

The Oracle Paths

Volume 4: The Purgatory

Chapter 387 - Saving a Ghost

In the hour before the pirate delegation arrived, the Titan Pearl was in turmoil, with every soldier and Player still alive sinking to the task like an anthill overflowing with vitality.

Now that Jake knew that the communications had probably been sabotaged from the inside, the procedure was extremely simple. As long as the culprit wasn't a Player with a higher Oracle Rank than Jake, finding him was a breeze.

In a few minutes of frantic chases through the corridors of the Titan Pearl, where Jake sprinted at a dizzying speed that threatened the integrity of the ship, he arrived in front of a passenger cabin on the first floor.

The Titan Pearl's first floor was close to the hull of the stellar battleship and normally inaccessible to the public. It was an area reserved for the technical personnel of the ship and the activities of repairs and maintenance were carried out there. It was also the floor giving access to the lower hangar where quite a few shuttles and other vehicles for the colonization of Riva 2 were parked.

When Jake stopped in front of this cabin a few meters from the lower hangar, he immediately sensed that something was wrong. He did not have the overdeveloped sense of smell of his cousin Kevin, but his Perception was still decent.

Although that door was sparkling, it smelled like blood. It was faint, but still noticeable.

Without hesitation, he contracted his muscles and slammed the door open with a punch. When he burst into the room, an intense smell of hemoglobin whiffed up his nostrils together with a foul odor of putrefaction.

As he scanned the room, he found a corpse in a pitiful state, but still fresh. The murder had taken place very recently.

It was the corpse of an elderly man whose eyes had been gouged out and whose body was covered with lacerations. This victim had clearly been tortured.

What was most disturbing, however, was that the corpse was hung from the ceiling light in his room not with a rope... but with his own intestines. The scene was so gory that even someone as impassive as Jake felt like throwing up.

Last but not least, the victim had no Fluid Organ. Not because it was too atrophied to be detected, but because it had been forcibly removed from him. The hole in the skull of the corpse was the most obvious evidence.

Having recently learned of the value and multiple uses of a Fluid Core, he was not at all surprised that the organ had been removed after the assassination. It was probably a common practice in this universe.

Repressing his revulsion, Jake's face twitched in disgust and pinching his nose he tried to calmly explore the rest of the room. After meticulously scanning the room with his Mental Strength, he breathed a distraught sigh.

He had found no conclusive clues. No diary, no communications, not even a computer or a smartphone containing a few personal files. Of course, he didn't know if these natives used this type of technology, but it was quite likely.

Undeterred, he then scanned the room with his bracelet. When he ran the scan energy through his Fluid Core, he discovered that the scan range was much greater, regaining almost a kilometer of range.

Again, his expression sank when he got the scan result. No fingerprints other than the corpse's in the premises. There was, however, one interesting piece of information: the victim had died less than 15 minutes ago. It was, however, a very weak clue if he hoped to identify the real mastermind.

Frustrated by his unsuccessful efforts, Jake stood still for a long time trying to think outside the box in an attempt to find a clue that his Oracle Device or Xi would have missed.

Suddenly, as he was about to give up and leave the premises, he heard footsteps walking in his direction. He instinctively wanted to close the door behind him to avoid a scandal, but it was too late.

"Mu-mu-murderer! "A middle-aged woman with a filthy apron dropped the toolbox in her hands and ran away at once, bellowing with all her might.

"Tsk! What a jinx... " Jake cursed inwardly before blocking her way as he ran past her like a lightning bolt. This woman was just a normal human and shortening the distance was ridiculously simple.

In a few expert movements, he immobilized her and covered her mouth with his hand to stop her screaming. She did try to bite him, but she almost broke her teeth doing that. When he was finally certain she wouldn't scream stupidly again, he let her go.

"Help-"

Nm lmmruz vft vu zuqmsut vuz vfrt ovfr lvu ommc f lvmzo gzufov frt wuiiut fefar fl ad val nzusampl uddmzol om hmqdmzo vuz vft hmqu om rmovare. Dfqr ao, vu jfl ozpiw nifware samiar om f hmj!

