

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 2: The First Ordeal

### Chapter 104 - Convalescence

When he discovered his new Aether stats, he was immediately dumbfounded. All of his stats had gained 1 Aether point, including his Intelligence and Perception. He had gained more Aether in a single fight than he had in a week of intensive training.

This seemed enormous to him, especially with Myrmidian Blood so diluted. If the cup of blood they were given each morning was pure, could he have stolen 100 points per stats? It seemed a little of a stretch to be true. If that were the case, a single defeat would sound the death knell for a gladiator.

Indeed, if a defeat only meant the loss of one place in the rankings, each gladiator could be challenged once a day. After losing 100 Aether points in each stat, it would already be impressive if the defeated could win against a rookie.

The first possibility was that his opponent had felt his defeat as a crushing humiliation to the point of giving up more Aether than expected, or that Aether would behave differently above a certain value.

He was also amazed at how much intelligence and perception he had gained during this fight. The training of the previous week was rather brainless. Exhausting and physically demanding to the point that he didn't even have the energy to think. One would just grit one's teeth and count the seconds until it stopped.

During this fight, he had consciously pushed his mind beyond its limits. He had focused like never before both to defend himself against the attacks that were overtaking him in speed and technique, but also to establish a deeper connection with his Shadow Guide.

He was now attentive to the non-physical and verbal information from his Shadow Guide and had managed to induce a change in his emotional state on his own during the fight, while controlling each of his muscles to adapt to his high strength. This required a lot of brain activity and he was not sure he could repeat the feat.

On the contrary, after giving vent to his anger he felt drained. He no longer felt anger towards anyone and after a good meal like this he was rather appeased. Even if the Coach proposed him a Mission with exceptional rewards requiring him to get angry, he was not sure to manage to anger himself again. It would take practice.

Unless each duel allowed him to rob intelligence and perception, chances were these stats needed to be stimulated to grow. In other words, it may have been possible for him to improve these two Aether stats with proper protocol under the influence of the Myrmidian blood.

Recalling how he had improved his intelligence over the past few months, he concluded that learning or solving tricky problems might do the trick, but it would have limited effect. One because he had no books on hand and two because he already had a lot of problems. His brain was already in turmoil.

Hu vft zuft lmqujvuzu ovfo qartdpirull mz ozfrlhurturofi qutafoamr hmpit aqnzmsu f rpqguz md hmeraoasu dfhpioaul, rmofgiw ovzmpv ovu ovahcurare md ovu nzudzmrofi hmzouk, fl juii fl ovu lwrhvmraxfoamr md ovu ojm huzugzfi vuqalnvuzul. Esuzwovare uilu jfl qwloahalq.

At least that's what he thought before he learned of the existence of Aether seventh stat, Extrasensory Perception. Lu Yan herself had admitted that she saw no real difference after unlocking that stat except that she could vaguely sense Aether in her own body.

It would not be absurd to start digging on that side. He might not be able to feel the Aether, but he could certainly work on perceiving and controlling his own body, his movements and emotions. His Agility had passively increased his dexterity and precision, but he had only realized the full extent of it when fighting Rufus.

If he wished, he could perhaps even manipulate the sphincters of certain large arteries as some very experienced Yogi could do. But to do so, he would have to be able to feel the arteries in question.

Unfortunately, this was a matter of Perception, not Control. He thus possessed all sorts of theoretical abilities which he was unable to use because of insufficient intelligence and perception.

After this revelation, he spent the rest of the following night trying to meditate, feel and control different parts of his body. He knew that he had to concentrate on his breath, to use it as an anchor, but beyond that he was only a neophyte in this matter.

In the morning when the sun rose he had not made much progress and had a headache. But when he checked his Aether stats again he discovered with joy that his perception and intelligence had gained 0.05 points each with the activation of the Myrmidian Blood. His idea worked!

