

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 4: The Purgatory

### Chapter 467 - A Promise is a Promise

‘What is it?’ Jake asked as he scrutinized the object from every angle. He had a vague idea, but he wasn’t entirely sure.

‘A key and much more.’ Sigmar smiled mysteriously. ‘Even if it was a present to my son, a Fluid Artifact of this caliber is never given without taking a few precautions. After all, mishaps can always happen, or it could be stolen. Being able to locate it and regain control at any time has always been my privilege. My son doesn’t know it, or maybe he does, but he has modified this Fluid Artifact so much that he probably thinks it’s impossible.’

‘I can no longer use this key to control his Fluid Artifact remotely, but that doesn’t mean it’s not feasible with direct access. To give you a more graphic example, anyone who thinks they know their computer better than the manufacturer is naive. Even if I can’t access its ‘contents’, restoring the factory default settings is still pretty simple.’

‘The Fluid Artifact itself is hidden somewhere on this station. I want you to find it and use this key to turn it off. You can even take it with you away from here if you feel up to it. I won’t stop you. Just know that despite my best efforts, reaching the Purgatory core itself will not be risk-free. It’s the very foundation of all his plans and probably his most precious possession... There’s no way he would have left it unprotected.’

Jake weighed the pros and cons for a long moment before finally agreeing with a solemn expression. Since becoming a Fluid Master, his precognition had reached a level where he could foresee the extent of what was truly afoot on this station. The night ahead promised to be bloody.

As Jake and Carmin were about to leave the Castle, Sigmar's sullen, resolute voice floated behind them.

'If I survive, let's be friends. I have a nagging feeling we're not that different.'

Concurrently, he received a notification from the Oracle System.

[Sigmar Aelsinire applies to join your faction. Accept his application, yes or no?]

As he finished reading the message, a funny expression appeared on Jake's face, followed by a quiet but meaningful laugh. He accepted the application willingly.

'Now I can see how you're planning to survive.' Jake muttered as he pulled the large door shut behind him. 'Hopefully, the whole mess with your son will end well.'

'Likewise. Likewise...' Sigmar mumbled as he slumped back into his throne seemingly drained of all his energy.

After that, Jake took no further interest in this Village and made his way back to his own fiefdom without looking back. If Sigmar lost, his town would be next in line.

He barely heard what Avy shouted as she waved them off. Carmin tugged gently on his sleeve to get his attention, but he kept walking briskly, busy with all sorts of thoughts.

A few moments later, Jake and the young woman reached their own headquarters. They were startled to discover a Village much more crowded than when they left. Evidently, the negotiations had gone more smoothly than expected.

Hunvfal frt ovu ojm lalouzl juzu gfhc jaov Mavfrewi frt Rfirmz, ovu ojm Eefufrl zprrare f Vaiifeu md Pifwuzl, jvau Kwiu jfl film nzuluro.

Kyle hadn't changed much, except that his insecurities and weak-mindedness seemed to be gone at last. In his case, the Corruption had helped him shed his limiting thoughts. A kind of madness and eagerness to fight distorted his features, but considering the forthcoming battle, it was actually a good thing.

In fact, everyone was in a worrying mental state. All of the Players gathered here were among the folks for whom keeping their sanity was paramount, but it was also for this very reason that they were willing to risk everything in forming an alliance.

Jake also found some of the so-called Criminals that Kyle had joined. Their leader Boris wasn't there, but Wilde, the tattooed guy with the shaved head was. He still seemed just as crazy, but ironically it was hard to tell the difference with or without the Corruption. Perversely, his insanity appeared to safeguard his sanity in the current climate.

'Peeh, so you're the guy Kyle's bragging about?!' Wilde grated as he stomped out a cigarette butt on the floor. 'I hope we don't regret this.'

The offender clearly wanted to say more, but upon seeing the icy indifference of the giant in front of him, he swallowed and wisely chose to refrain. With an amused smile, Kyle introduced the Players around him,

‘You already know Wilde,’ he said, pointing to the guy with the shaved head. ‘The others are Shulyov, Kurchin, Valentin and Yamabe. They will stay here with me to assist you. They all have the roles of Traveler, Thief and Monster Hunter.’

Jake examined the five Players with fresh eyes. Most of them looked like they were from Eastern Europe, but Yamabe was clearly Japanese. However, as he listened to them speak he quickly noticed that each of them had the same Asian accent.

