

The Oracle Paths

Volume 2: The First Ordeal

Chapter 107 - One month later

After this first significant fight, a month passed. It had now been 43 days since the Ordeal had started and Jake was finishing his 42nd day of training under the supervision of Lutex.

A lot had changed during this period. First of all Jake's appearance and stats. Secondly the ranking. And thirdly, the reputation he now held within the Ludus.

With the 3% pure Myrmidian blood he ingested every morning, his training efficiency had been multiplied compared to the first week. The intensive training of the latter had been nuanced by the addition of daily challenges to climb the rankings and sparring fights against Gerulf. At night, he made use of his great Vitality and Constitution to meditate and review what he had learned during the day.

The extent of his progress had been unexpected for all the recruits and gladiators of the Ludus. Elias had developed a form of comradeship with Jake but had long since fallen behind. After losing his wife and daughter, the Lebanese man did not have much ambition.

Intensive training prevented him from thinking and his progress had been one of the fastest among the new recruits, but he could not compare himself to the monsters that were Jake, Lu Yan and her brother, Lamine and Yerode.

Nevertheless, the advantage of a great Constitution and Vitality at the beginning of the Ordeal had become more and more felt as time went by. Jake could endure absurd training intensities and frequencies and recovered just as quickly, able to gobble up insane amounts of food.

As his Aether and Body Stats increased, especially Constitution and Vitality, his progression curve became even steeper. When Jake looked at his Status after defeating the gladiator 23rd in the rankings, he couldn't help but feel nostalgic about how far he had come.

Body Status:

[Height: 1.86 meters (+0,05)]

[Weight: 100kg(+15)]

[Strength: 37.3(+20) points.]

[Agility: 30.5(-2) points]

[Constitution: 34.2(+20+10=+30) points]

[Vaofiaow: 37.6(+10+10=20) nmarol]

[Intelligence: 18.1(-3) points]

[Perception: 13.6(+5+3) points]

[Aether status:]

[Strenght(S): 66 points]

[Agility(A): 66 points]

[Constitution(C): 72 points]

[Vitality(V): 70 points]

[Intelligence(I): 23 points]

[Puzhunoamr(P): 23.5 nmarol]

He was a completely different person now. His Body Status stats had improved by about 15 points for most of them, intelligence and perception being the exception. Progress had slowed over the last few days despite the intensity of training, showing that he was approaching his genetic limits.

This could be seen in his grotesque appearance. Not counting the bonuses brought by the Throsgenian blessings, he had gained 5cm and now weighed almost 20 kilos more... of muscle.

If he could have been called a handsome man after his few months at the gym on Earth, he was now just as scary as Gerulf, or very close to it. His Vitality had accelerated exponentially the speed at which his body was adapting to the point of giving him the shredded look he had today.

He explained the restart of his growth as an indirect effect of the Constitution Aether on his body. Although he could not verify this, Xi asserted that the effects varied from one individual to another.

Likewise regarding his intelligence, he did not seem to possess Lu Yan's genes. Despite all his attempts to exercise his mind, his progress had been frightfully slow and had been stagnating for a few days. His genetic potential seemed unable to break the 180 IQ point barrier.

However, this was not the case with his Aether stats. With his perseverance and the effect of the Myrmidian Blood, they had continued to grow without any restriction, only beginning to slow down recently when he had crossed the 60 point limit in some stats.

His Constitution and Vitality had even surpassed 70 points due to the daily beating he endured against Gerulf.

Speaking of the Kinthar warrior, Jake had got to know him through the fighting. There was apparently a reason why Gerulf was so strong and yet so limited intellectually. He didn't take Myrmidian Blood, despite the fact that he could qualify for a pure portion.

The blood didn't work on him. His Kinthar physiology and the blessing that went with it was so pronounced in him that the properties of the blood were neutralized in his body within minutes.

Even in Jake's case, the effect of the blood only lasted for a day, while other participants said that the effects on them lasted for more than 36 hours and accumulated with the next dose. The strength of the initial Blessing, probably related to his Oracle rank, was above that of most Ludus recruits.

