

The Oracle Paths

Volume 4: The Purgatory

Chapter 480 - Despair

Elsewhere on Yotai Shien 3, the consequences of Minerva's betrayal and the intricacies of Nylreg's machinations also began to manifest themselves in more or less unexpected ways, as did Sigmar's no less insidious precautions to protect his people.

The first precaution the former Fluid Grandmaster had taken was to save those he believed to be his world's future. Perhaps because of some lingering attachment to his former clan, Avy and her most promising guards had been evacuated before the final battle, including the natives without any fighting potential whose minds were still intact.

The soldiers and Fluid Wielders who stayed with Sigmar to fight were predominantly old or already badly injured veterans. Their evolutionary potential had been reached and most of them had already fallen into a state of semi-insanity. Their killing and debauchery impulses had already reached an unsalvageable level and unlike Players there was no hope for them to ever come back to their senses.

This place would be their final resting place.

And so, within minutes of Jake and his team leaving, a crowd of dejected humans stepped out of the darkness at the edge of their Village. Pavao and his troops momentarily thought it was an enemy attack and sounded the alarm, but Will made him lower his weapon when he recognized the petite woman in armor leading them.

Avy Shanmin was dispirited and ashamed. It took her last two bodyguards, two Fluid Masters, to knock her out so she could finally be evacuated against her will. The thunderous explosion of the first mental clash between Sigmar and Minerva had jolted her awake, but by then it was already too late to turn back. Her previous Village was already gone and if there were survivors, it was already too late to save them.

Will then spent the next few minutes welcoming the new migrants, going so far as to give them all citizenship in their Village. Without Jake's knowledge, the list of Villagers under his protection had grown by several hundred and his Baron Role had evolved again.

Unfortunately, none of this mattered anymore. About 30 minutes after Avy joined Will and the others, the rest of Minerva and Nylreg's armies caught up with them. Like a swarm of locusts, they came from the south like an avalanche and their Village was immediately overwhelmed.

Despite the losses suffered from the sacrifice of Sigmars' troops, more than half of them remained, and even after the Corruption had passed, there were still more than 500. Behind them, however, were thousands of Guards from their respective Villages. Who knew how many Villages they owned to produce such an army?

This could only mean one thing: That Sigmar's army had been defeated.

On paper, Will and his comrades had the numerical advantage, but he knew more than anyone that this was nothing but an illusion. The majority of the Villagers were not fighters, and they could only really rely on a little more than a hundred Players and about fifty Guards. In any case, the non-combatant Villagers were inside the Castle, unable to leave as long as the fortress existed.

The others were already wavering between madness and reason, threatening to attack their own allies at any moment. As a precaution, Will and Pavao had decided not to assign them residences so that they could fight alongside them as Vagabonds in case of unforeseen events.

The only good thing was that the enemy was in a similar situation and maybe even worse because of their Monster status. It was not uncommon for one of them to be wrongly targeted.

Within this army, Will, Svara, Drastan and the other key Players recognized several familiar faces, including Avros Valruc, the Australian Monster, or his partner Luke Wam, a steampunk gentleman carrying a blunderbuss. But in the midst of these hundreds of battle-hardened Monsters, their power was nothing special. At best, they could be considered above average.

‘Why are you attacking us?!’ Drastan roared as he transformed into a Troll. His eyes were bloodshot and he was shaking alarmingly from his inner conflict. ‘Can’t you see that we’d better help each other instead of killing one another?!’

In response, a dozen enemy Players transformed into Monsters, their vaguely humanoid appearance noticeably reminiscent of parasites. Their ferocity was matched only by the frenzy that possessed them, and whatever fighting skills they had originally had, whatever intelligence or sense of strategy they might have exhibited, was completely gone, replaced entirely by a savage and primitive style.

Tvu vmituzl md ovulu Mmrlouz Rmiul vft imre larhu pnezftut ovuq mrhu mz ojahu, frt ovuaz qmrlozmpl dmzql rmj nmlullut lpglofroafi nmjuz. Id Jfcu vft guur ovuzu, vu jmpit vfsu zuhmeraxut ovu eafro 5-6 quouz Hprouzl vu jfl dfhare fo ovu lfqu oaqu ar ovu Pao.

While for Jake and his elite team these gigantic Hunters were a minor nuisance, for most of the Players in his Village they were an almost impossible challenge to overcome. If they hadn't temporarily joined the Myrtharian Nerds and obtained the Myrtharian Body Passive Skill, they probably wouldn't have lasted more than a few seconds.

