

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 2: The First Ordeal

### Chapter 141 – Impostor

Instead of forming a block of infantry and archers like the previous legionaries, the imperial legionaries trotted in good order around him in order to surround him. The circle was relatively narrow, about 15 meters in diameter.

After the first line of the circle was formed, more legionaries continued to enter, reinforcing the established perimeter zone. No Tribune or General entered the arena after them. Only one Centurion.

And yet, despite having only a crest on his helmet and a long golden cloak betraying his rank, Jake felt an inexplicable pressure compared to the fake General he had just defeated.

‘What the fućk is going on, right now?’ Jake panicked a little, thinking fast to find a solution.

‘Xi, how much longer do I have to hold out?’

[Time remaining in the Ordeal: 28 minutes 36 seconds]

Jake was startled for a few seconds. 28 minutes to defend his life could be a long time, but it was much less than he expected.

Remembering the events of the morning, he realized that it made sense.

Just the journey from the Ludus to the Coliseum of Heliodas had taken at least an hour and a half, not to mention waiting for the games to start and all the minor fighting to end.

Except for a few planned executions of criminals or slaves to amuse the plebs, most gladiatorial fights were relatively balanced to provide a nice show. A fight could sometimes last up to twenty minutes.

The impassive Centurion who had remained outside the circle of legionaries lifted his head towards the Prince waiting for his next order. Lucius nodded to the presenter, and the latter hastened to announce in a cheerful tone:

‘This Throsgenian Hero has proved his worth by defeating one of our legions. The ferocity of these barbarians is not usurped. But the honor of the Empire cannot be trampled upon. When the Emperor and his Imperial legion pass judgement, no one escapes alive.

‘Let’s give this Throsgenian man a glorious death!’

No reaction from the crowd except for a few quickly muffled clamors. As proud of the Empire as the Myrmidians might be, a victory such as this would not be honorable at all.

The presenter bit his lip in apprehension at the response of the audience. A dissatisfied crowd in a Coliseum was a bad sign. The Crown Prince, even if he did not show it, was also panicking.

These games should have been a formality to restore the people’s image of the royal and other noble families. Why had things degenerated so badly in such a short time?

If he had been able to see the smug smile that some of the nobles from the other clans were displaying in their respective boxes, he

would already have some clue. In any case, it was too late to turn back.

Standing up from his solid gold throne, the Prince decided to assume the fiasco by seizing the bull by the horns. Walking up to the balustrade of his balcony, Lucius stared at the Throsgenian as one would look at worms before shouting in a bossy tone:

‘Kill him!’

Seeing the legionaries forming the ring draw their gladiuses, Jake’s heart suddenly raced. At that very moment, he was gauging his chances of making it out alive.

The simplest option was to flee, but there were so many Imperial guards patrolling all around and in the Coliseum that he wasn’t confident that he could escape unharmed. The proximity of the Temple of Myrmid also meant that there were a large number of Templars nearby and each of them was at least as strong as the General he had just slayed with a vicious trick.

‘Oh well... Everyone died except me. Might as well fight to the bitter end. If it’s all over, I’ll try to escape.’

That was the only logical conclusion he came to. And when he made his decision he suddenly felt much lighter. Fighting without any ulterior motive was so much easier.

A first group of legionaries from each direction left their ranks and moved forward into the circle while those behind them took their places, filling the space. Compared to the dead legionaries of the previous battle, these imperial warriors were very different.

Their posture was more stable, their age generally higher, and most of them had the olive-colored skin and golden eyes characteristic of a Myrmidian from a good family.

Preferring to take the initiative before being surrounded to death, Jake suddenly lunged to his right, trying to drive his sword through one of the legionaries. The legionary parried without difficulty, showing the difference in experience and strength with a normal soldier.

Jake didn't give up, however, using his Blue Aether of Intelligence to control the enemy's nervous system. The enemy arm magically moved out of the path of his sword and his attack hit the mark.

**CLANG!**

lrlouft md lofggare ovu uruqw ar ovu vufzo fl vu vft uknuhout, val ljmzt lomnut tuft ar aol ozfhcl fl ad ao vft bplo vao f zmhc. Tvu uruqw iueamrfzw jfl ovzmjr arom ovu faz gw ovu dmzhu md ovu lvmhc dmz fgmpo ojurow quouzl, ljuunare lmqu md val hmqzftul jaov vaq.

Sadly, he got up without a hitch a moment later. He was unharmed. Only a slight scratch on his breastplate proved that Jake didn't miss.

'Shit! Can bronze be so hard?!' Jake thought as he cursed the blacksmith who had made this armor. Could a fight be any more unfair than that?'

Now that he had opened hostilities, the other legionaries stopped dithering. All at once they pounced on him. Like a lone lion assaulted by a pack of hyenas, Jake decided to use his two swords as baseball bats and began to whirl around, striking every head that came too close to him.

Even though his stats were higher, the gap was not that pronounced. Each one of these legionaries was as strong as one of the centurions

of a regular legion and despite his incredible intelligence Jake was unable to dodge every blow.

He briefly tried to jump into the air to escape, but a second wave of legionaries leapt into the air to intercept him. After only a few seconds, he found himself in a battle of attrition where for each blow he delivered a new wound was added to the previous ones. He had already used his Aether points to improve his Extrasensory Perception quite some time ago, but here it made no difference.

Every legionary's head he managed to knock off would result in an additional deep cut when he wasn't directly stabbed. He had been able to protect his vital points until now, but that would not last.

However, when Jake thought he was about to die, the enemy pressure on him suddenly subsided as the legionaries attacking him were sent flying in all directions. Some crashed into the stone wall lining the arena, others into the bleachers, while a few unlucky scored a homerun by disappearing in the distance over the Coliseum.

Catching his breath with difficulty, Jake turned around and recognized the hooded young blonde woman behind him. Sexta Caelia Lucia.

Next to her stood three gladiators he knew well: Gerulf, Priscus and Khazus. Cassius was not with them, presumably in a safe place.

‘What are you doing he—‘

‘Lucius, that's enough!’ The Princess's angelic but firm voice cut him off.

On hearing this voice, the Crown Prince jolted on his throne. They had searched for her for so long in vain, so what was she doing there in full view of everyone and manifestly free and healthy.

But to see her appear today was a godsend for him. The Emperor had preserved her so well that the people were unaware of her appearance, just like the other noble families. Apart from him, Livia, their mother Antonia and the Emperor, only a few hand-picked royal guards would recognize her.

‘Who are you to give orders to the Crown Prince of the Sextus?’ He said indignantly. Playing ignorant was his best card.

Lowering her hood, the Princess revealed her beautiful face for all to see.

‘I am Princess Lucia, your sister.’

A leaden silence descended over the bleachers of the coliseum, but the Crown Prince didn’t let it get to him. By contrast, many of the dignitaries who had seemed to be napping since the beginning of the games showed signs of movement for the first time.

‘If you were my sister, I would have recognized you.’ Lucius replied without the slightest shame. ‘If you’d done your homework, you’d have known my sister looks completely different.’

Determined not to give his sister the slightest chance to prove her authenticity, he immediately ordered:

‘Guards! Arrest this impostor!’

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