

The Oracle Paths

Volume 4: The Purgatory

Chapter 469 - Signal

Drastan, Svara and the others who wanted to come along bitched for a while, but they accepted their fate. The Troll Slayer would have made an excellent addition, but unfortunately his fighting style was a bit too brutish. He didn't really excel at stealth, which was an absolute must for their upcoming mission.

Pavao frowned as he realized that none of his men had been chosen, but he had expected as much. Other than the fact that they were both Earthlings, Jake had no reason to trust him. Especially when he had openly admitted to following Colonel Hale's instructions to him.

Most importantly, if anything happened to Jake, this Village would be theirs, which was an acceptable outcome. Jake and the others could guess what was going through his mind, but none of them broke his dreams. If Pavao really did attempt a coup, he would experience firsthand the bestial fury of a Troll and a Valkyrie in action.

But that was without counting on Will and his minions. Since he had received the Musician Role, he had tamed a significant number of creatures.

On top of that, there were also all the Players who had recently joined their Faction that they could rely on. Even though most of them had already been crossed off the probationary list, counting on them to take out a few outnumbered soldiers was not a problem.

‘When do we start the operation?’ Tim asked again, making big swings with his axe to warm up.

Will rolled his eyes after explaining the plan for the third time in a row, but it was in this kind of situation where his businessman’s coolness showed its full value. Patiently, he repeated a fourth time,

‘When Avy’ Village is attacked and Sigmar personally enters the battlefield, we’ll take action.’

‘How do we know that’s the right time?’ Tim pouted pensively with his index finger resting on his lips. ‘What do we do if Nylreg and Minerva don’t show up? Or if Sigmar lied? Or if he dies too quickly? I don’t want to meet them on the way, nor do I want to run into an army of bloodthirsty Monsters.’

Al ovu lfware emul, ovu ozpov hfqu mpo md ovu qmpov md hvaitzur.
Ruiuflare Waii dzmq val gpztur, Jfcu difoiw zuomzout,

‘It’s a risk we have to take. Fight and maybe die, or hide and go crazy and then die too. I’d rather fight.’

‘Well said! Let’s slaughter them!’ Drastan roared as he flexed his huge biceps.

‘You stay here.’ Jake snapped at him indifferently, causing the warrior’s infectious exuberance to collapse.

The latter grunted his displeasure, but he had no intention of protesting. Even if their plan worked, this Village would surely be under attack by morning or the next night at the latest.

‘Will there be any drugs to keep us going?’ Peter asked out of the blues with expectant anxiety on his face.

Everyone ignored him unabashedly and his distress increased another notch. His little legs jiggled nervously as he struggled to his feet to tug on Kewanee's dress.

'At least something to drink? A numbing herb? Clove? Mint?' The addict asked with growing desperation, his last words practically whispered as he wept loudly.

Will was about to shoot him down when a sly smile appeared on his face.

'Daryl was a spy for the First Brotherhood, which unofficially serves Minerva's interests. He said airily. 'I've heard they have a drug even more powerful than CZT-3 to stabilize the Inquisitors' souls and keep them under their control... Maybe they carry it with them...'

This was not a lie. Because of their failed ascension, the Inquisitors' minds were constantly being tossed around by the Fluid and the storm of information and emotions it contained. Although they hardly felt any emotion, they used these advanced drugs to drown out the multiple voices competing within them and driving them to madness.

Upon hearing this, Peter's faded gaze regained its light and a determined expression appeared on his face.

'Let me handle the Inquisitors.' He proclaimed solemnly as he placed his right fist against his heart, his frivolity gone.

Jake rolled his eyes again, but at least they would have some peace. All they had to do now was wait.

With a snap of his finger, a telekinetic shockwave burst from his body, pressing the walls of the wooden hut with unstoppable power. Instantly the outhouse exploded, the Purgatory runes offering only insignificant resistance to this overwhelming force.

A moonless, starless night sky was revealed before their eyes, and each of them looked southward, waiting for the fateful signal that would change the course of this Ordeal or dash all their hopes.

‘They are coming.’ Ilphora said standing to the right of Sigmar, who was still slumped nonchalantly on his throne.

‘Did you do what I asked?’

‘I did.’ She replied gravely. ‘Avy and the promising recruits have been evacuated. Only the traitors, the martyrs and the lunatics remain...’

Io jfl mriw fdouz zuhuasare hmrdaqfoamr ovfo Saeqfz tzmnnut val ahw dfhftu md tzuftut Fipat Gzfrtqflouz. Guroiw imjuzare ovu vmmt, ovur zuqmsare ovu salmz dzmq ovu jmqfr fo val latu, vu efxut zuezuodpiiw fo ovu aqqfouzafi dfhu jmsur mriw md uruzew iarul easare mdd f taq gipalv iaevo.

‘You can run away too, Ilphora. I won’t hold it against you.’ Sigmar suggested as he stroked her intangible face, a rare expression of tenderness on his pale face.

An aura of sadness radiated from the female Inquisitor, but she did not shy away from his touch.

‘It’s too late to run.’ She sighed. ‘My fate has long been sealed. If this Oracle is as powerful as you say, then this battle is my chance to get my body back. From the moment I signed that Servant Contract with you, I knew what I was getting into.’

‘Then let’s fight together one last time.’ Sigmar declared as he put Ilphora’s helmet and hood back on. ‘If we survive, I promise to make sure you can feel the càrèss of the wind again.’

At that moment, he stiffened imperceptibly and muttered with a bad feeling,

‘Where is Crodores? He should be back by now.’

‘Don’t bother.’ A grating, cruel female voice suddenly echoed from the Castle entrance. ‘I’m afraid your underling has already given in to madness. His loyalty has proven to be much more fragile than I imagined.’

With that, the great door flew apart and a crumpled black robe hovered in front of Sigmar’s throne, as if intending to lay a new carpet. Looking down, Sigmar and Ilphora immediately recognized their comrade’s coat.

The youth’s face darkened noticeably after seeing this, but he simply closed his eyes numbly.

‘So, you still came... Minerva.’ He growled ominously as he opened his eyes again. The whites of his eyes had turned completely black.

At that moment, a murderous aura erupted forth from his body, the will for destruction it contained so terrifying that the Castle walls began to tremble, the runes covering them sizzling as if they were about to disappear.

In response, a second, equally powerful aura burst forth from across the hall, clashing with his without giving an inch. The first aura was pure and translucent, while the second was thick, dark and slimy, as if it had long since been corrupted and denatured by something unhealthy and alien.

After a short clash, the runes gave way and the huge stone castle exploded with a phenomenal flash, as if a nuclear bomb had just released its power inside.

A blinding white light flashed in the retinas of all witnesses for ten kilometers around, while a mushroom of flames and smoke rose to the sky.

A few miles above the ground, the sky was torn apart by the smoke, revealing the ceiling and pipes of the station for a few seconds before closing in.

When the witnesses regained their sight a few seconds later, half of the Village had been destroyed and a second shock wave ensued, sweeping away the few remaining buildings.

Jake and his team were quietly watching the sky when they saw the explosion and heard it a minute later.

The signal they had been waiting for had come.