

The Oracle Paths

Volume 4: The Purgatory

Chapter 420 - Domination

With her mud-colored skin, wet-look fluorescent blue braided hair and female Viking attire, it was hard not to recognize her kind. However, Jake had to admit that this was the first time he'd come across a female fighter.

All the ones he had met up to now were being humped from morning to night by the giant Nawai males, infamously known for having a raisin-sized brain. By process of elimination, Jake identified this woman as Svara, one of the three Enforcers chosen to execute him.

‘DIE!’

Chinen leapt at him with leopard-like explosiveness, a long knife drawn out of nowhere in his hand. He had probably picked it up during the second ambusher's diversion.

Jake stood calmly on guard, raising his machete at the knife as if he knew exactly where the attack would land.

‘Shrrriiii!’

To his surprise, the crude iron knife didn't snap immediately against his Wormak Machete. Instead, he noticed a slight indentation half an inch deep on his own blade.

‘...’ Jake pulled back to inspect his blade before focusing on the Grey Aether halo coating his enemy's. ‘Sharpening Aether? But of a higher rank than mine.’

‘Ignorant.’ The Nawai woman sneered at seeing him so relaxed.

At that very moment, Jake felt a sharp sense of danger and contorted his torso obliquely at almost 90 degrees. With his head turned upside down, he saw a fur-covered creature magically sprout from his own shadow and close his jaw in the gap where his head had previously been.

Having its jaw shaken by its failed bite, the monster did not give up and adjusted its trajectory, this time descending on his legs still rooted in the same place. At the same time, two clawed paws took shape out of the shadowy mass and approached from both sides in order to impede him from repeating his feat.

‘Hmmp!’ Jake snorted as he heard Chinen and the other female barbarian charging at him while he grappled with the creature.

He kicked upward obliquely while keeping his right leg firmly on the ground. With his momentum and flexibility, the amplitude exceeded effortlessly that of a splits and his torso contorted backwards accompanied the movement until it went past the leg rooted to the ground. At last, he let his last leg on the ground take off in turn and his initial kick evolved into a backward salto.

The monster’s lowered mouth and fully focused on his waist did not notice any of this.

This kind of feat would have been impossible for a normal human, except perhaps for the most outstanding acrobats. With that incomprehensible movement, the creature’s claws closed on the void, while its fangs sank regretfully into the dry earth as a merciless hand pressed the back of its skull with immense power.

The monster never had time to comprehend the fabled magic trick he had just been subjected to. Jake reappeared above the monster and stomped down on its head with his boots without giving it time to

recover. The sound of shattering glass echoed through the woods and a bestial howl of agony erupted immediately afterwards, sending all the birds flying within a league around.

Only then did Jake realize he was dealing with a wolf. However, this was no time to wonder where it came from. His other two assailants were upon him.

As he expected, the wolf scattered in wisps of dark smoke after Jake had blown its brains out with his boots. The warrior Svava bit her lip in fury at the sight, and she hurled a tomahawk straight for his heart, nearly hitting her ally in the process.

Chinen ducked out of the way at the last moment while Jake deflected the tricky weapon with his machete. The tattooed Player then charged again, taking advantage of this window to close the remaining distance.

Unfortunately, this was without counting on Jake's abilities. Like the first time, he slid down into the ground and reappeared like a ghost behind the young woman. At the same time, chains of rocks encircled Chinen's ankles, followed by his legs. When he became aware of his situation, he was already embedded in the solidified earth up to his waist.

'What the fuçking hell kind of witchcraft is this!' He raged, struggling with all his strength to free himself.

His tattoos emitted a new flash of light and his already congested muscles swelled again. The rock surrounding his legs cracked, but a new layer of rock immediately reinforced the damaged area.

Meanwhile, Jake tightened his fingers as if to form a knife and slashed horizontally at the neck of the unaware young woman. The whiplash cut off her breath and she momentarily blacked out.

Yet, before collapsing on the ground, she managed to catch herself by taking a step forward and turned her head towards him, shooting him an outraged glare. Jake frowned, somewhat puzzled.

