

The Oracle Paths

Volume 4: The Purgatory

Chapter 415 – Still Alive?

‘ So soon ?’ Jake stopped in his tracks and reconsidered his options.

To keep going or to go back and witness the judgment’s outcome ? Undecided, he let Xi settle the matter.

[We can go back to the forest any time we want.] Xi replied plainly. Comparatively speaking, it is not certain that the voice will announce the outcome if this Peter Brady survives his retribution. On the other hand, it might be interesting to ask Susan Burn about the motive for this attack. Everyone seems tense, but it’s too early to panic.]

Jake weighed the pros and cons for a moment before agreeing.

‘Okay, let’s go see what’s going on. ‘

He let out a regretful sigh as he gazed at the exotic trees stretching as far as the eye could see, then turned back with ease. He had spent time analyzing and memorizing everything during his short stay in the forest, and his return to the Village proceeded swiftly.

Like a hurricane, he sprinted back the other way, kicking up clouds of dust and torn-up grass. In an instant, he left the edge of the forest and passed his residence, followed by the alley leading to the main boulevard.

Despite his excellent constitution, he arrived slightly out of breath in the central square. The forest floor and the paths leading to it were

too soft, while the paved roads were not designed to support his weight.

With his Body Agility and Strength being close to 40 and 80 times that of a normal human respectively, he could theoretically trot for almost any length of time at near sound speed regardless of the Aether content of the world he was in.

Jake was definitely one of the top physical fighters in this Ordeal. If he decided to shed his liquid alloy, few Players in this Ordeal would stand a chance of catching him.

Sadly, because he was carrying 12 of the 30 tons of liquid alloy in his possession, moving and accelerating required considerable effort, requiring the assistance of his Aether and telekinesis, not to mention reversing gravity to prevent the ground from giving way under his weight.

This almost constant effort that Jake now routinely maintained without thinking could be considered a form of physical and mental training, but it was also the biggest drag on his performance.

Because of his slower speed, he had been unable to decapitate a Hunter with his sword during his first confrontation with these pests. Conversely, as soon as he adjusted his strikes by putting his full weight behind them, chopping these monsters into pieces became effortless.

Jake didn't complain about this handicap. Offloading at the crucial moment was an absolute trump card that could save his life.

Nevertheless, as he sweated profusely in front of the crowd of participants gathered around the square, he missed the Titan Pearl's metallic floor, which at least had the merit of bearing his weight.

In the short term, it might be possible to deceive people, but he would eventually get tired and someone would realize sooner or later that he was as heavy as a mammoth.

Al vu fzzasut, lmqu md ovu Pifwuzl frt lmitauzl eifrhut fo vaq gzaudiw gudmzu imlare arouzulo ar vaq. Jfcu zuhmeraxut lmqu md ovu dfqiafz dfhul vu vft oficut om ufziauz. Esur ovu Irypalaomz jfl nzuluro.

The latter, was hovering above the ground away from the crowd with his empty sleeves drooping limply. Clearly, he was just waiting for the results to add to his knowledge of this game.

‘Hey Jake. Did you come for the judgment result?’ Kewanee waved her hand at him as she recognized the man.

Jake rolled his eyes at the stupid question. Did she really think he was just passing by? Yet, the young Native American was friendly and kind, and he was not as antisocial as he used to be. Answering her call, he smiled innocently and walked over to greet her.

‘Do you know if this Peter Brody and Susan Burn were Players?’ Jake inquired, ready to take advantage of the young woman’s helpfulness while he could.

It wasn’t out of coldness or unwillingness to befriend her, but until proven otherwise she could very well be one of the Monsters and might try to kill him next night. Gaining people’s trust and then killing them was a classic strategy.

Fortunately, Kewanee didn’t seem to mind him getting straight to the point. She answered his questions with the same zest. Maybe she just liked to gossip, whatever the reason.

‘Peter Brady is definitely a Player.’ Kewanee declared confidently. ‘He’s the pale guy with an emo haircut who was freaking out earlier about having left all his equipment in his Space Storage. I didn’t know him before this, but Daryl happened to know him well and recognized him on the spot.’

‘Daryl?’

‘He’s one of the Titan Pearl’s chief physicians.’ She explained as she sensed his interest. ‘He got the Healer’s Role and occupies the Clinic.’