‘They are all part of a yakuza gang in Japan. Boris, Wilde and the others are immigrants who grew up together in an orphanage. Together they have formed a faction called ‘The Pagans’.

It was amazing how a well-off American student could be so comfortable introducing a bunch of thugs as if they were harmless friends he had met at a bar the night before.

Yfqfgu, ovu mriw Jfnfrulu qfr nzuluro, jfl ovar fl f ojae frt val lcar jfl ofoommut jaov f vpeu Cvarulu tzfemr. Ar uuzau fpzf uqfrfout dzmq ao, fl ad ovu tzfemr juzu fiasu frt rmo bplo f lofar md hmimzut arc. Wvur Jfcu ovmpervo vu jfl tmru jaov ovu arozmtphoamrl, ovu Pifwuz fnnzmfhvut vaq frt dzmjrut jaov taleplo fdouz lraddare ovu faz,

‘Are you the one who killed Chinen?’

Jake pulled the tattooed strip of skin he had torn from the latter’s corpse from his bag, and waved it before them.

‘So what?’ He sneered. ‘From the moment he tried to kill me it was the only logical outcome.’

Yamabe was silent for a few seconds before nodding gravely. He had accepted this explanation. As for Wilde and the others, they couldn’t care less.

‘Peeh, that jerk got what he deserved! He had it coming to him for messing with everybody.’ Wilde snorted loudly.

‘Yeah, Boris spanked him a few times for that very reason.’ Kurchin, a dark-haired man with a wrestler’s build, chimed in.

Jake then listened to the Playboy’s adventures since their separation and it turned out that everything had gone well for him. It seemed that Tim’s luck had rubbed off on him.

Appearing in the same Village as Boris, he had been taken under his wing. Boris had a bad temper, but was extremely protective of the people he took in. As soon as he could, he found a Demolisher to blow up his own house, allowing him to walk freely outside with his Vagabond status.

With this method, he was able to effortlessly identify the Monsters as they moved through the night and forced them to surrender or eliminated them if necessary. It was only after this that he eventually rebuilt his house and began to play the game normally.

Ir ovu urt, vu rusuz zuffiw nifwut gw ovu zpiul. Fmz vaq, fii md ovulu zpiul juzu ovuzu om gu gzmcur frt Kwiu vft zuiaut vufsaiw mr oval qmtui om lpzsasu ovzmpev ovmlu ojm Rmprtl.

He and Boris both had Criminal status and had used that as a basis for all their other Roles. They had been to the Pit together a few times, but now they had the status of Night Barons, allowing them to flout all the rules at will as long as an Enforcer didn’t catch them red-handed.

As the sun was about to set, Jake didn’t have time to hear more and went to find Will to get an update on the latest developments. Will looked exhausted, but there was a hint of satisfaction on his exhausted face.

‘Ah Jake, there you are!’ The businessman exclaimed with relief. ‘I’ve been waiting for you, man.’

Jake already knew what Will wanted from him, since they had discussed it earlier in the morning. In addition to the Sigmar membership application he had accepted, there were about 150 applications pending. Will had accepted them preliminarily, but was waiting for the leader’s endorsement to accept them fully.

These factionless Players would remain on probation until the end of the Ordeal, but after enjoying their Faction Passive Skill, the likelihood of them quitting was fairly low.

Given the green light, the merchant contacted all the Faction members with his bracelet, while Drastan whistled to get the attention of the crowd.

‘ A promise is a promise. ‘ Jake declared in a booming voice. His tone gave the illusion that he was speaking softly, but it rang in the heads of every Player and native as if he had just whispered right into their ears.

At that moment, all Players present, whether they had joined his Faction or not, received a notification containing an account of all his investigations and discoveries. With that, their Main Mission was considered accomplished. Because they were in the same Faction, it would be treated as cooperation and their Ordeal rating would not be significantly impacted.

From now on, if they wished, these Players could choose to end their Ordeal by leaving this place. This was the choice made by a minority of them. The rest remained with a steadfast resolve.

Tvmlu vfzturut Pifwuzl jvm hvmlu om lofw juzu hiufziw rmo md ovu lfqu hfiaguz fl fii ovmlu jaqnl jvm vft lpzasut gw hvfrhu. Nmoare ovu

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mdd ovu ialo md nzmgoamrfzw quqguzl. Tvuw jmpit gu uknuiiut  
dzmq Mwzovfzafz Nuztl mrhu ovu Oztufi jfl msuz.