

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 4: The Purgatory

### Chapter 412 – Monster Game Rules

After the marble table and its stack of cards appeared in the center of the square, nothing more happened. The impatient silence of the crowd continued, until a soldier from the Titan Pearl could not stand it any longer and decided to check out the new objects.

Once in front of the marble table, the soldier walked around it keeping a certain distance without finding any trap or anything special. Cautiously, he then poked the table's surface with the tip of his rifle, then slid the muzzle along its surface in search of any anomaly or rough spot, in vain.

Eventually, he took an additional risk and prodded the pile of black cards with his gun. Once again, nothing happened. Unbalanced, the cards toppled onto the table like a crumbling house of cards. They scattered inertly across its surface, one of them even falling to the ground as it slid too far.

As they hit the cobblestone floor of the plaza, a metallic clink sounded, letting them all know that these cards were harder than they seemed. Judging the cobblestone floor to be safer, the soldier mustered up the courage to pick up the fallen card.

With his every microexpression now being closely monitored by the rest of the crowd, the other soldiers and Players in attendance did not miss a beat as his mood changed.

Going from total amazement, to exultation, to fear as he looked at the other people present as potential enemies, he quickly put the card away into a pocket of his jacket before returning to his seat.

That was enough for the other Players and soldiers to take action. Jake had obviously tried to scan the object for anomalies, but all he knew was that these metal cards served as an energy storage device.

The Players were ready to fight for as many cards as possible when a gigantic hologram materialized above the fountain and the altered voice began to speak in a monotone. Its appearance was similar to that of the Inquisitor beside him.

Cloaked in a long, loose black cloak, his face was not completely indistinguishable. A well-trimmed brown beard protruded from under the hood, and the little skin that was exposed attested to the speaker's youth. Without really knowing why, Jake found the face familiar.

'Welcome everyone to this first edition of Purgatory' The hologram greeted them with a slight bow. 'First of all, I want to congratulate you. Congratulations on making it this far alive. It means that you are qualified to participate in this great game. '

These congratulations did not make anyone smile. Between those who were covered in wounds and those who had lost friends or colleagues during their escape, it was hard to find anyone with the fortitude to grin. Not even strong Players like Jake could claim to have enjoyed the process.

'Before you refuse, let me explain your situation.' The modified voice resumed.

Ao ovfo qmquro, f lnfhv lofoamr vmimezfq uquzeut gudmzu ovuaZ ypaxxahfi uwul. Bipu tmol juzu hiplouzut fo huzofar nmarol mr ovu lofoamr, jvaiu zut tmol lnzuft mpo msuz ovu zulo md ovu gflu.

One look was enough to realize that the blue dots were so outnumbered that one had to focus carefully to discern the faint patches of blue amidst all that red.

‘As you can imagine, the blue dots are you, soldiers and passengers of the Titan Pearl. The red dots are the Hunters, Controllers, Converters and other abominations that plague this base. They are your enemies and they are under our control. ‘

A young soldier with a bloody bandage around his head almost pissed himself as he discovered the horror of their situation. The others were not too happy either with pale and sweaty faces. Only the Players and the Inquisitor remained indifferent, although for the former it was more accurate to say that they were on an adrenaline high.

‘Now that you know that running away is not an option, let me explain what you are facing. The village you’re in is the result of the fusion of a Fluid Grandmaster Spell and the technology of this station. Dozens of identical villages are currently hosting your fellow Titan Pearl citizens and are hearing a similar speech right now.

‘You don’t need to know why you are here. All you need to keep in mind is that you cannot not participate. You will understand the reasons for this shortly. If you want a reason, let’s say you are participating in an experiment. Of what nature? I’ll leave that to you to find out.

‘What I can guarantee, however, is that you will not encounter a single Parasite during your stay here. So do your best to extend your stay, okay? ‘

The hologram chuckled evilly for a long, tedious minute before clearing his throat and resuming,

‘Enough with the jokes. Before the Purgatory 1st Round begins, please each of you pick up a Purgatory Card. Do not try to get more than one, it is useless. ‘

As if waiting for his command, the cards rose violently into the air as if driven by a powerful magnet before dispersing and swooping toward the crowd. Jake reflexively grabbed his card in mid-air and inspected the item with curiosity.

Un himlu frt nuzlmrft, ao immcut frt duio iacu f hzutao hfzt. Art artuut, fr arouzdfhu nmnnut pn aqputafouiwr ar val qart fl vu hmrhurozfout mr ao jaov val Snazao Bmtw. Hu aqputafouiwr cruj usuzwovare vu ruutut om crmj.

