

The Oracle Paths

Volume 4: The Purgatory

Chapter 459 - Intelligence Gathering

A few hours later, Jake and Carmin were patiently waiting for something, perched together on the highest branch of a yew tree. Scanning the horizon, the Silver Myrtharian man made another check,

‘Are you sure about what you saw?’

Clenching her fists tensely, then loosening them again, the young woman nodded with a dejected face.

‘One hundred percent sure. Wyatt has gone nuts.’ She insisted, biting her lip in frustration. ‘If there’s still hope, can you try to spare him?’

Watching her distraught expression, Jake sighed. Earlier, she had asked him to help her kill Wyatt Griffiths, the leader of her own faction. It must have taken a lot for her to come to that decision, but it was obvious that this was not what she wanted.

If he hadn’t committed an unforgivable act, she would never have made such a resolution. It was obvious from her smitten expression that she held more than just admiration for this Wyatt.

‘I just promised to come and judge the situation in person, not do your dirty work.’ Jake said flippantly, refusing to give her any false hope. ‘Whatever you think you saw, we need more information. I remind you that we’re scheduled to meet with Sigmar in a few hours.’

The Inquisitor named Ilfora had come by again early this morning after Carmin's visit, and the time of the meeting with her leader had been set for late afternoon. During the past three days, Will had done a phenomenal job.

To be exact, it was Peter Brady to whom they owed a good part of their achievements. The drug addict had sneaked into all the Villages after fleeing the onslaught of Isbeus' Monsters a few days earlier.

With a knack for infiltration, he had managed to gain acceptance as a citizen in most of them, allowing him to apply his Village Idiot talent to all their inhabitants. Thus, he had identified the Roles of most remaining participants without drawing attention to himself.

Regretfully, while trying to reach Isbeus' Village, he had hit a snag. Avros had instantly recognized him and it was a godsend that he hadn't been killed. To escape, he had been driven into the Forest without having the proper Role, which had landed him back in the Pit for the third time.

This had, against all odds, saved his life, but this time he had lost some feathers. When Will had found him this morning, the drug-addicted Player was on the verge of death, with only his head, his torso and part of his right thigh intact. His body was completely charred and covered with foul-smelling pustules.

The only reason he was still alive was because joining Jake's Faction, the Myrtharian Body passive had made him much more resilient. Still, he was pretty much screwed...

The thing is, when Jake's Bloodline had been promoted to lvl 3, the bonus of this passive Skill had also been upgraded accordingly. The Body Stats of the Myrtharian Nerds members were now boosted by 160% (20% of 8 times the body stats of a human) compared to those of a normal human, and Jake also benefited from this bonus.

Whether it was a twist of fate or a mere coincidence, it was precisely the increase in this bonus that saved Peter's life. It also goes without saying that the other members were more than delighted by this improvement. Especially the physically weaker ones like Will and Arryn who felt like they had been granted a second life.

Speaking of Will, having little interest in training, he had used his free time and the cooperation of Pavao and his men to recruit other Villagers. Over the past two days, many Villages had been attacked by the Monsters and there was a high proportion of desperate Vagabonds.

Most had lost their minds and joined a Criminal Settlement, but the others had enthusiastically accepted Will's invitation upon learning that Jake and his group had successfully resisted and eliminated the combined attack of Monsters and Inquisitors. To these helpless and desperate natives and Players, the heroic deeds of Jake, Drastan and Vincent were the stuff of legend.

As a result, thanks to Will's supervisory efforts, their Village had been mostly rebuilt and now numbered 600 Villagers. Based on Peter's report, the total number of natives and Players alike still alive was estimated at 5,000.

Over the past few days the chaos had been total and the most obscene crimes had taken place under the Corruption's influence. For most of the remaining survivors, all that was missing was a spark for their consciousness to flare up in a bloodbath.

The final battle was near.

After all the skirmishes and bloodshed, only five heavyweights remained, arrogantly imposing themselves on the competition:

-The Village of Isbeus, which consisted entirely of more than 1500 Monsters, not counting the Guards.

-The Village of Sigmar and Avy, with over 1000 natives and a few rare Players.

-A Village of Criminals led by Boris Slominsky and his faction 'The Pagans' to which the deceased Chinen belonged, and which included just under 300 Villagers. Surprisingly, Kyle was doing quite well there and had gained the trust of their leader.

