

The Oracle Paths

Volume 2: The First Ordeal

Chapter 49 – The Farm

‘How, is it possible to be that good when that thing was so hideous?!’ Amy exclaimed after devouring half of her meatloaf.

‘I asked myself the same question. ‘Those potatoes are delicious, too, and both meat and vegetables have miraculous effects on our bodies and Aether.’

‘It’s true that I feel extraordinarily well, as if my tiredness is going away. »

‘It’s very likely. Your dark circles are coming off. ‘ Jake confirmed, staring at her attentively.

‘You know, that’s not a very smart comment to make to a pretty young woman...’ Amy pouted.

‘But it’s the truth.’

‘Not funny.’

‘...’

They finished their meal in silence, Jake not hesitating to help himself to enjoy the unexpected effects of his dish again. When they were full, it was dawn and the suns replaced the moons.

The Oracle bracelet also gave the time, so he could tell that the nights were short, which was not to displease him. The dawn was already rising when it was only 4:00 in the morning. In the end, he hadn’t slept, but he felt fine. Same with Amy.

Next, he checked Will's condition, and was able to validate the miraculous effectiveness of Digestor's blood. Will's wound was almost healed, the scab peeling off at this spot, leaving a smooth pink skin like that of a newborn baby.

Will was breathing peacefully and his skin had regained its color. In fact, he was asleep. While he thought it would take several days with the silvery blood for Will to fully heal, a few hours had been enough.

The lung had probably not yet healed and Will should probably moderate his ardour during the next few days. Nevertheless, if he drank Digestor Blood regularly, who knows, he might be cured faster than expected.

Believing they should be back on the road soon, Jake gently shook Will, trying to wake him up as quietly as possible. He had explained his condition to Amy, and behind his shoulder Amy glanced anxiously at the convalescent.

His worries turned out to be unfounded. The businessman suddenly opened his eyes, and his gaze was sharp and alert. He seemed perfectly awake.

'I, I survived?' Will asked no one in particular, with a dubious look on his face.

'Yes, but it was close.' Jake explained. 'Next time, try not to get your lung impaled by one of those things.'

'Did you save me?'

'You could say that. Although the credit goes to the blood of those monsters and the Aether in the atmosphere. At this point, you could almost call it a healing potion.'

'Extra! I mean for being alive, not for drinking alien blood...' Will justified himself, realizing that his enthusiasm was somewhat excessive for someone returning from beyond the grave.

'However, now that you're better, I'd like to get back on the road.' Jake announced, breaking the brief complicity between the duo.

‘There’s food by the fire. Don’t forget to soak up the Aether from the Digestor you defeated, so you didn’t almost die for nothing. You too, Amy...’

The two companions nodded with embarrassment, especially Amy who hadn’t really been hurt and had really forgotten to absorb her victim’s Aether.

After defeating a Digestor, Amy and Will had finally been promoted to Rank 1 Recruits, and could now absorb the Aether as well.

Jake reminded them of the absorption procedure and how to store it if they wanted to, and then let them experience what he said for themselves. He also explained the benefits and risks of absorbing Aether directly. None of them took this step.

A moment later, all the Aether had been stored and Wil stared lovingly at the Digester’s roasted meat, which was kept at the right temperature by the embers of the dying fire. He, too, had never tasted anything so delicious.

Jake explained again to him and Amy the effect of the dish on their bodies and Aether before finally getting back on the road.

They quickly crossed the plain to penetrate a new wood, this time of conifers, with less dense vegetation and little tall grass, which was not to displease them.

This meant less risk of ambush by the Digestors, but also less discretion in doing their business. Amy had walked several hundred meters to pee behind a tree for fear of being heard... So, if a Digestor attacked her, she would have been screwed.

When the sun was high in the sky, they fell in the heart of the woods on a group of intact buildings surrounded by wooden enclosures. A farm.

