

## **Okaparnis Story Quest Ch. 4 – Become One With the Mantis**

“Thank you so much!” says Grapple. “Now I know that we need to keep working hard, but that we’ll be able to make enough fruit for the monks.” “As promised,” he states, “here is your gift.” He hands you a small praying mantis encased in amber. “This will allow you to set foot in the monastery on Hottentotsgot.” You thank him and say goodbye. You, Antonio, and Tira head back to the ship and make your way toward Hottentotsgot.

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As you head toward Hottentotsgot, you notice another, small island off in the distance. You ask Antonio what the story is behind that island. He looks out at it and says:

“That is Gordo’s Island. He protects the rare plants and animals that live around there. Almost everyone lives in fear of him even though nobody knows much about him or the creatures that live there. Lots of stories have been passed around. The most popular one is that Gordo is actually a giant who can throw ships around like they are toys. But, as I said, these are just stories; nobody really knows... Now, let’s eat dinner and get some sleep. We’ll reach Hottentotsgot in the morning.”

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You finally arrive at Hottentotsgot the next morning. It is an odd-looking island. There are high cliffs all over the island, forming a natural wall. After sailing around the island, Antonio finally finds a place where he can dock safely. It is a small section of rock that leads to a hidden opening in the face of the cliff. “It’s a cave!” you exclaim. “Be careful,” warns Antonio, “these stones look slippery.” Tira enters the cave first. “It’s already lit with torches,” she says. “I think it’s a kind of entranceway.”

The three of you walk through the cave until you come to a big, wooden door. You try the handle, but it’s locked. So, you do what any normal person would do: you knock.

A few seconds later, a person opens a slit in the door and looks at you. “What do you want?” he asks. You tell him Grapple gave you this praying mantis thing... He stares at you quizzically, opens the door, and then says, “Yes, well, do come in.”

When you make it inside, you are hit by just how large Hottentotsgot is. There are rooms built right into the walls, with little systems of caves connecting them. In front of you is a large field of grass and flowers. There are monks tending the plants by speaking to them, nurturing them, watering them, etc. In the center of the place is a huge statue of a praying mantis.

You, Tira, and Antonio walk up to it and each of you begin to feel a lot of fear and anxiety. There’s something about this statue that’s weird. It’s making you feel like a failure, as though you’ve let down all of your friends and family. It’s making Tira fear the suffering of her mother. And, it’s causing Antonio to fear that he won’t be able to find work again... The monks come up to each of you and tell you:

“Worrying is pointless. When there are challenges in life, either you can do something about them or you can’t. If you can do something, then do it. If you can’t, then just relax. Worrying will only make you feel worse, while doing nothing to fix the problem.”

**Task:** Practice relaxing. Choose one (or more) of the following relaxation techniques to help you get started...

- **Mindfulness** – Take a look at your thoughts, especially when you are upset about something. Oftentimes, your mind will be filled with thoughts like, “My friends hate me,” “I’m stupid,” or “I’ll never pass this test.” These negative thoughts are kind of like trying to walk home during a bad dust storm; you can’t see clearly. Instead, try to just pause. Wait until the dust settles and then you can walk home. Clear your mind of negative thoughts and then you’ll be able to focus better.
  - Start by paying attention to the sensations in your toes. Can you feel your toes as you wiggle them? Now, focus on your stomach. Can you it going in and out as you breathe? Focus on that sensation for 10-15 breaths.
  - When you notice something, try to NOT label it as good or bad. Just experience it and let it go without judgment.
  - Try using this when you feel anxious or overwhelmed.
- **Deep, Belly-Breathing** – Sometimes we just need to relax. Taking deep breaths that fill up your belly activates what is called the “Relaxation Response.” If you’ve ever been scared, you’ve felt a rush of adrenaline as your body prepares itself to either fight or run away. The relaxation response is the opposite of that “fight or flight” response and it will help to calm you down, especially when someone or something makes you feel angry.
  - Breathe in deep, filling up your stomach. Make sure you inflate your stomach and not your chest. This will take some practice to get right. Do this for 20-30 breaths.
  - Try using this when you are feeling angry or stressed, say, right before a test or exam.
- **Visualization** – Emotions can be tricky to deal with. They can change our entire mood and outlook on the day and our feelings can alter without warning. Emotions like anger tend to pop up out of nowhere, taking us by surprise and causing us to do things that we normally wouldn’t do. They are hard to control, but that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t try.
  - This is very important... Emotions do not define who you are as a person. What defines you as a person is how you deal with those emotions. If you react poorly to anger, then you become an angry person. If you let negativity take you over, then you become more negative. Our mind forms habits, regardless of whether they are good or not. So, it is important to try to form as many positive habits as possible. This will help make you a happier, more resilient person.
  - If you are still struggling with emotions, try the bubble-method. When you feel an emotion (like anger, or even sadness), imagine that you are taking it outside of yourself and are placing it in a bubble. Then, just let that bubble float away.