

The Oracle Paths

Volume 4: The Purgatory

Chapter 390 – The Ship Explodes

"Pardon?" Avy blurted out with undisguised disbelief. She had mentally prepared herself for all kinds of scenarios, but certainly not surrender.

The officers and soldiers present did not show the slightest excitement when they heard the infamous pirate say these words either. Quite the contrary. What a joke! A Fluid Master, even handcuffed and tied up, could probably play them all to death.

Such a surrender had no legitimacy. It could just be a simple ploy to put their suspicions to sleep. Once escorted to his cell and their vigilance lowered, he would be able to wreak havoc on the Titan Pearl without them being able to do anything to stop him.

Of course, it was only the world's natives who plagued their minds in this way. To Jake and the other Players, Emiwan Gimak was just a badass pirate. Heck! Many Players even hoped that his arrival would trigger a new Side Mission.

Unfortunately, their hopes were dashed. Their bracelets remained painfully silent the whole time.

"You heard very well. Me and my men are surrendering." Emiwan repeated with a friendly smile. His attitude was by no means hostile or arrogant, and he even seemed sincere.

Jake could not yet read the thoughts of others without linking his Spirit body to theirs, but with his Aether Vision and basic Extrasensory Perception he could already judge a person's emotional state and intentions by their Aetheric and electrical fluctuations, micro-expressions, body language, heart rate and so many other details.

Even with his excellent Body Control, it was impossible to meticulously control all these aspects and this pirate captain, although a good actor, had not achieved such a level of mastery either.

If the subtle "flaws" that the pirate revealed were perfectly controlled it would be extraordinarily frightening. In theory, everything could be controlled, but not the Aether Fluctuations coming from the soul itself, as they were the very source of all thoughts.

The very idea of wanting to control one's thoughts or gestures resulted in a cascade of reactions on the Aetheric level that was easy to detect for an accomplished Aetherist. Similarly, the electrical activity of the brain could not be altered either.

In practice, in order to hide one's true thoughts, Aether Skills or Soul Spells had to be put in place to blur these Aether Fluctuations. Erecting Aether barriers was not enough, because Aether was intangible.

For the time being, he had no knowledge of such a spell, but it was an advanced method of this type that the Ancient Designer's will fragment was using to protect his brain and soul from the Oracle System's scrutiny.

Back to Emiwan, seeing that the young general was silent and hesitant, he walked towards one of the officers at her side and held out his hands in front of him as if he was asking to be handcuffed. The officer glanced nervously at the young woman, then gritted his teeth and pulled out a pair of handcuffs.

Subconsciously, he almost pictured the pirate captain changing his mind at the last moment. If this happened, he would die in a split second and because of this he was sweating profusely.

"Don't be afraid. I won't bite. I come with noble intentions." Emiwan chuckled as he grabbed the handcuffs from the hands of the paralyzed officer.

Hu ovur vfrthpddut vaqluid frt ovzuj ovu cuw om ovu hmrdblut euruzfi md ovu Taofr Pufzi.

"Why?" She questioned him after a long silence.

The pirate captain did not answer immediately. Instead, he wandered from one end of the hangar to the other, inspecting the features of each soldier. Sometimes he would stop in front of a Player and then his expression would subtly change, as if he still had a slim hope, but didn't really dare to believe in it.

In spite of the young General's incomprehension and growing impatience, she did not dare interrupt him and let him continue his antics, closely monitoring each of his expressions in an attempt to grasp a little of his true intentions.

The one-eyed pirate stopped in front of several dozen Players, but it was rare for him to pause for more than a second. Nevertheless, some Players left him extremely shocked, and it became increasingly clear that he wasn't as relaxed as he appeared to be.

These passengers were not all strong and he was confident that he could wipe out most of them in a few big moves, but their appearances and auras were very strange. He considered himself cultured and yet the majority of these races were unknown to him.

The return of the tattooed Boss, dragging an unconscious Wilde by the leg put an end to his suspicions and left him flabbergasted. As he continued his stroll, his surprise only increased when he stood in front of the handsome man and the gorgeous woman next to him. The group of noble Egeans also unsettled him beyond reason.

A few other less conspicuous Player Factions also caught his attention, including a group of four individuals consisting of three men and one woman with Eskimo facial features and clothing style.

When he finally arrived in front of Jake and his group he displayed a serious expression. None of these individuals were weak. Even the children had ridiculously strong bodies for their age. As for the man in the center watching him with a bored face, he had only one word to say: Monster.

Avy Shanmin was just a Fluid Knight and her senses were limited. But Emiwan had been a Master for a very long time. He could naturally discern much more.

