

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

### Chapter 171 - Variants

A few minutes later, the plain of low magenta grass had been repainted in silver, almost giving the impression that it had just snowed. The corpses of Digestors lay in multiple pieces all over it, these voracious monsters knowing no fear having no flight instinct.

In the end, Will failed miserably, coming last in this competition that he was the only one to take seriously. In addition to joining the fight too late, he was by far the weakest and every Rank 2 Digestor demanded his full attention. So the result was only to be expected.

Jake had single-handedly slaughtered over eighty creatures, including the majority of the Rank 3 Digestors. He was currently soaked in silvery blood from head to toe and was seriously wondering if this blood could be used to make dyes. Because beyond the metallic smell that stung his nose, he had a feeling that these stains wouldn't come off so easily in the washing machine.

Sarah had shot about thirty Digestors on her own, demonstrating that the time of her Ordeal had not been wasted. She was slightly out of breath, and her long blond hair was also sticky with silvery blood. If Jake had been absent she certainly could have wiped out the herd alone with a few more minutes.

Even Crunch, as a good opportunist, had managed to prey on a dozen of these monsters. Unlike humans, he didn't understand the concept of resources. These Digestors flailing around were just a fun

game to him and without their hostility he could have had fun tormenting any one of them for hours.

Will was therefore the most miserable of all, having killed only six Digestors with the greatest difficulty. Without Jake or Sarah, he would have been unable to survive alone against this horde. The advantage, however, was that this battle alone had earned him about 20 Aether points. At his level it was enough to increase his strength or agility significantly.

‘Is everyone okay?’ Jake asked worriedly as he saw them all covered in blood, but unharmed at first glance.

‘I think... I think I’m okay.’ Will groaned as he wiped the blood off his sword with a rag. ‘But please don’t attack without warning next time.’

Sarah giggled when she heard his complaint. Unlike the businessman, she simply jerked her gladius to get rid of the blood on it.

Unfortunately for Will, the blade made of a Digestor’s forearm had cracked during the fight. It wouldn’t hold up in another battle of this intensity.

‘Need another weapon?’ Jake offered with a straight face. Without proper weapons to face the next monsters, it could quickly become dangerous, even for him.

‘Ugh, thank you very much.’ Will accepted his offer outright. This was no time to get cocky and arrogant, needing no one.

Like the first day on B842, Jake ripped the scythe-shaped forearm off a relatively undamaged Rank 3 Digestor, which he hadn’t completely pulverized during his Berserk Mode.

While it had taken him a considerable amount of time the first time to carve and shape his first saber, the process was surprisingly quick this time. Jake's strength, dexterity, and intelligence was incomparable to that of the old days, and this kind of rudimentary crafting required virtually no effort on his part. Not to mention the fact that the edge of his machete had been reinforced with Grey Aether.

Aware that such a situation could happen again, for example if his machete broke, he was neither short of tape nor strong glue. His only concern was that he wasn't sure that these Earth products could withstand high-intensity Evolver combat.

There was a real risk that the blade would become dislodged from its makeshift handle (another bone split at one end to insert the blade), and escape into the air, leaving its owner helpless with only the remaining hilt of the saber as a weapon.

'It's really impressive. Sarah expressed her admiration for Jake's craftsmanship. It gave her a good idea of the difference between their stats and especially intelligence.

His gestures were precise and decisive as if he had done this thousands of times, which was impossible. He was also considerably stronger than in her memory of the Coliseum. If she didn't do her utmost, the gap could widen even further as time went by.

And Sarah didn't want to be discarded at all, now that she had proved that she could be something more than just a cheap seductress. Jake was a loner, not very talkative and tactless, but at least he inspired confidence. The way he scolded his cat in public showed his silly side, but that was precisely what reassured her in those circumstances.

In her opinion, Amy had made a mistake by leaving the group so early. Her instincts told her that powerful people with integrity weren't so common in the Mirror Universe. Jake and Will were no angels, focused on their goals, but they were mentally very stable.

She was much more suspicious of Kyle comparatively, who, although he had a good background, didn't have the same emotional maturity. She still didn't know how much the Ordeal had changed him.

Jake quickly finished Will's new saber. Now that he had replenished his Aether, he was in a generous mood. To prevent the situation from happening again so soon he spent 50 Aether points to encode 10 Grey Aether points for Will's saber.

Of course, it wasn't for free. He first explained to Will the role of this Aether and reminded him that he would have to pay him back sooner or later.

Will accepted willingly. On the sharpness and strength of his weapon depended both his survival and his ability to accumulate more Aether. There was no question of being stingy in this situation.

Now that Jake had almost 900 Aether points again, he took the opportunity to increase his Extrasensory Perception by another 10 points, bringing it to 40 points.

The control range of his Aether increased by another meter and his control became easier from a distance like a muscle becoming more flexible when extended beyond its limits.

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[Suzeufro, zfrc 5= 406,400/ 100,000,000] jfl urmpev om tunzull frwmru.

As they were about to fill their empty bottles and gourds with fresh Digestor blood, a shrill sound different from the usual Digestor cackles they used to hear came from the dark wood further filled with bluish trunks with no foliage.

The magenta grasses had regained their rights once they were out of the plain, as if growing in an open area at the mercy of red lightning wasn't doing them any good. This made it difficult to spot the creatures hiding underneath.

After a while, Jake heard the rustle of tall grass being crushed, or moving aside to make way for a rather heavy creature. Crunch which was happily devouring one Digestor's thigh suddenly abandoned his meal, growling his exposed fangs towards the forest.

The group soon saw the silhouette of the creature walking towards them. They were two in fact, almost identical, but the rustle of the grass had not disappeared. There was something else in the woods, responsible for his cat's defensive posture.

These two monsters were undoubtedly Digestors. Bipedal, they shared most of the characteristics of their brethren.

Silver forearm constantly changing shapes, a batracian skin, slightly translucent allowing to glimpse their venous network as well as robust legs capable of reversing the direction of their joints at will. And finally, a single eye the size of a baseball on a tiny head with an enormous jaw that seems capable of stretching itself to infinity.

Their size exceeding three meters in height and the fluidity and speed of transformation of the extremities of their limbs, including

feet, indicated that they were Rank 3 Digestor. But the similarities ended there.

Their supposedly silvery eye was glowing with a red light and the heat of an oven radiated from their bodies, deforming the heated air around them. Their greyish batracian skin was slightly pinkish, as if both Digestors had sunburned. Their necks were also longer, like a long tube.

Upon seeing them, the two monsters' chests swelled abruptly, an incandescent glow visible through their skin. Then after a few seconds, their chests stopped swelling and they opened their jaws.