaminated with rabies.

With his chief's expression of sheer insanity, the culprit felt immediately that the direction of the wind had changed. He was reckless and carefree, but certainly not suicidal.

Feeling his leader's beastly gaze turning towards him, he gulped noisily and bolted his way to the exit door in a flash. The door was left ajar, and with a skillful contortion of the bust Wilde nimbly passed through the narrow space, then fled without looking back.

His leader ran after him like a furious rhinoceros, and the half-open hangar door was brutally rammed into, slamming it open as it was dislodged from its hinges. The supposedly armored metal door deformed like aluminum foil and disappeared into the distance along with the perpetrator.

Soldiers and Players inside the shed remained speechless in amazement for a long time, no one even daring to let out a fart. The Players, who were part of the same group as these two individuals, were facepalming with weary and awkward faces, suggesting that such an incident was far from being a first.

A few seconds after the disappearance of these individuals, another group walked in through another door. This group consisted of about twenty men and women in equal proportion, dressed in gentleman's and ladies' attire reminiscent of high society.

Most of these people had light-colored skin and eyes, blond or chestnut hair, along with fancy clothes and haircuts. Their attitudes were relaxed, often with a slight, barely discernible condescending smile, but their etiquette was impeccable. Nothing gave the perception that they were there to participate in an Ordeal.

And yet, with their Aether fluctuations and some unmistakable physical features, they could not be confused with the native soldiers and passengers whose physiologies and abilities were Fluid-based.

At the head, a handsome man, surprisingly brown, in sharp contrast to the rest of this group, led the way. His irises were crimson red and next to him stood a gorgeous woman with a seven or eight year old girl with eyes of the same color.

Jake felt an intense sense of danger when he saw these people, and he was far from alone in feeling that way. Even in his group, with the exception of Tim and Lily, everyone had grown somewhat stiff.

The most alarming thing was that all these people smelt like blood. The metallic smell in the air was so dense that it was almost suffocating. The paleness of the handsome man, the kid and the young woman leading the group was also so extreme that it seemed as if they were three dead bodies coming back to life and coming straight from a morgue refrigerator.

Instinctively, it was easy to label them in the "vampire" box, so much so that their outfit seemed to come straight out of a cosplay event. Nevertheless, Jake cautiously reserved his final judgment for another day.

"Another friend! Come little one!" The kid walking at the head of this group let go of the young woman's hand with no warning and pounced on Jake with her short legs and a flushed face.

Bang!

A few meters away from Jake she hit an invisible force field and fell back on her butt.

"Ouch!" She grunted as she rubbed her butt with a grieving face. She hadn't yet understood what had just happened and tears were already gathering in the corner of her reddened eyes.

"Come back here Lily." The gorgeous woman ordered in an icy tone, but one could feel a certain restlessness beyond this surface coldness.

There was something bewitching in her soft voice, and even the Lily in their group who was holding Tim's hand was tempted to run to her.

Her exuberance dampened by her uncanny fall, the girl obediently returned to her group and threw herself into the young woman's arms to seek comfort. The scene was almost as embarrassing as the altercation between Wilde and his leader, but in a completely different way.

"Speak! Why did you do that?" The young woman said coldly as she gave a fiery glare to Jake, who had not budged from his position.

"She ran at me for no reason." He shrugged coolly. "Except for my mates, I don't trust anyone here. Kids are no exception."

"Fair enough." The handsome man answered in place of the young woman with apathy. "Lily, this will teach you a lesson. It is to avoid such situations that we teach you etiquette and courtesy."

Far from having learned her lesson, she momentarily lowered her head in shame, but as soon as the handsome man averted his gaze, she stuck out her tongue at him in a mocking grimace.

After these two incidents, other groups of Players entered the room one after the other until the hangar was basically fully packed. In total, there were several thousand soldiers present, as well as an even larger number of Players.

For the ship's crew it was an extremely shocking scene. All of these individuals emitted a disturbing aura of danger that was out of place among the passengers. Since when had their Titan Pearl become a den of experts.

For the experienced veterans who dabbled in the Fluid it was even scarier. Although these Players' Fluid Cores were not highly developed, their instincts were sharp and they could feel strange energies revolving around these individuals that they failed to understand.

Several hundred of these Players in particular had atypical hair and eye colors, reminiscent of the Egeans that Enya and Esya were part of. At the sight of so many of their compatriots, the two sisters were both happy and unnerved. From their reaction, it was also clear that they recognized a few people.

