

The Oracle Paths

Volume 4: The Purgatory

Chapter 408 - Corruption Unleashed

‘Is it just me, or do those creeps following us not look so good. ‘Kyle blurted out a few minutes after they set off as he probed the ceiling with his Golden Sight.

Tim, who was leading the way at Jake’s request, stopped abruptly upon hearing his remark and turned to Jake to gauge his reaction. The child was currently holding the string of a pendulum in his right hand with the swagger of a dowsing expert, the latter currently pointing in the direction in front of them.

It was a simple application of his Luck stat, which he had further strengthened after his second Ordeal. He seemed determined to walk the path of a specialist.

Pondering, Jake mimicked Kyle with his own pupil skill before confirming with a nod. All sorts of information appeared before his eyes, including their Aether and Fluid levels.

‘These creatures look tired. ‘

The other members showed surprised faces.

‘How is that possible? They were so full of stamina a few minutes earlier. ‘Will and Esya exclaimed in disbelief. The ferocity of these monsters was still fresh in their minds.

‘It’s possible if they’ re desperate. ‘ Jake postulated numbly. ‘If the parasites aboard Emiwan’s ship had behaved like that, they never would have survived until now.

‘Ffaz nmaro. Mfwgu ovuw juzu bplo vprezw. ‘Kusar ezprout jvaiu hvujare mr f hftrw gfz ovfo hfqu mpo md rmjvuzu.

‘Or they have a different circadian rhythm than we do, which they have to respect. ‘Vincent offered another insight.

‘Maybe... In any case it’s good news for us. So let’s take advantage of it to push forward. ‘

At the same time, elsewhere in the space station.

A humanoid form shrouded in a maelstrom of dark energy emerged again from the darkness. The room where the figure had recently surfaced matched it: austere, dark, gloomy and filthy.

Covered with dust and broken objects, one could recognize old machines as well as numerous glass and plastic containers and tubes. The chemical liquids they contained had long since evaporated or had been used for some mysterious purpose.

On some of the stretchers and other capsules, one could find withered corpses or bones in poor condition. For those who had been best preserved, a chain with a number plate adorned their neck or wrist: Guinea pigs.

Nevertheless, whether these corpses were well preserved or on the contrary limited to a few bones, they shared a common point: Their dark color like coal as if they had been charred. Yet it was not so.

Shortly after the energy-shrouded person appeared, the sound of hurried footsteps echoed behind it. With a few seconds delay, three men barged into the laboratory. They were slightly out of breath from running after their master, but that didn't dampen their fanatical glee.

Oru md ovuq jfl Rmrfit, dmzquziw crmjrl fl ovu gufztut mddahuz jvm luzsut fl Asw Svfrqar'l zaevo-vfrt qfr. Hmjusuz, oval oaqu vu jfl rmo iuftare ovu ozam. Hu frt mru md ovu movuz ojm qur juzu loftare gfhc, easare jfw om ovuaz ovazt hmqzftu jaov f zulnuhodpi fooaoptu.

This person wore a long black overcoat with long sleeves, with a hood pulled over his head, rendering it nearly indistinguishable. Despite all the secrecy, from the slight stoop of his back and the parchment-like skin of his hands, it was clear that this individual was exceedingly old.

'My Lord, I did what you asked.' The old man stated as he dropped to one knee and bowed his head in respect.

'Good work.' The mastermind replied contentedly. 'It couldn't have been easy to impersonate a mere passenger for so long. I know how demanding your... appetite can be.'

'Tsk, tsk, I also thought it would be a torture at first, but some of the new passengers proved to be to my liking. If it weren't for that preordained encounter, the operation wouldn't have gone so smoothly.'

'Oh... For you to make such a judgment, these 'Players' must be exceptional.' The energy cluster murmured pensively.

'Players?' The kneeling old man raised an eyebrow in confusion, but his doubts went unanswered.

The dark maelstrom suddenly fluctuated, like a candle flame being blown out by someone before settling again.

‘It is time. ‘The voice inside said solemnly.

The individual shrouded in darkness silently levitated to the end of the room until he reached a smooth metal wall. The opaque energy cluster shook again and the same graceful hand with long black fingernails appeared again before resting against the wall surface.

Tvu tfzc uruzew lmquvmj dimjut om ovu jfii frt aol lpzdfhu guefr om zanniu iacu f nuggiu ovzmjr arom f nmrt. Tvur ovu gifhc eimj talfnufzut frt ovu jfii zuozfhout omjztl ovu hmzruzl md ovu zmmq iacu f gpzlo gfiimr. Aii md oval ar laiurhu.

