

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 4: The Purgatory

### Chapter 432 - First Hunt

Among the other two voted, Hephais Vist was an Egean Player who had already stood out for his survival on the first night. The fact that he was voted guilty today showed that public opinion had changed dramatically during his five-day absence.

Apparently, this man didn't care about these votes and Jake had actually never seen him since day one. According to Kewanee, he had striking black eyes and always hid his features under a hood or mask.

As for the last one, Luc Wam, he was a complete stranger and had quietly slipped away at the same time as Avros. The other Villagers may have missed their exchange of glances, but Jake did not. These two Players knew each other.

Gordon and the rest of his slimmed-down native clique were biting their fingernails in trepidation, and with his flair, Jake immediately sensed that there was an opportunity here. Startling the two women beside him, he stood up and walked to the square's center before facing the small crowd.

He then cleared his throat and declared aggressively,

'I want the Enforcer role.'

Seeing that some of the natives were about to protest, he took the lead.

‘Hold on. I’m not done yet. If you give me this Role, I promise you two things. I will take care of Avros, and I will protect anyone who is willing to receive my protection. ‘

Turning to Carl, the Confessor, Jake gestured for him to come over and commanded,

‘Ask me what my role is.’

Tvu gimrt lmitauz jmZlvannare ovu IrypalaomzI diarhvut, gpo vu ezaout val ouuov frt dmzhut vaqluid om flc ovu fdmZuquroamrut ypuloamr.

‘What is your first Role, Jake Wilderth?’ Carl questioned him bluntly.

At that very moment, golden runes materialized around the two men and linked together to form a kind of bond. Jake probed the glowing runes around him with his mind and came to the conclusion that it was akin to an Oracle Contract.

Under these circumstances, lying would be considered an infraction.

‘Villager: Forest Warden.’ Jake replied coolly, without showing any sign of jitters or hesitation.

Upon hearing his answer, the natives who had been holding their breath from apprehension exhaled loudly in relief. At least this ‘monster’ was on their side.

The group of natives then took a few minutes to whisper among themselves before accepting his proposal. The other two Enforcers chosen were neither Kewanee nor Svara, but Drastan, formerly Barbier, and Peter Brady, who was missing.

Jake was surprised at the last choice, but Daryl the Healer, and Carl, had certified to know his Role. He was reliable, but because his role was a sensitive subject they had sworn not to reveal it to others.

Hearing the robotic voice speak his name, Jake yawned.

‘I’m finally going to have some fun.’

He then explained to Kewanee and Svara his intention to protect the volunteers for a fee and left them to handle the negotiations.

Currently, Kewanee and Svara were also among these volunteers.

They had already planned to spend the night together after last night’s massacre.

By the way, the message on his wooden sign was still standing in front of his door and everyone knew about the deal he had signed with Carmin. Many had been shocked when they heard the announcement that she had attacked him 4 nights earlier, but when they saw them reappear together they were reassured.

Jake then waved goodbye to the crowd and decided to go on the hunt. It was not out of altruism that he wanted this role, but simply because he had fallen behind on his plans.

Kewanee and Svara were now richer than he was. It was Carmin, in comparison, who was not proactive enough. It seemed that the only important thing for the vampire was to get her dose of hemoglobin.

He didn’t care if Avros, Luc or Hephais were guilty or not. All that mattered was that by defeating them, he could then extort their precious Fluid. It would also be a good pretext to worm something out of them.

Once far from the central plaza, Jake stopped putting on a relaxed attitude and pulled out his machete. With a thought, he began to search for the three criminals one by one starting with Avros and his Shadow Guide fluctuated accordingly. Alas, after a few steps his ghostly double became motionless and refused to move again.

[Prediction doesn't work on Hephais and Avros] Xi told him succinctly after the procedure had failed a second time.

Jake suppressed his annoyance and shifted his focus to the only remaining target: Luc Wam. As he saw the Shadow Guide heading in a certain direction, he regained some enthusiasm.

‘It works!’

He had feared that the Corruption might have rendered the Oracle System inoperative, but that was apparently not the case. The two Players were therefore of equal or higher rank than he was. He found this hard to believe, but there was also the possibility that they had used an Oracle Skill like Oracle Cloaking or Promotion.

Ao oval nmaro ar ovu Oztufi, Jfcu vft rm arouroamr md gpzrare ovZmpev val Auovuz dmZ ojm lqfii, praqnmzofro dalv. Hmjusuz, ad ovuw ovmpervo ovuw hmpit euo fjfw jaov ovulu duj uddmzol, ovuw juzu dmmiare ovuqluisul.

