

The Oracle Paths

Volume 4: The Purgatory

Chapter 398 – Argument

In the face of all this drama, Jake carefully watched the man known as Alonzo, who despite his extreme thinness and muddled look shared some resemblance with the young general embracing him with all her might as if she never wanted to let him go again.

Although Avy was overwhelmed by the happiness of their reunion, the survivor did not return her embrace. His arms were dangling, hanging limply along his body without resisting the warm hug of the weeping young woman.

At first glance, all noticed that they had the same dark hair, the same almond-shaped eyes, and the same face shape. Above all, both of them were rather small, which reinforced this feeling of familiarity. Two or three years apart, they were as alike as two peas in a pod.

Without taking too much risk, Jake could already tell that they were most likely siblings.

The major difference between the two siblings was that Alonzo hadn't seen the shadow of a pair of scissors nor had he enjoyed the slightest ray of sunshine for ages. Combined with his dumbness and his jerky and startled head movements reminiscent of a pigeon's gait, he really seemed to be out of sorts.

After a long time, peppered with screams and tears, Avy separated from his brother and took an interest for the first time in the other survivors accompanying him. Seven women, five men, and every one of them was in the same deplorable state.

"Alonzo, what happened? Tell me everything, it's important." Avy finally asked after wiping her tears of joy with her sleeve.

Only then did she realize that her brother Alonzo and the other survivors were behaving strangely. On hearing her question, the young man tilted his head with curiosity, but remained silent. It was the kind of reaction a wild animal might have had when hearing a human voice for the first time.

Starting to panic, she repeated the question to the other survivors, but her increasingly aggressive tone only further traumatized them. With each shout, the survivors would shiver like epileptics, within a hair's breadth of running away. In addition, they kept blinking as they sought to escape from the neon lights. When she shook Alonzo violently in the hope of getting a reaction, Emiwan stopped her by pressing firmly on her shoulder.

"Don't bother. "He grunted in a hoarse voice. "I've seen these symptoms before. They have been spared by the Hunters and Controllers, but they have been breathing the air and Fluid on this station for too long. Maybe they're just traumatized, but after all this time you have to assume that all the survivors are being used as cattle or slaves to the parasites infesting this station."

The Pirate Captain's warning had the effect of a cold shower for the general, who struggled to quell her feelings. She had an entire crew and tens of thousands of passengers depending on her mental clarity and decisions for survival. She could not lose her equanimity, let alone in front of her men.

"Can anyone check to see if they are infected? "Avy requested loudly as she turned to the few Players she was starting to grow familiar with. "I know that some of you have your own methods for checking this."

Indeed, all the perceptive officers had noticed how easily Jake and the others were able to distinguish infected pirates from healthy pirates.

Tvu fzzmefro Eefufr jaov imre vfaz fit iufdw ezuur uwugzmjl rfqut Mavfrewi ommc ovu mnnmzopraow om lvmj mdd. Hu jfl mru md ovu Pifwuzl, jvm ar ovuaz hmqnifhurhw vft rmo tuaerut om plu ovuaz lhfr mr hfnopzut nazfoul. Al f zulpio, ovuzu jfl f vaev nzmfgaiaow ovfo val dfhoamr jfl zulnmlagiu dmz ovu ardaiozfoamr md nfzflaoul fgmfzt ovu Taofr Pufzi.

Even though he had been careful not to admit his mistake during previous meetings, he needed to show to the largest possible audience that he could be trusted.

Giving himself a mystical air, he closed his eyes, took a deep breath and raised his hand in front of him towards the survivors. Then, after a few seconds of posing, he breathed out all his air in a long rasp, opened his eyes and put on a solemn face.

"Most of their organs are severely inflamed. "Mihangyl reported faithfully without omitting anything. "They all suffer from varying degrees of kidney and liver failure. This man and these two women carried a parasite and survived. The others are healthy, but their brains contain the mentioned substance in small quantities, a sign that they were used as food for these aliens and then lobotomized to forget everything and remain under their control. I am afraid they are all time bombs."

"Impossible! "Ava exclaimed, rejecting the facts. Nevertheless, faced with the neutral and indifferent tone of the Wood Mage, she had to accept reality.

Taking her brother's face in her hands with wet eyes, she stammered, "What did they do to you? DAMN IT!"

The last outburst was strikingly piercing and startled everyone, including Alonzo, who stumbled and fell backwards. Seeing the terrified look her brother gave her, she immediately softened and regained a gentle, cautious tone.

"Sorry, sorry... I'm really sorry. I didn't want to scare you... "

Alas, it was pointless. Alonzo seemed to have the intellectual capacities of a toddler. Although Avy was still hopeful, it was very clear to bystanders that her brother didn't recognize her.

