

The Oracle Paths

Volume 2: The First Ordeal

Chapter 137 - Battle of the Coliseum (part 5)

Jake's brain was thinking fast, trying with all its might to explain how they had gotten to this point. Each of them had a fully functioning Oracle device to predict the ideal Path in this situation.

Even Lu Yan, who was at least Rank 4, had assured him a few weeks earlier that she and her brother had a plan for this arena fight. This meant that at that time the probability of failure was extremely low.

Jake doubted that Lu Yan would be able to sacrifice her brother to achieve her goal. He hadn't fully grasped her personality yet, but if there was one thing he was sure of it was the strength of the bond she shared with her brother, or her acting was more terrifying than he imagined.

In any case, Lu Yifeng couldn't have been deadlier than that, and his sister's wrath couldn't be more sincere. Whatever their original plan was, it had failed.

Using his Coach to assess the likelihood of the mission's success, he noticed that the probability had not changed, which made no sense. From the beginning of this confrontation, they had been indecisive, letting the enemy take advantage largely because everyone trusted their Shadow Guide.

The reason they had gotten to this point was that the Shadow Guide had not responded adequately since they had set foot in this arena.

And yet, Jake couldn't rule out the possibility that there was a Player with a much higher rank than theirs hidden among the enemy legionaries. Unfortunately, no matter how thoroughly he scrutinized the movements and faces of the latter, there was no distinctive sign that a Player was among them.

Moreover, such an incredible Player would have directly influenced the battlefield through his combat prowess. The Tribunes were roughly equal in strength, and as terrifying as the General was, his strength remained within the limits of what he deemed possible.

Besides, the General was not giving many orders, proof that he was not influencing the battlefield through his excellent leadership.

So, where was the catch?

While he was analyzing the situation as best he could, the two Tribunes that had faced him earlier had disbanded. One of them was indeed putting pressure on Lu Yan with the help of three centurions, but the second one had ultimately decided to help the seventh centurion eliminate the two other Throsgenian gladiators who had survived until now.

Together, these two strangers had managed to stand up to one centurion and the seven or eight decurions still alive, relieving the pressure on Lu Yan, Erwin and his few friends. For that alone, they deserved respect, but Jake didn't know if they were Players or natives.

Before he even considered rescuing them, the Tribune had taken the opportunity to decapitate one of them from behind with the same surprise attack that had almost succeeded on Jake earlier.

'If I fight like I have from the start, we won't win this battle. In the worst case, I can run away, but I have no guarantee of success.' Jake pondered his possibilities with a rare analytical coldness.

'In that case, I am left with only this solution. And so much for my stock of Aether...'

Since the mutiny episode, Jake had accumulated a substantial amount of Aether in his bracelet. There was the Aether of those he had killed with Gerulf, the two thousand four hundred and eighty points he had gotten by absorbing another bracelet, and those he had just gotten right now by fighting in the arena. All told, he had nearly 2700 points.

That was more than enough to maximize his Aether of Intelligence and Perception to 100 points, while adding 4 points to his Aether of Extrasensory Perception. The problem was that unlike his physical stats, the impact this would have on the battlefield was difficult to quantify.

He would have preferred to keep his Aether to have more leeway once in an Oracle City. Jake didn't know the prices, but he knew that every transaction in the Mirror Universe was based on Aether crystals. No matter how much Aether he had in stock, it probably wouldn't be enough.

The other problem was that if he spent it right away to increase his stats, he was wasting it, since once his stats were maxed out, the Myrmidian blood he had would be useless to him for a while. After he maxed out his physical Aether stats, they hadn't budged, no matter how hard he trained.

That didn't mean it was totally useless. He could feel the Aether building up in his body, but it wasn't reflected in his stats. However, the Aether was not lost. When he manipulated his Aether, he could

move this excess to a part of his body, allowing him to temporarily strengthen it beyond its original performance level.

The rub was that this only worked when he was actively focused. And manipulating the Aether wasn't something he could do for long without getting a splitting headache. By increasing his Aether Intelligence, his ability to control it would definitely increase.

'All right, the time has come to invest in myself.' Jake mumbled out.

In an instant, almost all of his Aether points disappeared from his bracelet, blue, indigo and purple filaments gushing out of it to merge with his body. The thicker blue filaments were mostly concentrated in the area of his brain, while the others were much more randomly distributed.

Wvur ovu Bipu frt lrtuem Auovuz zuffvut val gzfar, ao duio iacu f qurofi uknimlamr. Hu vft fizuftw uknuzaurhut oval duuiare hmqnfzfgiu om ovfo md f giart qfr zuefarare val laevo jvur vu vft primhcut ovu lusurov lofo, gpo oval jfl mr f hmqniuoui w tadduzuro lhfiu.

For the first time in his life he felt... intelligent, enlightened.

Complex calculations and problems that he would have been unable to solve without hours or even days spent on the subject, he could now give the answers with a single thought.

As his Perception and Intelligence expanded at the same time, he experienced something very peculiar and disturbing. The amplitude and nuances of the sounds he had been able to hear up to that point increased significantly, but so did his understanding of them. His brain was now processing this data for what it really was, a vibration of the air at a certain frequency.

And strange as it was, he was able to understand. If right away he heard a certain radio frequency, he was confident that with enough time he could crack the message simply by analysing the frequencies by ear.

He had the same experience with his eyesight and his other senses, the Aether of Perception amplifying the latter to the limits of the human sensory organs.

His sense of touch became so precise that for the first time he became aware of the existence of certain tiny nerves that he did not know he could control. Much like someone who could consciously move his ears for the first time, Jake was able to do the same with his arteries and heart, even controlling the pores of his skin.

Although he didn't perceive the Aether much better, the incredible gain of Perception had deeply rewired his brain and the way he saw the world. His manipulation of Aether, which had been crude until then, suddenly became much more refined.

With the slight improvement in his Extrasensory Perception, the range of what he thought was his Mind had also increased, allowing him to further influence the Aether around him.

And with the explosion of his senses and intellect, the unsolvable problem of the Myrmidian legionaries suddenly found its solution. Suddenly, the Tribunes seemed clumsy to him, their every move predictable and ridiculous.

The centurions were as goofy as newborns, while the few decurions still alive were mere scarecrows unable to influence the battlefield.

Lfloiw, ovu Guruzfi, jvm jfl loaii qfzhvare hfiqiw omjftl Hpem, lvmjut vaqluid ar f hmqniuouiw tadduzuro iaevo ar val qart. Tvu tadduzurhu ar nvwlahfi lofol jfl loaii nzuluro, gpo Jfcu ruutut mriw f

eifrhu om zufiaXu ovfo fnfzo dzmq val urmzqmpl nvwlahfi zmgplorull
frt jfz uknuzaurhu, vu jfl rmo lm dzaevourare.

The other change he was also unaware of was the impact his stat gain had on his Oracle Path and the other Players in the arena.

Erwin, who was playing it safe on the ground as he tried to reattach his arm, suddenly changed his expression, while Lu Yan, who was getting more and more cornered, suddenly turned her head towards him in surprise.

'Let's see if you can still kill us.' This was the thought that ran through all three Players before payback time.