

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 172 - Headache

The whole group, including Crunch, sensed that something was wrong when the two monsters opened their mouths wide. The incandescent light rose quickly from their chests to their long tube shaped necks and a fireball escaped from their mouths with the power of an artillery shot.

The two projectiles were no bigger than a ping-pong ball, rather pitiful at first glance, but Jake had no doubt that it would be lethal to take one head-on, even for him.

Grabbing his cat by the neck and Will by the collar of his jacket, he leapt with all his strength in the air to leave the impact zone. Sarah, for her part, dived in a forward roll towards the two monsters, passing successfully under the two balls of fire.

The two flaming ping pong balls hit the ground a fraction of a second later and like two air bubbles bursting brutally, an explosion louder than a grenade deafened their eardrums.

Upon landing, Jake had a chance to inspect the extent of the damage after putting down a Crunch and Will shaken. In addition to leaving a crater five meters in diameter and one meter deep, the flames continued to burn as if these projectiles contained some kind of flammable oil or gasoline.

Meanwhile, Sarah had managed to get close to them and successfully removed their heads without a hitch, although the hot air burned her skin to the first degree during the short time she

came into contact with it. Picking up the Aether, she returned to Jake with the conquering gait of a proud woman demanding compliments.

‘ Well?’ Sarah taunted him in a sexy pose with her hands akimbo.

‘ Not bad... ‘ Jake said in bad faith with a sorrowful face. That Aether could have been his...

‘Will and Crunch, I’m adding the rescue to your debt. ‘Jake informed the two rescued with extreme seriousness.

In response, Crunch sat on his butt, then lifted one of his hind legs up to lick his balls, as if to say, ‘You’ve already taken all my Aether, what difference does it make to me.’ .

As for Will, he was a businessman. Short reckonings made the best friends. As long as Jake reasoned like that, they’d get along just fine, even if he suspected Jake was joking. Or maybe he wasn’t?

Jake was about to inspect the two bodies when he looked out into the woods again. The rustle of the tall grass still hadn’t disappeared. Straining his ear, he could hear multiple similar sounds, but in addition to that, there were two other distinct noises.

The first was a buzzing sound that was reminiscent of mosquitoes, but much more deafening. The second was an indescribable sound, a mixture of suction noise mixed with a strange rattle.

‘How are we going to share—‘

Jake interrupted Will with a wave of his hand to signal them to shut up. Watching him cautiously peering through the woods, his two companions regained their concentration. This time Crunch and Will had learned their lesson and backed off about ten meters to avoid any unpleasant surprises.

In the end, it wasn't the creatures in the tall grass that showed up first, but those responsible for the buzzing. Raising their heads slightly towards the noise, Jake and Sarah discovered two flying insects the size of a prehistoric dragonfly. This was their only common trait with the harmless Earth insect.

These two monsters were also Digestors, no doubt about it. Six legs capable of changing shape, lengthening or shortening at will, as were their four razor-sharp wings. Both insects had four faceted silvery eyes and a translucent grey exoskeleton covering every part of their body. They also had a pair of mandibles on their heads and a long, mosquito-like, sharp trunk.

In appearance, these Digestors were smaller than the previous ones, about the size of the Rank 0 and 1 Digestors that Jake hadn't seen for a long time. Yet Jake took the threat seriously this time. The two insects were moving so fast that he could barely follow them with his eyes despite his Aether Agility of 130. Except maybe Sarah, the rest of the group would be unable to react to the creatures.

Before swooping down on them, the two 'mosquitoes' landed on the two fire-breathing Digestors' corpses by sticking their six sharp legs into their abdomen. Their trunks pierced the thick skin of the Digestors and an unpleasant sucking sound was heard.

Their proboscis, one or two centimeters in diameter, suddenly stretched more than ten times its width while the blood of the dead Digestors was sucked out at a dazzling speed. The area around the proboscis had also liquefied as if under the effect of an anticoagulant toxin so powerful that it could even soften the bones.

If a human being was stung by this, their vital prognosis would be directly compromised even if their blood was not absorbed. As they watched the scene, Jake and Sarah got a chill.

‘Take Will and Crunch and run.’ Jake gave the order quietly. ‘I should be able to handle them, but they have to attack me.’ He added, sensing she was about to make an unnecessary protest.

Luckily, she had a good head on her shoulders. She knew these two Digestors were beyond her reach. She might be able to escape by herself, but it would be fatal for Will and the cat if they were targeted.

The young woman leapt to the two deadweights and like Jake earlier, she grabbed them without warning, one by the collar, the other by the neck. She then sprinted at full speed towards the Oracle Shelter, leaving Jake alone to face the threat.

In the few seconds it had taken Sarah to escape, both corpses had been vampirized and reduced to the size of a small dog. The next second, when there was nothing left to absorb, the skin was swallowed up as well, passing through the tube like an inverted sock.

There was absolutely nothing left of the two fire-breathing Digestors. The most amazing thing was that the two Digestors had not changed in size, their abdomens had not swollen.

Apart from a slight silvery halo around their bodies showing that they had successfully digested the energy and Aether, there was no indication that the two mosquitoes had just eaten a meal that was at least ten times their weight.

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His perception of time slowed abruptly, his own breaths suddenly seeming endless. He also felt even lighter, if that was possible.

But it couldn't be that simple. After increasing his Aether stats so much, a severe headache hammered into his skull. The concentration needed to keep the excess Aether from leaving his body was like trying to lift a 100kg bar for a normal human. Assuming it was possible, this effort could not be held for more than a few seconds.

Feeling the urgency of the situation, Jake scanned both monsters with his bracelet to get the crucial information he needed to plan his strategy.

[Rank 4 Digestor, Regular, Insect type (Mosquito): Digestors born insects or having consumed many insectoid creatures before stabilizing. Their Chitin exoskeleton is stronger than steel, and their legs are as sharp as any sword and can elongate. They can vampirize and poison their victim through the proboscis, but each leg, wing and mandible is venomous. Their intelligence is limited, but they can be controlled and commanded by other higher-ranking insect or psychic-type digestors].

Memorizing what he needed to know with a thought, he pulled out his machete, and then pounced on the two mosquitoes before they could take off again, leaving a shock wave behind him. The last sentence of the scan report had caught his attention.

If the uncomfortable sucking noise he heard in the tall grass was the Digestor commanding these two mosquitoes, he had to finish them off as quickly as possible and run away.

The two blood-sucking Digestors were as fast as he expected. Despite his speed, their wings vibrated in time and his sword missed them as his swatter used to miss the flies.

And as his migraine continued to grow in intensity while he wondered how to reach those Digestors flying above him in the shortest possible time, the hideous monster he did not wish to see so soon finally crawled out of the tall grass.