

The Oracle Paths

Volume 4: The Purgatory

Chapter 431 - At Loggerheads

After the two women's account, Jake remained thoughtful for a while. Eventually, he asked coolly,

‘The 11 dead people from last night... were they killed by the Monsters?’

Kewanee and Svara were somewhat taken aback by his query, but as they replayed the robotic voice's announcement in their memories, they realized that the answer was not all that simple.

‘I'll say... at least nine,’ Svara concluded, though she couldn't say for sure. ‘But one of the victims was another Vagabond. Since the first house was burned, a house has been destroyed every day.’

The robotic voice had announced the list of Monster victims first before announcing several more murders. To Jake, this could only mean one thing: The Monsters had upgraded their Role.

There was still the possibility, of course, that this was the result of specific cards or that they had held back in the early days, but he rejected the second theory outright. After all, the Inquisitor had left the Round as soon as he had reached his kill goal.

‘We need to get our hands on a Monster for questioning, but if the number of attacks per night hasn't changed, it can only mean one of two things: Either the number of Monsters has increased, or the

houses being attacked contained several Villagers. ‘Jake stated solemnly.

‘Though, I don’t know if the Monsters can attack as many times as they want in a house and we’ll have to check. If the number of Monsters has increased, let’s assume that the original two Monsters now have the ability to infect other Villagers to increase their numbers.’

The two women were surprised by his lack of concern regarding the dire situation, but they refrained from commenting at all. Seeing their offended expressions, Jake felt compelled to justify himself,

‘You’re making a big deal out of nothing. If all the Villagers are converted to Monsters, we’ll all qualify for the next Round. There are no real losers. It’s much better than dying and that’s probably why the infected Villagers agreed to switch sides.’

‘But if you’re right... That means that out of the remaining 27 participants, there are at least 8 Monsters if we assume that their number of attacks per night hasn’t changed. ‘Kewanee pointed out with a distinct anxiety in her voice.

‘Actually, there could be more.’ Jake said matter-of-factly. ‘Let’s assume that we don’t know much. But from Gordon’s reaction, I think he knows something. My guess is that he doesn’t have the same control over the vote as he did in the early days. I’ll try to get it out of him after the vote.’

Before the voting began, he glanced around at the other survivors again, and a thought occurred to him, whereupon he advised,

‘In the vote to follow, vote against Avros, then on us for the Enforcer Role.’

They didn't ask why, but they acquiesced.

Jake then took advantage of the short respite to draw the five cards he had missed while serving his sentence. Stubbornly, he decisively drew 5 Role and Challenge Cards with the good intention of drawing the Lord's Role.

This time, it seemed that the Pit had triumphed over his bad luck, for he drew the Lord's Card on the second draw. Perhaps this Card wasn't so rare after all, and indeed, the Card's contents confirmed his doubts.

[Villager: Lord(Knight)(Upgradeable): The Lord can offer to protect other participants against a certain fee. With each new Cycle, the Lord can protect an additional person. If the Lord fails to save his protégé, he loses his status. Prerequisites: Letters of Nobility, saving a person from a monster attack, or possessing the Monster Hunter Role.]

This Role Card was currently of common rarity, but the prerequisites made it problematic to activate. Besides, for most participants this Role was completely unnecessary. They had enough trouble keeping themselves safe, and the Corruption didn't really promote empathy and helping others.

Jake then continued to draw new Role Cards to further expand his knowledge of the game. This would give him more options if he needed to change his play style, but more importantly, he could better prepare himself for future threats.

There was nothing worse than not knowing what the enemy was capable of. This collection of Roles solved some of that problem.

In total, his deck now included 10 cards, 7 of which were Roles. Most of the cards drawn were Production Roles like Farmer and Miner or

Craft Roles like Baker and Mason. Miner and Mason turned out to be much more interesting than he had originally believed, causing him to rethink his strategy, but it was the last card drawn that made his day.

[Traveler (Legendary): Can wander around outside and everywhere, including at night, he can knock on other houses. Prerequisite: Traveler's Boots and Cape.]

It was a good card! No doubt getting the equipment set would not be so easy, but the very existence of this card meant a lot.

With his cards drawn, Jake finally took a look at his new Status.

