

# **The Oracle Paths - Chapter 433: Last Night**

## **Chapter 433: Last Night**

Jake's first instinct was to pick up the severed arm to absorb the liquid alloy.

"Tsk, wrong arm. "Jake tutted in a grumpy mood.

[You just can't get lucky every time.] Xi stated the obvious without the slightest hint of sympathy for his setback.

Luc Wam was apparently right-handed and it was regrettably his left arm in his hands. He then proceeded to check the blunderbuss from all angles, but found that the weapon was nothing special. Compared to his own assault rifle, it was a primitive shotgun.

"They were good..." Jake declared as he looked down the path they had escaped to.

Whether it was Luc, Avros or Hephais, they were top tier players. Their agility, coordination, reflexes, strength, and accuracy were excellent compared to the majority of contestants, while their mental state left nothing to be desired either. If it had been a different person than him, like Sarah or Kyle, they would have died without a doubt.

Above all, they had all managed to escape. Jake was now sure, Hephais and Avros were using an Oracle Cloaking or their Oracle Ranks rivaled his. Despite his advantage in speed and strength, he had never really managed to gain an advantage over these two. As for Luc, he was slightly below them, but with the help of the other two he had put in a decent performance.

Hephais, was an Egean assassin specializing in the shadow element, while Avros kept his true abilities concealed behind his dynamite. Even though he seemed to have won this first exchange, Jake knew how close this fight had come.

Still, he had won the first round. And that was a good starting point for winning the next.

"Let's get back to the hunt. "Jake whistled blithely. He recalibrated his Oracle Path and his Shadow Guide started running in the direction of the footprints.

Unfortunately, fate had other plans. Less than a minute later, the robotic voice put a hasty end to his project.

[ Hephais Vist, Luc Wam and Avros Valruc have qualified for the next round and have decided to assert their rights. They will be transported out of the Village in 5,4,3,2,1...0.]

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A few minutes earlier, someplace on the other side of the mountain.

Luc Wam collapsed against a fir tree, his face drenched in sweat. He was missing his left arm, cut clean off at the shoulder. He was short of breath and his crooked face betrayed the immense pain he was in.

"Fucking hell! That bastard didn't miss me!" The gentleman cowboy began to spill out all the insults in his arsenal before running out of breath. He wanted to continue, but stabilizing his wound with Aether was already getting his full attention.

Once his wound was bandaged, he growled, "What was that freak? We're supposed to be the Monsters here, right? Why am I more afraid of him than you? "

"You are mistaken. "Hephais gave him a sympathetic look. "You, are scared of him. And on the other hand, I am not a Monster. "

"Yeah, you picked the Assassin's Role, so what? In the end, you kill one person every night. Just like us. "

"Wrong. " The Shadow Mage quipped with his finger. "I don't have to kill anyone. I kill because I want to. "

Faced with his companion's shamelessness, the one-armed man snorted and decided to pretend he didn't exist. Turning to Avros, he asked,

"What do we do now? If he can find us once, he can find us again. Sure, you can abandon me, but I doubt you have enough Aether to keep the Oracle Cloaking until nightfall. "

The Australian, who was smoking a cigarette nearby, threw his butt into a bush and watched the fire start with great fascination before sighing,

"We have no choice. We've got enough Fluid already. I was hoping to accumulate more, but it's a sin to be too greedy. "

Hephais and Luke facepalmed. Avros could have left since the 5th Cycle, but he had stayed there to get more. Right now, he was probably the richest Villager in this Round.

"How does a sociopath like you stay so calm?" Luc made no secret of his awe. "If I'm not mistaken, you haven't committed any infractions so far, have you? Are you more sane than all of us put together or do you just have better self-control?"

"Hmmm? " Avros lost interest in the burning bush and cracked an evil smile. "I'm not sane. I'm insane. I always have been. But unlike the rest of you, I'm used to it. I don't live in denial of my vices. "

All of a sudden, Avros and Hephais looked up in the same direction and their expressions changed.

