

The Oracle Paths

Volume 4: The Purgatory

Chapter 499 - Verxes

‘Father.’ He groaned. ‘I should have known when Minerva showed up.’

Sigmar was grievously injured, but he did have a complete body. He was a genuine Fluid Grandmaster supported by this world and boosted by Jake’s passive Myrtharian Body. For Nylreg at that very moment he was the worst possible opponent.

Nodding gratefully to Jake and the others, Sigmar looked at his son with deep sorrow before he let out a long, weary sigh.

‘I’m sorry, son. The adventure for you ends here.’

The next thing he knew, Sigmar’s glowing arm was piercing his son’s chest, his heart beating wildly in his hand. The space then distorted around Nylreg and his father, seemingly forming a vortex, and their bodies slowly began to break apart as if they were both being ground down by a steamroller.

‘Why?’ Nylreg asked, spitting out silver blood with the desperation of a child in search of recognition.

‘Because life is unfair.’ Sigmar said with his eyes filling with tears. ‘I have failed you as a father, but I will not let you endure this injustice alone. I will stay with you until the bitter end.’

Hearing this a weak struggle dawned in Nylreg’s eyes, his yellow eyes shining intensely, but for the first time his human nature prevailed.

Tightening his muscles to stop himself from moving, he let the vortex grind their bodies and souls to total annihilation.

Jfcu frt ovu movuzl lofzut fo ovu tzfqfoah lhuru proai mriw ovuaz vuftl juzu iudo arofho, gpo bplo fl ovuw immcut iacu ovuw juzu fgmpo om talfnnufz dmz emmt f smzouk qaiiamrl md oaql ifzeuz lptturiw fnnufzut guvart ovuq jaov f impt ovprtuzmpl zmii.

The vortex created by Sigmar dissipated instantly and the father and son's heads were thrown violently in opposite directions, with Nylreg's heading straight for the giant vortex.

Just as he was about to be swallowed by the vortex, a pale, graceful hand with golden nails appeared out of the vortex and grabbed Nylreg's head by his hair. At the same time, an overwhelming and breathtaking spiritual pressure leaked out of the vortex, crushing the souls of all the survivors in the process.

Simultaneously, in perfect synchronicity with the onset of this hostile pressure, a second pure and invigorating spiritual aura blazed against it, saving the dying Players' souls from eternal destruction.

As Jake and the others regained consciousness, they saw the towering figure of an Oracle Guardian standing before them. At four meters tall, with four muscular arms, a long energy shield and futuristic silver armor covered in bluish runes, they looked indomitable.

In total, there were twelve of them and in the center of their circle formation stood a thirteenth Oracle Guardian different from the others. He was the one who was currently projecting this pure aura protecting and healing their physical and mental wounds at a tremendous speed. It was not an Aether Spell. His mere presence was exerting this kind of effect on them.

At over 25 meters tall, he did not look like the other Oracle Guardians. Although vaguely humanoid, his narrow head was mounted on a very

long neck and he was what a brachiosaurus might have become with several billion more years of evolution if the dinosaurs had not gone extinct on Earth. He had seven large calloused fingers on each hand and was massively muscular to support his thick armor which would have been more appropriate on a mecha than a living being.

Numerous cube-shaped slots of various sizes adorned his armor and at first glance one might have thought that he was a shallow Oracle Guardian with a penchant for gemstones. Except that on closer scrutiny, there was no room for any mistaking. These cubes of different colors were Oracle Cubes.

Staring calmly at the golden-nailed hand that had gripped Nylreg's hair, the thirteen Oracle Guardians said nothing but one of their huge hands came to rest on the blade's hilt in their respective scabbards. The one who appeared to be their captain frowned and bellowed,

‘Verxes, what are you waiting for to show your face?!’

Ir zultmrlu f quimtampl ifpevouz uhvmut ar ovuaz vuftl jaov rm aturoadafgiu mzaear. Tvu ifpevouz luuqut om hmqu dzmq usuzwjvuzu frt rmjvuzu fo ovu lfqu oaqu.

‘And here I was wondering who would have the honor of welcoming me.’ The equally melodious voice sounded this time from the wormhole itself. ‘How are you Faeyr?’

No answer.

‘Time has not made you any more congenial. Regrettably, you are still as grumpy as ever...’ The mysterious Digestor holding Nylreg took no offense and carried on the conversation as if nothing had happened. ‘You Oracleans are far too vindictive. I just ate your brother, okay? No need to make a big deal out of it.’

‘Verxes, you know why we’re here.’ The man named Faeyr replied with startling composure considering the enemy’s shameless taunting. ‘Surrender nicely and maybe your death will be quick.’

A new burst of melodious laughter, more sustained this time, shattered the silence, and then the remainder of the Digestor’s body nonchalantly stepped out of the vortex to present an angelic face, albeit tinged with a conspicuous vulgarity.

This Digestor was both the most human and the most odd-looking Digestor Jake had ever encountered. Like Nylreg his irises were golden and emitted a soft light, but the similarity ended there.

Anatomically, this male Digestor was as perfect as a statue of an ancient Greek hero, but his height was ordinary, about six feet tall. His skin was pale and translucent, but the blood running through his veins was not silver like that of other Digestors but golden as if molten gold filled his veins. Behind his back, 4 majestic pairs of pure gold wings were fully deployed with a total wingspan of over 100m. The human wearing these wings was so small in comparison that he was almost insignificant. And yet, it was this little thing that generated this overwhelming pressure.