In no hurry, he retraced his steps and examined the house behind which Avros had vanished. The Australian had been careful, but moving at his speed it was impossible not to leave traces.

In front of Jake's sharp senses, no detail could escape him and with his intelligence he could practically reproduce the scene before his eyes. An imprint on a paved stone, a crushed blade of grass, a cracked tile, and a moment later he found himself in front of the house that had just exploded.

On the door broken in thousand pieces, he recognized the initials of Gordon Mason. The duplicate keys of the Villagers supposedly in his possession were gone, and he hoped that this idiot officer was carrying them with him.

The explosion made it difficult for him to track down Avros, but Avros was clearly a little too còcky. To retrieve the villagers' keys, he had carelessly searched the rubble, leaving his footprints all over the ash layer. The ash still stuck to his feet had then betrayed the direction he had fled.

Unsurprisingly, the Player had left the Village, and his tracking led him to the mountain where the mine was located.

'So, this is where you want to ambush me.' Jake wondered inwardly.

Coincidence or not, his Shadow Guide told him that Luc Wam was also in the area. One didn't have to be Sherlock Holmes to suspect that Hephais Vist was part of their team. Even if he was not, it was better to assume the worst.

To his delight, he didn't have to look for them for long. Unlike Chinen and Svava's failed ambush, these three targets didn't even try to hide, the three men sitting on a large rock prominently displayed at the entrance to the Mine.

'Tchee, so you're the one they chose to send into the fray?' Avros taunted as he chewed on a tobacco leaf.

Ir ufhv vfirt vu vuit f loahc md twrfqaou, jvahv vu raqgiw zmiut guojuur val dareuzl.

'Seems like it.' Jake smiled politely.

The two sides silently examined each other, before Avros broke the silence again.

'You better give up while you still can.' He declared benevolently. 'I know Peter, he won't come. As for Drastan, he knows the risks.'

Jake squinted his eyes, but continued to smile.

‘Drastan... You mean the Villager immunity he lost when he attacked Carl?’ Jake scoffed. ‘If he comes here, he won’t just be attacked by you three, am I right?’

Avros’s face darkened, his benevolent facade nowhere in sight. As soon as he stood up, his two companions stood up in turn and drew their weapons.

Hephaïstos was as described, a man hooded in black with a look reminiscent of the Assassins from Assassin’s Creed. He was armed to the teeth, with a short sword in each hand. It was easy to see why the Monster’s attack on him had failed the first night.

Luc Wam had an eccentric look, a disharmonious mix between a Latin cowboy and a steampunk gentleman. He wore a faded orange frock coat, a black bowler hat and a silver monocle, but the rest of his outfit was much more casual. His leather boots were well worn and it was legitimate to wonder if the gray of his shirt was genuine or an accumulation of grime. He, too, was armed to the teeth, but more into firearms. The Player was currently pointing a huge blunderbuss straight at his heart.

Far from being intimidated by this demonstration, Jake instead felt a surge of excitement. After five days of suffering in the lava, he was in dire need of a stretch.

A eiufq diflvut ar val uwul frt fr msuzjvuiqare lnazaopfi nzullpzu urepidut ovu qaru. Tvu Anuk Pzutfomz eiwnv vft guur fhoasfout. Uriacu gudmzu jvur ovu qurofi nzullpzu jfl qmzu nlwhvmimeahfi, ofreagiu udduhol fnnufzut fzmprt vaq.

The air seemed to distort near him and small gravels began to gravitate around him, as if gravity had disappeared. But what struck the three Players the most was the total silence, as if they had just put on a pair of earplugs.

For the first time, they became aware of the formidable opponent in front of them. Giving up on testing him, they realized that staying alive was going to be the challenge of the next few hours.

By unspoken agreement, Hephais disappeared, leaving a trail of dark smoke in his wake, and Jake promptly tilted his chest to escape a rain of darts. Simultaneously, Luke Wam opened fire and a telekinetic barrier intercepted the projectile, leaving a ripple on its surface.

Jake then grabbed the two sticks of dynamite on the fly without looking and threw them back at his owner, but a third stick exploded beside him. A detonation rang out and a cloud of smoke obscured the battlefield.

Gunfire and the clash of swords interspersed with explosions continued to echo through the opaque fog before silence returned a few minutes later. When the smoke cleared, Jake was left alone in front of the mine, in the middle of a macabre scene.

However, except for a severed arm holding a blunderbuss, there were no bodies of the other three men. They had taken advantage of the smoke to escape.