

The Oracle Paths

Volume 2: The First Ordeal

Chapter 116 - New Side Mission

Meanwhile Jake, Kyle and Lu Yifeng had made it safely into the arena. They had been surprised not to meet anyone, not even the shadow of a cat. The arena and its surroundings were eerily quiet, the atmosphere as eerie and stressful as it could be.

As they progressed, the trio thought several times that they were walking straight into the lion's den, but they had to face the facts. No one was waiting for them. No ambush behind a wall, no archer watching from a balcony, no trap to step into. Everything was horribly quiet and empty.

At least that's what they thought at first. Realizing that no one was interested in them, they started watching the other buildings surrounding the inner courtyard, and especially the one where Servius Cassius and his wife lived. The arena was quite large and the marble walls were thick, so Jake and Lu Yifeng could not hear much. No suspicious sounds except the wind and a few owls perched somewhere they didn't know about.

The light from the torches near them dazzled them slightly, creating a contrast with the buildings plunged into darkness in the distance that prevented them from seeing properly. They didn't know what was going on and where all the traitors had gone.

Jake squinted his eyes and thought he saw movement in the distance, but he couldn't be sure. Either way, it only strengthened his

motivation to get a weapon as quickly as possible. Lu Yifeng had resolved to fight barefoot that night, but he too hoped to have at least one sword in his hand.

Kyle followed the two men with a worried look on his face. If it were up to him, he would probably have stayed in the cantina and played dead.

Following the edges of the arena to take advantage of the cover provided by the canvas canopies under which the training gladiators sometimes rested to quench their thirst or refresh themselves, the group made their way smoothly to the armory to their greatest relief.

Again, they expected to find it guarded and locked, but the wooden door to the storage room had already been opened by someone else. Someone who obviously had the keys.

On tiptoe, the trio moved cautiously forward in apnea to make as little noise as possible. Lu Yifeng, who was in front of Jake, took a brief look inside, but apart from the darkness and silence he found nothing strange. Giving Jake and Kyle the green light with a wave of his hand, he sneaked into the storage room before whispering a few seconds later from the inside:

‘It’s clear. No one’s inside, but we’ve got a little problem...’

When Jake walked in, he knew right away what problem he was talking about. The racks and crates containing the real bronze weapons had already been robbed. Apart from the wooden gladius swords and some bulky shields there was not much left.

Exasperated and disappointed, Jake and Lu Yifeng had to make do with a wooden sword each with a bronze dagger for three. As a kindly soul, Jake left the dagger to Lu Yifeng, believing it would make little difference to him. A sword blow to Jake’s head bronze or

not was like being bludgeoned by a club weighing several hundred kilos. With sufficient force, even a stick could smash a head.

Tvu zufi ypuloamr jfl jvuovuz mz rmo val ozfarare ljmzt jmpit vmit pn. Dulnaou ovu lnuhafi ozufoquro nzmsatut gw ovu Mwzqat Tuqniu om qfcu ovulu jufnmrl zulaiauro, Jfcu vft zuhuroiw gzmcur f duj md ovuq jvur val nvwlahfi lozureov vft zufhvut f huzofar iusui.

Kyle was slightly embarrassed that no one had asked his opinion, but he was aware that he was the weakest. Like Jake, he had a sword and the only large shield left in the armory. Even if he wasn't going to be of much use, he at least wanted to be alive the next morning to brag about it.

As for the remaining small round shields, it was better than nothing and corresponded to the fighting style of Jake and Lu Yifeng. For good form, all three of them also put on a helmet, so as not to die stupidly from a vulgar arrow in the head.

Jake picked up some wooden swords for the upcoming fights, but also to equip Lu Yan and Miya. The more he thought about it, the more he thought there was something wrong, but he couldn't put his finger on it.

For a short moment, the fleeting idea of finishing Lutex and the other gladiator had crossed his mind, but he had given up. It was certainly an easy and effortless way to become stronger, but his consciousness prevented him from doing so.

Although he had no problem slashing monsters or drilling holes in the skulls of criminals or aliens, he was not yet psychologically ready to kill an innocent man in cold blood. Even though his own sister was dying in front of him, he wasn't sure he would be able to finish her off and take her Aether if she asked him to. He probably

would have waited patiently for her to breathe her last breath before harvesting the Aether from her body.

