

The Oracle Paths

Volume 2: The First Ordeal

Chapter 146 - Interlude (part 2)

As they contemplated the lifeless corpse of the Imperator, all the Players present, including Ruby, burst out laughing.

‘Tsk, tsk, that emperor was a real weakling. We really wasted our time waiting for him here...’ One of the Players who was playing cards before sniggered disdainfully, adding a kick to the corpse for fun.

‘Shut up, Jacob! If it wasn’t for Ruby, it might not have been so easy.’

‘The bald man in shorts wearing a claymore retorted bluntly.

‘He did indeed react in time despite our surprise attack. If Ruby hadn’t taken control of his nervous system, it might have gone wrong.’ One of the young women in armour agreed just after removing her sword from the corpse.

‘You’ve always been too careful, Melissa. Do you think we didn’t notice that you attacked last?’ The other young woman in full armor teased her with a smirk on her face.

‘Hmmm!’

‘How much longer do we have to hold out?’ Another player leaning against one of the walls again with his arms folded changed the subject abruptly. He was too lazy to consult his own bracelet.

‘About 20 minutes, I think. I hope by killing the Imperator we can stay in this world longer...’ A slightly chubby man sighed wearily.

‘Not sure that’s a good idea with the whole army out there. »

The young woman in the wheelchair just listened to them without saying a word, frowning as if she was disturbed by something, but couldn’t figure out what it was. Meanwhile the other Players had gone back to their occupations as if the army outside the temple did not concern them.

A quarter of an hour passed in a good mood, but the young woman’s expression only grew heavier.

‘What’s the matter, Ruby?’ An extremely muscular middle-aged man wearing a simple tank top under his fur coat noticed the young woman’s complex expression. He was the oldest of the Players present.

‘I’m not sure... I wanted to control his brain, but I couldn’t. So I controlled his nerves directly instead. ‘

‘And what’s the problem? It’s the Emperor after all. If he didn’t have a strong mind, it would be disappointing, wouldn’t it?’ The middle-aged Player protested, shrugging his shoulders. His voice was deep and calm and his posture confident like that of an expert salesman or diplomat.

‘The problem... is that I couldn’t find his mind...’ Ruby said quivering slightly. ‘If he hasn’t awakened the Seventh Aether Stat, his consciousness only exists through the neural network of his brain, but when I searched for his brain, I couldn’t find it either... It was very strange. ‘

The other Players, who until then had been chatting in a relaxed manner, suddenly stiffened. Strange as the words of the young woman in the wheelchair may be, she never talked for the sake of talking.

‘What do you mea— ‘

Even before the bald man with the claymore could fully ask his question, the thirteen Players in the Temple received a notification from their bracelet.

[WARNING! Digestors detected. Immediate repatriation of all Players present in the Ordeal in 120 seconds. Seed World XG26 987 àssimilation protocol engaged.]

‘What the hell?!‘

As if he’d just figured something out, the older Player suddenly rushed towards the dead Imperator, but it was too late. The corpse had already stood up, its appearance completely different.

His golden eyes had turned silver and his arms and legs now looked like sharp blades of different sizes, the skin of which was covered with a metallic texture. As for the rest of his skin, it was gradually turning an ash-grey colour and his organs could be partially glimpsed through it.

‘No wonder you couldn’t find his brain!‘ A Player spat out in an excited tone. ‘The Digestor inside his skull probably ate most of his brain!‘

‘Instead of talking we’d better kill him again...‘ Ruby whispered in an anxious voice.

‘Well, then do your thing.‘

‘Okay.‘

The creature that was once the Imperator was again immobilized in place when Ruby waved her hand. But this time, a shrill shriek

hammered into their eardrums, soon followed by an excruciating psychic blast.

It was nothing like what Jake had experienced in the Myrmid Temple, but it was enough to knock out the Players, whose intelligence was not the strong point. As for Ruby, who was already focused on controlling the nerves of the enemy, she took the blast head on and started bleeding from her nose.

She didn't let go of her control of the enemy though. If she flinched now, her comrades closest to the creature would not escape.

‘A DIGESTOR IN MY HOUSE ?! YOU'RE NOT WELCOME!’