These Egeans were not all united. Several groups had formed, mixing mages, knights and civilians, and some of these groups were openly hostile to each other. Those who spotted the two sisters accompanying Jake and his group were often surprised, but the word "traitor" was whispered repeatedly.

Verbal insults and scornful looks were not uncommon, and for the two sisters to be ostracized in this way by their peers was a first that deeply confused them. Esya even hid behind Jake and the others so as not to have to face their gaze.

Enya, for her part, snorted loudly as she let out two streams of flames from her nostrils like a dragon reeking with anger. Whether these Egeans were truly impressed or not it did the trick. After showing her temper, their attitude towards them became more reserved.

In addition to these Egeans, there were also Earthlings of all origins and some human species they had never met before. With the increasing diversity of bloodlines it had already become difficult to determine the true origin of the participants.

Most of the groups were disorganized but well clustered around a leader such as Jake's one. However, there were also a few groups that were perfectly equipped and cooperating seamlessly, which undoubtedly betrayed their military background. At the very least, they had undergone strict training to perform this way.

They were all obeying someone's order. Sometimes these leaders seemed useless and idle, as if these soldiers were there to ensure their safety, but there were also a few individuals with a strong presence that gave even Jake chills.

At that very moment, it was simply impossible to determine who was an enemy. The frosty ones could prove to be trustworthy and reliable while the more likable ones could very well hide a vile nature with much more sinister intentions.

When a little later the general of the Titan Pearl arrived in the hangar with her senior officers, she was dumbstruck. She had just come to realize that she had been clueless about the situation since her Hypersleep awakening. Everything had gone from bad to worse as the hours went by.

Fortunately, she had good self-control and her soldiers knew when to be reliable. In good order, they opened a path for her through the crowd and she walked fearlessly to the front of the hangar where she was supposed to receive the pirate delegation.

At the front of the shed, the gate opening to the sidereal vacuum had already been lowered and an energy field existed to prevent the air from escaping. In silence, the attending people waited for the entrance of their detestable guests.

At the appointed time, a shuttle identical to the ones that had previously boarded them appeared in their field of vision and crossed the thin energy wall leading to the hangar without any trouble.

Instead of crashing stupidly like the other shuttles, this shuttle parked impeccably in the place indicated by the light signals. When the shuttle finished its landing and finally cut the engines, the tension outside intensified visibly.

With the exception of a few Players with indifferent attitudes, most of the people present had their hands on their weapons. At the slightest twist, they would be able to react to the threat in the blink of an eye.

As the door of the pirate shuttle lowered, the soldiers and Players closest to it held their breath and mentally conditioned themselves for the worst. Thankfully, all their worries turned out to be unfounded. The door lowered smoothly and an unarmed, one-eyed man appeared under the shed light.

Tvu qfr jfl ar val ifou dmzoaul, jaov val zaevo uwu frt vfaz fl gifhc fl f hzmj. Hu jmzu f nfohv msuz val qallare iudo uwu frt jfl jufzare f oaevo-daooare zut fzqmqz hmsuzut jaov quofi nifoul frt f imre, ovahc, tfzc vmmmtut hmfo. Lacu Asw Svfrqar frt qmlo suouzfrl, vu hfzzaut lusuzfi tfzc opgul mr val guio om gu plut fl jufnmrl.

His face was emaciated, covered with fine scars and his nose prominent. The visible eye was glacial and deeply sunken in his orbit. One could feel all the vicissitudes this man had gone through with a single glance.

Avy Shanmin and the officers with full clearance to certain files instantly recognized this tough man as the infamous Emiwan Gimak. Pirate Captain of the Red Eels, but also a fearsome Fluid Wielder who had defeated many Fluid Masters in duels.

Sweeping the crowd with his eyes, the newcomer's gaze lingered calmly on a few individuals, including the young general with a pensive expression, as if he was trying to estimate something. Then slowly, but in a completely unexpected and deliberate manner, his hand reached for one of the tubes on his belt.

This gesture froze the blood of the soldiers present and Avy Shanmin herself almost drew her weapon out by reflex. She had to wave her hand in a hurry to quell her troops' fervor.

Thud!

The tubes on the pirate's belt dropped noisily to the ground causing a rattling racket, and the one-eyed man put his hands up to the utter astonishment of the audience. Content with the effect, his lips cracked a subtle smile and he said,

"I surrender."

d quite a blow.