In an instant, a fireworks display of multiple Aether Skills erupted everywhere at once and Jake's Village was transformed into a deadly battlefield in the blink of an eye.

Near the woods, one could see Svara's pets, namely a Shadow Wolf and Raven, tackling to the ground and devouring one of her foe, while the Nawai warrior herself was fighting like a fiend against two other Monsters. Because her fluorescent turquoise hair shone so brightly in the night, she was a soothing beacon for her allies.

Elsewhere, near the Castle, a giant Troll was smashing giant Hunter skulls with a club. Just before leaving, Jake had made him a huge metal club with his new powers and Drastan was already fond of it.

Everywhere the gunshots of Pavao and his men and a few other snipers kept ringing out, but their bullets seemed to have little effect on the enemy shell.

Regularly, multicolored explosions would light up the night sky and one could see a Kewanee throwing out various potions without any restraint. On the other side, Avros would laugh out loud, occasionally retaliating with his own sticks of dynamite.

This status quo lasted for a few more moments, and then the expressions of Avros and the few enemy players who had maintained their human form until now changed abruptly. Shocked, an angry, indignant expression crept across their faces and they turned their gaze in a certain direction.

The lit fuse of the dynamite Avros had been throwing around fizzled out and all his equipment quickly became useless. Other Players with specific Roles experienced the same thing, but with no visible consequences.

Will, who was surviving as best he could with his summons, breathed an audible sigh of relief as he felt the tide turning. If he was right, Boris and his Criminal Village had begun their surprise ambush on the enemy Villages.

Al Czaqarfil, ovuw vft rm lvmzofeu md Tvausul, Duqmialvuzl frt movuz lvftw nzmdullamrl. Dulozmware, immoare uruqw zulaturhul jfl f gzuuxu dmz ovuq, frt ovuw hmpit film tm qphv jnzlu, iacu gpzrare Luouuzl md Nmgaiaw mz dfiladware ovulu nfnuzl om lrfohv lmqu uruqw Rmiul.

What was currently happening in the enemy ranks was simply their active Roles being rendered inoperative due to their new status as Vagabonds. For anyone who had already gone mad and relied solely on their Monster powers, it was of no consequence. Even if there were, their limited intellect would have prevented them from realizing it.

However, for Players like Avros, whose Demolisher role was crucial, it was a major blow. It meant that from now on, they would have to use their own powers to destroy any enemy buildings, and it meant that destroying or forcibly taking the Castle would now be impossible without defeating all those protecting it.

With their motivation galvanized, Jake's Village Players gave a rallying cry and resumed fighting with renewed fervor.

As the hour ticked by, their numbers kept dwindling and more and more of them fell to the Corruption. When the Myrtharian Nerds on probation were down to a mere 40, their enemies dealt them the final blow.

A second army of Monsters sneakily emerged at the edge of the Forest. With an expression of despair, Will recognized most of the vampires and other corrupt Players under Wyatt's command.

With a pang of disappointment hard to describe, he also recognized two of his most important companions, namely Kevin and Sarah, who were accompanied by an army of blood-covered Monsters. For a brief second, Will considered greeting them before remembering that they were only a shadow of their former selves.

Even now, when he looked closely at them, he saw nothing but a lustful look of greed, anger and contempt. He was not even sure if they could recognize him. No doubt, he would be immediately attacked if he approached them.

He was about to sound the retreat when Jake at long last deactivated the Purgatory. At that moment, everything changed. Instead of being in a half-ruined Village, he found himself alone in a booth with his Summoners. The Monster that had cornered him had been separated from his comrades. His few allies like Svara and Drastan were nowhere in sight, but he could still hear them fighting nearby.

Jake and his team had made it!

Jplo jvur vu ovmpevo vu vft jufovuzut ovu lomzq, ovu qmrpqurofi uknimlamr hfplut gw ovu ovzuu Fipat Gzfrtqflouzl lvmmc ovu lofoamr, ypahciw dmiimjut gw f luhmrt mru ovfo diannut ao msuz. Io jfl ovur ovfo Waii rmoahut ovfo val gzfhuiuo jfl jmzcare fefar, fo iuflo nfzoafiiw.

Because very quickly, his Oracle AI informed him pessimistically that returning to B842 was presently impossible.