Guzpid jfl lm nmjuzdpi guhfplu vu rfopzfiiw guhfqu lozmreuz gw hmqqprahfoare jaov ovu ufzov frt ovu lpr. Hal zmpoaru md gpzware vaqluid ar ovu lftrt frt ofcare imre rfnl ar ovu gpzrare flvul jfl val jfw md ozfarare.

He would wake up in the late afternoon when the sun began to fall, at which time Jake would join him for his daily battle. The friendly fights against Jake were only to loosen his muscles and satisfy his violent impulses.

From a strictly rational point of view, the minerals in the soil, like the ultraviolet rays emitted by the sun, had their own Aetheric Code, and Jake assumed that Gerulf's hereditary blessing allowed him to take advantage of it.

The Kinthars being the southern version of the Throsgenians, the Throsgenians were theoretically able to cultivate in a cold

environment similar to that of the lands from which they had been taken away.

His gain in Intelligence and Perception, however, was substantial and had totally changed his way of perceiving the world. His speed in learning hand-to-hand combat techniques and the use of various weapons had been promising from the start, but insufficient to hope to catch up with Lu Yan. On the contrary, the gap had only widened.

At least in the beginning. Circumstances had changed. Day after day, he had felt directly how his mind was becoming sharper and sharper, as if a veil that had always prevented him from seeing clearly was gradually fading away.

His senses had also become more and more piercing, so that sometimes in particularly deep meditations he would feel something more than his own body when he dived into himself. He was on the verge of unlocking the seventh Aether stat, but something was still preventing him from doing so.

This evolution of his mental and sensory faculties had profoundly changed his life to the point that he was beginning to manifest a kind of Cartesian coldness that he was not used to. As if normal emotions such as fear or joy had no hold on him anymore. He was still feeling them, but they were only signals that he was able to put into perspective and ignore.

However, this could also be related to the monotony brought on by his training and the traumatic violence of the daily fights against Gerulf. On several occasions, especially during the first two weeks of sparring, Jake had broken down emotionally, giving up the fight after being pulverized once more. The disappointment and despair he felt in those moments was unbearable and rekindled his complexes.

The active Myrmidian blood within him had immediately punished these moments of weakness and cowardice by vaporizing a fraction of his Aether. After a few similar failures, he had learned his lesson and began to grit his teeth whatever his state of mind of the day.

It was also at this time that the first significant results of all this training began to appear. Gerulf's blows became less terrifying to him and he was able to take and block more of them before he was knocked out. Even when he was knocked unconscious his episodes of unconsciousness lasted less, as did his disorientation.

As his intelligence and senses increased, Jake had begun to show an increasingly fine reading of his opponent's movements. His technique was also progressing exponentially and his responses to Gerulf's blows had become more precise and adequate to the point that today their fights lasted a few minutes before he was kicked. And often he was able to get up a few seconds later and do it again.

Of course, the former ludus champion was holding back his blows, but every day he would let go a little more. And the more he let go, the more he enjoyed those fights with Jake. He couldn't stop praising this little Throsgenian. Because of Gerulf's high esteem for Jake, not even the other veteran gladiators dared to give him a dirty look.

Instead of limiting himself to the sword, he had begun to look at other weapons to perfect his shortcomings, his technique no longer having anything to do with the amateurism of his beginnings.

Needless to say, he was not the only one to make progress. There were failures and successes, and everyone followed his own Path. Some were ambitious and hard-working, others more lazy or even downright passive. By the 42nd day of training, the potential of each Player had begun to reveal itself and it was easy to recognise those

who would go far from those who would never set foot in an Ordeal again after the end of it.

For these people, the Ordeal was just a nightmare from which they could not wake up. The food was awful, the training a real torture and every day they had to fight someone to lose again. They made no progress, were exhausted and were in pain everywhere. Their chance of surviving the battle in the Coliseum that would determine whether they would succeed in their Ordeal or not was already uncertain.

Of course, none of this had anything to do with Jake and he hoped that this Ordeal could stay that way until the very end. Unfortunately, nothing was ever simple. There was a saying in the Oracle cities that he would soon learn the hard way.

'When an Ordeal goes too well, trouble is coming.'