

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

### Chapter 177 - Waiting in ambush

Jake had now realized, though not without frustration, that his Shadow Guide was leading him to the woods full of Digestors that he had fled in extremis earlier. He hoped he wouldn't run into the Slug and his Mosquito minions, because otherwise it would be difficult to save the two women.

There was a real risk that these woods were a lair for these infernal creatures. Perhaps the Slug was just one of many minions out there and had left the woods in the hope of hunting more freely. If that was the case, it was spooky.

He couldn't go back there empty-handed. If the bullets from his assault rifle had limited effect against this giant mollusk, he simply had to take some precautions and appropriate measures.

At the first shrub thick enough to prune a few spears, Jake put himself to work. With his machete sharpened by the Grey Aether, he pruned six spears in less than a minute, then used the remaining scraps to cut a few more pikes.

He made sure that the spears remained thick enough so that they retained a certain weight. This was the only way to ensure that they would have enough kinetic energy on impact to compensate for their lower speed. Jake was strong, but he wasn't so cocky that he thought he could throw a spear at 1200m/s like the bullets from his assault rifle.

However, he had sharpened them neatly at the end. They were as sharp and pointed as possible given the short time he had to make them.

‘No chance it’ll hit the Mosquitoes, but if I see the Slug I’ll make him a second asshole with it!’ Jake praised himself as he inspected his ‘longest spear’ with a satisfied smile.

[ Hmmff, instead of talking nonsense, you’d better hurry.] Xi harrumphed as she heard him do his dirty joke.

Jake immediately got serious again and picked up the projectiles before setting off. These spears and stakes weren’t heavy, but running with them was cumbersome.

Nevertheless, he managed to maintain quite a speed and reached the edge of the woods a few minutes later. He feared that he would immediately fall back on the Slug, but these fears were unfounded. As he penetrated the wood, he did not come across any living soul.

However, he heard the yelling of Digestors coming from the woods a few miles away. Alas, this was once again the direction in which his Shadow Guide was leading him.

‘Damn it!’ Jake cursed mentally, teeth clenched.

Hu loaii urouzut ovu jmmtl om hfzzw mr val qallamr. Fzmq ovu qmquro vu luo mpo om fhmqnialv ao, vu vft nzunfzut dmz ovu jnzlo, usur fr fzqw md Daeulomzl.

He could stay in the tall grass, but he couldn’t see anything in the twilight darkness, and he didn’t like it. Noticing that the trees had no foliage, but long, thick branches branching off again and again, he decided to try his luck by acting as Tarzan.

With a few leaps and a dexterity that would not have been out of place among monkeys, he climbed one of the trees and tested one of the branches with his foot. No squeaking or creaking, it could work.

It was also worth mentioning that the soles of his boots had finally succumbed after all this high-speed travel. The soles of Jake's feet were now in contact with the ground or rather the branches. He didn't even dare to look at the state of his feet or his paranoid instincts would probably have kicked in. They must have been filthy black.

He did the balancing act cautiously at first, then once reassured, he gained confidence and soon he was moving like a ninja from tree to tree. When one branch was too far away from another, a long jump was sometimes necessary, but with his stats it wasn't a particularly challenging feat to perform.

When the Digestors' cackles became close, Jake slowed down radically to maintain the utmost discretion. If the mission was to fail because of his slowness, too bad. Jake was willing to help, but he was not suicidal. Not yet.

Eventually, when he got close enough he realized that the Digestors' shrieks weren't the only noises present. The cries of angry or panicked men were heard from time to time, mixed with a few insults in another language. The hissing and clash of swords against Digestor's chitin was perfectly recognizable.

Jake was not really surprised as he remembered that Enya was protected by several extremely fearsome guards. The Jake before the Ordeal would never have dared to face them without guns and the current Jake would avoid messing with them for no reason.

Sadly, it was a different spectacle that revealed itself to him. The two princesses were immobilized on the ground by what appeared to

be their own soldiers. Someone had tied their hands behind their backs, and their top clothes had been partially torn off. It didn't take a genius to figure out what was going on.

The problem was that the party had been interrupted by the unexpected arrival of the same Slug that he had run away from a little earlier. Jake didn't believe in fate and therefore it could only be a trick from the Oracle. Not that the Oracle was controlling the Digestors, but the two princesses had probably been guided here to facilitate his intervention.

Tjm md ovu dmpz Dphfi Gpfztl jvm vft fhmqnfraut Erwf mr vuz ozfrlfoamr jaov vaq juzu daevoare ovu Sipe, vmitare ao fo gfw jaov fqfxare ljmzt ouhvraypu. Tvuw zuepifziw lvmpout mztuzl om ovu movuz lmitauzl jvm juzu daevoare ovu lqfii dzw.

Jake didn't know how the Slug had renewed his army in such a short period of time, but there were a dozen Humanoid Digestors of Rank 4, as well as a multitude of Rank 2 and 3 Digestors. Fire-spitters were also on the scene, bombing the demoralized soldiers.

Nevertheless, Jake was forced to admit that these warriors were formidable. Their physical stats were as good as his before he overloaded his Aether Stats and their overall technique was better.

With his current Intelligence it didn't mean much, since he could easily copy them, but he didn't know anything about their Intelligence stats either. Pretending they were all stupid to keep his confidence was a sure way to die.

Despite appearances, the armoured warriors were not struggling much. Each one of these fighters had the proper equipment and was literally the equivalent of another Jake. The low-ranking Digestors were being chopped up by the hundreds, but more and more seemed

to emerge from the tall grass, as if the din of the battle was acting as a beacon attracting all the Digestors from miles around.

The two Ducal Guards were also aware of the problem and soon called for retreat. They had managed to hide it until now, but the two warriors were feeling nauseous after fighting this slug for so long without causing any significant injury.

It didn't take them long to realize that the repulsive Digestor was emitting a poison into the air. Some reckless soldiers had already briefly lost consciousness, and were quickly devoured by other hungry Digestors. The orders they shouted that Jake didn't understand were simply to keep their distance from the mollusc.

Jake continued to watch the battle from the top of his branch, as dusk gave way to night. Only the occasional flash of glowing red lightning zigzagging across the sky brought a hint of clarity.

The armored warriors were incredible, but the number of Digestors was only increasing. What was bound to happen, happened, and soon more warriors fell. More Rank 4 Digestors joined the fight, along with other misshapen looking Digestors he hadn't seen before.

Gradually, the group of warriors began to retreat in an orderly fashion, regularly abandoning the corpse of one of their own to the enemy. The two princesses had been dragged on the ground with them by two other soldiers in the middle of the formation and could be considered safe for the time being, but this would not last.

When Jake thought he'd never get a chance to take action, another shrill, thunderous screech that was louder than anything he'd ever heard before made the trees in the forest shake, the sheer force of

the scream making them lose their balance as if they'd just gotten a slap in the ear.

Looking up to the dark sky, Jake heard more than he saw the newcomer, but with his present Perception it wasn't so hard to estimate the creature's shape using his other senses. Another Digestor. And the biggest one he'd ever seen before.