When the wall disappeared, a strange sight was revealed. An empty room filled with waste and bones in the center of which were two hideous creatures. Vaguely humanoid, but with their proportions off, these ‘things’ radiated a phenomenal energy.

Their bodies measured a dozen meters in height, but they were so fat and bloated that they were unable to move. On their huge bellies, a number 8 and 11 respectively could be read in the common language of the Galactic Consortium.

As nightmarish as these creatures were, they were completely harmless and any human could blast them to death if the opportunity presented itself.

Of course, these abominations were not as useless as they might seem at first glance. The dark energy surrounding Ronald’s leader was similar to the one contained in the bodies of these creatures, but on a completely different scale.

With each breath, these monstrosities would absorb an impressive amount of Fluid, as well as a fraction of the surrounding Aether,

before converting it into that same dark, putrid energy. Most of it was retained, but the rest was enough for no light to survive in this room.

As soon as the wall was removed the dark energy began to spread like a fiery cloud.

If Jake had used his Myrtharian Sight on them, he would have realized that each of the Hunters they had faced also held a similar energy signature. It was the depletion of that dark energy in their bodies that led him and Kyle to believe that these creatures were exhausted.

If Emiwan, the Pirate Captain, were present, however, he would have immediately recognized them for what they truly were: Converters.

When the three men and their leader were traversed by the dark energy mist, they all took a deep breath and closed their eyes with an elated expression.

‘Affv, I’su qallut oval. ‘Tvu mit qfr laevut jaov uqmoamr. ‘I duui hmqniuou fefar. ‘

His crumpled skin was streaked with dark veins, as if he had just been poisoned, but soon the wrinkles faded until only faint marks were left. His slightly arched back straightened up and his gaunt coat filled out noticeably. Ronald and the third man experienced the same metamorphosis, miraculously rejuvenating to the physique of their heyday.

‘This Corruption sure is an evil temptation. ‘ The old man, now an elegant middle-aged man with thick eyebrows said appreciatively.

‘Do you regret joining me? ‘The leader asked quizzically.

‘Never my Lord. ‘The middle-aged man answered sincerely as he knelt down again. Joining My Lord has been my greatest decision,

even if it has turned me into a despicable traitor reneging on his origins and principles.'

'What a hypocrite. 'His Lord chuckled.

The leader then flew up to stand between the two Converters and spread his hands wide, forming two talons with them.

'Exhale!'

A geyser of energy surged up from the ground to his torso before splitting into two identical energy beams in each of his arms. Two shockwaves exploded at the end of each of his palms with a thunderous roll.

The fog of dark energy dissipated momentarily like the sky after a storm and the huge gelatinous belly of the sleeping Converters caved in, forming a depression several meters deep. The two abominations were instantly jolted awake.

RROOOAAAR!

For a human, it was like taking an uppercut in the solar plexus with relaxed abdominal muscles and full lungs. Very painful.

The two Converters immediately snapped out of their coma and attempted to wail out their agony, only to find themselves suffocating.

They tried to bring their tiny arms up to their throats as a reflex to their asphixis, but it was useless. They were just too big.

The two Converters kept on jerking horribly, whimpering in frustration, until they finally reached their limit. Then, all the corrupted energy they had accumulated gushed out of their mouths like a volcanic eruption and the two monsters collapsed at breakneck speed.

Sheets of opaque mist poured into the laboratory, soon penetrating the walls and seeping into all the porosities and fissures. The leader once again concealed his hands and smugly explained,

‘These Converters are failure. But their performance is very close to that of Subject No. 0. Their only real drawback is that they are too stupid to understand orders. They are like big babies who only know how to eat and whinè.

‘Now that they have unleashed the Corruption, all these soldiers and passengers will have no choice but to participate in my grand plan. Will they surprise me by confronting their wickedness, or will they prove to me once again that the very nature of a living being cannot be changed? ‘

As he said these words, the veil of opaque energy dissipated, revealing a young man with long black hair. His skin was immaculate and his stature slender, consistent with the delicate appearance of his hands. The man was of average height and seemed to have never practiced any physical exercise, but despite this, he exuded an oppressive presence that commanded respect.

His three servants knelt compulsively as they reacquainted themselves with their master’s features. Oblivious to their little game, the young man instead turned his gaze in a certain direction, his eyes unfocused as if he were gazing at a distant entity through the walls.

The three men did not feel the immense melancholy coursing through their master’s mind, but they did feel his anger. After a while, the youth muttered fatalistically,

‘Sm, wmp’zu vuzu fl juii... Sm gu ao. ‘