

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 4: The Purgatory

### Chapter 481 - More Chaos

'How is this possible?' Will wondered in disbelief.

Because paradoxically the other functions of his bracelet turned out to be functional again, he was more confused than panicked by this discovery. But there was good news in all this: His Summon Storage Space was at long last available.

It was with immense joy that he was reunited with his baby dragon, Charizard. Upon finding his master after the long radio silence, the mythological creature howled with joy and began to snuggle up to him, oblivious to the growing chaos around them. With his first summons now the size of a horse, Will almost died from being crushed.

His dragon had grown quite a bit during their separation, and the beast's company gave him back some confidence. Mustering his courage, Will inhaled deeply and ordered his dragon to destroy the rusty doorway blocking his way.

Eager to be of service, Charizard let out an immature roar, then opened his jaws wide at the door. An expectoration of black, charcoal-like smoke billowed from his nostrils, then a torrent of blue flames spewed out of his mouth.

After a concentrated blast of flame on the steel obstacle for about half a minute, the armored door finally softened, and after a couple more

hard head-banging blows, his summons managed to break it open and it crashed down with a bang.

Will cautiously walked out into the deserted corridor behind his dragon and noticed that the lighting was damaged or disabled except for a few red LEDs signaling an emergency evacuation of the station. When the floor under his feet rocked again after yet another distant explosion, the businessman started to realize the extent of his predicament.

He wished he could prove his worth to Jake by gathering the participants under his care, but now he wasn't even sure he could escape in time. If he was still on Yotai Shien 3 when it exploded, he would die for sure.

And that was without factoring in the possible Monster Players or parasites that might impede his progress. However, because his Oracle Device was just about working, he was no longer completely helpless.

'This is Will Hopkins of the Myrtharian Nerds, can you hear me?'

He repeated his voice message twice using their Faction's group communication feature and soon enough he received confirmatory responses. Among the thirty or so responses he received, he was relieved to hear the tired voice of his friends.

'This is Svara, I hear you.'

'Kewanee. Still alive... but not for long.'

'Will, it's Enya. Hold on, we're almost there!'

'ROOOARR! Die you freaks!'

Will winced as Drastan's war cry thundered through his eardrums, but he paid more heed to Enya's message. Excited, he asked hastily,

‘Is Jake with you?’

‘ ... ‘

The radio silence from Enya, Esya and the others dashed his renewed enthusiasm.

‘He stayed behind to protect us... We... We were attacked simultaneously by a group of Players and a wave of Corrupted Fluid engulfed him.’ Esya explained shamefully, not sure how to get the point across.

Will was not stupid and he immediately understood the implication. While he was probably the most rational, calm and peaceful of the group, he too could feel how his mood had deteriorated over the last hour.

More than once, he had woken up disoriented on the battlefield, far from his supposedly safe location. The creatures he had tamed with his Musician’s Role had died one after another because of the rash risks he had taken, and the last one still alive had not followed him into that little room when the Purgatory had been deactivated.

The upside, though, was that the Players possessed by their Monster Role had probably been released from its clutches. Still, whether they would be able to pull themselves together or plunge further into madness remained a mystery. With the Corruption wave that Enya had mentioned, he wouldn’t bet his life on it...

‘What should we do Will?’ Enya asked composedly this time.

It was a direct question. It was an implicit consensus that in Jake’s absence he was the Faction Leader making the important decisions. He wished he had more time to reflect, but a shrill cackling resounded suddenly before him.

Heavy thuds of impact distorted the metal ceiling tiles above him, and Will could almost imagine thousands of parasites crawling furiously through the hallway vents. His dragon's impish and defiant roar had drawn the monsters' attention to them.

A few seconds later, the ceiling gave way and a flood of aliens poured out. Enya and the others heard only the strident squeals of the parasites and the dragon baby's infuriated roar, followed by a few gunshots, and then the call was cut off. Nevertheless, before hanging up, Will managed to get his message across.

'We'll meet at the landing bay.'

Enya, Esya, and Kyle relayed the information to Mihangyl, Carmin, and Hephais, who were not officially part of their faction, and then they were on their way again.