Even though he hadn't put all his strength or used any Aether Control in this move, he hadn't really held back either. This girl was much tougher than he had estimated after her axe throw.

With her huge broken axe, which was now just a wooden bat, Svava attempted to retaliate with a cry of revenge, but the dizziness caused her strike to be off by a few centimeters. Fearing to kill her this time, Jake breathed in deeply and depressurized the air around them with his telekinesis.

The vacuum bubble created, Svava, who had already emptied her lungs with her yelling, quickly began to suffocate. She dropped her axe and decisively abandoned her thoughts of revenge. She turned around and tried to run away.

After exposing her back, that was all it took to finish the job. Jake grabbed her legs with earthen handcuffs like Chinen's a moment earlier, causing her to stumble. Maintaining the vacuum bubble around her, he glided across the floor to reappear in front of her like a specter. Then he punched her solar plexus, ruining any hope she had of catching her breath.

She fainted a few seconds later.

BOOM!

‘DIE!’

Miraculously, during this time Chinen had managed to free himself. He now looked like a little tattooed Hulk with his clothes ripped off, except that it was definitely not his natural appearance. The result

was grotesque and Jake noticed that some of the huge veins had burst, forming large hematomas under his skin.

‘Stop it, you can’t win under these conditions. I flat out outclass you.

‘Jake said plainly.

It wasn’t arrogance, it was the truth. These Players were not weak, but they suffered from a crucial handicap: Their Oracle Ranks were inferior to his.

Even if the bracelet didn’t work well on this station, predicting the actions of other Players was extremely easy as long as the link to the Oracle System was not completely severed.

His Oracle Rank extended to his every action and intention. The traps he had made were impossible to anticipate through their Shadow Guides. As for their ambushes and other tricks, none of them had the *désirèd* effect.

Yet Jake disdained to use the Prediction function of his bracelet. He had been caught out so often that he trusted Xi to give him the feedback he needed in crucial situations. So he hadn’t lied when he said he was completely overpowering them. Even if their Oracle Ranks had been superior, he would have crushed them all the same.

‘You still underestimate me. ‘ Chinen growled, blood trickling from his mouth and eyes.

An intense aura of green light radiated from his wrist until it enveloped his entire body and all his wounds closed completely. Better than that, his body seemed to have adapted to his new condition, for his deformed veins and muscles did not tear again.

‘Oracle Heal!’ Jake exhaled in surprise. He had just realized that this Oracle Device Skill was far more of a cheat than he had previously thought.

This was not a simple healing, but the restoration of a healthy state regardless of the reasons. The Oracle Heal did not care about the reasons for these injuries. All that mattered was that the person activating the Spell recovered well.

Since Chinen's body was still in this state, it had simply been healed so that it would become his new normal state. Whether it would have any adverse effects when he returned to his normal form was hard to predict.

'Yeah, Oracle Heal. I wasted my one instant Ordeal heal just to kill you.' Chinen cackled madly.

'...Is this guy retarded?' Jake muttered, completely ignoring the umpteenth threat of the Player in front of him.

Having made no real effort at discretion, a vein popped up on Chinen's temple and he let out a furious scream before pouncing on him, causing a crater to open out in his rear.

This time Jake didn't take it lightly.

'Since you won't surrender, sorry, but the adventure shall end here for you.'

Clutching the handle of his machete with both hands, Jake assumed the Kendo 'Sha no Kamae' stance: sideways, legs spread wide, machete lowered, and pointing back. His Strength, Agility, and Constitution Aether rocketed into his arm generating a myriad of warm colors, while the Grey Aether of his claws and fangs merged with his blade. The air hummed as a telekinetic force field shrouded his body, giving him even more power.

Completely blinded by his frenzy, Chinen rammed into the death zone like a speeding car and Jake lunged forward, releasing his stroke with a thundering roll.

Chinen's giant, body-built figure continued to jog a few steps past him before coming to a complete stop. Then his body split into two halves, severed from his left hip to his right shoulder.

Chinen was all but dead.