

The Oracle Paths

Volume 4: The Purgatory

Chapter 437 - End of The First Round (part 2)

‘Carmin, can you confirm that he’s not a Monster either?’ Jake was already pretty much convinced, but an extra precaution didn’t cost anything.

The vampire studied Peter with her dead fish eye for a fleeting instant, then concurred,

‘It’s not one of the original Monsters anyway. We can have Carl interrogate it with his Confessor Role to be on the safe side.’

‘And that’s what we’ll do.’ Jake approved of the idea.

They spent the rest of the morning questioning the rest of the villagers, comparing their stories in order to catch any enemy who might have slipped through the cracks. With the Confessor, the Henchman and the Village Idiot helping out, the probability was slim to none.

Carl confirmed Peter and Carmin’s story, while Gordon submitted to the standard search that Jake subjected him to. With the invincible demon impression the officer had painted of him, getting him to cooperate could not have been more straightforward.

The Cards in the Bailiff’s possession completed his knowledge of the game and seeing his interest in them, all the participants under his protection agreed to show him theirs.

Some of them had already been played, but Jake noticed that unlike him, the normal participants harbored little hope of winning. As a result, their choice was mostly Treasure, Enchantment, or Event cards, and these were all cards that could save their lives in a crucial situation.

Some of these cards were useful items that could be used as prerequisites for certain Roles or other cards, while the others had all sorts of fancy abilities.

The non-exhaustive list of cards with unpredictable effects included:

Treasure Cards: weapons, armor, accessories, potions, recipes, role items, treasures, Fluid Card, etc.

Enchantment Cards: Teleportation, Shield, Imposter, Unbreakable Lock, Metamorphosis, Tracking, Offensive/Defensive Spells, Unassailable, Copy.

Event Cards: Climate, Earthquake, Flood, Meteorite, Beginner's Luck, Jackpot, Pardon, Diplomatic Immunity, Prison Break, Reconversion, Falling in Love, Invasion, Double/Triple Pick, Lottery, etc.

Most of these cards had self-explanatory titles, while others had not yet proven their worth. Prison Break, for example, was still irrelevant, since there were no prisons to speak of in their Village. Jake suspected it might be feasible to lock up criminals convicted by a vote, but this had yet to be proven.

Jake did not confiscate these cards. These natives were already under his protection and would continue to provide him with a significant stream of Fluid over the subsequent Rounds. He had to preserve their trust, and a tyrannical attitude was not the way to do so.

After that, all that remained was for him to visit the last two Players.

Tvu dazlo mru vu salaout, Dzflofr, jfl fr vmrulo qfr. Hal vmqu jmzit jfl fzhvfah frt nipreut arom f ovmpflrt wufz mit jfz guojuur val numniu frt f zfhu md eafro qfr-ufoare ozmiil hfiut Vuzlarel.

Their planet was closer to their own sun than the Earth and its rotation on itself was slower. So slow, that a year was only two days long. The sun could shine on the same side of the planet for several months before darkness fell and because of this the temperatures could easily reach unbearable levels.

In order to survive, his people all without exception had a very dark skin capable of withstanding a lot of radiation. Indeed, because of the slow rotation of their planet, the solar winds were not properly neutralized and the radiation was much more deadly than on Earth.

Drastan was what his people called a Troll Hunter. From the Ymir tribe, every year a few children would awaken a talent that the natives called the Troll Curse. After years, decades, centuries of fighting, the curse would eventually make them the very same Trolls they had sworn to fight.

Nevertheless, in the meantime, they enjoyed all the legendary attributes associated with this belligerent and stupid creature, notably their incredible longevity and exceptional endurance. To make the most of their existence, the Awakened were then taken away from their parents to be trained and their lives were often miserable, albeit necessary for the tribe's survival.

Before getting his Oracle Device, Drastan thought he was cursed by the Versing Warlocks, but he had eventually learnt in the Mirror Universe that it was purely a matter of genetic and Aetheric code. His people were not aware of it, or perhaps one of their ancestors had suppressed the truth, but these Trolls they hated were simply their ancestors.

With the Oracle's rewards, stopping the inevitable mutation had been a breeze and he could now look forward to enjoying a normal life. Alas, fighting these Trolls was the only thing he had ever known and getting back to living a normal life was not that easy. With the omnipresent Digestor threat, the Digestors had replaced the Trolls.