"There's no time. He's on his way. See you later. "

After that, they confirmed their choice through their Fluid Card and the robotic voice announced their departure to a disgruntled Jake.

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Before returning to the Village, Jake first inspected the last place where the three Players had stayed. There he found the Bailiff's spare keys, abandoned in the grass next to a burnt bush that was still smoking. The runes had apparently stopped the fire from spreading.

Jake then walked back the way he came and a few moments later arrived at his house. He was surprised to find a group of people in front of his home. Remembering what he had requested of Kewanee and Svara, he determined that they must have succeeded in persuading them, but the reality was entirely different.

The negotiation had been a failure, but the departure of the three Players had changed everything. The remaining villagers had finally found their hero. Before that, they had pinned their hopes on Drastan, the black man in armor, but he had been disappointing so far.

Now, the said Player was locked up in his house and was content to wait for the end of the Round. Some said he was afraid of Avros and the other Monsters, but the truth was that he too was trying to resist the Corruption. With no better solution, the best thing to do was to maintain his peace of mind, preferably in an unstimulating environment.

Nevertheless, Jake didn't care about his mishaps. With the marketing done by the two women and the recent publicity the robotic voice had brought him, he had no trouble extorting the residents.

Except for Peter Brady, Drastan, Ostrexora, Kewanee, Carmin and Svara, all the remaining villagers were natives, namely 14 natives and 6 Players. Unlike the Players' Contracts, it was harder to negotiate with these people without a proper Role.

Having the dominant position, Jake asked to be paid up front as proof of their good faith. His argument was that if he felt like killing them and stealing their Fluid, he was 100% confident that he could kill them before being sent back to the Pit.

The memory of how he had escaped his first punishment was still fresh in their minds, so his argument hit home.

In the end, all the natives except Gordon, Laksmi and Carl accepted his protection. Gordon hesitated for a long time, but his fear finally won out over his reason. After his bad behavior toward Jake, he feared retaliation.

Laksmi was an unimportant recruit, but according to Kewanee she had spent most of her time with Ostrexora and they could be considered friends. Ostrexora was extremely mysterious and

reclusive and it had been a surprise to everyone when she had accepted the native by her side. More than one thought that she was secretly a lesbian, being bitter and cold only towards men.

As most of the natives had given up on earning 50M, they all agreed to pay him the 5M fee for protection, for a total amount of 55M units. Some grumbled a little, but in the end the fear of being the next to die convinced them all.

At that moment, Jake realized that he would have in his house tonight 14 of the 20 remaining villagers, including Kewanee, Svara and Carmin. The vampire had agreed to join them, but had not asked for protection. Knowing her abilities, Jake didn't refuse.

Statistically, there was a significant chance that one or more of these people would be part of the Monsters, but that was exactly what he wanted. What had tipped him off was Gordon and Carl's refusal to mix with the other natives. Their backgrounds were not a good enough reason to explain their reaction.

So Jake played along and accepted everyone without exception. He returned to the forest to collect some herbs and finish his preparations, then returned home at dusk.

Getting everyone into his tiny building proved to be a challenge, but with a little bit of stuffing, they all managed to fit inside. However, Jake had to reposition them personally, to make sure he was able to intervene immediately if anything went wrong.

In the end, he managed to keep them all in the same room with at least a meter of distance separating them from each other. Everyone was leaning against the sides of the wall, forming a square in the center of which stood Jake, Carmin, Svara and Kewanee.

This was the first night that Jake did not go into his fireplace to practice. He didn't light it either, and kept his eyes wide open and his mind alert. With his Myrtharian Eyes, nothing could escape him and the darkness would blind his enemies.

For the first few hours, except for the groans of pain from the Villagers and the floor squeaking as they shifted positions to relieve their backs or legs, nothing disturbed them.

Just as Jake was beginning to entertain the idea that the night would pass without a hitch, someone banged on his door.

