

The Oracle Paths

Volume 2: The First Ordeal

Chapter 140 - Battle of the Coliseum (final part)

Hugo's body lay a few meters further away than the last time Jake had checked his condition, his body still frozen in the posture of a person crawling with pain. His head had rolled in the sand nearly a dozen meters after being chopped off, and looked pretty nasty.

Sarah and Thomas had been executed in a flash without being able to do anything. Thomas' face was unrecognizable, all his facial bones reduced to fine gravel. His face had hollowed out to form a deep crater of bone and flesh, his crushed eyes resembling a raspberry confit. Roughly the head of someone who'd put his head into the end of a cannon just before ignition...

Contemplating the Myrmidian General's enormous hands, Jake concluded that a fist from the Myrmidian General would definitely achieve the same result. In comparison, Sarah had had a dignified death.

Her face was looking the same direction as her back, but apart from this slight problem with the orientation of her head, she was practically intact. In any case, she didn't seem to have suffered too much.

As for Erwin, Jake scanned the arena looking for him, finally recognizing his body under the rubble. He had obviously been thrown violently against the stone wall bordering the arena near the section that Jake had destroyed by throwing his sword. The collision

had led to the crumbling of another section of it, with Erwin unfortunately underneath.

Jake didn't know if the Player was still alive, but he was definitely in bad shape. Sighing again, he turned his attention to the General who was also staring at him. Apart from the gash on the Myrmidian's cheek, which was already no longer bleeding, his body was unharmed. All the Throsgenians who had sacrificed themselves against him had not managed to inflict the slightest scratch on him.

But Jake was not afraid. Unlike the other gladiators who died in the arena today, he was blessed with a unique experience. The experience of fighting Gerulf himself every day. The Kinthar was bigger, stronger and fiercer than this cardboard General. The Myrmidian may have been tall, but he still looked one head shorter than Gerulf.

And even though Jake was fighting the Kinthar fairly in order to improve, it didn't mean that he hadn't thought about all kinds of countermeasures if he had to face life and death against such a figure. Gerulf was a monstrous opponent, but he was not invincible or he would never have relished the sparrings against Jake.

Against Gerulf, Jake would never have allowed himself to use those low blows, but against a stranger wanting to kill him? He would have no remorse.

Pretending to pick up a second sword, Jake stooped down near Lu Yan's corpse to pick up one of the wooden splinters from the poorly made broken swords and shields they had been provided to fight this unfair battle.

Running his hand through the sand with his fingers slightly apart, he grabbed the sharp wooden splinter by wedging it between his middle and ring fingers. Continuing the movement, he then grabbed

the handle of Lu Yan's sword lying a few inches away from the young woman's body.

Finally, he stood up as if nothing had happened. From the beginning to the end of the action, he had never stopped staring his opponent in the eyes. With stats like theirs, they could shorten the distance in the blink of an eye.

Seeing that the General was in no hurry to finish him off, Jake moved on to the second stage of his plan. Many of the warriors had a ritual, a routine that they would repeat each time before they fought.

Some prayed to their gods, others more down to earth checked their equipment carefully or rubbed their hands with fine sand or other material to make sure that their hands would not slip at the fateful moment.

Then there were the aggressive, the belligerent, those who were eager to fight. It could be anything from cracking their necks or fists, or for the more arrogant, even taunting their opponents.

At this precise moment, Jake chose a mixed approach, confident that the Myrmidian would give him the honour of the first blow, given the Myrmidian's complacent expression.

Pifroare val ljmztl ar ovu ezmprt, vu hzmphvut tmjr fefar, hfiqiw zpggut val vfrtl jaov lftrt frt ovur lommt pn. Tvur Jfcu nzuourtut om call ufhv md val dalol nzuhaliw jvuzu ovu lniarouz jfl.

The action seemed innocuous, a simple routine to give himself courage, but the sharp piece of wood was no longer in his hand. It was somewhere stuck between his teeth.

After that, without ever breaking the eyecontact, Jake began to trot slowly towards the Myrmidian, accelerating little by little as he

shortened the distance. He could have jumped or sprinted in one go, but instinctively he felt that rushing would be a mistake.