When he got out of bed, he knew right away that he was in no condition to resume any training. If his life depended on it, he could certainly fight or train, but it would only reopen all his wounds.

It had been about 14 hours since his fight and with his vitality that was equivalent to about three and a half days of convalescence. With wounds like his it was not enough. The wounds had crusted on the surface, but the cuts were rather deep. A normal human would need at least two weeks and a lot of rest to recover.

Not knowing what to do, he decided to go to the training anyway. But before that, he wanted to get his fill again. Cassius had promised him unlimited gourmet food in exchange for becoming Gerulf's new sparring partner, and he clearly intended to put this promise to good use.

Aiovmpev vu jmzu mriw f imarhimov, val gmtw jfl hmqniuouiw hmsuzut jaov gfrtfeul. Al f zulpio, vu luuqut om gu tzullut zfovuz hmrluzsfoasuiw hmqnzut om movuz eiftafomzl frt lifsul ozfarare gâzê-hvulout.

As he was about to leave the infirmary, he came face to face with a young woman dressed in a plain toga. Her blond hair was tied up, her face was without makeup, but her golden irises and olive skin were characteristic of the Myrmidians.

When she saw him upon entering the infirmary, she froze on the spot. The young woman looked frightened. She obviously wasn't expecting to meet anyone in the infirmary this early in the morning.

'Don't worry about me, I was just leaving.' Jake tried to reassure the newcomer that he believed to be a maid or a nurse or doctor working here.

'W-Wait!' She stood between him and the door, spreading her arms out to block his way.

'Do you know who I am?' She asked with a worried tone.

‘Should I?’ Jake retorted with a raised eyebrow.

Now that she was asking him that question he thought her face looked familiar, but it could have just been a coincidence. After all, many Myrmidians seemed to share this characteristic of golden hair and eyes. Olive-coloured skin was also common in the Myrmid empire.

Beyond these details, her face was rather sickly and her physique rather frail. She had very thin hair, large dark circles and only reached the height of his pecs. If he had seen his own face the day before after his fight, he would have realized that just like him, she had lost a lot of blood. But unlike him, this anemia and bloodless appearance was chronic.

‘N-No, you can leave.’ Noting that he did not know her identity, she regained her composure and went out of his way.

Jfcu, loaii fl lnfzare jaov jmztl fl usuz, rmttut val vuft liaevoiw gudmzu iufsare ovu zmmq. Hu juro tazuhoiw om ovu hfroarf jvuzu ovu movuz zuhzpaol frt eiftafomzl juzu vfsare gzufcdflo.

Both professional gladiators and recruits had to watch with undisguised jealousy as Jake demonstrated a unformal gastronomic tasting. Jake would gobble up large portions of luxury dishes without bothering to enjoy them, as if he was eating the same oatmeal porridge they had.

Very few veteran gladiators were eating as well as he did, and Jake could practically hear a symphony orchestra formed by the gnashing of his audience’s teeth. When he wanted to, he could be really petty.

He didn’t care about their envious expressions, he would regularly make ecstatic sounds or noisily lick the sauce off his fingers in revenge for all the times he had had to sit and watch them eat while he was only allowed bread and beans.

He would have shared with Kyle, Elias and the siblings, but the cook had reminded him that this was strictly forbidden. Anything he put on his plate, he had to finish. He also consumed 3% pure Myrmidian Blood for the first time.

As he was still convalescent, Lutex excused him for the day's training, leaving him to gorge himself and to lie around as much as he wanted in the cantina. Jake took the opportunity to continue to regain his strength and meditate.

From time to time he would try to challenge himself by practicing the postures and movements he had been taught. Or he would concentrate on the smells around him, the different sounds, or try to observe details on trees or walls in the distance as a kind of eye gymnastics. He hoped that this would stimulate his Perception stat even more.

Eventually the day passed and the time for daily duels came. A few minutes later someone was challenging him to a duel, wanting to take advantage of his convalescence to make it big.