

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 4: The Purgatory

### Chapter 435 - 10 Seconds

The Titan Pearl's doctor then opened a flap of his officer's trench coat, revealing the numerous carbon tubes hanging from his leather belt. Slowly, he unclipped his coat and let it fall to the ground, revealing an ordinary soldier's uniform, but loose and stretchy enough to accommodate any movement.

'You're a Fluid Wielder. ' Jake said with no change of expression. He had already braced himself for this eventuality since Avy Shanmin's bodyguards were themselves Fluid Masters on a tail.

Even on Earth, military personnel with specific training such as doctors or surgeons had officer status by default. This did not truly grant them authority, but the rank was nonetheless valid.

In a world where authority was synonymous with power, being a Fluid Wielder was a sure way to achieve and maintain social status. As the Titan Pearl was the 23rd expedition to Riva, there was no doubt that the Consortium knew that none of the previous expeditions had ever made it to their destination.

Following this logic, the Titan Pearl had been bolstered accordingly, and the very presence of the Players was the best evidence of this. Jake didn't know if any of the natives of this world were capable of mobilizing the Oracle's forces, but it wasn't all that absurd.

'Indeed. Fluid Master Daryl Fishle, at your service. ' The doctor did not deny his statement. 'Basically, I was just a dormant spy for the

First Brotherhood, tasked with keeping an eye on the Shanmin clan's heir. If the trip had gone as planned, Avy would have made a mistake sooner or later and we would have replaced her with one of our own.

‘ Sadly, nothing goes as planned on this expedition and I was forced to make certain choices to survive. Now, even if I were to surrender, it is likely that the Consortium would send me to the Inquisition to be reformed. Becoming an Inquisitor is the dream of many fools, but when you know as much as I do... Let's just say being a criminal isn't so bad after all. ‘

The few non-monster natives present listened to his speech with growing bewilderment, while a marked surprise was also apparent amidst the sadistic grins of the Monsters. Who would have thought that a simple ship's doctor could hide so many secrets ?

Many of the Titan Pearl's soldiers had been treated by him over the past few years, and he had always been beyond reproach in terms of ethics and character. Aside from his nicotine addiction, he was an honest man. At least, that's what everyone thought.

‘Now that the introductions are done, let's get it over with, shall we ?‘ Daryl proclaimed with a sly smile as he grabbed one of the tubes from his belt.

Once in his hand, the object lengthened to form a sort of wand about 50cm long, wide at the handle and thin as a twig at the end. At once, this end began to sparkle like a star and a thunderous rumble broke out in the small house.

For a split second, the flash of white light illuminated the interior of the room and all the natives blinded by the darkness got to see the actual situation around them.

The panic suddenly escalated, with shrill screams of terror easily covering the weapon's thunderous roar. In the throes of chaos, some even tried to escape through the door, only to remember that they would be sent to the Pit if they did so. In the end, they were forced to cower in the corners of the room, hoping not to be noticed.

'Don't underestimate the Fluid Wielders after defeating Avy. She's just a common Fluid Knight.' Daryl warned him condescendingly.

'Thanks, but you better worry about your own safety.' Jake replied unmoved. He was tired of these cartoonish, clichéd villains.

If he'd had a little more objectivity, he would have realized that he was behaving exactly the same way as his enemy, but he'd always been a hypocrite.

All of a sudden, a long streak of white lightning shot out from the wand, blinding everyone present. The attack was easily dodged, but the flash was the catalyst for the other Monsters to spring into action.

Kujfruu jfl zfqqut arom gw ovu himlulo Mmrlouz frt aqquafouiw dmprrt vuzluid urofreiut mr ovu ezmprrt fefarlo f dmzquz rfoasu jvm vft rmovare vpqfr iudo. A gprhv md emitur dufovuzl juzu omZr mdd ar ovu quiuu frt fr fztpmpl lozpeeiur urlput. Fmz rmj, ao jfl vfzt om ouii jvm vft ovu pnnuz vfrrt.

Simultaneously, two Monsters leaped at Svara, while the last two caught Carmin in a vice-like grip. Jake braced himself thinking he was Daryl's target, but when the lightning bolt faded he realized he had been fooled.

The doctor was nowhere in sight and a spark to his left told him that Svara had been targeted. He only managed to create a telekinetic barrier between the two and a second deadly bolt of lightning struck the force field, electrified crackles running along the obstacle.

‘Tsk! Not bad. But you haven’t seen anything yet. ‘ Daryl sneered as he continued to slalom like an untraceable shadow.

Dark energy began to converge on his body and his speed increased exponentially. At this point, even Jake could barely keep up with him. If the house wasn’t reinforced with runes, the impact of his feet on the ground would have blown it apart.

In the blink of an eye, the Fluid Master whirled around the room like a hurricane, and with the exception of Carmin and Jake, everyone was slashed to different levels. The most shocking part of it all was that his subsonic movements produced neither sound nor wind.