-Wyatt Griffiths' Monster Village and his Pureblood faction, which Jake and Carmin were currently spying on from a tree top. According to their initial investigations, he had about 300 Monsters under his command and many prisoners...

-And finally, Jake's Village with about 600 Villagers, most of whom were useless.

There were still a few other Villages such as that of the Egean Mihangyl, the Inuit or Skaur, but they were much smaller. And yet, they could not be underestimated because they were mostly made up of Players. Heaven only knew with whom they had forged their alliances.

Gasur ovu pzeurhw md ovu laopfoamr, Dzflofr, Varhuro frt ovu movuzl vft film lomnut ovuaz ozfarare. Budmzu Jfcu iudo jaov Cfzqar, usuzwmru vft guur easur ovuaz àllaerqurol.

Drastan and Vincent would convince Boris through Kyle, while Enya and Esya would help Hephais convince Mihangyl and Ralnor. Being all Egeans, this was the best solution. Everyone had made good use of the Fluid obtained from the Jackpot Cards and they had all become much stronger.

‘Jake, something’s going on!’ Carmin brazenly nudged him as he spotted some movement on the side of her former Faction. At the moment, she was still one of their members, but was patently on the outs.

Opening his eyes wide, he suppressed a yawn of boredom and focused on the newcomers. With his keen eyesight, he saw two unfamiliar Inquisitors coming out of Wyatt’ Castle.

As usual it was impossible to tell them apart by their clothing, but the gait of these two was also indistinguishable from normal humans. However their size was iconic. One being tall and sturdy like him, while the other was barely taller than the vampire at his side.

With Peter’s report, he identified them as Kagorim and Imaev. The drug addict had paid dearly to know their names. With his Myrtharian Sight, Jake focused his attention on their Spirit Body’ s fluctuations. These two were no amateurs. The Fluid screen draping over them rendered their telepathic exchanges untraceable.

‘I can’t figure out what they’re saying to each other.’ Jake apologized telepathically to Carmin. ‘Not without them realizing it, anyway.’

‘Let’s try to get closer to learn the truth from one of the Villagers.’ The vampire suggested. ‘I can try to question a member of my Faction. I’m sure they haven’t all gone mad.’

Jake rolled his eyes. It was clear from her crestfallen countenance that she herself did not believe her statement. Tracking the two Inquisitors with his eyes, he was momentarily startled when he saw them teleport away, but he didn’t dwell on it.

‘Not just yet.’ He finally replied aloud. ‘If this doesn’t work, our cover will be blown. Let’s wait a little longer.’

‘Suit yourself...’ She muttered, crossing her arms.

The duo continued to watch the stubbornly empty Village, until two new Inquisitors showed up at the far end of the street. At a glance, Jake knew it wasn’t the same two Inquisitors as before. He recognized one of them as the Inquisitor from his First Round. The problem was that Peter and Will’s report did not mention them.

‘What the hell is going on?’

Suspicious and with a bad feeling, he gritted his teeth and decided to sneak closer to the Village. With Carmin on his heels, Jake shadowed them until the two Inquisitors were invited into the same Castle that Kagorim and Imaev had just left.

A few minutes later, the two Fluid Masters emerged through the same door and left the premises at a high speed. Unlike the previous pair, they did not teleport away, giving them the opportunity to tag along. But Jake gave up on that idea. They weren’t there for that.

Almost immediately afterwards, the Castle gates opened for the third time and a herd of people poured out. The mystery of where the villagers had gone was solved.

Jake almost fell off his tree branch when he saw a familiar figure.

‘Kevin?! What the hell is he doing here?’ He exclaimed inwardly.

His cousin was in his Werebear form and a bestial, cruel expression permeated his face. His brown fur had turned gray and was partially covered in dried blood, but he didn’t seem to care.

‘Something’s wrong.’ Jake warned Carmin, finally sharing her concern.

Al ad om dpzovuz tfzcur ovu nahopzu, frmovuz zuhmeraxfgiu daepzu uquzeut dzmq ovu Cfloiu tmmzjfw. A imre gimrt qfru, ofrrut lcar, frt iplhampl immcl. Io hmpit mriw gu Szfzv.

Except that this Sarah had changed a lot. Her golden eyes had turned to an intense orange verging on red and a carnivorous and sadistic smile accompanied her every move. She too was covered in blood.