

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 4: The Purgatory

### Chapter 441 - New Rules (part 1)

At first glance, Jake understood that this Round would be nothing like the previous one. Yes, aside from a few minor alterations, the Village had not changed much, albeit much larger and with most of the residences unoccupied.

The layout of the buildings was more or less the same, with the addition of the castle. The Mountain and its Mine was still there, as well as the Lake and the Forest. Even the hill and its Manor had not budged, although the hill was now higher and more than one Villa sat atop it.

What had actually changed was that the Village no longer ended at its former border. Whether it was the Lake or the Forest of the past Round, these extended much further, demarcating many similar Villages that stretched to the horizon.

From his position, Jake warped the air with his telekinesis to form a huge lens that would double as a telescope and decided to take a thorough look at the surroundings.

After a few minutes of meticulous observation, he determined that the neighboring Villages were in a similar situation to his own. In the absence of participants, their NPCs seemed to be operating autonomously according to their pre-established alliances.

Jake spotted a cohort of Guard warring against another, but also a party of Hunters entering the forest carrying longbows. He even

spotted a Thief quietly picking at the front door of an empty House to do some larceny.

Turning his attention to his own Village, Jake finally sighted some real Players. Like him, they were unsettled by the change and trying to adjust to their new surroundings.

He was immediately relieved when he recognized his comrades from the previous Round. The overall location of their residences had not changed too much, so he found Kewanee and Carmin without much difficulty. Drastan was in front of his Barber Shop, while Gordon was busy kicking chickens as he cursed the whole universe.

Carl was spacing out in front of the majestic cathedral replacing his old chapel, while Svava was familiarizing herself with the new tools in her Tannery.

As Jake continued to search for the Villagers from the last round, he eventually found all of them, except for those who had qualified several days prior.

Or so he thought. Surveying the Manor at the top of the hill, he gawked as he recognized the ghostly figure of Ostrexora and her faithful sidekick Laksmi.

‘ They stayed? ‘ Jake murmured, stroking his chin thoughtfully.

Perhaps out of instinct or because her Perception was so high, Ostrexora còcked her head in his direction and their eyes met for a brief moment. She held the eye contact without displaying any restlessness, and did not try to flee. Nevertheless, she whispered something to Laksmi, who then ran to hide inside the mansion.

Jake instantly realized that they had to solve this problem right away for the Round to go smoothly. He was the Baron of this Village now

and if he wanted to, he could make life difficult for the other Villagers by dispatching the Guards.

Tvu iaqaol md oval fpovmzaow zuqfarut om gu luur, gpo dzmq jvfo iaooiu vu vft jaorullut, ovulu Gpfztl luuqut om nfw vaq prypuloamrare mgualfrhu.

When Jake was about to visit her for a heated discussion, his bracelet, which hadn't done much good recently, suddenly notified him that he was receiving a call. He was delighted when he saw the caller's name.

'Hey Will, how are you?' Jake took the call in a good mood.

He wasn't the type to be nostalgic, but reuniting with his Faction was definitely a good reason to rejoice.

'Jake, you're finally here!' Will's very animated voice rang out from the other end of the device. 'Tell me where you are and we'll come visit you. Tim and the two sisters are with me.'

'Hmmm, not that I don't want to, but how do I do that?' Jake quashed his enthusiasm unabashedly.

'Oh good question, wait a minute... Can you see the other Villages from where you are?'

Jake heard him fiddling with something on his end, but waited for him to finish before he bragged smugly,

'Yep, I'm on top of my Castle. I'm admiring the view.'

Radio silence. Then he heard overexcited shouts from the other side, including Tim's.

'Sorry about the noise.' Will replied a little later. 'You have no idea how good this news is! We'd been considering this scenario but thought it unlikely... The Lord on our side is one hell of a bastard!'

Jake grew bitter as he sensed how little faith they had in him.

‘That’s not what we mean. ‘ Will justified himself right away as he felt him brooding. ‘Just that we know how much you hate making things difficult for yourself. Lord forces you to socialize and usually that’s more my job. ‘

‘No biggie. ‘

‘If you’re up in a castle, we should be able to find each other easily.