## **Chapter 434: Monsters**

Those who were sleeping were jolted awake by the pounding on the door, while Jake and the three female Players got into fighting position. With their Player Perception, none of them had trouble seeing in the dark. Walking cautiously toward the door his blade in hand, Jake shouted,

" Who is it?"

If it was a Monster, they were supposed to be able to destroy the door or no Monster attack would have succeeded the previous nights. Still, the possibility that it was a diversion was not to be discounted.

"It's Peter. " A tired voice sounded from the other side. "I have something to say. I know who the Monsters are."

The image of a young Player addicted to drugs and jaded to everything came to mind. He was curious how the walls of his house could block out all outside sounds, but at the same time allow the Villager's voice on the other side to filter through.

Jake didn't ask him who the Monsters were, because he already had a much more plausible suspect in front of him.

"If you're not a Monster yourself, then how come you're out at night? "He probed him, not taking his guard off.

There was a short silence where Peter seemingly pondered his options, after which he answered,

"Let's say I'm a Monster. What would that change? "

Jake's brow furrowed, but he quickly loosened up. It didn't matter if Peter was a Monster or not. As long as he stayed out, he had no reason to pick on him.

"So, who are these Monsters? " He asked. Telepathically, he relayed, "Think the answer in your head. "

"I've identified three: Susan Burn, Daryl Fishle and..."

When Jake heard the last name, a cold shiver ran down his spine. However, his acting had progressed well and he managed to cover it up. Peter having thought the reply, no sound had come out of his mouth and Jake took advantage of it to confuse the matter.

"Why don't you speak? If you have nothing to say, get the fuck out or I shall treat you as my enemy. "He yelled harshly with overbearing hostility. At the same time, he told him telepathically, "Let me handle the situation. We'll talk later. "

"...Very well. Since I'm not welcome, I'll leave. Don't regret your choice. "The junkie hurled a final threat, and then turned tail and walked away.

It was only a full minute after the Player left that Jake relaxed his vigilance. Or so it seemed.

Without warning and in pitch blackness, he reversed his grip on his sword and stabbed at the shadow behind him. A spray of gray blood splattered on the floor and walls as his blade came out of its back. The Villager, who was leaning against the opposite wall, was sprayed with blood and immediately started screaming.

Jake felt his victim's claws clench in pain around his neck, but he ducked with a jerk of his shoulder, followed by a backward headbutt. The Monster collapsed to the ground, his face completely pulverized.

Jake then turned around, ready to face his assailant, but was taken aback when he discovered the culprit. He was a Titan Pearl engineer, and a very ordinary one at that. Nearly retired, he officially had the role of Fishmonger, and Jake knew he had a wife and two kids from chatting with him on the first day.

"You're not the one I was expecting. " He said with some disappointment, tinged with relief.

At that moment, the softness of his features hardened, replaced by a palpable rage. Then, he turned his head towards one of the young women at his side and uttered word by word in an icy tone,

" Isn't it Kewanee? Or should I say, one of the Monsters. Witch and Monster, you have hidden it well. "

The Native Indian woman's face sank as she felt his great disappointment. She reflexively stepped back and pointed her spear at him. The other Villagers immediately shrank away from her as if she were infected with leprosy.

"Listen to me, Jake. It's not what you think. " She defended herself with an aggrieved look. "I am one of the Monsters, but I didn't attack anyone. I can swear to that! "

Of course, Jake would never give the slightest credence to an oral promise. In his eyes, even the Oracle Contracts could barely be trusted.

"How could you keep this from us? "Svara gasped with a horrified expression. She was having a hard time coping with this. "To think I was planning to sleep in the same house as you after last night's bloodbath..."

In comparison, Carmin maintained her icy poise, only having eyes for Jake.

"She... shouldn't be lying. I think so. Maybe... I don't know. " The vampire chipped in with waning assurance.

