

The Oracle Paths

Volume 2: The First Ordeal

Chapter 45 - Change of plans

With his knife, Jake patiently ripped out bone shavings to shape the femurs, then split the upper heads in half about six inches deep so that the scythes could be inserted inside.

Luckily, he had extra strong glue and heavy duty tape that he used to hold the scythes to the femurs that served as the handles for these improvised weapons. He then used this same tape to wrap the handles to thicken them and soften the grip. Until leather straps were available, this would be enough to make them comfortable to use.

Once his work was completed, Jake made a few moves in the air with his new weapons before handing these improvised machetes or short sabers to Amy and Will for them to try them out.

The comfort was ok, but the scythes were heavier than he imagined. Probably that's why these Digestors were having trouble standing upright.

The first monster that almost caused his demise didn't seem to have any trouble... standing up. He hoped with all his heart, that the first Digestor he had met was an anomaly in this area, because an ambush by three monsters like that would not end so well.

That was the difference between Level 1 and Level 2.

'Do the handles fit you?' Asked Jake courteously.

‘I can make them a little thicker with the scotch I have left, but you’ll have to get used to the weight.’

‘That’s great!’ Will complimented, thumb up. He was already having the time of his life with his saber, trying to mimic Jake’s spectacular moves and those from the action movies he’d watched.

As for Amy, she was having a hard time wielding the blade with her tiny arms, but you could tell that she was relieved at the thought of no longer being unarmed in the face of these monsters.

While they were discovering their new toys, Jake collected the monsters’ useable blood, filling all of his vials to the brim. He left the meat behind, not short of food for the moment. He would have collected the hides to make leather, but it took much more time than he had at his disposal. And if he was going to do that, he might as well use a higher level Digestor.

Hu ovur qftu ojm qmzu lfguzl, jvahv vu oaut om val nfhc, frt ovur luo mdd fefar.

The sun was beginning to set and the light was seriously running out. Yellow suns were slowly giving way to purple moons. Unfortunately, the strident cackling was becoming more frequent and increasingly close, confirming the sad hypothesis that these Digestors were also hunting at night. They would not be able to rest until they left this forest or found an adequate shelter.

But just as they were about to experience an infernal night, another group of humans led by a Playboy were enduring another kind of hell, which would lead them to make a desperate decision.

‘Hey Kyle, are you sure we’re on the right track?’ The blonde named Sarah asked, anxiously sweeping the ferns around.

‘Of course I am.’ The Playboy confirmed in a sarcastic tone. ‘You see that track by that rock over there. There should be the rest of one of my cartridges from when I shot the monster.’

The child who had dropped his mother’s hand gamboled near the rock and actually found the cartridge after a few minutes of searching.

‘I have it!’ He exclaimed, proud of his finding.

‘Come back here, Tim!’ His mother shouted in a tired voice. She was the oldest in the group and all that walking had exhausted her, not to mention the fact that she had a child to protect.

‘Thanks, kid.’ Kyle congratulated him awkwardly, exasperated deep inside.

‘Unfortunately, an empty shell doesn’t make a bullet. You can dump it back where you found it. But at least we have confirmation that we’re on the right track. If I’m not mistaken, we should be able to find the mall where we appeared at the end of this wood.’

‘I’m sorry I doubted you.’ Sarah apologized in a not-so-sorry tone.

‘Haha, don’t worry. Everyone’s a bit on edge here...’

‘Not without reason...’ One of his groupies mumbled.

‘ True... ‘

The group progressed silently, no longer daring to doubt the Playboy’s sense of orientation. Indeed, after a quarter of an hour, they left the wood in question, arriving in a sort of clearing, including a portion of the mall in which they had been when they were transported on B842.

Nevertheless, the building remained voluminous, with a size approaching that of a football stadium, comprising six floors, the first of which included a hypermarket selling all sorts of foodstuffs and utilities.

‘Jackpot!’ Kyle congratulated himself when he saw the rest of the mall.

Most of the hypermarket had been preserved, which meant they wouldn’t run out of food for a long time. This made an ideal base, giving them time to find other survivors and find a way to harvest Aether easily.

Once in front of the building, the group cautiously went through the automatic door, which was still working, probably thanks to a backup generator. As a result, even the fresh and frozen food had hope of remaining consumable for a while, until the generator also ran out of battery power.

Enchanted, they rushed to the sections of their choice, picking the food they longed for right off the shelves. The child’s laughter echoed through the store as he happily ate pastries behind the empty bakery, while his mother reminded him to chew enough before swallowing, with a slight smile on her lips.

The young women in the group went to the sanitary department instead, raiding the intimate hygiene shelves, aware that such an opportunity would not arise again any time soon.

The three cowardly-looking men, who until now had been rather discreet, took the opportunity to go to a sports shop to exchange their shorts and flip-flops for more off-road clothing.

The Playboy, inspired by them, did exactly the same thing, getting rid of his jeans and suede shoes in exchange for comfortable jogging shoes and sneakers. It was no longer time to show off.

