

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 2: The First Ordeal

### Chapter 46 - Battle under the purple moons

The night had fallen. The shrill cackles were now ubiquitous, forming a symphony of disgraceful squeals around them.

Jake had kept his trusty machete and semi-automatic pistol in his hands, while Amy and Will clutched the guard of their improvised sabers with all their might. They knew that Jake couldn't fully protect them this time and that they would have to defend their lives on their own.

Fortunately, their new weapons were a game-changer and they no longer felt so helpless against these creatures.

'Stay close to me.' Jake ordered as he began to run.

Amy and Will managed to follow him somehow, despite their fatigue, fear giving them wings. Crunch, however, with his short legs, was panting, his tongue hanging out. Reportedly, cats sleep more than 20 hours a day. Even if the black tomcat had been able to enjoy a short nap during Asrael's speech, he was active since then.

After a moment, they left the ferns and trees to reach a completely uncovered plain.

There the grass was not so high and they had a clear view. The reverberation of the purple moons offered a satisfactory brightness, bathing the plain in a bloody glow.

Jake refrained from wondering about why there were so many moons and their so abnormal color, his attention already monopolized by the group of Digestors on their footsteps.

Armed and prepared, the trio waited patiently for the monsters to leave the forest to hunt them. Even Crunch had his claws out. At first, the shrill cackling became louder and louder, then suddenly it was silence.

At that very moment, fourteen creatures nonchalantly emerged from the woods, their muffled footsteps reflecting their wariness. They had seen the corpses of their fellow monsters.

More than the number, what warned Jake was the two huge silver monsters following them. They were as big, if not bigger, than the first one he had encountered.

The silver blood had almost healed his ribs and he was not afraid to face them again. Unfortunately, there were not just one but two, not counting the fourteen other Digestors that preceded them. It would be a tough battle.

‘What, what do we do?’ Amy asked, stuttering, as panic gradually took hold of her.

‘What we’ve done so far. We kill them... Or die trying.’ Jake replied coldly. Even if he had to go down, he would at least make them pay dearly.

Hearing these words, Amy grew even paler if that were possible, but at least she stopped shaking. She had accepted the situation and what she had to do. Fight, and survive to laugh about it.

Will was no different. Jake’s words resonated in his mind, awakening a fighting instinct he didn’t think he had. Putting his glasses back on in his trademark gesture, he warned himself, focusing his attention on one of the monsters.

After a short moment when silence reigned supreme on the plain, a long, shrill cackling sound was heard and the peace was broken.

Jake, who had originally planned to keep his Aether, decided he could not afford to be thrifty. He immediately invested his 6 Aether points to increase his Aether Agility by 3 points, bringing it to 16. With the 15.5 of his Body Agility, his effective agility was 24.8.

Agility directly improved his reaction time, reflexes, balance, dexterity, precision and body control. This was the reason why despite his lack of firearms training, he could still hit the bull's eye every time.

More strength could have a decisive impact, but if he inadvertently reacted too late, he was finished.

Then the monsters charged and Jake aimed and fired. In less than five seconds, the magazine of his gun was empty and the bodies of twelve of the fourteen Digesters were on the ground, each with a bullet in their head.

Amy and Will held their breath as they watched, then jumped up and down with joy when they saw that only four were left. Even Jake was stunned by his accuracy. Maybe a marksman could do the same thing, but with a technique as poor as his? Not so sure.

‘I’ll leave the two little ones with you. I’ll take care of the big two. Good luck...’ Jake announced, before throwing himself into the fray, Crunch on his heels.

Amy and Will swallowed, each picked a monster, then took turns yelling for courage. Not having time to reload his weapon, Jake dropped it, grabbing two of his knives.

They knew that these Digestors were much tougher than the others and that unless they aimed at their eyes, it would be very difficult to seriously hurt them. He waited until he was less than five meters away before throwing his projectiles.