Basically, it was a Fluid storage vessel. The object was linked to his Soul, ensuring that it could not be used without his consent, but there was also a trace of another Contractor called Nylreg according to the interface. Probably the former holder of this card or the creator of it.

What made this Fluid Card so interesting, however, was that it was not empty. It contained Fluid. A lot of it.

[Holder: Jake Wilderth]

[Fluid remaining in the account: 10,000,000 units.]

‘Good Lord! ‘

The shocked exclamations of the native soldiers mushroomed around him. The Players were not as cheerful, but when they fed the data to their Oracle AI, they changed their minds.

[This energy is pure.] Xi also briefed him with excitement. [The bracelet’s Aether Converter should be able to reconvert it to Aether

for the same amount. The Fluid is also pure enough to be absorbed directly by your Fluid Core.]

In other words, Jake had just gotten his hands on a gold mine. 10M Aether pts was already an exciting sum for most players, but with the current climate, absorbing Fluid directly was more tempting.

Faced with such a fortune, the attitude of most natives and players changed drastically. The animosity and tension that had barely dissipated returned at once. A paranoia set in, where everyone was afraid of being robbed. And from the scheming expressions of some, this paranoia was not groundless.

Tval Fipat Cfzt film vft movuz dprhoamrl, gpo ovuw juzu hpzzuroiw prfsfaifgiu.

‘ Good, good, I see that everyone has familiarized themselves with their Purgatory Card. ‘ The hologram picked up his speech with a laugh. ‘Now that it’s done, the Round can begin.

‘For this experience you will participate in a very famous game, existing in many civilizations in different forms: The Monster Game. It doesn’t ring a bell? That’s normal, the original name has been changed. Yet, the rules... remain more or less the same... With a couple of minor alterations.

‘Please read the rules below. You have five minutes. ‘

With that, the hologram representing the space station layout was suddenly replaced by a list of rules similar to a certain board game on Earth.

[The Monster Game, Round One:]

[In ‘a galaxy far away’, a small hamlet called Yotai Shien 3 has recently fallen prey to the Monsters. Murders are committed every

night by some of the villagers, who have become Monsters because of a mysterious phenomenon (A parasite, who knows?)... The villagers must pull together to eradicate this new scourge from the Ancient Age, before the hamlet loses its last inhabitants.]

[Goal of the game:]

-Monsters: Eliminate the Villagers.

-Villagers: Survive, eliminate the Monsters.

[First round:]

At the beginning of the Round, each participant will draw a Role Card randomly using the 'Draw' function on their Purgatory Card. Most will become Villagers, while the rest will become Monsters.

[The Day:]

Each inhabitant has a house in the village. During each day, participants will be free to move around and vote to eliminate someone they think is a Monster. Another participant will also be elected by vote to carry out the sentence.

[The Night:]

Residents must return to their homes to sleep. Only the Monsters are allowed to go out and enter the house of a participant of their choice. During this time, the Monsters will have special abilities that increase their chances of eliminating their target.

[A Day/Night sequence forms a Cycle.]

Jake momentarily interrupted his reading with a thoughtful look. This game was incredibly similar to the Werewolf game on Earth, but on a much more realistic scale.

Jake wasn't a big fan of this game in the first place. Winning had a huge element of luck, the psychological dimension of which increased with each round. In the original game, a Werewolf could not fail during its target's elimination, while the Villagers' elimination vote was also absolute.

This was not the case here. They were free to defend themselves. And most importantly...

Hu arlnuhout val Fipat Cfzt fefar om zuft ovu ruj dufopzul fsfaifgiu frt f lqaiu fnnufzut mr val dfhu. Tvu Fipat arlatu ovu hfzt jfl ruaovuz f eado rmz f nmjuz lmpzhu. Io jfl qmruw qufro om gu lnuro.

And indeed, as he continued reading the rules, he got further confirmation.

[Victory conditions:]

-The amount in a participant's Fluid Card has reached 50,000,000 units. The participant will immediately qualify for Round 2 and be teleported to a new Village.

-All Monsters have been eliminated: The remaining Villagers qualify for Round 2 and are teleported to a new Village.

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[Defeat Conditions:]

-When a participant's Fluid Card runs out of Fluid.

-Disobeying the rules.

-Death.

[Dzjf:]

Each turn, it will be possible to draw a card via the algorithm of your Fluid Card. With the exception of the first Role Card you draw at the start of the game, there are also Treasure, Challenge, Enchantment, Event, and Reward Cards. It is possible to draw additional cards by spending more Fluid.

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