Soon the whole group had exchanged their summer clothes for more suitable ones.

They then began to visit all the shops one by one, the majority of which were of no use in ensuring their survival in this post-apocalyptic world.

A few hours earlier, they would have been delighted to be able to freely use the latest computers and smartphones, but now these objects were less valuable than a bottle of fresh water.

Taking the escalator to the second floor, the group dispersed again to explore the building.

Outside, the suns had begun to descend and the light was gradually fading. However, with the neon lights in the mall and the lack of windows, the group of humans did not notice the change.

The exploration of the second floor went smoothly, as did that of the third floor, and with the exception of a toy store, which amazed the child, and many clothing boutiques, they did not find anything significant.

Or ovu dmpzov dimmz, ovuw lvmpout jaov bmw, talhmsuzare f ifzeu dpzraopzu laer. Tvuzu juzu daoout caohvurl, ukvagaoamr gfovzmmql, gpo fgmsu fii gutzmmql frt gutl, lmisare ovu ypuloamr md jvuzu ovuw jmpit liuun ovfo raevo.

Unfortunately, it was at this very moment that the situation took a sudden turn, leading them straight to hell. As the group dispersed again inside the shop, looking for the bed in which they would sleep, shrill clattering sounded... next to them.

A few seconds later, a scream of suffering shattered their calm, instantly transforming their ephemeral euphoria into icy terror.

The Playboy jumped out of bed as if he'd been lying on a thumbtack, then shakily drew his Colt out, before racing off outside the store. He wasn't the only one with the same idea, his groupies were on his heels.

Even the mother and child had reacted on the spot and followed them closely. As they approached the escalator to hurtle down the stairs, a translucent creature blocked their path, pouncing on them scythes in front.

Kyle managed to dive in time, but one of the young women wasn't so lucky and was literally eviscerated before their eyes, her screams of agony provoking horrified retches from the survivors.

'Jenny!' Another young woman sobbed when she saw her friend being mauled, but Sarah grabbed her by the arm firmly, pulling her towards the escalator.

‘It’s over, there’s nothing more you can do for her!’ She cried out without showing any mercy. Nothing was more important to her than her own life.

Dragging her friend, they set off again, along with the Playboy, the mother and the child.

When they reached the ground floor, they heard another scream of suffering, this time male, and then nothing. None of the three men in their forties had escaped the monsters.

Ao iuflo ovuw ovmpvevo ovuw vft, dmz fl ovuw juzu fgmpo om ulhfnu ovzmpev ovu fpomqfoah urozfrhu tmmz ovuw vufzt vpzzaut dmmolounl, ovur f :

‘Wait for me! Don’t—Don’t let me rot here!’ A balding man no longer of prime youth cried out with a gasping voice. He was one of the three men they thought were dead.

By some miracle, he had managed to escape from the Digestors, taking advantage of the fact that the monsters were munching his friends to take the escalator behind them.

However, the shrill cackles resounded again and it was the trigger that reminded them that they didn’t really have time to dither. The Digestors were eating rather quickly and were not satisfied with their meager meal.

The group ran without turning around until they lost their breath. After what seemed like an endless time, when the shrill cackles were long gone, they stopped, overcome by fatigue and lack of oxygen.

The adrenaline was fading and the aftermath of their Olympic-style cavalcade was already beginning to be felt. They would be in horrible pain within a few hours.

When they caught their breath, Kyle looked at the rest of the group. There were only seven of them left. They had lost three people in the attack. He didn’t care about the deaths of the two men, but Jenny’s death had affected him. After all,

they shared many sexual adventures together in the past, and despite the fact that she was stupid, she was a good friend.

The other young women were also mourning the loss of their friend, with the exception of Sarah, who gazed at him with a look saying, 'Now what do we do?' . 'How should I know...' was plastered on the Playboy's lost face as an answer.

'I want us to go back to the big, scary man!' The child whined, with a face full of tears. 'I'm sure even the monsters are afraid of him!'

When they say the truth comes out of the mouths of children... Or the Oracle... They felt lost, and even if he didn't like the solution, it was there in front of him, and it was a child who found it.

Going back to that psychopath... Remembering his altercation with the man in question, a shiver ran down his spine. Nevertheless, Kyle agreed with the child's reasoning.

Having experienced his skills and temper, there was no doubt that these monsters, or at least the ones they had met, were no match for him. He might be overestimating this person, but it showed how much this man had left a deep impression on him.

'It is indeed the only solution we have left.' The Playboy reluctantly declared.

Sarah wasn't thrilled with the idea, but she couldn't think of anything more promising than this one. Their Oracle devices had clearly not included these Digestors in their predictions. The adjusted Path was uncertain and recommended them to retrace their steps.

As for the rest of the group, they approved the idea without flinching. They were simply drained and tired of all the ups and downs they had experienced today.

Tired, but too nervous and anxious to rest, the group set off again at dusk, retracing their steps in order to find the man they had hoped to never meet again...