‘Will continued. ‘Tell me, if you see our signal. ‘

With his telekinetic telescope, Jake searched the sky carefully, but it wasn’t necessary. A firework exploded a few Villages away with incredible brightness. He then pointed his telescope below and found Will and his group standing at the edge of the woods.

Will wore a traveler’s wool cloak, while the two sisters were bundled up in thick mantles, their pink hair hidden under a large hood. Only Tim was really recognizable. He looked crestfallen, but that was understandable after Lily’s elimination. In addition to them, Arryn and two other men accompanied them.

‘I see you. ‘

‘Perfect. Um... Can you pick us up? The roads aren’t very safe right now...‘

Jake was somewhat taken aback by his lack of bravery, but he didn’t mind.

‘Sure. Give me a few minutes. ‘

Like a bird of prey, Jake darted over the tower balcony and with a thump catapulted himself forward like a goddamn cannonball. The

Guards and Villagers below were buffeted by a blast of wind, but by the time they looked up the culprit was long gone.

Leaping from house to house, then tree to tree, Jake quickly crossed the distance to his friends. He could have flown, but he preferred not to hasten the Corruption's propagation if he didn't have to.

A few minutes later, he landed in front of them noiselessly and Will nearly had a heart attack when Jake patted him on the shoulder.

'Jesus, don't ever do that again! I thought Skaur and his minions had caught up with us.'

'Why do you look so stressed?' Jake asked dubiously. 'It's not like they can attack you in the middle of the day. Unless you...'

'We'll talk about that later!' The businessman pushed him toward the road, glancing behind him skittishly from time to time.

'Too late.' One of the other two men grimaced as he saw a group of guards in mismatched chain mail appear down the road behind them. At their helm, a huge, fat, muscular, pierced fellow licked his lips as he stared at Will with a gleeful expression.

'Will, Will, Will...' The fat man swaggered as he banged the butt of his club against his other hand.

The nerd shook like a leaf with each utterance of his name.

'For a second there, I thought you were leaving me all alone.' Skaur lamented with a theatrical flourish. 'You know how much, I'm counting on you, right?'

Will may have been nervous, but with Jake as backup, he found the courage to retort.

‘Fuck off Skaur! You’re even worse than the bugs on this station. We’re getting out of here whether you like it or not!’

In response to the resolute tirade of the snotty youth in front of him, the fat man’s oily forehead creased dangerously. The scruffy guards next to him immediately drew their weapons as they sensed the change in atmosphere.

Jake would have gladly sat back and enjoyed the scene while eating popcorn on the side, but unfortunately, as a Faction Leader, he couldn’t stand by and let his subordinates be humiliated in front of him. Calmly, he stepped in between the two.

It was not until he moved that Skaur took notice of the intruder.

‘Who are you?’ The fat man asked cautiously. Unlike the tough guy image he gave off, he wasn’t that brave.

He was able to sense when the wind was turning or he wouldn’t have survived all this time. And right now, his gut was telling him it wasn’t a wind, but a hurricane that was blowing.

‘Jake Wilderth.’ Jake replied placidly. ‘Leader of the Myrtharian Nerds. The person you were threatening is one of my subordinates.’

Skaur didn’t know what a nerd was, but to him the term was obscure and cryptic enough to make him think twice. Abandoning his old ways, a cheesy smile that Gordon would not have disavowed flashed across his face, accentuating his triple chin even more than it already was.

‘It was a misunderstanding.’ Skaur backed off first. ‘It pains me that Will wants to leave us, but I think too highly of him to force him to stay.’

The fat man then raised a fist in the air and the guards sheathed their weapons before backing away. Before leaving, Skaur gave a last threatening glare to Will, who flinched again.

The fat man wanted to do more, but when he saw Jake frowning in annoyance, he chickened out. After that, he rejoined his bodyguards and walked away without looking back.

‘Who is this Skaur?’ Jake questioned with interest. ‘He seemed to know you well.’

‘Long story.’ Will grumbled as they set off.