Only a few meters from the enemy, the two warriors erupted at the same time, releasing all the accumulated tension.

Jake kicked the sand, forcing the Myrmidian to protect his eyes, but the tip of the enemy sword appeared just inches from his forehead, the accompanying wind blowing his hair against his skull and deforming his skin.

Manipulating his Aether to the extreme, his pupils shining with an intense multicolored light, he sidestepped to the left, pivoting on himself to pass behind the General. At the same time, he reversed the position of his sword in an attempt to stab his enemy from behind, but as if he had eyes in the back of his head, the Myrmidian deflected the blade without looking.

Taking advantage of the fact that the Myrmidian was still blinded, Jake spun on himself while jumping towards the General with a double slash at full power. Once again, the Myrmidian pushed both swords back with a single wave of his hand, his sword knocking Jake's blades to the side as if they were skittles.

Letting himself be carried away by the movement, Jake dropped toward the General as if he was off balance, but as his face drew nearer to the old veteran's, his eyes opened wide abruptly.

The multi-colored glow appeared once again behind his pupils, even more intense than the previous time. A nearby Player could have seen a deep red, orange and yellow light focus on the muscles controlling his tongue and lips.

By controlling his Aether, it was difficult to significantly increase the strength of motions involving large muscle groups, because this

required moving an equivalent amount of Aether from parts of the body not mobilized by the motion.

Tvu qfkaqqq udduho md oval ownu md qfranpifoamr jfl luur jvur lqfii qplhiul, ovu vfztrull md f dareuz, ovu ezan, mz ovu urt md ovu uigmj mz cruul juzu urvfrhut.

When Jake spat out his wooden splinter with millimeter precision, the small muscles involved exceeded for a short while an Aether concentration of 5000 pts. It was a number that even a Myrmidian elite warrior could not hope to reach by mere training.

The piece of wood was expelled like a rifle bullet from Jake's mouth and went directly into General Myrmidian's eye, penetrating deep into his brain. Still falling and unbalanced, Jake bumped slightly into his enemy before eventually landing safely on the ground.

Absolute silence in the Coliseum. The General stood motionless for a brief moment, looking ahead with the same dignified and arrogant gaze that befitted a person of his stature. Then Jake stood beside him looking defiantly at the Imperial box. Nonchalantly, he gently pushed the corpse with the palm of his hand and it collapsed like a domino.

A huge stream of Aether flew towards his bracelet, wrapping it in a marvelous white halo. He had won!

Prince Lucius now wore the grimace of a constipated person or someone who had accidentally swallowed a fly. His face was red, the veins on his forehead pulsed, and his teeth were grinding in anger from humiliation. Waving his finger at the presenter to signal him to come in and explain himself, the poor guy rushed up, sweating profusely.

Pricking up his ear, Jake heard the prince speak in a gentle, measured voice, his face showing a faint smile. But his eyes, however, weren't smiling. They were cold like those of a snake.

'Catulus, if I remember correctly, didn't we win that battle?'

Swallowing with an evasive glance, the speaker hastened to answer in a honeyed tone:

'Yes, Your Highness... Forgive me, Your Highness.'

'Wasn't there something different when General Flavius got the victory?' Lucius hinted with a sly smile.

As if he had just found his lifeline in a shipwreck, the sweaty presenter hastened to reply with a sly smile.

'General Flavius was leading the Imperial Legion Your Highness...'

'Oh... But doesn't the Imperial Legion wear black? Why did those legionaries wear blue? Did you make a mistake?'

At that very moment, the presenter could not help cursing the Crown Prince inwardly for his shamelessness. He was nothing more but an organizer. The legionaries had been provided by the prince himself. He was not lacking in judgment, however, and improvised a pleasing answer.

'At the battle, General Flavius and his Imperial Legion intervened just after the Third Legion had suffered a heavy defeat at the hands of the Throsgenians...'

'See, when you put your mind to it...' Lucius whispered, patting his cheek a few times. 'You know what you have to do.'

'Yes, Your Highness...'

Moments later, the arena gates were lifted again and two new platoons of black-armoured legionnaires invaded the arena.