The main building must have been the residential part, but a barn, a stable and a henhouse could easily be distinguished from their position.

As they approached, they saw other pens, and with undisguised astonishment: animals. Many animals.

The hens were clucking, the roosters were crowing, the sheep were bleating, the cows were bellowing, the rabbits were yelping. In all, several hundred animals squealing and struggling in their cages and pens, probably locked up since being teleported by the World Eater.

Jake was debating the odds of spending the night on B842 without any of these animals being devoured by Digestors, despite the ruckus they were making.

Perhaps the Digestors perceived a threat in the number of animals in the farm and chose to ignore them. No way.

Hmjusuz, fl vu fnnzmfvhut mru md ovu nurl, vu rmoahut ovfo qmlo md ovuq juzu fhopfiiw mnur. Mmlo md ovu nurl juzu nfzoafiiw uqnow tulnaou ovu ifzeu rpqguz md fraqfil zuqfarare.

It was easy to explain. The animals also had an Oracle device. Those that had more advanced survival instincts, were more intelligent or bold, had escaped at the first opportunity.

The rest of the cattle, too conditioned or too used to the farm to leave on their own, had stayed behind.

As they moved forward, they recognized the stretch of dirt road that was to lead to the settlement. It had been cut clean a few metres after it left the farm and there should have been, according to Jake, many more animals and pens than that initially.

He was sure of this because one of the buildings was missing half of its structure and the section was so clean that it was troubling. The animals, probably pigs, given the nature of the pen, had long ago vacated the premises, free from their prison.

Unfortunately, perhaps it would have been better for them to have remained locked up, for on their way the group had neither seen nor heard a single pig. They could only hope for them to have gone in a different direction.

Once in front of the most spacious building, Jake picked the lock of the residence, a large ivy-covered stone house.

With the shutters open, they discovered a large, perfectly maintained living room. The parquet flooring was shiny, the furniture was modern and sober, contrary to what one might have expected from a farmhouse lost in the woods, and an imposing wall-mounted flat screen faced an equally imposing dark leather sofa.

A fragrance of orange blossom gently attacked their nostrils, indicating that the housework had been done very recently. However, the house was empty.

The only explanation the group could think of was that the residents were not at home when the farm was moved, or that they were in the other part of the farm.

Tvu iflo vwnmovulal, rmo arlaeradafro, jfl ovfo ovuw vft emru uknimzare frt ovfo ovu Daeulomzl vft tufio jaov ovuq, movuzjalu ovuw jmpit vfsu hmqu gfhc om immc fdouz ovu fraqfil.

Besides, the racket coming from the pens was mainly due to the thirst and hunger of the animals, since as they had noticed in passing, the watering and feeding troughs were empty.

Considering the residents as dead or permanently missing, Jake undertook to rob the property of everything that could be useful to him during their journey.

‘Will and Amy, see if you can find any backpacks or hiking gear. If you find anything handy in your size, don’t get emotional, understand?’ Jake ordered, in a serious tone.

They made an indignant expression, but in the end they nodded and began to look for something that might be of practical use to them. After all, they had survived a hellish night, and they were well aware that without Jake’s equipment, they would already be dead.

On top of that, they felt more than a little guilty when they saw Jake carrying his huge package alone without asking them anything.

Meanwhile, Jake went through the drawers one by one looking for strings and duct tape, the two resources he had almost run out of the day before and thought he might have to use again some day.

Eventually he found the tape, but no traces of rope or string. He then went to the kitchen, where he sorted the food according to what could be preserved for a long time or not.

Naturally, everything that ran on electricity was unusable and the fresh produce inside the refrigerator had already started to rot, especially meat and fish.

Nevertheless, he found enough canned goods to enrich his variety of food, even though under normal circumstances he would have had to pay for it to accept eating canned cassoulet or sauerkraut.

Bpo ovu laopfoamr guare jvfo ao jfl, vu tat rmo arourt om gu f nahcw ufouz.