A voice deep and powerful enough to shake the earth suddenly echoed over their heads. The stone slabs on the ceiling of the hall suddenly froze and the temperature inside the temple quickly dropped to negative.

Then the ceiling began to crack until it collapsed completely, and a giant looking very much like the statue of Throsgen fell from it like an ice meteor. The Digestor uttered a last shrill cry before being reduced to a bloody pulp under the weight of the newcomer.

Tvu eafro gmzu f lozmre zuluqgifrhu om ovu lofopu. A vprhvgfhcut mit qfr jaov f imre hzwlofi hfru. Uriacu ovu lofopu val jvaou vfaz jfl imreuz, tzfeare om ovu ezmprt. Tvu lfqu jfl ozpu md val gufzt, jvahv hmpit uflaiw gu plut fl f lhfzd. Hal lcar jfl nfiu gpo hmsuzut jaov daru lhfiul frt val imjuz hfrarul nzmozptut dzmq val ianl.

Glancing around, Throsgen noticed the humanoid flies reaching to his ankles and looking at him blankly. Their wristbands were actively flashing a red light.

‘HMMM ? PLAYERS ? ‘

Then he noticed that as he spoke the walls of the temple seemed about to give way. He then tried to control his vocal cords to speak at an appropriate pitch.

‘Hmm, sorry. It’s been a long time since I’ve spoken to other Players. An Ordeal? And Digestors?’ The old man sighed.

They didn’t answer him, but he seemed to get his answers without a problem.

‘I guess this world is doomed. I can’t believe those monsters followed us here... I guess they got Myrmid. With his temper, he would never have ignored those vermin.’

The other Players remained silent, leaving the abnormally talkative giant monologue alone.

‘Less than 60 seconds? No time to argue, I presume. Well, I guess I’ll see you around. The least I can do is help you one last time.’

The giant then ventured out of the temple, his every step shaking the ground. Ruby and the other Players only had time to see how he planted his crystal cane in the ground and then how Durn Gurum was instantly transformed into an ice graveyard.

Somewhere in the Mirror Universe, a gigantic ring-shaped spaceship was floating in the vacuum of space. Inside, in a room so white that it was impossible to distinguish the walls, floor or ceiling, an alien in space armour was kneeling in front of another.

Even on his knees, the alien was almost two meters high, one of his arms carrying a large circular energy shield, while the other three were folded with closed fists against his chest. An Oracle Guardian.

The alien in front of him was comparatively tiny. Not even two feet tall, with a long neck as thin as a bamboo stem and a head the size of a golf ball. His face had no eyes, no mouth, no nose, no ears, and yet the little creature was emitting an unbearable pressure. Its body rested in a miniature levitating cradle that served as a chair and means of transportation.

‘What is it, Garos?’ Oros, the Oracle Overseer spoke directly to his mind.

‘An accident occurred in one of the Ordeals on B842. Digestors have appeared.’

‘What?!’ The Overseer was so shocked that he unconsciously released some of his spiritual power.

The Oracle Guardian opposite suddenly spat out green blood, but since he was wearing an opaque helmet, Oros didn’t realize it.

‘Which world?’

‘The Seed World XG26 987... During a First Ordeal...’ The messenger growled in a solemn tone.

Tvu iaooiu fiaur zuqfarut laiuro dmz f duj qmquról, qurofiiw hmqqprahfoare jaov frmovuz uroaow om jvmq usur vu mjut zulnuho. Tvur vu guefr om qmsu fefar, val ruhc jaeiare liaevoiw ar val dimfoare hvfaz.

‘The situation is more critical than I thought. The System A16 fell without anyone noticing. Everyone out there, even the Oracle Overseers are probably under the control of Brain Eaters...’

‘How long has it been?’ The bodyguard asked in a worried tone.

‘Centuries... Without the accident in that Ordeal we wouldn’t have noticed anything. Write down the name of the human who discovered them and raise his Ordeal rating. AS for Myrmid, he deserved it. Serves him right for deserting without telling anyone. If he’d reported properly instead of disappearing, we wouldn’t be in this mess.’

‘My Lord, we’ve also fled the front...’

A heart-rending scream echoes through the spaceship, the alien’s helmet suddenly filling with green blood again.