

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 2: The First Ordeal

### Chapter 55 – Moment of Respite

Praise the Lord! That message scribbled by Amy contained two pieces of great news.

The food problem was solved and they were moving in the right direction. Finding the barbarian did not please them much, but in view of the carnage on this farm, he did not skimp on getting his hands dirty, Digestors or not.

"This bitch!" The curvaceous blonde spat hatefully, after reading the message herself.

From the ravaged expression of the surviving group members, this swearword contained more remorse for oneself than real hatred for the blue-haired girl.

When they emptied the bag, they found enough canned food for a week or two, enough to wash themselves, and other utilities such as tape, bandages and dressings, but no medical disinfectants or medicines.

There were, however, a few bottles of hard liquor which the previous survivors had not bothered to consider, and the pot-bellied man quickly spotted them, as one might expect of an alcoholic biding his time in hiding and getting drunk.

Sophie, who was studying to be a nurse, did the bandaging. The housewife's wound was not that serious, but the one of Loana was worrisome. Without immediate care, the wound had become infected and threatened to turn into gangrene. Gangrene fever was evidence of this and sepsis was not far away.

When she noticed this, the student in the infirmary's lips trembled before doing the right thing. She had gone to warm a sharp kitchen knife to red before returning and asking the two men to hold the wounded woman, who had lost consciousness.

A moment later, she had reopened the wounds, removing the infected muscle and bone pieces with a knife, before cauterizing them with the burning blade. Unfortunately, they didn't have any antibiotics.

Of course, Loana's sleep was not so deep that her subconscious could ignore such stimuli.

She had suddenly opened her eyes before she began to scream as she struggled, the two men in the group barely managing to hold her in place. A few minutes later, she slept sound asleep again, the pain being such that she had slipped back into unconsciousness.

Farfiw ypauo frt lfdi, fiqmlo usuzwmru lypfoout ar mru md ovu zmmql  
pnlofazl om ofcu f rfn, md hmpzlu fdouz daiiare ovuaz guiaul.

To catch up with Jake's group, and for fear of sleeping in the woods, they had walked and run for over thirty-six hours and were at the end of their strength. They all needed sleep.

Without the Aether-rich atmosphere of B842, they would never have lasted that long. They had also all used their unique Red Crystal to gain some strength instead of saving it for the head tax of an Oracle city, as they had candidly hoped at first.

If they had known that the people they were looking for were still there less than an hour earlier, they might even have continued on their way to reach them.

Indeed, if Jake was setting a good pace for Will and Amy, he wasn't afraid to sleep under the stars, Digestors on their heels or not. As a result, they had enjoyed a good night's sleep, giving Kyle's group a chance to catch up with them.

This was obviously before their Aether session. Catching up with them would be a lot harder now.

Despite his flippant demeanor, the Playboy wasn't an idiot. He knew that if in a few hours Loana was not back on her feet, they would have to abandon her. It was their only chance if he wanted to catch up with the group of survivors that had gone before them.

While everyone was sleeping and he was rummaging among the supplies left by the previous tenants, he discovered by chance a small bottle filled with a silvery liquid, accompanied by a second message they had not noticed.

At first he had thought it was a special glue or car paint, something like that.

"Digestor's Blood: Speeds healing by applying ointment to wounds, invigorates and speeds up recovery/regeneration by drinking it. May improve long-term Aether statistics if consumed regularly."

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lpzsasmzl qaevo dmiimj ar ovuaz dmmolounl frt vft tuhatut om mzefracu ovu  
dmmt ovuw hmpit rmo hfzzw frt iufsu f lareiu gmooiu md laisuz gimmt,  
uknifarare aol plul.

He already had more than enough on him and could not carry more without affecting his mobility. Well, he could, but honestly, since their arrival there were rather too many Digestors around them than too few.

The fact that Digestor's blood could be used as a healing ointment was Jake's latest discovery, after he voluntarily cut himself to test this possibility.