Jfcu aqputafouiw nahopzut f qfr ar val dadoaul jaov imre ezfw vfaz oaut ar f nmrwofai. Tvu suouzfr vft f suzw hflpfi lowiu dmz f lmitauz tmhomz mnuzfoare mr f lnfhu lofoamr ouuqare jaov Mmrlouzl. Tvuw vft quo ufziauz tpzare val ompz md ovu omjr.

‘It’s okay, I know who it is.’ Jake nodded. ‘But why do they know each other?’

Kewanee let out a small laugh, then leaned in close to his ear with a knowing look.

‘I was told that this Peter Brady guy might be a drug addict. He’s been to the Titan Pearl’s infirmary several times covered in injuries. The ship’s cameras apparently revealed that he had inflicted them upon himself. According to Daryl, he was doing this just to get morphine shots. When the doctor noticed that some of the drugs were missing, he immediately kicked him out.’

Jake was speechless at the mindset of such an individual. In a world where danger was everywhere, this guy still found ways to engage in such depravity. Just this feat deserved his respect.

‘And then? Why did he attack that Susan Burn?’

Kewanee shook her head, before resuming,

‘I’m not sure. She has the Butcher’s Role, and he allegedly attacked her when she refused to let him into her store. That’s the lady over there.

Jake stared in the specified direction and discovered a pretty woman of small stature with an abnormally large chest. It was hard to imagine how she bore the weight of her two ‘assets’, but she was apparently much tougher than she appeared at first glance.

As soon as Peter Brady had choked her throat, she had promptly extricated herself from his stranglehold by violently lowering her elbows, then retaliated with a vicious knee strike to the testicles.

Pmmz Puouz jvm vft fizuftw guur sahoaqaxut mrhu jfl ovpl fo oval suzw qmquro jzuohvutiw urtpzare val luhmrt, nmlagiw usur qmzu hzpui, lurourhu. Waov val nmmz nuzdmzqfrhu lm dfz, ovu hvfrhul md vaq hmqare gfhc fiasu dzmq ovu Pao juzu rmo vaev.

After chatting and exchanging small talk, Jake and Kewanee shared a bit about their experiences in the previous two Ordeals before falling silent again.

Meanwhile, a few more onlookers had filled the forum’s stands and the growing unrest was once again on display. Two brawls had nearly broken out in those few moments.

Jake was beginning to wonder if all these incidents were normal and just the result of pent up emotion from the recent days or if some other force was at work. He had brushed off the Corruption mentioned by Emiwan and the diary, but he was finally starting to take this threat seriously.

Right now, he felt normal but it was hard to assess. When in doubt, he preferred prevention to cure.

‘Xi, let me know if you detect any abnormalities in my Aether and Fluid Core, as well as my vital signs. Also, cross-check the previous scans with each other to see if there is a gradual change.’

Individually, the scans might look ok, but with more material it might be possible to identify a pattern. Xi didn’t get a chance to give him the result.

All of a sudden, a flash of red lightning struck the cobblestone floor in front of the fountain, cast from a cloudless sky. Momentarily blinded, most people closed or covered their eyes with an arm, only to discover a foul-smelling, purulent mess curled up on the pavement.

Squinting, Jake vaguely recognized the contours of a human being. Based on Kewanee’s description and the very reason they were out here, this putrefied thing was undoubtedly the infamous Peter Brady.

‘Is he dead?’ The crowd wondered with bated breath.

Tvu vpttiut dmzq zuqfarut qmoamriull dmz fiqmlo f qarpou gudmZu ao ommc f lvfzn arofcu md gzufov, frt guefr f hmpevare dao. Puouz jfl fiasu!

After a few minutes of agony, the Player began to shed pounds of dead, ulcerated skin and eventually found the strength to stand up. He was now nàkèd and hairless, his old emo cut having been permanently left behind in the Pit.

Seemingly oblivious to the stunned crowd watching him like a miraculous specimen, Peter searched his pocket for a pack of cigarettes and a lighter, before remembering that he had forgotten them in his Space Storage. As for the clothes on him, they had long since melted.

‘ Jesus fućking Christ... I almost died out there. This bitch is dead when I see her again. ‘ He then spouted a long litany of insults, each one more inventive than the last.

If a coughing fit causing him to spit blood had not interrupted him, God only knew how long he would have continued.

Eventually, Peter noticed the crowd around him and leaned back against the fountain, letting himself slide down to face them. A crooked smile came over his jaded face and he extended a hand as if to beg.

‘Anybody got a cigarette ?‘
