

The Oracle Paths

Volume 4: The Purgatory

Chapter 465 – Revelation (part 2)

‘The Digestors? They’re here?!’ Carmin exclaimed in shock.

‘Not exactly... But they may as well be.’ Hade proclaimed grimly. Observing Jake and the young woman in turn, the Fluid Grandmaster wore an apologetic expression.

‘Unfortunately, this is mostly my fault, although I did bring forward their arrival a little bit. Since I don’t quite know what you have heard about me, I’ll first tell you what you need to understand. At this point, keeping the secret from the participants is no longer important.’

‘Wait a minute, if these are Digestors, why haven’t we been repatriated to the Mirror Universe?’ Jake interjected, raising his hand. ‘That’s what happened when their presence was discovered during my First Ordeal.’

Hade blinked in astonishment, but immediately pulled himself together. Carmin was still shocked. Never had she considered the possibility that these hellish aliens could appear here.

When she had arrived on B842 with her sister, the members of her clan there had exterminated a staggering number of them, giving them the misleading impression that apart from their ugliness and stench, these monsters were greatly overrated. Thinking they could easily score points for their Oracle Rank, they blithely continued to

slaughter them, until the pile of Digestors' corpses formed a small hill.

They paid dearly for their overconfidence. Such a concentration of Vampires in one place naturally meant high concentrations of life energy and Aether. It wasn't long before they were surrounded by a horde of millions of Digestors, who at the time were fortunately mostly Rank 1, 2 or 3. For Vampires like them, it was small fry.

But with numbers like that, an army of ants could easily defeat an elephant, and that's exactly what happened. A few guards at the bottom of the ladder had been overwhelmed by a swarm of enemies after being isolated and their merry slaughter had immediately taken a much more dramatic turn.

After devouring the flesh of these Vampires, the Digestors had instantly mutated. Rank 1s became Rank 2s, Rank 2s became Rank 3s, while some Rank 3s also reached Rank 4. On top of that, even those who hadn't leveled up had mutated, adopting various physical and magical attributes once characteristic of their kind.

In addition to gaining the ability to absorb blood, their bodies began to release a kind of Dark Blood Energy that was unpleasantly similar to their own, while some Digestors with alien shapes acquired outright humanoid features.

These new Digestors had then gone into a frenzy, like these new Thralls and Ghouls unable to control their instincts. The problem was that this time their increased power allowed them to threaten not only the normal Vampires, but also the Vampire Nobles.

As the snowball effect spread, more and more Vampires fell, feeding the ranks of the enemy, until the first Vampire Noble fell victim to these insatiable demons who knew no fear.

A new series of evolution and mutations ensued, giving birth to a flock of Rank 4, 5 and 6 Digestors that bore an uncanny resemblance to their last victim, one of them practically becoming a perfect copy. This Digestor's tuxedo may have been an organic protrusion, but Carmin was still having nightmares about it today.

In the end, half of their group had been slaughtered and if their Vampire Progenitor hadn't found them by some unknown method and saved them in time, they would have all died without exception. The only reason Carmin and her sister had survived was because their relative and many other vampires who had watched them grow up had sacrificed themselves.

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'You have not been repatriated to the Mirror Universe, because familiarizing yourself with the threats the Oracle faces is the purpose of this Third Ordeal.' Sigmar explained seriously after giving the young woman a sympathetic look.

'The Oracle has many ways to train you, depending on your current level, character, and circumstances, but it tends to favor immediate exposure. If it were possible, every Ordeal would be a battlefield where you would face hordes of Digestors until you knew them better than yourself. Unfortunately, this is impossible.'

'I don't know why, but the Oracle is powerless against them, and if a Digestor were to kill you in an Ordeal, you would die for real. At least that's what naive people think. The raw truth is that the Oracle will not save you. Even if your soul survived, you would be considered dead. The Oracle sometimes makes exceptions, but they are few and far between.'

Jake snorted disdainfully upon hearing this. Yep, he knew about that. 'Protecting my Soul Mate? Bullshit!' It had gotten him stripped and almost killed.