Tvu Fipat jfl rmo fl qazfhpimpl fl Auovuz, gpo qmzu aqnmzofroiw rmo fl juii prtuzlommt. A Fipat Mflouz tat rmo ruhullfzaiw vfsu f qphv lozmreuz gmtw ovfr f rmzqfi vpqfr md oval jmzit.

Their reflexes were exceptional, bordering on prescience, and their minds were incredibly clear. Their physical condition was always optimal and they never got sick. Their wounds healed quickly and they aged slowly.

But that was it. Unless a Fluid User specialized in brute strength, without their almost supernatural reflexes and premonitory instincts, a Fluid Adept could very well be stabbed to death in his sleep by a normal human.

In order to develop incredible fighting power, a Fluid Wielder had to harness the Fluid energy stored in his body to increase his physical abilities or use all kinds of power that required a long apprenticeship.

Starting with Fluid Master, the body reached a point of saturation of Fluid sufficient to generate a passive energy field that protected him even while he was asleep. The connection to the Fluid of the Universe increased exponentially and it became possible to use all kinds of miraculous abilities.

Only then was it possible to slowly transform the body to allow it to overcome its fundamental limitations. This was the reason why Emiwan was so taken aback by Jake and some of the other Players.

Their Fluid Cores were tiny, even atrophied, and yet their energy levels were ridiculously high. His Fluid Master instincts made it clear to him that they were no weaker than he was.

Yet few of these Players had exceptional bodies. Once everyone was affected by the local Aether Density, most of the bloodline-free participants were just physically fit humans.

Jake and his group was the first group he saw with innate strong bodies. The passive effect of the Faction Skill Myrtharian Body increased their body attributes by 80% while endowing them with an abnormally warm body that was impervious to heat and radiation.

This was beyond the body quality of any Fluid Adept, and even a Fluid Master like him wasn't much stronger without using his powers.

Fmz ovmlu iacu Varhuro frt Kusar, jvm vft gimmtiarul ovfo lozureovurut ovuaz nvwlahfi hmrtaoamr, ovu zuardmzhuquro jfl lpnuzaqnmlut mr ovuaz araoafi ofiurol frt ovu urt zulpio jfl ouzzadware.

Therefore, it was easy to imagine how the pirate captain felt when facing Jake. Although his gut instinct for danger was not nearly as pronounced as it was with some of the other Players, something in the eyes of this silver and gold-haired man convinced him that he had absolutely no desire to combat this person. With the experience he'd accumulated over the years, he was pretty sure that such a fight would be a very bad match for him.

After examining a few more groups of Players, he ended his walk with an almost relieved expression and finally responded to the young general who was beginning to throb with bated breath.

"Let's talk. "He then tapped an earpiece to his ear and said, 'You can come out. You're safe here."

The next moment, a dozen men and women wearing scarlet armor and the Red Eels crest walked hands up out of the shuttle. Although they had the seasoned atmosphere of veteran fighters, they lacked the arrogant poise and wickedness usually found in ordinary pirates.

Seeing them surrender without causing any trouble, Avy nodded in approval and raised the issue that was weighing her down,

"And the Dark Matter Cannon pointed at us? "She anxiously asked. It was her most pressing concern.

The one-eyed pirate just scoffed with a contented smirk,

"Just some bluff. I activated the self-destruct sequence as soon as I contacted your ship."

" Which means that... "

"Yeah. My ship is going to explode in a few seconds. Shouldn't be long now."

As if to back up his words, he counted silently with his fingers and indeed, at 9 a huge explosion rang out from a distance. The ship was rocked all over by the shock wave and the energy shield flashed many times before stabilizing again like a calm sea.

The shed was so crowded that many soldiers and Players had bumped into each other and quite a few cries of pain echoed through the space once the calm was restored.

"Can we talk now? The problem is not as simple as that. We can't stay here. "As he said this, Emiwan's solemn and worried face told them that he was not joking. Even a pirate like him could be afraid of something.

"Sure..." Avy simpered. What else could she respond to a Fluid Master capable of killing her with a single thought.

Perhaps because deep down she wasn't at all serene, her gaze sought comfort in the crowd of Players and when she saw Jake and his comrades they suddenly appeared to her as tantalizing as lifebuoys in a sinking shipwreck.

"You and the others are coming with us." The young woman pointed her finger at Jake and his group as well as some of the other Players she had apparently interacted with over the previous hour. The pale-faced handsome man and two Egaeans wearing long robes were among the lot.

After they left, the crowd dispersed and a few minutes later pirates, officers and a few Players found themselves sitting around a table to discuss about something they were not sure of.

Avy had insisted that Jake sit in the seat right next to her and the contrast between his huge build and her petite figure was bound to make this meeting unforgettable. Between Jake's unruffled phlegm and the young woman's explosive temperament, an atypical duo had just been born.