"But how much longer will she resist? "Jake retorted without a shred of mercy. "You know very well how these Roles work and this Village's influence on our instincts. If she wants to survive, she will have no choice but to embrace her new nature. "

He then gave her an ultimatum, "If you are truly innocent, sign a Contract."

Kewanee's frail stature drooped as she heard his cruel words. She knew full well what kind of Contracts he was talking about. Unlike Svara, she knew what men were capable of when they had all the power over another soul. She would rather die, than take that risk.

"I can't do this. Find another way. "She flatly refused.

"I don't see any. Unless you have enough points to qualify for the next round."

"In that case, let's fight. May the better one win. "Kewanee gritted her teeth, now convinced that the confrontation was inevitable.

As she aimed her spear at him this time, a mirage of a gigantic golden prairie chicken appeared behind her. Feathers grew on her bare arms and legs, while her hands took on the appearance of talons. Her fleshy lips and jaw protruded into a curved beak, while an unsightly crest sprang up in the middle of her head, splitting her hair in two.

The final appearance could not be considered badass. To tell the truth, the result was rather funny and Jake almost went into a fit of laughter despite the severity of the situation.

At that moment, a raucous and hysterical laugh interrupted the drama. Simultaneously, the owner of this same voice started to howl in agony.

"Aaarrrrgh! How did you know." Susan croaked as she looked at the empty spot in her chest where her heart once was. Across from her, Carmin held the vital organ between her fingers, licking the blood dripping from the arteries with delight.

Jake was surprised at the vampire's responsiveness, but he didn't take offense. Since he'd been hanging out with her, he knew she had a way of identifying other Monsters. Why she had waited all this time to take action was beyond him.

Nonetheless, this incident was the final straw that set off the hostilities. Aware that their identity as Monsters had been revealed, the affected Villagers gave up all pretenses. For the first time, Jake and the other survivors experienced the full range of abilities that this Role entailed.

Susan, who was missing a heart and one of her huge breasts, did not die immediately, quite the opposite. Her crazy giggle returned and her countenance began to change.

Her pupils slit and her blue eyes turned white. Her slender fingers fused into a metallic blade and her spine lengthened, followed by her bones cracking.

The bloody heart in Carmin's hands turned gray and spines shot out of it, piercing the vampire's hand all the way through. Then the heart flew back to its former home.

"What the..."

Carmin instantly released her Blood Aura and a torrent of reddish energy enveloped her body. Before Susan could complete her transformation, her head was ripped off by a violent swipe of her claw.

The girl's carcass rolled to the ground, spilling gallons of gray blood, which triggered another wave of panicked screams from the unfortunate ones being sprayed. It should not be forgotten that during all this time it was pitch black. Carmin's bloody aura was ominous in the middle of this darkness.

Meanwhile, the other monsters had taken the opportunity to complete their morphing. Their original faces were still recognizable, but their morphology had become grotesque and distorted, the result being very similar to the Hunters who had chased them not so long ago.

In this form they were unaware of it, but their sadistic and cruel expressions betrayed a transformation that went far beyond their appearance.

But what set off alarm bells in Jake's head was their ability to change the shape of their limbs to form various deadly weapons. This uncanny ability reminded him of the Digestors without any mistaking.

"This Role... is a poisoned gift. "Jake suddenly realized. It gave them more freedom and an overpowered fighting form, but it doomed them to the night.

As he was counting them, Jake realized that one was missing. The most important one.

'Where's Daryl?'

Searching for him with his eyes, he finally found the Titan Pearl's head doctor among the Monsters. Curiously, he hadn't transformed. He was still the same friendly-looking fifty-year-old with a catogan haircut and fingers yellowed by nicotine. Except this time, a sinister gloomy energy was seeping out of his body.

"I underestimated Peter. " The Healer sighed as he slipped on a pair of latex gloves. "With his addiction and secret, I thought he would have known how to hold his tongue... But it doesn't matter.

"Killing you all has always been my plan from the beginning."