The Wood Archmage wore a grieving expression and carried Ralnor's lifeless body in his arms. Because of the Oracle System's malfunction, he didn't want to take any chances and planned to take his friend's body with him as long as his Soul had not yet dissipated. Using a mysterious spell, he confined his friend's spirit to his body and then moved it to his Space Storage.

'Do you think Jake is already...' Kyle asked hesitantly. The question he really wanted to ask was so pessimistic that he chose to let the others deduce the rest by themselves.

'He's alive.' Carmin replied tersely.

Esya wanted to add something, but she also refrained. Like Kyle, whether Jake was alive or dead was not really the question they wanted to ask. It was only with the participation of Hephais, a hardened and apathetic assassin, that someone dared to bring up the taboo truth.

‘He’s alive... and so are we for the moment. Let’s try to keep it that way. We have two options: Go back for him or run as far away from here as we can to escape the same fate. Jake sacrificed himself so we could have a chance, so let’s not waste it.’

Kyle wanted to retort viciously as he sensed the assassin’s lack of gratitude, but the assassin stopped him dead in his tracks.

‘I don’t know your leader well, but from what I do know, even if he goes crazy because of the Corruption, he’s not in danger. We are. If we run into him and he’s not himself, we will have wasted all his efforts to save us. He would most likely kill most of us. Conversely, if we let him unleash his wrath on our enemies, Jake might still survive to the end even without our help.’

The group considered his words and had to admit that he had a point. These outsiders were not familiar with Jake’s abilities, but Enya, Esya, and Kyle knew better.

The three members let go of their guilt and concern, and a determined coldness gradually settled on their faces.

‘He won’t die. Let’s trust him a little longer.’ Kyle said with conviction. ‘So far, he has never failed.’

After that the six survivors remained silent and did not encounter any monster or Player on their way. However, it wasn’t long before they encountered some. As they approached the destination indicated by their bracelet, where Will was supposed to be, shrill cackling began to reverberate in the hundreds around them, and human noises and screams from desperate struggles nearby multiplied.

The first horde of parasites appeared a few seconds later and a new battle of extreme ferocity broke out.

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Elsewhere on the station, the Players, Monsters or not, working for Minerva or Nylreg, received their respective orders from the two Fluid Grandmasters, but this time none of them paid them any mind.

The station was about to self-destruct at any moment and these Players who had lost their Monster Role were finally coming to their senses. Or at least... a handful of them did. Because those who were too slow or poorly positioned were quickly devoured by the tide of Corrupted Fluid and fell back into insanity, never to wake up again.

Yuo ovuzu juzu f duj Pifwuzl jvm zafhout ypaou f gao tadduzuroiw om ovulu mztuzl.

‘Oh, I got an extra Side Mission. Did you get it Luc?’ Avros laughed as he shoved a grenade down the throat of an unconscious Native American woman wearing a tattered bloody dress.

‘I got it too.’ The steampunk gentleman chuckled maliciously as he reloaded his blunderbuss.

If Jake or the others had been there, they would have recognized the unconscious woman as Kewanee. Since her recent vocal message, her plight had devolved into what it currently was.

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Not far in the station, a fearsome Werebear tore a poor native man who had gone astray in half and showered himself with his blood with a loud, overbearing roar. Next to him, a blood-soaked blonde woman was biting the carotid artery of another native with loud sucking noises.

These two people were Kevin and Sarah.

Next to them, other Vampires and Players with Bloodlines critically influencing their behavior or personality were slowly coming to their senses, but they had already gone too far in their folly to back out.

After draining the corpse of its blood, Kevin seemingly woke up to his actions and threw the corpse to the ground in disgust. Returning to his human form, the vampires and Sarah next to him immediately shot hungry gazes at him.

‘Kill my cousin... I can’t.’ Kevin growled with difficulty before his eyes went blank again.

Hmjusuz, rmo usuzwmru vft ovu lfqu lhznpuul. Wvur Wwfoo qmsut mdd ar f huzofar tazuhomr, Szfzv frt ovu movuz sfqnazul tfzout fdouz vaq frt sfralvut arom ovu tfzcrull, iufsare ovu artuhalasu Wuzugufz fii fimru.