[AETHER STATUS:]

[Strength(S): 324.7 points] (300.7|324.7)

[Agility(A): 315.3 points](286.8|315.3)

[Constitution(C): 333 points] (317|333)

[Vitality(V): 329.8 points] (315.2|329.8)

[Intelligence(I): 426.6 points] (298|426.6)

[Perception(P): 341.4 points] (257.6|341.4)

[Extrasensory Perception(EP): 400.2 points] (302|400.2)

[Aether Core: 191 points] (188|191pts)

[BODY STATUS:]

[Physique: Silver Myrtharian Body lvl2]

[Height: 2.54 meters] (2.53|2.54m)]

[Weight: 491kg (486|491kg)]

[Strength: 215 points (203|215)]

[Agility: 101 points (96|101)]

[Constitution: 235.2 points] (203.5|235.2)]

[Vitality: 228.5 points] (202.3|228.5)]

[Intelligence: 154.9 points] (115.8|154.9)]

[Perception: 167.5 points] (116.2|167.5)]

[SOUL STATUS: Myrtharian Soul lvl 2(Heat,Earth, Radiation attributes), 4 Soul Glyphs: A Fish in Water, Apex Predator, Extreme Diver, Harbinger of Chaos.]

[Spirit Body lvl14(11|14) (Ghost): Its density is such that the Spirit Body begins to have tangible effects on the physical world and can temporarily separate itself from its carnal envelope. Out-of-body journeys are now possible, but keeping in mind that in this form the soul is extremely vulnerable and the physical body abandoned in a state of clinical death. The soul is now partially resistant to heat and radiation and can extract a portion of the energy it contains].

Jfcu jfl qmqurofzaiw lofzoiut jvur vu talhmsuzut val ruj lofol. Wvuovuz ao jfl val Auovuz mz Bmtw lofol, val qurofi lofol vft ofcur f qfflasu iufn md msuz 30%. Esur val movuz lofol vft arhzufut f gao, ulnuhafiiw val gmtw foozagpoul ouqnuzut gw ifsf.

His Spirit Body especially had gone straight from level 11 to 14, which made him realize that he had been training incorrectly all this time. His Spirit Body and Soul needed to be tempered too in order to evolve. Just raising his mental stats was obviously not enough.

For some reason, he didn't feel much different. What was certain, however, was that he had regained his equanimity. The unhealthy

emotionality caused by the Corruption seemed to give him a break for the moment.

After that, the robotic voice announced the start of the vote. Jake made no attempt to influence the outcome. With his eyes closed, he simply waited for the result after turning in his ballot.

The survivors present showed different behaviors. While the Players were calm like Drastan and Peter Brady, some of the natives seemed to be extremely nervous. The Bailiff was one of these people, but Carl also had a gloomy look on his face.

Jake also recognized Susan Burn, the busty soldier who had been sexually harassed the first few days. Now that she was being left alone, she stood back with a scowl on her face.

There was also Laksmini, the rookie who had calmed the terrified Enforcer youth chosen to fight him, the Warrior Daryl, and a few other natives he remembered. Speaking of the frightened youth that Laksmini had placated... he was nowhere in sight.

Yet, the two individuals who caught his attention the most were two lone Player.

The first one was Avros, the Australian with the surfer's look that he had been suspicious of since the beginning. His attitude hadn't changed. He was as relaxed and frivolous as ever, but because of the drop in the number of ladies, he had stopped winking at everything. Instead, his face wore an amused smile, showing off his perfect white teeth.

The second was an austere woman with tousled black hair, wearing a long white dress. She was barefoot, and her feet were black with dirt. With Kewanee's past description, he identified her as Ostrexora Daemonne, the Player she had urged them to vote against.

Wvur ovu mpohmqu md ovu smou hfqu mpo, oval lofopl ypm hvfreut arlofroiw:

[The noon vote took place in the Village Square. The Villagers present voted against Avros Valruc, Hephais Vist and Luc Wam, suspecting them of being Monsters. Please choose three new Enforcers. Avros Valruc retains his Role.]

Gordon, Carl and a few other natives erupted with joy at the verdict, while Avros Valruc lost his smile for the first time. Rising to his feet, the Australian gave the sobbing natives a hostile glare that made their blood run cold.

All of a sudden, he began to applaud.

‘Well done Gordon. Even a rat when cornered can bårè its teeth. Alas, I’m afraid you don’t know what a huge mistake you just made. Tonight... Well, you’ll find out for yourself in a few moments. ‘

With these words, without waiting for the next vote, the surfer broke into a sprint. He leapt over a building and disappeared behind it before anyone could stop him.

BOOM!

A few minutes later, an explosion sounded somewhere in the village in front of a stunned crowd. Then Gordon fell to his knees with a horrified expression and began to bawl his eyes out.