

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 4: The Purgatory

### Chapter 434 – Monsters

Those who were sleeping were jolted awake by the pounding on the door, while Jake and the three female Players got into fighting position. With their Player Perception, none of them had trouble seeing in the dark. Walking cautiously toward the door his blade in hand, Jake shouted,

‘ Who is it?’

If it was a Monster, they were supposed to be able to destroy the door or no Monster attack would have succeeded the previous nights. Still, the possibility that it was a diversion was not to be discounted.

‘It’s Peter. ‘ A tired voice sounded from the other side. ‘I have something to say. I know who the Monsters are.’

The image of a young Player addicted to drugs and jaded to everything came to mind. He was curious how the walls of his house could block out all outside sounds, but at the same time allow the Villager’s voice on the other side to filter through.

Jake didn’t ask him who the Monsters were, because he already had a much more plausible suspect in front of him.

‘If you’re not a Monster yourself, then how come you’re out at night?’

‘He probed him, not taking his guard off.’

There was a short silence where Peter seemingly pondered his options, after which he answered,

‘Let’s say I’m a Monster. What would that change?’

Jake’s brow furrowed, but he quickly loosened up. It didn’t matter if Peter was a Monster or not. As long as he stayed out, he had no reason to pick on him.

‘So, who are these Monsters?’ He asked. Telepathically, he relayed, ‘Think the answer in your head.’

‘I’ve identified three: Susan Burn, Daryl Fishle and...’

When Jake heard the last name, a cold shiver ran down his spine. However, his acting had progressed well and he managed to cover it up. Peter having thought the reply, no sound had come out of his mouth and Jake took advantage of it to confuse the matter.

‘Why don’t you speak? If you have nothing to say, get the fućk out or I shall treat you as my enemy.’ He yelled harshly with overbearing hostility. At the same time, he told him telepathically, ‘Let me handle the situation. We’ll talk later.’

‘...Very well. Since I’m not welcome, I’ll leave. Don’t regret your choice.’ The junkie hurled a final threat, and then turned tail and walked away.

Io jfl mriw f dpil qarpou fdouz ovu Pifwuz iudo ovfo Jfcu zuifkut val saeaifrhu. OZ lm ao luuqut.

Without warning and in pitch blackness, he reversed his grip on his sword and stabbed at the shadow behind him. A spray of gray blood splattered on the floor and walls as his blade came out of its back. The Villager, who was leaning against the opposite wall, was sprayed with blood and immediately started screaming.

Jake felt his victim's claws clench in pain around his neck, but he ducked with a jerk of his shoulder, followed by a backward headbutt. The Monster collapsed to the ground, his face completely pulverized.

Jake then turned around, ready to face his assailant, but was taken aback when he discovered the culprit. He was a Titan Pearl engineer, and a very ordinary one at that. Nearly retired, he officially had the role of Fishmonger, and Jake knew he had a wife and two kids from chatting with him on the first day.

'You're not the one I was expecting.' He said with some disappointment, tinged with relief.

At that moment, the softness of his features hardened, replaced by a palpable rage. Then, he turned his head towards one of the young women at his side and uttered word by word in an icy tone,

'Isn't it Kewanee? Or should I say, one of the Monsters. Witch and Monster, you have hidden it well.'

The Native Indian woman's face sank as she felt his great disappointment. She reflexively stepped back and pointed her spear at him. The other Villagers immediately shrank away from her as if she were infected with leprosy.

'Listen to me, Jake. It's not what you think.' She defended herself with an aggrieved look. 'I am one of the Monsters, but I didn't attack anyone. I can swear to that!'

Of course, Jake would never give the slightest credence to an oral promise. In his eyes, even the Oracle Contracts could barely be trusted.

'How could you keep this from us?' Svara gasped with a horrified expression. She was having a hard time coping with this. 'To think I

was planning to sleep in the same house as you after last night's bloodbath...'

In comparison, Carmin maintained her icy poise, only having eyes for Jake.

'She... shouldn't be lying. I think so. Maybe... I don't know.' The vampire chipped in with waning assurance.