'Getting back to how the Oracle exposes you to this threat, it can range from Ordeals where Digestor-like creatures exist, to almost situational ones like here. The Corruption produced here by the parasite Converters has little to do with the one generated by the proliferation of Digestors in our world, but it is no less dangerous for this Seed World. Eventually, all the inhabitants of this universe will lose their minds and kill each other. Devoid of reason, civilizations will disappear, and then die out completely, with anarchy reigning supreme.

'140 years ago, I was sent by the Consortium to a certain allied planet that was being invaded by unknown enemies. Not having received my Oracle Device at the time, I too did not know what I was up against. My power was sufficient, so I and my men had no trouble exterminating them. Unaware of what they were, we spared a few of these monsters, as well as salvaged a few corpses in good condition and migrated to Yotai Shien 3 and began our experiments to understand their biology and the origin of their ability. You have no idea how much I regret it today...

'To put it in context, I had accepted this mission because Minerva Isbeus was giving me a hard time. As one of the oldest Fluid Grandmasters, she saw me as a threat. I hadn't completely converted my Fluid to Aether yet, but I was close. Minerva is so sensitive to the Fluid that she lost her emotions long ago. All she has left is her pursuit of power and her ambition. By accepting this mission far away from the Consortium, I had sent her the message that I wasn't interested in encroaching on her turf, and I had hoped that our feud would end there.

‘My plan was indeed successful at first, until I learned that I was being held responsible for the demise of the planet I had just saved. Having just eliminated all the Digestors, it could only have been Minerva’s scheme. Having become a fugitive, I settled on Yotai Shien 3 and our research, which was more of a hobby at the time, began.

‘We had, and I apologize for this, more success than we had hoped for. Although the corpses’ souls had already dissipated and we could not reproduce the Aetheric signature of the Digestors in our hands, we tried to get as close to the originals as possible. The parasites on this station today are the result.

‘Unaware of this at the time, our mistake of sparing several Digestors for study ended up having irreversible consequences. In particular, the Corruption. The Corruption you are experiencing today has little to do with the Corruption we were exposed to back then... The Corruption you are experiencing is merely the result of the release of a putrid Fluid produced by the Converters, one of our failed creations. Although the living Digestors we owned were few in number, and the Corruption emitted infinitesimal, it was the real deal. Wherever it grew, Digestors would thrive...

‘As you may know from your investigations on the station, I fell in love with Wendy on this station and we had a son a few years later. He was a beautiful and valiant baby, but Wendy died soon afterwards, drained of all her vitality... It’s rare, but it happens sometimes when the child’s Fluid Core is overdeveloped. I accepted this grief without suspecting anything.

‘Nylreg, though quiet and not very expressive, was intelligent, curious and had fun like any other child. There was no reason to suspect that this was just a delusion. Because he was my son, he was born with an activated Fluid Knight Core, which gave him all the

predispositions to become an exceptional Fluid Wielder. Proud and full of hope, I trained him body and soul from an early age.

‘The research went on and when he was 5 years old I gave him the Fluid Artifact where we are now. During those years, the Corruption kept building up and even though the incidents were multiplying, I simply blamed them on fatigue and stress from being confined on a space station for so long. A year later, we had one death. That’s when I realized something was wrong, but it was still a fleeting inkling. It took two more deaths and the insanity of one of the Fluid Masters under my command for me to realize the extent of this danger. But it was already too late. Everyone went crazy like a powder keg in front of a match flame.

‘At that point, I did what I felt was necessary. I sealed the station with my powers and exterminated all of our Digestors guinea pigs, including the ones that had spawned without me noticing. They were mostly insects or small rodents and I didn’t immediately make the connection. I also personally executed all those who had lost their minds. I then cremated and ejected the ashes of these monsters and employees into the cosmos. The experiments ended and the project was classified. After that, the situation quickly returned to normal and our lives resumed, but the damage was done.

‘Because there was one Digestor that I had overlooked...to kill. The only one, I would never have suspected. My own son.’