In terms of armor and weaponry, this Digestor had no chitin, no protuberances, no horns, fangs, or claws. His body could not have been more ordinary if you ignored all these little cosmetic details. Instead, he was barefoot and content with a white baggy and a badly buttoned matching shirt.

It was really the first time Jake had come across such a Digestor, who looked more like a seraphim out of a fairy tale than a bloodthirsty abomination. Even his gleaming white-toothed smile was photogenic and confidence-inspiring. This Digestor was meant to be worshipped,

and gazing at him for a brief moment was enough to prompt them to prostrate themselves on the spot.

Al ovu Pifwuzl juzu fgmpo om tm lm, Ffuwz ar ovu hurouz lrmzout imptiw frt ovuaz ovmpevol md atmifozw juzu gfralvut dzmq ovuaz qartl. Unmr zufiaware oval, Jfcu tzuj f hmit gzufov frt omme f zftahfi tuhalamr.

He activated his Oracle Shield.

Seeing him act so decisively, the two sisters who were closest to him did the same, but Kyle only glanced at them with envy. He didn't have that Oracle Skill. Luckily for him, Wyatt's Oracle Shield had a 3m radius and he graciously accepted Kyle, Carmin, Sigmar and Peter who were stuck outside.

Watching them perform, the Oracle Guardians nodded approvingly before turning their attention back to the two Digestors. Verxes, the Seraphim Digestor, cast a puzzled glance at Jake, Wyatt and the other players present before finally retracting his smile and glaring at Faeyr.

'I don't know who sent you here, but you're misinformed.' Verxes stated sarcastically before adding coldly, 'If it was the Ancient Designer Aas who had come in person, I would indeed have run for my life. But a common disciple like you? Even if there were a thousand of you, I could still come and go as I please, let alone a bureaucratic knucklehead like you.'

Under their visored helmets, the 13 Oracle Guardians displayed a dull anger and the blade at their belt was drawn in concert. With perfect coordination, they all moved into battle positions, shields raised, swords pointed at the enemy. Faeyr, who was in the center of the formation and only a few feet away from Verxes, began to sparkle as the cubes on his armor began to shimmer one by one.

‘It’s no use.’ Verxes sighed as he closed his eyes.

Untold energy that Jake would never have believed possible if he hadn’t already seen it before in Xion Zolvhur then began to radiate from each of the Oracle Guardians as behind Faeyr appeared the mirage of multiple, larger-than-life Cubes. Their surfaces stretched to the heavens, making it impossible to see the top.

Jake recognized the Red Cube where the Ordeals were taking place, as well as Orange Cubes, Yellow Cubes, Green Cubes, Blue Cubes, Black Cubes, and even the Indigo and Violet Cubes he had never seen before. The sky was cluttered with them and with each additional presence, the auras of each of the Oracle Guardians soared exponentially.

Behind his Oracle Shield, Jake’s senses were obstructed and he had no idea what the effect of those Cubes were, but the result of his short-range scan terrorized him when he found out that the Aether level outside his shield had already surpassed five million.

‘The Cube Magic of the Ancient Designer Aas is always a sight to behold.’ Verxes praised in awe without hiding his deep respect for the creator of this magic or rather technology. The line became blurred between the two concepts after a certain level.

‘Unfortunately, I repeat what I said earlier. You have been misinformed. If it is not Aas himself or one of his Overseers I have absolutely nothing to fear from you. Let me show you... exactly where you stand.’

BANG!

At that moment, Jake’s vision turned monochrome. Everything became gray and dull. Only Verxes himself was still colorful.

Even more shocking, he became acutely aware that his body was completely frozen, including that of the other Players, the Oracle Guardians, Nylreg and even the mighty Faeyr. Calling to Xi in his head, he was met with silence, and checking his Oracle Device, he discovered to his horror that time had stopped flowing.

Verxes had stopped time!

So why was his mind still moving? Jake racked his brain over this question before noticing the presence of Xion Zolvhur's Will Fragment's tiny protective halo. The Ancient Designer had protected his mind from the enigmatic Aether Spell.

With time frozen, Jake was able to freely watch as Verxes gleefully walked up to each Oracle Guardians, gracefully poking their hearts before moving on to the next. When he reached Faeyr, a mischievous smirk crept across his face and he stopped himself from poking him with his finger. Instead, he stole all the Cubes embedded in his armor one by one before whistling away with a bag full of Cubes of various sizes.

Then, he also threw Nylreg's frozen head into the bag packed full of Cubes, and happily waddled back to the giant wormhole from whence he came. As he was about to step inside, he abruptly turned his head towards Jake with a doubtful expression before shaking his head and sliding into the vortex.

As the vortex dispersed, time resumed and all objects and people regained their colors. At the same time, twelve apocalyptic shockwaves detonated where each of the twelve Oracle Guardians had been poked and Faeyr let out a heartbreaking scream of rage.

'Verxes!'

That was the last thing Jake saw. With that hateful cry, all the Players were sent back to the Red Cube and when he opened his eyes again he was in the familiar room of boundless darkness that had sent him here, ready to receive his Rewards.

The Third Ordeal was finally over.