"What are we going to do with them?" The Boss of the tattooed Players gang suddenly croaked, drawing everyone's attention to himself.

The tattooed giant was sitting on a chair he'd materialized from who knows where, his legs as wide apart as possible to assert his dominance in a typical example of manspreading. Though, maybe he just had big balls.

At that moment he was smoking a kind of long pipe and a cloud of opaque smoke enveloped him, making the soldiers and Players nearby cough. Maybe because they lacked confidence or had other worries, anyway no one dared to raise the slightest remark to him.

"What to do with them?" Mihangyl snorted when he saw the giant stealing the spotlight from him. "Boris, if you already have the answer, why ask?"

After these multiple meetings in the command room, the two faction leaders could be considered as acquainted with each other.

Boris Slominsky was a Terran like Jake despite appearances. He and his gang came from every corner of the world and not all of them were from Earth, but Boris and Hilde Sobol, his rebellious underling, were both from Bulgaria and knew each other before the Ordeals.

Before that they were just two unimportant big guys, Boris had even been a bouncer in the past after a chaotic journey. The appearance of all of them had changed a lot after their first Ordeal, but it had also brought them together. They had even made their tattoos a rallying symbol.

At this point, it was difficult to determine whether Boris and his men could be trusted or not, but what was certain was that they were not saints. Far from it. They had a bad temper and seemed to favor violence to solve every problem. Killing to eliminate a threat, even an uncertain one, was a perfectly pragmatic and acceptable solution for them.

Yet, until proven otherwise, they had not committed any reprehensible crime and followed instructions without imposing their opinions. At the very least, they respected the words of their leader who had a decent amount of self-control.

"So what if I know what should be done? I could be wrong." Boris chuckled while forming perfect rings of smoke as he exhaled the air from his lungs, which annoyed the Egean to the highest degree. "I'm not a big thinker after all. I'll rather let the pompous schemers like you take the decisions for me."

"You... !"

A surge of green light exploded from Mihangyl's body, ruffling his hair and flapping his robe ominously.

Jake was somewhat excited at the prospect of a fight between these two Players, but sadly Will's jaded expression made him realize that this wasn't the first time this kind of clash had occurred. This kind of argument must have taken place quite a few times during the previous days he had stayed in his cabin.

Remembering that the businessman had been attending every meeting studiously, he telepathically asked him to give him a report. Knowing Will's meticulous nature, he had no doubt noted down all the information he had gleaned about the faction leaders.

Performing the remote data transfer with their bracelets, Jake obtained this report almost instantly and read it in seconds, with Xi compiling the data in an orderly fashion for later use.

In the end, the fight between Boris and Mihangyl did not proceed. The second most influential Egean stood between the two hotheads and forced them to stand down.

Ralnor Beinan, a Fire Magic Knight. The two sisters had recognized this individual and had willingly contributed to complete this report. Compared to Mihangyl, who was just a pampered nobleman, though powerful, Ralnor's feats of arms in the war against the Viranians, the neighboring empire of Velsyos, from which the two sisters originated, were rather well known.

Magic Knight referred to warriors using magic in an auxiliary way to reinforce their fighting prowess. It was a rare profession in their world and considered a waste of potential, as magic required both an exceptional affinity for the elements and a long apprenticeship.

As such, even though Ralnor was a mediocre Fire Mage, his body was superhuman and his martial skills as formidable as they could be. His influence was limited on Ega, but in the Mirror Universe, Ralnor was like a fish in water. Compared to most Egeans, he had literally steamrolled his First and Second Ordeal.

In this context, despite his arrogance, Mihangyl was constrained to listen to him. Especially since his safety in hand-to-hand combat depended greatly on the goodwill of this knight.

When the battle was aborted, the insidious suggestion to get rid of the survivors was naturally dismissed. They were given food and the camp took shape. Emiwan reminded them over and over again that their psychological symptoms could also be explained by the presence of Converter parasites converting the Fluid into a poisonous form for them.

Ruefztiull, ovu faz jfl fl npzu fl ao hmpit gu frt usur ovu Pazfou Cfnofar gw val mjr ftqallamr hmrdaqut ovfo ovu Fipat lpzzmptare ovuq jfl nuzduhoiw rmzqfi. Or ovu lpzdfhu, Ymofa Svaar 3 jfl qphv iull tfreuzmpl frt vmloaiu ovfr ovuw vft guur iut om guiaus, frt qfrw lmitauzl frt Pifwuzl guefr om zuifk.

People ate and joked around. Even the intrepid Nawaii groups that had gone on exploration on their own returned unharmed a few hours later.

The day went by without any twists and turns until nightfall. Then, the nightmare began.