One of them hit the target and pierced the eye of one of the monsters. However, the second one turned its metal arms into a circular shield, thwarting the projectile aimed at it.

Ignoring the blind Digger, Jake took advantage of the fact that the other creature couldn't see him behind his shields to strike with all his might with his machete at its lower abdomen. The monster didn't react in time and his stroke hit its target.

However, his joy was short-lived, as the creature was more resistant than he imagined. From a slash to the waist that would have easily sliced a normal human being in half, only a thin gash marked the Digestor's leathery skin. The silvery blood of the creature barely spilled, showing no sign of weakening.

Changing tactics, Jake immediately opted for a wear and tear tactic, psychologically prepared for a long fight. Crunch did the same, lacerating the back legs of the blind Digestor non-stop, which roared with frustration and pain in response.

Meanwhile, Will and Amy faced their respective monsters. Amy was struggling against a paralyzing terror, but every time the monster's blades approached her head, she remembered that she didn't want to die and found the will to move again.

As she retreated backwards, avoiding the creature's attacks, she eventually reached a creek, which caused her to lose her balance, the contact with the water and the moss caught her off guard. Before she had time to realize what was happening to her, the Digestor was on her, its scythes a few centimeters away from splitting her skull.

Miraculously, providence gave her a chance, a unique chance. The monster slipped on the same moss-covered stone that had caused her to fall, and slumped into the stream, splashing the young woman from head to toe.

Realizing that such an opportunity would probably never come again, Amy hastily picked up her saber and brought it down on the monster's neck.

Unfortunately, she wasn't strong enough to decapitate the monster's head at the first blow, but it was enough to sever part of the monster's spinal cord, which lost all ability to move.

Enjoying her victory, the young woman uttered a beastly cry, and then struck with her saber again, repeating the same gesture over and over again until the monster's head was detached.

'You...filthy... fućking...MONSTER! You're not so smart, are you!' She spat, insisting on every word with a big saber stroke.

After a while, when the Digestor looked like a bloody mush, she dropped her weapon, realizing the butchery she had perpetrated.

At that precise moment, she burst into tears, before throwing herself into the stream, rubbing with water the dried blood of the monster that covered her to the point of tearing her skin. Then after a few minutes, she stopped struggling.

She came out of the water and lay down in the grass, emptied of all emotion. She had accepted that it was the monster or her. All she had done was defend her life. She had nothing to blame herself for.

When she realized this, she laughed. It was a laugh of pure happiness. A heart-warming laugh. The laughter of a beggar falling on a gold ingot. The laughter of a drowning girl breathing a breath of fresh air. The laughter of a blind woman seeing again. The laughter of a paraplegic walking for the first time. The laughter of a thirsty woman finding fresh water. The laughter of a hungry woman enjoying her favourite food.

Quite simply, the laughter of a living person.

Will, on the other hand, showed a composure that surprised even him. When the Digestor came upon him, he imitated Jake's gestures. He focused on an opening in the monster's guard and struck with all his might.

Tvu qmrlouz gfhcut mdd om nzmouho aol iasuz, gpo Waii aqputafouiwi dmiimjut lpao jvaiu ovu hzufopzu jfl ovzmjr mdd gfifrhu gw faqare dmz aol ovzmfo. Tvu Daeulomz tmteut ar oaqu, gpo rmo hmqniuouiw, frt mru md aol hfzmoat fzouzaul jfl lusuzut, ovu laisuzw gimmt eplvare mpo.

However, Will was also too slow and one of the scythes crashed into his right lung as he injured his victim, leaving him as miserable as the monster.

After a few seconds the monster's agony came to an end and a mass of Aether appeared above the body.

The debilitating pain prevented him from rejoicing. He slid slowly to the ground, his vision gradually blurring. Strangely, he felt no regret as he felt his end approaching. He had done his best to survive, and he had already avenged himself.

Unfortunately, as his lung filled with blood, his breaths became shallower and jerkier, until finally the world began to turn around him and lost its light...