

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 2: The First Ordeal

### Chapter 64 - Ambush

‘AAHHH! Let go of me!’

Jake and Will were instantly on alert, recognising the screams of Sophie, the nurse with the UV charred skin. Seconds later, the yells of Loana, Sarah and Amy combined with those of Sophie, adding to the confusion.

Quickly, screams rang out from all sides around Jake. The fourth faction of humans, composed of solitary wanderers, couples or mini groups, was attacked by an unknown enemy.

Visibility was almost nil with no light source, or campfire, the purple moons and stars being shrouded by a cluster of clouds. Nevertheless, the duo forced themselves to keep their cool and rushed towards the rest of their group, hoping it was not too late.

However, Jake didn’t forget to absorb the Aether Crystals with the Compress function of his Oracle device, not forgetting to give a dozen crystals to Will for his assistance. A few crystals could mean the difference between life and death.

In order not to wake up the rest of their group and thinking they were relatively safe with all the other wanderers camped around them, Jake and Will had thought it wise to isolate themselves about twenty meters to stand guard and complete the transaction with Princess Enya.

A mistake that should have been of no consequence, since this distance could be covered in one or two seconds with Jake's new statistics. Unfortunately, in this particular case, it backfired.

The night around them was so dark that he could only see a little further than the tip of his nose despite the activation of his flashlight. A few meters before reaching the tent in which the child, his mother and Loana were supposed to sleep, a sudden feeling of terror overtook him.

BANG

A hole one centimetre in diameter appeared in his left shoulder, despite his attempt to dodge. Had he been a hair slower, the bullet would have hit his heart. The impact was so intense that he was stopped dead in his tracks and thrown to the ground in the opposite direction. Before he could even take stock of what had happened...

BANG

Will, who had just witnessed the shooting on Jake, had had enough time to dive for cover, but a bullet pierced his thigh anyway, sending him waltzing away in a heart-rending cry of pain.

'Fuck!' Jake grunted as he clenched his teeth, the pain preventing him from thinking straight. He'd never been in so much pain in his entire life. Luckily, now that they were on the ground, the shooter in the dark no longer seemed to consider them a threat.

Will didn't look any better, and his femoral artery had been hit. He was losing a lot of blood and was struggling to stop the bleeding by squeezing the wound with both hands.

The cries of the camp became more and more panicked and terrified, soon replaced by sobbing or pleading. Howls of rage or noises of

fighting also reached their ears, a sign that not everyone had given up the struggle.

‘Let go of my mommy, you monsters!’ Shouted a familiar child’s voice amidst his mother’s outraged sobs and screams. A thud was heard and he was not heard again.

**BANG BANG!**

‘Raaaghh, Hamish, shoot the bastard! He got one of our guys!’

Miraculously and much to Jake’s surprise, the Playboy had grown some backbone and had joined the fight with the help of his trusty Colt.

**BANG!**

The sound of a grown man collapsing to the ground reached his ears. They had gotten the Playboy too. All the men in their group had been shot, and he didn’t know about Amy and the other girls.

The voice he had heard spoke clear English and could only belong to a member of the second group, since each solitary person of the fourth improvised faction had greeted them one by one upon their arrival, and he was confident that this voice did not belong to any of them.

In any case, though he may have been in agony and had almost died in vain, his fear of death was soon replaced by an unbridled anger at himself and his helplessness.

Even though he had an IQ of over 200 and stats well above the average human, he had been fooled like a rookie. With the darkness, he still had no idea what the shooter looked like and what weapon had been used against him.

The only thing he was sure of was that it was a powerful weapon, probably a sniper. Without the Oracle Path still active to ensure his survival, he would have seen absolutely nothing coming.

Nevertheless, the screams were beginning to subside, and the screams of Sophie and Loana that he had heard were moving away from their camp towards the second group's camp. The blitz attack by their attackers had been an overwhelming success.

Yet fate did not give Jake the chance to avoid the conflict. Sounds of boots were approaching his position and regularly he would hear the sound of stabbing or throats being slit. Henchmen were approaching them to finish the job.

As though he would just let himself get screwed up without having a say in the matter! Without even bandaging his wound, he spent the entirety of his Aether to deal with the emergency situation his body was facing. At the same time, he grabbed and uncorked his bottle full of Digestor blood and sipped a good half liter as fast as his swallowing allowed.

After giving a dozen Red Crystals to Will for his commission, Jake had the coquettish sum of 112 Aether points to spend. If these criminals thought he'd be easy prey, they were in for a nice surprise.

Will didn't have the same freedom of action as Jake, but he also reacted quickly. Sipping his bottle full of Digestor blood as well, he had immediately consumed the Aether crystals to increase his Constitution by 3 points again.

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As for Jake, he was preparing to kill his first human. The barbaric, brainless alien from earlier didn't matter. To him, the latter was no different than the Digestors. And whoever was plotting to kill him was no different either.

First of all, his wound had to be contained and blood loss had to be stopped. 40 points immediately went up in smoke into his Constitution(+10 pts). He immediately felt how his bones, muscle fibers and skin became more tenacious, resisting the hypoxia and inflammation caused by the gunshot wound. As his red blood cells became able to hold more oxygen, his immune system and endurance improved significantly, making the injury seemed almost benign.

24 more points were also invested in his Vitality (+3 pts). This investment hurt his heart, but the Constitution stats only made him more robust, enduring and resilient, yet only marginally accelerated his regeneration.

The Digestor blood in his possession was no longer of first freshness and only amplified his vitality by 70%. He had to make up for this difference in order to close the wound and renew the lost blood as quickly as possible.

Of course, this would not be enough to put him back on his feet completely. Even with a tenfold increase in his current vitality, such a wound would need at least a full day to heal completely. Even though Will appeared to be healed, he still coughed and complained from time to time about pain in his right lung.

What he was aiming for was immediate clotting in less than a minute, even if the clot would burst at the first violent effort, and an acceleration of his regeneration mainly to be ready to face whatever the future might hold for him the following day.

As for the remaining points, even if he wanted above all to increase his Intelligence, it would be of no use to him in this situation if he could not react in time. Even if Intelligence also improved the reaction time, Agility had the same effect at a lower cost. There were certainly nuances that he did not know, but he did not have the privilege of worrying about them.

More Perception would have been more than welcome on this moonless night, but 3 more points would drain all his Aether without having a decisive impact. It was safer to play it safe.

Of Aether's remaining 48 points, he spent 30 more on Agility (+15 pts) and the rest on Strength (+18). This time the effect was really noticeable. The gravity that had always drawn him to the ground seemed to have disappeared and he felt twice as light as before, his strength having more than doubled.

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Even knowing that this was possible with Aether, there was a difference between imagining it and experiencing it. He felt as if he had traded his carnal envelope for a better one. He had never been very supple, even while practicing the exercises of his Shadow Guide over the last few months, but now he felt like his bones were as ductile as rubber, his stiffness totally gone.

His Aether Status now looked like that:

[Aether status:]

[Strenght(S): 34(+18) points]

[Agility(A): 31(+15) points]

[Constitution(C): 26(+10) points]

[Vitality(V): 16(+3) points]

[Intelligence(I): 11 points]

[Perception(P): 10.5 points]

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vaq. Tvu oaqu vft hmqu om euo val zuSureu.