He knew he was wrong to think this way and that his mentality would have to change quickly. But this time a little voice whispered to him that this was the right thing to do. Lutex was strong as an ox and Jake thought he really had the potential to get out of it. And yet despite this, he doubted his choice, as if he had made a crucial mistake.

For a brief moment he thought of the shy Lu Yan and the cold skinny Miya, but he couldn't make up his mind.

‘Am I wrong?’

In any case, by bringing the swords to them he might be able to find out for sure. Lu Yifeng was now reluctant to go through the cantina again, worried that his sister would suddenly want to join the fight with them. Even though she was by far the most gifted, he couldn't help but see her as a harmless little sister, dependent on his protection.

Farfiw uypannut, ao jfl jaov f iaevouz vufzo ovfo ovu ozam luo mdd feфар, zuozfhare ovuaz lounl gfhc om ovu hfroarf jvuzu ovuw vft iudo ovu ojm wmpre jmqur. Tvuaz zuifoasu lofou md zuifkfoamr tat rmo iflo imre, ovmpev.

No sooner had they finished crossing the arena portion under the canopies than they heard screams and the sound of a container breaking. Immediately afterwards, as if a forest fire had broken out, a fire broke out in the servants' residence, setting off the alarm in the Ludus. Seconds later, the yelling and panic exploded, waking up those who were already asleep and causing the attackers to abandon all tactics of discretion.

With the clarity provided by the flames of the fire, Jake was finally able to see what was happening and for a brief moment remained frozen in place. In addition to the gladiators and recruits they recognized looting, killing and raping everything they could, Jake also saw hundreds of darkly clad individuals in the distance climbing the wall with grappling hooks.

Some of the guards protecting the wall had been cut before they could react or joined the enemy ranks, but once the alarm sounded the guards who were still alive went into action. The sound of drawn swords rang out in unison in all directions and soon after the battle raged, turning the gardens and walls of the Ludus into a place of slaughter.

Blood and guts watered the flowers as the corpses of guards or invaders defeated from the top of the wall rained down regularly. The reputation of the guards of Servius Cassius, all of whom were former gladiators, was not usurped. After the first few seconds of surprise, they began to methodically cut off their enemies, preventing the men in black from entering the Ludus itself.

‘GRROOAAHHH!’

The trio that had almost reached the cantina stopped abruptly when they heard this scream of fury. Jake would have recognized it among a thousand, it was Gerulf’s.

Concentrating his vision in the direction of the scream, he vaguely saw a mass of humans running in that direction, quickly followed by the same humans flying in the opposite direction like a brick wall exploding under the impact of a C4 charge.

With each blow from Gerulf, a dozen or so unidentified shapes would fly off to new horizons, the trail of blood behind them giving them the charisma of a shooting star in its final moments.

Gerulf was as strong as his reputation suggested, and Jake had no doubt that he would emerge victorious from his battles.

Unfortunately, this was only true if he was in perfect condition. He didn't know the real stats of the Kinthar, but if he had been poisoned the culprit had necessarily planned an adequate dose to overcome it.

Jfcu jfl ypaou dmrt md ovu gfgzfafr frt ovuzu jfl rm ypuloamr md iuooare vaq daevo fimru. Duhatutiw, Jfcu ovzuj ovu jmmtur ljmztl vu jfl hfzware prtuz val fzq fo ovu urozfrhu md ovu hfroarf jaovmpo usur hvuhcare ovu laopfoamr arlatu. Hufzare ovu lhzufql frt zmfz md ovu difqul, Lp Yfr vft hmqu mpo md ovu hfroarf om ezuuu ovuq, frt luuare ovfo lvu jfl juui, ao jfl urmpev dmz Jfcu frt Lp Yadure om qmsu mr om ovu ruko lofeu md ovuaz nifr.

For once, the Oracle agreed with them.

[Side Mission: Save and protect the person most dear to Servius Cassius.]

[Secondary Objectives:]

[-Save Gerulf.]

[-Save Priscus]

[-Save Khazus]