

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 4: The Purgatory

### Chapter 473 - Dual Elements

Assessing his surroundings, Jake recognized the cavern where he and Carmin had been grounded earlier, as well as the same rock structure full of man-sized holes. These multiple tunnels together formed a complex network of galleries where darkness reigned supreme.

The reason his comrades' attention was elsewhere was because countless pairs of yellow lantern-like eyes were multiplying dizzily all around them.

'Hiss!'

A wrinkled, clawed paw poked out of one of the holes, soon followed by thousands of others. The skin was a sickly gray with a network of dark veins, while the claws were ink-black, long and curved enough to slit their throats effortlessly.

The group immediately identified these Hunters by their simian morphology, the thin tentacles acting as furs and the row of long translucent fangs filling their grotesque jaws dripping with saliva. Yet these parasites were significantly different from those they had already faced.

First, they were larger. The smallest was larger than an adult silverback gorilla and likely weighed about half a ton. Their claws and tentacles were longer, their tails ended in a pointed club as flexible as a whip, and they were much more agile.

The larger ones could barely wriggle out of their holes, their bodies so stout that the cave walls would crack around their tunnel to give way. When one of them managed to get out of the gallery from where they came, hundreds of monsters waiting behind them would swarm out after them once the exit cleared.

Once standing upright on their disproportionately muscular hind legs, the biggest ones reached 6 meters in height.

But most notably, these giant Hunters' eyes were no longer completely devoid of intelligence. In addition to their customary ferocity and greed, one could now detect malevolence.

Shrriiii!

Appalled by the shrill howl, Jake immediately spotted the Controller perched on the tallest monster's shoulder. This hybrid parasite between a grayish spider and a withered baby was as nightmarish as he remembered, but he also hoped it would stay as weak as it was.

Blending into the background like a chameleon, if he didn't already have experience with these creatures he might not have noticed it. Good thing for him, his Myrtharian Sight was on since his arrival in the Pit.

Shrrri! Shrrri! Shrri!!!

A series of high-pitched shrieks coming from different directions soon began to resonate around them, transmitting all sorts of signals and orders that they were not equipped to interpret. However, the essence of their messages was still obvious: Kill them all.

Knowing they were surrounded, everyone drew their weapons. Jake understood how dangerous these Hunters could be with a Controller coordinating them, but this time his previous strategy wouldn't work. The series of shrill screams had already guaranteed that there would

be at least several dozen of them, some of whom didn't even risk leaving their tunnels to issue orders.

'What do we do?'

 Enya asked, her face livid, but with the single-minded countenance of one ready for battle.

Her long pink hair was tied back and she was wearing a tight fitting cutting edge armor. In her right hand she held a well-made short sword, while her left hand held a metal staff with a pink crystal at the end. Esya was similarly equipped.

It was hard to recognize the two spoiled noble ladies of a few months ago, but how could they not change after everything they had been through?

Jake scanned the cavern they were in with his senses, as well as the entrance to the galleries, and a grim glint flashed fleetingly in his eyes.

'We're moving.'

 He replied resolutely as he pulled out his replica.

He had come to the conclusion that eliminating all the monsters in a short time was impossible. The galleries were filled to capacity as far as his extrasensory perception could stretch and his hearing was picking up suspicious noises from over 500 meters away. If they really stayed there and fought them to a standstill, they might go crazy before they got through.

With his decision made, the group formation tightened, each man covering the others' backs. Simultaneously, the Controllers must have guessed their intentions, because the monsters suddenly clustered by the thousands ahead of the path that the light arrow was pointing to.

'Fuck!'

 Jake huffed, but for once he wasn't the only one. 'Screw it, let's go for it.'

Neither of them were beginners, the Fluid and Aether flowing under their control suddenly streamed towards their legs and reddish or orange auras quickly built up in their lower limbs. Even Tim and Kyle were quick to react.

The only one left behind was Peter. Turning around to cast longing glances at the deadly basin, his soul was torn between the *désiré* to accompany them or die in bliss.

Suddenly, his face lit up as he saw the liquid in the tank return to its blueberry color and instead of mentally conditioning himself like the others, he threw his bag on the ground and began to rummage urgently for his metal canteen.

Jake and the others were too busy planning their next moves and building up energy to worry about the guy. As they all charged forward as one, the druggie turned tail, making his way to the tank alone.