Tired and weary, his eyebrows trembled several times with barely repressed killing intent. Then he threw diplomacy out the window. With his telekinesis, he squeezed a few vital points, including her carotids, and with the blood flow momentarily cut off the lady fainted instantly.

"Phew... I should have done that from the start..." He lamented as he wiped the inexistent sweat on his forehead.

Jake had no intention of doing anything to hide his tracks. On the contrary, he intended to report his discovery to the General and his other companions. The only reason he did this was to prevent the mechanic from alerting the real culprit. Deep down he hoped that the murderer was still around.

Dragging the woman's unconscious body into another room, he tied her up and gagged her so as not to be disturbed and hid silently in the shadows.

Again, it was a waste of time. The culprit was not stupid and had long since left. Even if he was around, Jake's arrival might have already alerted him. More importantly, his Shadow Guide had no leads for him.

[Jake, try a maximum range scan for Fluid Ghosts.] Xi proposed out of the blue. [Since the Aether Density is high enough, even if it's mostly converted to Fluid it ensures that all souls have a chance to transform into one of these creatures.]

"I got it."

It wasn't a bad idea. If the culprit was unaware of the existence of these Fluid Ghosts, it was possible that the soul of the deceased had already turned into one of these monsters and been ignored. Even though it pained him to waste his Aether so prodigiously, he gritted his teeth and activated the scan at maximum range.

Once he received the feedback, his face finally showed a slight smile. He had found his Ghost.

To tell the truth, the Fluid Ghost was really not far away. The creature was wandering a few meters below his feet, hidden in the ship's piping. It was just far enough away to escape the senses of his Spirit Body.

Even after finding it, Jake was in agony when he wondered how to reach it. There were several meters of metal between them and it was the thick armor that made up the hull of the Titan Pearl.

"I can try this..."

Rather than trying in vain to destroy everything and damage the vessel, he focused his Mental Strength on the wandering spirit and connected his Spirit Body to his. The soul of the deceased had not yet stabilized and had a vaguely human form.

The ghost of the middle-aged man seemed lost and terrified, and there was no doubt that the spirit was reliving the events of his last trauma over and over again. This would probably be the last memory the Fluid Ghost would retain before mutating into one of those fluid-hungry, unintelligent specters.

His only hope was that all of his memories had not yet disappeared, and for that he needed to stabilize the victim's mind as soon as possible.

To do this, Jake tried something he had never done before. By forming a kind of lasso with his Spirit Body, he pulled the future Fluid Ghost up to him, who didn't even try to resist.

Then once their minds were connected, he accelerated the rotation of his Aether Core and converged all the generated Aether towards the victim. Within seconds, the soul ceased to disperse and the ghost's muffled, tortured gaze suddenly stopped shaking, just like a crying baby having suddenly been stuffed with a lollipop in his mouth. The feeling of *pléâsuré* was so unexpected that the man stopped moping.

After a few minutes, the dead man's soul became completely stable. Simultaneously, his spirit continued to absorb the Fluid into the atmosphere and when Jake removed his Aether, the Fluid Ghost retained its human form.

This was the first time Jake met an intelligent Ghost.

"Thank you, revered Fluid Master." The soul bowed with reverence. "Without your help, I probably would have become one of those degenerate ghosts."

"Ahem, you're welcome. "Jake replied in an embarrassed tone. "Can you tell me what you remember? Did you sabotage the Titan Pearl? And on whose orders? Who killed you?"

"It was... a passenger."

Jake was taken aback. It was both the most obvious answer and the one that was absolutely useless to him.

"But then again? "He calmly insisted.

" He was a Fluid Master like you... he had powers... that's all I can remember... "

"A distinctive element. Think about it. "Jake tried not to rush the deceased.

"I think he had a tattoo. Yes! A tattoo on his right arm forming a scepter."