

The Oracle Paths

Volume 4: The Purgatory

Chapter 475 - Jinxed

Jake and the others were about to charge into the fray as they had been doing until now, but they unexpectedly wavered when they saw the small contingent of parasites protecting the Purgatory Artifact.

The twelve Hunters were the largest they had encountered so far, approaching 10 meters in height, and their bodies were now covered with a metallic shimmering chitin forming a natural armor.

This chitin and their entire limbs could extend, retract, and sharpen as they pleased, coming very close to the characteristics of the original Digestors, of which they were but a pale copy.

Yet Jake and his group didn't give them more than a passing glance. As big and beefy as they were, they were just small fry. What fully captured their attention this time were the three Controllers in the background.

They looked like grayish spiders with a width of about a meter, their heads and upper limbs growing on them like mushrooms. They no longer looked like dehydrated babies, but like grotesque children still with one silver eye. Planted atop their skulls, it functioned like a ball-jointed antenna and had no blind spots.

The reason Jake and the others had momentarily flinched was because they could feel a frightening spiritual pressure radiating from these three insignificant creatures. These Controllers now seemed qualified to control far more than their congeners...

Jake, Ostrexora, Mihangyl or Hephais could certainly resist this kind of compulsion, Carmin, and the two sisters perhaps to a lesser extent, but Ralnor, Tim and Kyle were vulnerable prey.

BOOOOM!

They didn't have time to decide on any tactics when a deafening explosion detonated above them. The shockwave rocked the ground and heavily shook the cave they were in. Only the Fluid Artifact in the center continued to hover unaffected.

The battle between Sigmar, his son, and Minerva was escalating and had crept dangerously close to them.

This commotion, far from panicking the fifteen parasites, acted more like a clarion call to attack. The twelve Hunters stretched out their arms into a farcical quadrupedal stance and began to gallop toward them with the momentum of a full-blown tank.

Jake and his comrades paled slightly as they realized they had underestimated their speed, but it was too late to turn back.

'Shrrriiii!'

The three Controllers also let out a synchronized wail, and like Jake and Ostrexora had done before, the sound wave was channeled and redirected at them through a spiritual funnel.

Tim instinctively hid in Jake's shadow to let him take the brunt of the attack, while Kyle did the same, hiding behind Tim. Ralnor, who was barely lucid, stood there like an idiot and took the mental wave with full force.

For a long second, he stood still, staring blankly, and for a moment Jake thought they would be torn to pieces by the oncoming Hunters. He would have preferred that...

Instead, the Fire Knight turned around, swung his flaming sword and slashed sideways at his friend Mihangyl who was standing next to him. This was not the Wood Archmage's first battle, and a thick wall of bark rose between the two, but a fiery blast ensued that sent them both flying.

Mihangyl got up quickly, but the close-range blast had knocked him off his feet. In comparison, Ralnor, who was a sturdy warrior in the first place, got up as if nothing had happened and struck again.

'Kyle and Tim back off!' Jake shouted urgently as he saw the other two Controllers move around him to target them.

Cackle!

The Hunters in pursuit had caught up with them and their retreat was cut off completely, depriving Kyle and Tim of that option. Carmin single-handedly obstructed the hundreds of monsters pouring out of the galleries behind them, but the damage was done. The teenager actively searched for a workaround, but his luck seemed as lost as he was in this situation.

'Fuck off!' Jake roared in anger as he returned a frontal kick when the first giant Hunter pounced on him, preventing him from assisting his friends.

His foot, weighing several tons, sank between the monster's eyes and the monster's skull caved in a couple of inches. With his foot embedded in the enemy's skull up to the ankle, he followed up with a side kick with the same leg, violently kicking it away from the Hunter's shattered head.

The other group members also engaged in combat with their own opponents. After the instant death of the first Hunter, the other

eleven spontaneously switched targets and Jake momentarily found himself left without an opponent.

This was not exactly great news for his companions. Kyle and Tim, who had been playing cat-and-mouse to avoid the Controllers' sneaky mental attacks, found themselves locked in a tough fight against a Hunter several times their size whose chitin and bones were strong enough to take all their hits.

When his sword broke against his opponent's femur, a determined expression appeared on Kyle's face. Gaining momentum, he grabbed Tim by the collar and threw him into the monster's face. In return, he was smashed by two gigantic arms transformed into a flail.

