

The Oracle Paths

Volume 4: The Purgatory

Chapter 447 - New Plan

Jake then noticed that Carmin was not among them.

‘Where did Carmin go?’ He asked Svara and Kewanee nosily. Unlike the Villagers and Players under his protection, Carmin was not one of his proteges nor part of his faction.

They exchanged unsettled looks and shook their heads apologetically.

‘I haven’t seen her since the assault began.’ Drastan also testified grimly. ‘Peter fought with us, but we lost sight of each other during the fight.’

Jake checked his Ordeal Missions and found Peter Brady’s name in the list. The drug addict was very much alive and kicking.

‘Whatever, I’ll just let him do what he wants for now.’ He shrugged.

‘What are you going to do now, Jake?’ Will asked concernedly. ‘I was optimistic an hour ago, but now it’s going to be hard to get back on track with a burned-out Village.’

‘You’re wrong.’ Jake objected calmly. ‘I never cared about the buildings. Sure, it’s cool to have a place to sleep, but it was never essential to my plan.’

‘But these Game Buildings have their uses.’ The businessman argued quietly. It was part of his job to find out stuff, and he’d duly done his homework. ‘For starters, they are virtually indestructible against

normal methods and there are bonuses to be gained from certain builds. For example, your Lord Role will be unusable until you rebuild the Castle.’

Jake had a bad feeling when he heard this. He pulled out his Fluid Card and looked at his Role list. A cursory glance confirmed to him, alas, that Will was telling the truth.

‘Fuck!’

His curse echoed for miles around. Once he calmed down by uprooting a dozen trees with his bare hands in front of his stunned companions, Jake regained his usual composure. Fucking Corruption.

‘How did they do it?’ Jake brought up the most crucial issue with his newfound lucidity. ‘To almost destroy my wooden hut in the first round, I needed all my Berserk Mode power. I refuse to believe that these Players or Inquisitors are powerful enough to destroy an entire Village in such a short time. I know that Avros, one of the attackers has a Role or an item that allows him to destroy buildings, but I don’t know more than that.’

‘What’s this Avros’ initial Role?’ Will asked, cocking an eyebrow.

‘Monster...And Mason if my memory serves me right.’ Kewanee replied while scratching her chin with her forefinger.

Will let out a plethora of curses upon hearing this. It was rare for him to lose his temper like that.

‘Look no further. He has the Demolisher Role. It’s a rare Role, which requires the Mason Role as a prerequisite as well as a certain amount of materials to make explosives. These explosives are nothing special if used against us, but they are frighteningly effective on the Game Buildings.’

Jake was not as downcast as his comrade. Quite the opposite, he had regained some of his optimism. He recalled the sticks of dynamite Avros had used in their fight. If it was enough to keep him from planting his bombs, it was perfectly within his capabilities.

‘I don’t want to play devil’s advocate, but you’re overlooking something.’ Enya interjected, arms crossed. ‘Other than the cataclysmic explosion in the Village south of ours that served as a diversion, I haven’t seen or heard a single explosion. If I had to go out on a limb, I’d say the buildings were set on fire. So either they have a Pyromaniac, or this Avros’ arsenal is not limited to bombs. In the case of the castle and the other stone mansions, it was obviously sabotaged from the inside. So they have at least one Thief who can pick locks, or a Locksmith to make duplicates.’

‘Makes sense.’ Jake nodded. ‘We need to find another Mason now, since they killed all the native Villagers. If any of you have the Role Card, pass it to me. I’ll rebuild the village my way this time. I dare them to destroy the new castle once I put my own spin on it.’

Draston, Kewanee and Svara were somewhat skeptical, but the others chuckled knowingly. These guys had really messed with the wrong person if they thought they could demoralize him by destroying a few houses.

To be fair, you couldn’t really blame them. Right now, they thought his corpse was feeding the fish. The Village’s destruction was just a bonus.

‘I have the Role Card.’ Draston said flatly. ‘But building is not my specialty. I prefer fighting.’

‘Perfect.’ Jake smiled. After equipping the Role, he called out, ‘Now let’s get to work.’

‘Wait Jake.’ Will stopped him. ‘Remember, this is still a game. Like Witch’s Potions, you need recipes, or rather in this case blueprints, and specific materials. The first building to be rebuilt after the Castle will be the Barracks so the Guards can resurrect.’