With a hopeful and expectant look on his face, he dipped his canteen in, filling it up with the priceless nectar. However, just as he was about to close the lid, the wide-open mouth of one of the gigantic snakes that had dropped into the tank earlier popped out of the water and gobbled him up from head to toe.

Another alien titanoboa also emerged a fraction of a second later and attacked its fellow snake without any qualms to reclaim half of the prey. Selfish and hungry, the first snake had no intention of spitting out its meal, and loudly gulped down in response. The ‘bulge’ containing Peter slid abruptly down the esophagus and the snake dived again, vanishing into the abyss of the pool.

Jake noticed from his first step that the addict had not followed them and he watched helplessly as he met his doom. This time, he didn’t turn around to get him out of trouble. The addict had just proved to them that he was no longer able to think rationally.

Instead, he would focus on his mission and the safety of his 8 other comrades. To spare his energy and lower the monsters' guard, they were going neither too slow nor too fast, but before long another free electron broke through, outpacing the rest of the group without a care in the world.

'Raaaaagh! Taste the steel of my sword!'

Ralnor's furious roar reverberated throughout the cavern and they saw a gust of red flame sweep over a hundred of the Hunters before them into the air.

Spending his energy without regard for his stamina, the Fire Knight continued to swing his flame-wrapped sword with unparalleled rage. With each strike, a six or seven meter long blade of red fire was released, slicing and incinerating several dozen monsters each time.

Yet even with this firepower, Ralnor was quickly overwhelmed and his momentum began to wane. The Controllers' single bulging silver eyes in the background were locked on the knight and shortly afterwards another series of shrill screams rang out.

The disoriented and flustered Hunters instantly repositioned themselves, adopting a formation and stance that would allow them to easily avoid these flaming blades performed without any technique. If Ralnor had been in his normal state, his exquisite swordplay would have allowed him to fine-tune his tactics, but at this point, it was good enough that he wasn't attacking his allies.

Still, Jake and the others had to stop him for his own sake, but more importantly for their own. If the Hunters who had been cut in half were dead or badly injured, the same could not be said for the hundreds of burning monsters.

The reddish flames consuming them quickly died down, while the energy levels of these creatures suddenly began to skyrocket. With his Myrtharian Sight, Jake saw the dark energy flowing through their meridians pulsate intensely and this instantly triggered a wave of mutation.

Slowly, but with a speed noticeable to the naked eye, the Hunters began to grow and their sallow gray skin took on a familiar reddish hue.

‘Stop him.’ Jake yelled, fearing the worst.

He thought the two sisters would be helpless, but their hair suddenly turned white, and a pure, holy aura enveloped their weapons. Only then did Jake remember that their pink hair was a hybrid color reflecting their affinity for two elements.

Rut jfl ovu qfzc md f Fazu Mfeu mz Kraevo, jvau Wvaou hmzzulnmrtut om Laevo, Ladu mz Ppzadahfoamr. Io jfl rmo ovu lfqu ownu md iaevo vu nzmtphut, zulpioare dzmq fr uiuhozmqferuoah jfsu, gpo lmquovare uilu, zumeraxfgiu artuut gw aol npzu, jvaou zftafrhu.

Since he knew them, the two sisters had never used this ability, for lack of means, but they appeared to have finally solved this problem. Now it remained to be seen if it would work at all.

‘Light Spell: Cleansing Ray!’ Elya shouted cutely as she aimed her mage staff at Ralnor.

Elya didn’t bother shouting the name of her spell, but she also waved the scepter in her hand, shrouding a portion of the cavern in light like sunbeams piercing the clouds after a long storm.

This radiance fell on the monsters, who didn’t seem to mind, but Jake noticed the dark energy in their veins recede momentarily before

slowly continuing to build up. Nevertheless, the evolutionary process of these creatures had slowed tremendously, almost coming to a halt for those that had been lightly hit by Ralnor's flames.

'Well done. Keep going!' Jake exclaimed, pleasantly surprised.

The others gave them a thumbs-up as well, and taking advantage of the respite, Mihangyl produced another soothing flower to calm his friend blinded by his murderous wrath. Jake took the opportunity to absorb the remaining flames in his body and charged forward at supersonic speed into the group of giant Hunters still blocking their way.