'But how much longer will she resist?' Jake retorted without a shred of mercy. 'You know very well how these Roles work and this Village's influence on our instincts. If she wants to survive, she will have no choice but to embrace her new nature.'

He then gave her an ultimatum, 'If you are truly innocent, sign a Contract.'

Kewanee's frail stature drooped as she heard his cruel words. She knew full well what kind of Contracts he was talking about. Unlike Svara, she knew what men were capable of when they had all the power over another soul. She would rather die, than take that risk.

'I can't do this. Find another way.' She flatly refused.

'I don't see any. Unless you have enough points to qualify for the next round.'

'In that case, let's fight. May the better one win.' Kewanee gritted her teeth, now convinced that the confrontation was inevitable.

As she aimed her spear at him this time, a mirage of a gigantic golden prairie chicken appeared behind her. Feathers grew on her bare arms and legs, while her hands took on the appearance of talons. Her fleshy lips and jaw protruded into a curved beak, while an unsightly crest sprang up in the middle of her head, splitting her hair in two.

Tvu darfi fnnufzfrhu hmpit rmo gu hmrlatuzut gftfl. Tm ouii ovu ozpov, ovu zulpio jfl zfovuz dprrw frt Jfcu fiqmlo juro arom f dao md ifpevouz tulnaou ovu lusuzaw md ovu laopfoamr.

At that moment, a raucous and hysterical laugh interrupted the drama. Simultaneously, the owner of this same voice started to howl in agony.

‘Aaarrrrgh! How did you know.’ Susan croaked as she looked at the empty spot in her chest where her heart once was. Across from her, Carmin held the vital organ between her fingers, licking the blood dripping from the arteries with delight.

Jake was surprised at the vampire’s responsiveness, but he didn’t take offense. Since he’d been hanging out with her, he knew she had a way of identifying other Monsters. Why she had waited all this time to take action was beyond him.

Nonetheless, this incident was the final straw that set off the hostilities. Aware that their identity as Monsters had been revealed, the affected Villagers gave up all pretenses. For the first time, Jake and the other survivors experienced the full range of abilities that this Role entailed.

Susan, who was missing a heart and one of her huge breasts, did not die immediately, quite the opposite. Her crazy giggle returned and her countenance began to change.

Her pupils slit and her blue eyes turned white. Her slender fingers fused into a metallic blade and her spine lengthened, followed by her bones cracking.

The bloody heart in Carmin’s hands turned gray and spines shot out of it, piercing the vampire’s hand all the way through. Then the heart flew back to its former home.

‘What the...’

Carmin instantly released her Blood Aura and a torrent of reddish energy enveloped her body. Before Susan could complete her transformation, her head was ripped off by a violent swipe of her claw.

The girl’s carcass rolled to the ground, spilling gallons of gray blood, which triggered another wave of panicked screams from the unfortunate ones being sprayed. It should not be forgotten that during all this time it was pitch black. Carmin’s bloody aura was ominous in the middle of this darkness.

Meanwhile, the other monsters had taken the opportunity to complete their morphing. Their original faces were still recognizable, but their morphology had become grotesque and distorted, the result being very similar to the Hunters who had chased them not so long ago.

In this form they were unaware of it, but their sadistic and cruel expressions betrayed a transformation that went far beyond their appearance.

But what set off alarm bells in Jake’s head was their ability to change the shape of their limbs to form various deadly weapons. This uncanny ability reminded him of the Digestors without any mistaking.

‘This Role... is a poisoned gift.’ Jake suddenly realized. It gave them more freedom and an overpowered fighting form, but it doomed them to the night.

As he was counting them, Jake realized that one was missing. The most important one.

‘Where’s Daryl?’

Searching for him with his eyes, he finally found the Titan Pearl's head doctor among the Monsters. Curiously, he hadn't transformed. He was still the same friendly-looking fifty-year-old with a catogan haircut and fingers yellowed by nicotine. Except this time, a sinister gloomy energy was seeping out of his body.

'I underestimated Peter.' The Healer sighed as he slipped on a pair of latex gloves. 'With his addiction and secret, I thought he would have known how to hold his tongue... But it doesn't matter.'

'Killing you all has always been my plan from the beginning.'

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