‘Damn it.’ Jake grunted. ‘And how do we get those blueprints? Should we plunder the other Villages’ Masons? By the way, how do you claim another Village if you’re not one of those citizens.’

‘I endorse that idea.’ Drastan roared fiercely as he gripped his huge war hammer with eagerness to fight.

‘I’m all for it too.’ Svara and the two sisters nodded.

Tim, who was still lying down from his injuries, raised his head and bellowed, ‘I’m in. I want to find the motherfucker who fired all his arrows at me and shove his bow all the way up his...’

‘Shut up, Tim!’ Will snarled before massaging his brain, burdened with tremendous weariness. ‘Let me handle this. Our enemies think you’re dead for now and that’s a good thing. I still have my store in Skaur’s Village.’

‘We can ask Avy.’ Esya reluctantly offered.

‘Let’s do that then.’ Jake complied with a displeased expression. What the fućk was he supposed to do while waiting for them to come back?

The group then split into three groups. The two sisters, Svara and Kewanee went to Avy Shanmin’s Village, while Will returned to negotiate with Skaur under Drastan’s protection and his two bodyguards. The latter were apparently native Fluid Knights won over by his Charisma. He would also take the chance to get the musical instrument he needed for the Musician Role.

In the end, only Tim, still convalescent, stayed with him.

Jake first traversed the Forest to investigate the Village to the south where the explosion had originated and there found a smoldering, wrecked city. He had assumed that Avros and the others were targeting him personally, but perhaps he had been mistaken.

After that, he and the teenager quietly returned to their Village. Hearing a commotion under the rubble, Jake found the Guard Captain still alive. He and his horse had been buried by several tons of rubble, but he had somehow made it through.

‘My L- You’re not my Lord anymore. ‘The warrior stared at him in a fit of existential crisis, as if he could no longer make sense of the new instructions occupying his memory.

’ How creepy. Even the NPCs are aware of the program screwing with their brains.’ Jake thought with many doubts.

He didn’t help him immediately. Instead, he scanned the Guard with his bracelet without success, then with his own Spirit Body and Myrtharian Sight. When he focused all his Perception in his eyes, he sensed something uncanny.

’ So, that’s how it is.’

‘Tim, never trust the Guards. ‘Jake ordered telepathically.

The teenager nodded without question. Every command from Jake was taken as gospel. Jake then helped the Guard clear the debris, then ordered him to search for any survivors. Every extra Guard was extra free labor.

They visited the Castle, as well as other important residences like the Bailiff’s or the Cathedral, but practically nothing was left. The attackers had been extraordinarily thorough in their efforts to burn

down everything. In particular, the Mason's residence, where they had left nothing, not even the ashes of the tools.

As they reached the bottom of the hill, Jake paused in surprise. Looking up at the top, he murmured thoughtfully, 'So even you didn't run away?'

Climbing the hill at an even pace, Jake strolled up to a ruined mansion. The smell of coal and ash was still prevalent and a few wisps of black smoke were still billowing from it. Rummaging through the rubble, Ostrexora and Laksmini looked dejected. Especially Laksmini, who still looked quite shaken up.

'Why are you still here?' Jake broke the silence, which startled the young woman. In comparison, Ostrexora just turned around slowly, as if she had already anticipated his arrival.

'Why are you still alive?' She countered with a straight face.

Jake grinned. 'Let's talk.'

Fzmq ovu hmggiut lomrul, Jfcu fzzfreat dmpz lommil. Orhu usuzwmru jfl lufout, vu tat rmo gufo fzmprt ovu gplv.

'What do you want?' he asked gravely. 'I know you're not with those other Monsters that just attacked, but I also know that compared to you they're like choirboys.'

Ostrexora made no effort to deny it.

'I want what any Monster wants. Killing and Eternal Rest.' A face contorted with untold insanity superseded her usual listlessness. Even someone as battle-hardened as Jake recoiled slightly.

'But I only kill men.' She added candidly, flashing an angelic smile against all odds.

' Okay, she's definitely insane.' Jake concluded inwardly, but didn't show any of it. Surely some dude had ruined her life in the past to make her hate men like that.

'But I'm a man.' He pointed out the one important detail she seemed to have glossed over.

'You are.' She nodded apathetically again.

Jake felt a headache coming on. This was going to be a long discussion.