

The Oracle Paths

Volume 2: The First Ordeal

Chapter 133 - The Battle of the Coliseum (part 1)

The enormous grid, more than 6 metres wide and 5 metres high, opposite the Imperial box, began to creak slowly upwards. The reflection of the long rectangular Myrmidian shields in a tight row could be seen behind it despite the darkness of the corridor.

Jake and all the other Throsgenian gladiators turned cautiously toward the great grid, ready to face whatever would come out of that passage. Kyle and Sarah moved to Jake's side, while the already weakened Will stood very close behind them. To Sarah's right stood Erwin with his heavy shield and long sword. He seemed determined to protect the young woman.

To the left of Kyle, Hugo and Thomas formed another duo. Away, but not so far away, Lu Yan and her brother formed another fearsome pair. The difference was that instead of being on the front line, the siblings had mixed with the rest of the recruits to the great despair of Lu Yifeng, who could not understand why his sister was acting like that.

BADUM! BADUM! BADUM!

The drums started drumming again when the grid was finally fully raised. It was then, in the midst of a heavy silence, that a cohort of Myrmidian legionnaires in perfect formation began to march through the arena in perfect synchronic rhythm.

Five by five the legionaries continued to enter one after the other. After forming an orderly block of 10 times 10 soldiers, about 60 more entered the arena with long bows and quivers full of arrows.

A little later and with nonchalant composure, warriors in shining golden armor entered quietly as well. Their helmets had a navy blue feather crest betraying their position as centurions. Each of them represented the centurion of a cohort, from the tenth to the Principle of the first. Compared to the number of legionaries now present, the number of officers was abnormally high.

Finally, five other men in long capes and even more luxurious armor, adorned with silver and gold, entered after them. Tribunes, the senior officers of a legion.

Behind them stood a giant as big as Gerulf with an armour of pure gold. He had no helmet, but his long golden Myrmidian hair and irises gave him an indescribable aura. A legate, the commander of a legion, and in this case, the one supposed to embody General Flavius himself.

Tvu dazlo zfrcl md iueamrfzaul juzu uypannut jaov vufsw lvauitl frt imre lnufzl, gpo ufhv md ovuq film vft f ljmzt fo ovuaz guiol. Tvuz rfsW gipu oprahl artahfout ovfo oval jfl f zuepifz iueamr frt rmo fr aqnuzafi iueamr fl ovuw dufzut.

Regardless, Jake couldn't help thinking something was wrong. If General Flavius was commanding an Imperial Legion, these legionaries should have worn black like the ones they saw at the entrance to the Coliseum. Besides, these legionaries really looked like legionaries.

Jake was expecting to face gladiators charged with playing the role of their enemies. At no time did he imagine that Sextus Lucius would be so shameless as to hire real soldiers to do the job. The plebeians

may have mistakenly thought that this was just a show-off, but those in the know soon noticed the difference.

‘They’re dead...’ An old man, usually passionate about arena fights, sighed. His desire to make a risky bet had completely disappeared. Others in the stands shared the same opinion.

The Throsgenian gladiators waited patiently for the Myrmidian Legionaries to position themselves, not knowing how to react. Jake tried to scan the faces of his enemies for any sign that they were Players, but he found nothing conclusive. Yerode and Lamine, whom he was in a hurry to kill on the battlefield, were nowhere to be found.

‘Strange...’

Jake heard Lu Yan’s surprised whisper behind him. Since his Aether of Perception had reached 50 points, he had become extremely sensitive to the slightest noise. No sound in the arena could escape him. If he moved a little closer to the bleachers, he could even hear the whispers coming from the Imperial box.

Then, without warning, all hell broke loose. The legionary block knelt down, freeing the vision of the archers behind. A two-stage salvo of arrows was immediately fired. The archers in the front line shot straight ahead towards the Throsgenians while those behind aimed at the sky to make a bell shot.

‘Brace yourself!’ Erwin shouted in a voice loud enough for all the recruits to hear as he took cover behind his huge shield.

A split second later, the recruits in the front row who had raised their guard too late were transformed into porcupine, while the others managed to block or dodge the first salvo. Shortly afterwards,

the second volley from the sky fell on them, striking down other recruits who thought they were safe from the front line.

The same process was repeated three times, after which 'General Flavius' raised his hand to signal them to cease fire. About twenty bodies covered with arrows lay in a pool of blood, while about twenty others still alive had been shot in non-vital areas.

In less than 10 seconds, the Throsgenian side had already lost a tenth of its strength. Another tenth was wounded, with some of the wounds leaving them incapacitated.

Some of these victims were Players, but Jake felt that despite their premature death their end of Ordeal rewards would not be too bad. After all, they had still made it to the top 100 of the recruits for the right to fight in this arena today.

However, after the most reckless were eliminated, all the remaining Throsgenians had a solid defense. The problem was on the equipment side. Jake's round shield had been punctured in several places and appeared to be on the verge of breaking. Most of the gladiators were in the same situation as he was.

Jake decided it was best to retaliate before his shield gave up. When 'General Flavius' signaled to the archers to shoot again, Jake grabbed his round shield like a Frisbee and like Captain America threw it with all his might at the famous 'General Flavius' to the surprise of Erwin and Hugo at his side.

The shield flew at missile speed towards the Myrmidian and the latter displayed his great power by drawing his sword at such a speed that the friction of the blade with its sheath caused sparks to fly. Not expecting such a blow, he narrowly deflected the deadly projectile without much concern for the direction.

He should have. The wooden shield changing trajectory as in a puck game ran diagonally through the rows of archers, smashing two heads in a row and ruining part of their formation. Seeing the result, 'General Flavius' snorted in anger. It's been a long time since he's been humiliated like this.

Still, the next salvos of arrows hit their targets and soon the rotten wooden shields began to split and burst one after the other, piercing the gladiators who were sheltering behind them.

Jake, who was now without a shield, then did something that shocked Lu Yan as she monitored his actions from the corner of her eye.

Standing in profile with one arm raised in a defensive posture, a purple, blue and yellow light flashed behind his pupils. The Yellow Constitution Aether of his body then shifted to the side of his body exposed to the arrows forming a slight yellowish halo visible to all Players present.

CLANG !CLANG !

The arrows that struck Jake's body broke off one by one, the bronze tips becoming as flat as coins after impact, as if it had just collided with a steel wall. Unlike Lu Yan, who lacked stamina a few weeks earlier, Jake didn't need to move to accomplish this feat. And his Extrasensory Intelligence and Perception had nothing to envy hers.

It was one of the techniques he had learned as he became more familiar with the workings of the Seventh Stat. Apart from sensing the Aether and the supernatural, it was of little use.

Yet, as he increased it, his Aether perception became better, like a fog gradually lifting and the range increased slightly. But the control of his Aether still rested on his willpower, the control of his mind as

well as the sharpness of his senses. This depended on the stats of Intelligence and Perception.

Intelligence, Perception, and Extrasensory Perception together formed the triad upon which the Soul was built. As his stats increased, the mysteries of the world that eluded him seemed to reveal themselves as a veil hiding the truth that was slowly being torn asunder.

When his Intelligence and Perception had exceeded 50 points and his Extrasensory Perception 15 points, controlling his Aether in a rudimentary way like this had suddenly become... easy.