Unwilling to fail on the first day of his grand protection project, Jake had no choice but to grit his teeth and go all out. That meant spending astronomical amounts of Aether and Fluid and with that came Corruption.

‘10 seconds. ‘ Jake said to himself. That was how long he allowed himself to end the fight.

His body burst into flames and a searing heat erupted from his body. Bloodline Ignition on! In order not to incinerate his allies and the innocents under his protection, Jake controlled the heat released for the first time and internalized it into his own body.

This was the first time he had ever performed such a dangerous operation and he felt a tremendous pressure hammering at his skull. If his Spirit Body had not been strengthened recently, focusing the temperature like this would have damaged it.

Ir fr arlofro, vu opZrut eimjare jvaou, gpo fo ovu lfqu oaqu val lozureov frt uruzew iusuil zmlu laeradahfroiw.

‘This...’ Daryl doubted for the first time. With his experience and superhuman foreknowledge, he put his wand away and grabbed two more tubes instead.

The first formed a full-body armor of energy runes and metal, while the second formed a huge rectangular steel shield four inches thick. A dark energy shield coated the structure for added defense.

Four more tubes levitated around him to form additional shields and they interlocked in a choreographed fashion. Under this turtle formation, the Fluid Master was confident that he could survive even an orbital cannon shot.

Unfortunately, it wasn’t an orbital cannon shot, but Jake. As soon as Jake swung his machete, his fate was sealed. If Daryl could silently rip everyone apart while moving like a shadow, Jake was the exact opposite.

Telekinetic shields insulated his allies from the coming deluge and then he struck with all his might. Far from being a shadow, it was a comet as blinding as the sun that atomized the wooden room like a meteor.

A tornado of blazing light ravaged the remaining Monsters in a split second, Jake’s machete mauling them into hundreds of pieces in a supersonic blast. The house’s walls and floor that had remained intact until now began to crumble.

‘Nine seconds.’

Jake noticed that the natives turned into Monsters effortlessly withstood the scorching heat of his blade, which should have incinerated them. Worse, it accelerated their wound regeneration.

‘The Monster Role is indeed based on parasites. In that case...’

Tvu vufu uqaoout dzmq val gmtw jfl jaovtzfjr dzmq val giftu frt zuozfhout usur tuunuz arom val gmtw. Irlouft, vu lvfznurut ao om ovu ukozuqu jaov val Svfnurare Auovuz. Laqaout om 100nol, oval fgaiaow jfl mgmliou ar oval jnzit jaov fr Auovuz turlaow md 200, gpo ad vu ftut ovu mru hmrofarut ar val hifjl frt dfrel, vu hmpit qmqurofzaiw arhzufu ovfo sfipu ourdmit.

A shrill grinding noise leaked out of his blade and the slaughter resumed in earnest. This time, no monster escaped. Parasite or not, Digester or not, corrupted or not, he butchered them all without exception.

'8 seconds.'

Only Daryl was left beneath his Fluid Artifacts formation. Scanning the room, he saw Kewanee lying in her own blood, Svara struggling to get up with the help of her axe, and Carmin staring at him like a starving child at a pizza.

With his hearing, he could tell right away that Kewanee was dying. Her heart had stopped beating, and her half-human-half-chicken form had resorbed.

'I can take care of it.' Svara said telepathically.

Jake nodded and deactivated the force field isolating her from his attacks.

'Six seconds.'

Raising his blade, he swung it down at the shield wall in front of him with all his weight. The structure caved in, but stood firm. The deep gash through the metal resorbed the next second as if it were some kind of shape memory metal.

'Five seconds.'

Rprrare mpo md oaqu, Jfcu lpqqmrut fii val nmjuzl, dzmq Sozureov Auovuz om ovu gialouzare dpzrfhu vufo val gmtw vfzgmzut. A tuipeu md lozmcuul gfoouzut ovu tudurlasu lozphopzu jaov lphv dzuypurhw ovfo ovu lvmhcjfsul guhfqu lm himlu omeuovuz ovuw guhfqu sazopfiiw artaloarepalvfgiu.

'4 seconds'

The shield formation shattered, revealing Daryl and his armor huddled inside. Seeing Jake's predatory gaze, the veteran Fluid Master finally felt the call of the Reaper.

Out of sheer survival instinct, he brandished the last tube in his possession to form an energy blade and his free hand reached for the Fluid Card in his pocket. Seeing him fiddle with his Fluid Card, Jake instantly understood his intent.

'I won't let you do it!' Jake swung his machete one last time with unstoppable momentum.

The doctor did not panic. A flood of dark energy infused his veins at the last moment, increasing his physical strength, and his blade clashed against his own. Just before impact, his body ballooned into a monstrous form.

'3 seconds.'

An arm and a leg were flung into the air. Against Jake's overwhelming power, Daryl's futile efforts had not been nearly enough. Yet, at the crucial moment he had leaned to the side, avoiding a fatal injury.

When Jake tried to end it all, Daryl grinned victoriously and vanished. Right afterwards, the robotic voice resounded above him, acknowledging the doctor's qualification for the next round.