Both sisters cringed in horror as they thought he had been bludgeoned to death, but when the monster collapsed backwards after Tim had plunged the butt of his axe into its eye, a shocked but very much alive Kyle reappeared before them.

Just before impact, Jake had used his powers to soften the rock beneath him. Instead of being crushed between two hard surfaces, he had simply 'sunk' before resurfacing a few seconds later.

Nevertheless, he had not escaped unscathed. His arms and legs had taken the full brunt of the impact and suffered multiple fractures. He struggled to get up while stabbing his sword into the ground, uncorked one of the Healing Potions provided by Kewanee and immediately recovered his health.

Meanwhile, the fight between Ralnor and Mihangyl had reached its climax and surprisingly, the Wood Archmage did not have the advantage. Because he refused to hurt his friend and his element was countered by his comrade's flames, he was stuck in a defensive posture that was gradually weakening.

Tim was just congratulating himself on his victory over Kyle's Hunter when his own opponent came charging back and slammed into him like a battering ram. The teen's body flew for a hundred meters before hitting a wall, his condition uncertain.

Just before the attack, the two Controllers had finally managed to pin him down and his body had gone temporarily stiff, his mind spacing out with no chance for his luck to change anything.

'Damn it! Hephais! Ostrexora! What the hell are you doing?!' Jake yelled, now completely infuriated as he waved his hands wildly as if trying to eviscerate the air.

The Hunter Kyle was facing was brutally impaled by a gigantic rock stalactite bursting out of the ground below him, the rock spike growing so fast that the monster soon crashed into the ceiling of the cave.

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As if to prove he wasn't playing around, one of the Controllers who had targeted Tim also staggered to his feet before collapsing dead, his brain pierced by a Shadow Blade. The last Controller died in a similar fashion within the same second. Hephais had used Tim and Kyle as bait to sneak up and murder them.

Ostrexora, on the other hand, had not given a damn since the beginning, just floating passively above them and gloating over their misfortune. If she had wanted to, none of this would have happened. Unfazed by the drama around her, she continued to act as if she didn't hear anything and an untold fury began to fester in Jake's mind.

By then, Esya had managed to dash to the teenager's rescue. Miraculously, he was not yet dead, the wall having cushioned his fall turning out to be more friable than expected.

Regaining consciousness after swallowing the Potion that Esya had made him drink, the kid threw a hateful glare at the ghostly woman when he saw her indifference.

'Holy shit, I wasted all my luck just to not die. I'm going to be jinxed for several hours after this...' Tim ranted, gritting his teeth in frustration. Sacrificing his luck to physically affect reality was far beyond his current abilities and had severe consequences.

Crazed with rage and under the influence of Corruption, his overflow of emotion due to the perceived injustice caused an irreversible mood shift. With a disturbing coldness, he glared at Ostrexora and muttered ominously,

'But I will not be alone. You will share my misfortune!'

If the others could see his Aether Stats at that moment, they would have found that his Aether Luck stat already in the negative had suddenly started to plummet. From -8, it went to -50, -100, -500, before leveling off at -1000.

When this happened, Ostrexora's indifferent and disdainful countenance suddenly changed. Aghast, she turned to the child, and a terrific mental force darted towards Tim with the sole purpose of killing him.

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‘Sorry guys, the adventure ends here for me. At least Lily won’t be alone anymore.’ Tim said with a wry smile.

Amidst all the confusion, the teenager closed his eyes and in front of a flabbergasted Esya, the crumbling wall behind him exploded completely, shattered by the wild charge of a thirteenth Hunter coming out of nowhere. The poor Tim who was in his way had already been trampled to death and covered with tons of rubble.

Ostrexora who had just witnessed the scene had a shiver of horror and started to panic seriously, her legendary icyness nowhere in sight. Within seconds, her Ghost state had deactivated twice, causing her to fall awkwardly to the ground, and as she got up she stumbled three times against the perfectly smooth floor of the cave.

A blade of flame intended for Mihangyl suddenly hit her in the face when she was in her solid state and she tumbled for several meters before neutralizing the flames with her powers. Even so, the arm that parried the attack was already burned to the third degree.

Suddenly, the previously grudging and hateful looks of Jake and his friends became sympathetic, wishing her their heartfelt condolences. Death sentence by misfortune? Was there any better revenge than that?

‘Nicely done Tim.’ They thought hard in their heads with a flush of admiration.

Even dead, he could still be a pain in the àss to his enemies.