In the end, the only Player suspect left was Ostrexora Daemonne. Without Kewanee's warning, he would never have been interested in her, but with the Round coming to an end he wanted to tie up any loose ends. The only hitch was that the Indian had not yet woken up, so he had to rely on himself.

Finding her residence turned out to be no big deal. This female Player's house was, like Jake's, on the edge of the village, but in the opposite direction. Such locations had advantages and drawbacks. On the one hand, they were quieter, but on the other hand, it was difficult to gain the trust of other villagers, since it was hard to keep an eye on them.

As soon as he saw Ostrexora's house, a cold and sinister wind began to blow down the alley for no explainable reason and the first thing he noticed was the wilted flowers at the entrance. The closer one got to the old stone building, the more sparse the vegetation became.

Pahcare pn f vfrtdpi md wuiimjalv ezfl giftul, vu zpggut ovuq guojuur val dareuzl frt ovuw hzpqgiut arlofroiw. Surlare ovu usai fpzf nuZqufoare ovu nifhu, Jfcu dzmjrut gpo hmroarput ar ovu lfqu tazuhomr.

'You, are you sure you want to go?' Svara struggled to hide her nervousness without much success.

She may have been a Valkyrie now, but supernatural phenomena still scared her. The Nawaii were roughly prehistoric men and it would take time for them to give up their old superstitions.

‘You can wait for us here if you don’t feel like it.’ Jake allowed her. Then he glanced at Carmin, but saw only her icy composure and unwavering resolve.

‘Are you a reptile or something?’

Of course, his words would never reach his lips. He had a reckless streak, not a suicidal one. Besides, he knew it was a front. The vampire probably had the most self-control issues of all the remaining participants.

At long last, he knocked on the door. Their rune-covered residences had already proven their sturdiness, so he was taken aback when it cracked on first impact. He had trouble controlling his force, but not to the point of damaging a reinforced wooden door.

‘Come in.’ A placid voice invited him inside.

He was about to open the door when he heard footsteps behind him. Turning his head, he recognized Laksmi, the female soldier hanging out with Ostrexora. She was carrying a wicker basket and seemed surprised to meet him there.

However, she did not engage in dialogue. Despite her curiosity, she snuck past him and went through the door to deliver whatever was in her basket.

Budmzu ovu tmmz himlut, Jfcu lounnut ar jaov val dmmo frt ovur urouzut jaovmpo dpzovuz ftm. Tvu arouzamz opzrut mpo om gu fl eimmqw fl vu vft aqfearut.

Cold and stark, but not in the sense of temperature. In all honesty, the room temperature was mild, with a fireplace already burning in the middle of the day. There was even another wood-burning heater to keep the room warm. However, even with these arrangements, the place was as devoid of human life and warmth as a fućking asteroid.

Cobwebs hung from the wall and ceiling, while a thick layer of dust covered the floor and furniture. Skeletons of dead rats were everywhere and a musty smell saturated the place. Without the fireplace, one would have thought that the house had been uninhabited for a long time.

It was all the more disturbing because at the beginning of the Round, his own house was perfectly clean. If this house was no exception, accumulating such a level of grime in such a short time was no small feat.

Scanning the room with his eyes, Jake found neither Laksmini nor Ostrexora. It was as if they had vanished into thin air. Realizing something, he activated his Myrtharian Sight as he focused the Perception Aether in his eyes and the scenery immediately changed. A neat, well-maintained interior unveiled itself before his eyes. The two women were also standing in front of him and calmly staring at him.

Ostrexora was as apathetic and austere as usual. Her pallor was sickly, like a corpse, while her unkempt hair and gothic black makeup only added to the grimness. She was still barefoot, but he noticed that they were immaculately clean. Come to think of it, he hadn't found any footprints on the path that matched her shoe size.

‘You are as versatile and insightful as I feared.’ Ostrexora greeted him in a monotone. ‘To what do I owe the honor of the great Jake Wilderth’s visit?’

Jake raised an eyebrow, half believing he caught a hint of sarcasm, but he brushed off the jab.

‘You know very well why I’m here. ‘He didn’t beat around the bush. ‘I know for a fact that you’re one of the Monsters from the get-go. I should have thought of that the moment Kewanee called for us to vote against you. You’re the one who turned her, right?’