Reading this, the Playboy's heart leapt. He was convinced it was the handwriting of the shaggy-haired barbarian. He remembered seeing him drinking this silvery mixture on the snow-covered hilltop.

At the time, he had found it repulsive, but now he understood that the savage knew what he was doing. Even if he was in ignorance before, he had to be willing to give up his preconceived ideas and his habits as a gourmet city dweller if he wanted to cope on his own.

Uncorking the bottle, he plucked up his courage with both hands and after a deep breath took a sip of the beverage.

Contrary to the foul taste he was expecting, a slightly sweet flavour excited his taste buds. The metallic smell of blood was present, but unlike the red blood of the animals of the Earth, it did not cause the same reflex of disgust.

Like a good wine, the liquid warmed his entrails, except that this invigorating heat extended to the entire body. His fatigue was not completely gone, but he was already feeling better. More full than with the can of lentils he had swallowed.

Decisively, he went to the foot of the sofa on which Loana was resting, undid her bandages and smeared the wound with silver blood, then forced Loana's lips to open to pour a few sips of the "potion".

Half of the liquid dripped down next door, but the rest arrived safely. For a few minutes nothing happened. Then the remedy took action.

Loana stopped sweating and her pretty face started to turn color again. The almost stump formed crusts on the wounds cauterized with red iron. Kyle forced her to drink again, before falling asleep on the next chair, not without having set the alarm on his smartphone for seven o'clock.

Less than three hours of sleep, and the guarantee of being exposed to all sorts of unpredictable dangers when walking in the woods at night. But that was the price they had to pay if they wanted to catch up with the other survivors.

Incidentally, this gesture betrayed his lack of interest in his Oracle bracelet, since Jake had long since given his smartphone to eat to his own device to make it perform these functions.

When his alarm went off three hours later, Kyle woke up with a start, feeling as if he had barely closed his eyes. Even so, he felt perfectly alert.

In front of him, Loana stared at him, visibly surprised to see her wounds so well cicatrized. Unfortunately, her fingers were still missing. He himself had not believed for a second that Digestor's blood could completely regenerate her hand. Even the best remedies had their limits.

"How do you feel, Loana?" The Playboy asked calmly.

"Well, if you ignore the fact that I have no left hand and that I'm left-handed..." The young woman grunted, trying to smile, but tears flowed instead.

For tact it was a failure, but there was no time to spare her.

"I'll wake the others. We leave in five minutes." Kyle informed her while stretching.

"Pick up what you can carry by putting it in one of the backpacks we found in the kitchen. "

"All right. "

The potbellied man had to be kicked a few times to wake him up, but in general everyone prepared without grumbling. With the backpacks they had picked up at the mall and those they had found in the house, they finally had enough to carry food.

It was obvious that the Playboy jealously kept the silver blood bottle in his own backpack, after having briefly explained Loana's miraculous recovery. This made Sarah flinch, but since she had chosen to go to sleep rather than inspect the food, she could only blame herself.

Leaving the farm to resume their journey to the trio, they once again contemplated the animals slaughtered in the pens to their great displeasure. Barely two miles away, there was some change.

A corpse of a pig right in front of them, forcing them to take a shamefully longed-for break. Half of the neck was missing, as well as the animal's hindquarters, but boot tracks indicated that the trio of survivors they were tracking had gone in that direction.

This was the first time they had noticed human footprints since leaving the farm. It was a miracle with the lack of light that they had not drifted in another direction.

Excited by the knowledge that they were on the right path, they set off again with more spirit. Even the housewife, who often complained, bent to the imposed rhythm. She had noticed that the boot prints were quite far apart, indicating a running stride.

The trio they were chasing had lost no time. It was amazing that the nerd and the silent girl with the blue highlights had kept up such a pace so far. They must have been at least as exhausted as they were.

Unlike Jake's group, their pace was noticeably slower despite their renewed determination, and it took them a good part of the night to get through the 40 kilometers or so that had taken the trio only four and a half hours without tiring more than that.