

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 223 – Three Days

'Seriously? So strong...' That's what most of the Wilderths present thought when they heard their grandfather's concluding words. Jake, on the other hand, just thought his grandfather was a lot more còcky than he remembered.

It was obviously to give them a warning. Just as the government was struggling to maintain its authority in the face of all these Evolvers, their grandfather needed to remind them that he was still fit to lead this family.

The funny thing was that the old man had still failed in the end. He could brag all he wanted, but he was still a loser.

Jake wasn't the only one who thought so. His three diabolical cousins, Cedric, George and Brice, were equally confident in the face of this family record to be beaten, Cedric even allowing himself to cast a teasing look at Vincent who had strutted around a few moments earlier with his record of 48 minutes.

Put back in perspective... It was as if a premature ejaculator was boasting of having lasted more than 20 seconds. Quite pathetic actually.

Feeling the mocking looks of his cousins, Vincents b̀arely held on to punch their faces. Fortunately for him, with his new pale blue skin it was no longer possible for him to blush with shame. The spasms of certain muscles in his face and the way he clenched his teeth in

frustration betrayed, all the same, how close he came to losing his temper.

Only he knew the nightmare he had endured during those 40 minutes. Instead, he was very proud that he had lasted so long. Their grandfather was simply a monster to whom it was foolish to compare with.

‘Don’t make fun of Vincent.’ The old man lectured them curtly. ‘Statistically speaking, there’s a better chance that each of you will be eliminated in the first five minutes, that one of you breaking his record. Don’t forget that by holding more than 40 minutes, he is among the 0.1% who performed best in that second Ordeal.’

Indeed. Jake shook his head. He had finished in the top 0.01% at the end of his first Ordeal. It was a much better result in comparison, but he didn’t forget under which conditions he got his rating.

If he hadn’t discovered the Digestors, they would have only finished at 200 points and probably ranked in the top 1 or 10%, since surviving one’s first Ordeal was not supposed to be hard. The appearance of the Digestors had distorted the game, complicating the final fight and ending the Ordeal prematurely, but this was the case for all the participants of his Ordeal World.

That is to say, one person in 10,000 had on average managed to obtain more than 300 rating points during the two regulatory months. Seen like this, Jake’s performance could only be considered mediocre.

However, he did not consider himself to have been any worse than these participants. Lucia and Gerulf’s blood was worth far more than these 300 credits. It was clear that in some cases focusing on getting special rewards was clearly worth sacrificing his Ordeal rating for the good cause.

Considering that there were at least as many participants in this second Ordeal as the first, the fact that there were a few dozen survivors at the end of the second Ordeal indicated that the participants would die more at the beginning than towards the end. Surviving the first hour was therefore the key stage on which he had to focus all his attention.

The Wilderths were all originally gifted, with an excellent education. After increasing their Aether Intelligence stat, they were all able to deduce and plan in an instant the important points of their grandfather's discourse and their consequences.

Kyle, Sarah, Will and Tim weren't lagging behind either and were also thinking about what kind of Ordeal could eliminate so many Players in such a short period of time. Sarah and Kyle had reason to be confident with their Myrmidian bloodline, but Will and Tim were quite anxious.

Their Aether stats had been maxed out after getting their share of the Rank 7 Digestor's corpse sale, but they were undeniably the weakest of the band. Will was a businessman whose first Ordeal included very little training, while Tim was still a child.

'How are we going to team up if most of us are eliminated in the first few minutes?' Edward, one of the older cousins, asked a pertinent question between two sips of tea.

The old man rubbed his temples for a few seconds to give himself time to think about his answer, and then proclaimed:

'You won't be able to. At least, *****.'

Realizing that he had just mumbled incomprehensible gibberish, their grandfather sighed. The Oracle had just stopped him from revealing information he wasn't entitled to reveal. It was the most neutral and

least punitive way the Oracle System had at its disposal to control information.

‘Don’t shoot yourself in the foot at least, do me a favor...’ He finally murmured in a weary tone.

Jakes, his group, and his cousins remained silent for several minutes after the incident, all lost in thought.

Jake may have taken his grandfather’s wishes seriously, but it was just impossible for him to team up with his cousins. To be quite frank, he didn’t even fully trust the members of his own group yet.

No matter the circumstances of the Ordeal, Jake would always plan his strategy based on the assumption that he couldn’t count on anyone. If he could have the assistance of his family during the Ordeal, he would take advantage of it, but there were real risks in collaborating with Kevin, George or Brice.

Kevin had been a scrapper from a very young age, easy to provoke and aggressive. He always had problems with anger management and hyperactivity since he was a child. Not a person he wanted to be around during an Ordeal where he was putting his life on the line.

George was devious and manipulative. An angelic smile up front, a real scum in the shadows plotting to get his way. Jake had never seen him get scolded and considered in retrospect that he was probably a psychopath. He didn’t know if his parents or grandfather knew, but he was not fooled.

As for Brice, this guy was a loner, but a different species than Jake. He had a lot of contacts and relationships, but none of them fell into the ‘friend’ box. He used his acquaintances to further his own ambitions.

The only difference from George was that he didn't wear a mask and his intentions were always clear. Paradoxically, this made him reliable to a certain extent, but it should never be forgotten that his allies in an Ordeal would never be anything more than sacrificial tools.

As if to support his analysis, Brice suddenly rose to his feet.

'I won't be teaming up with all of you. My Aether Skill works better if I work alone. Sorry, Grandpa. '

He then bowed slightly to pay his respects to the old man, and left the room with a determined step under the pensive gaze of the family members present.

'I have my own teammates, but I will do my best to work with each of you. 'George promised as he, in turn, rose to his feet with a charming smile. He dusted off his pants, covered with cookie crumbs, and left the room after bowing to his grandfather.

As if the departure of Brice and George was the signal to end the meeting, the remaining cousins in turn stood up to bid farewell to their grandfather. Seeing their indifferent reactions, the old man sighed again, then let out a small exasperated laugh.

Cedric, the hairy giant, magnanimously stated that he would protect them for free if he met them during the Ordeal before proudly leaving with the grace of a sea lion doing ballet.

A moment later, only Jake and his group, Anya, Charles and Elijah, their youngest uncle, remained in the room. Vincent had left as soon as he could escape since the second Ordeal no longer concerned him anyway.

Startled to discover that Jake hadn't left, his grandfather put down his cup of tea for good, rubbed his temples again with a tired face,

then got up in his turn. Before he left, he gave them one last instruction.

‘Inform your cousins that I will take you to the Red Cube for your Second Ordeal in three days’ time in the morning. If they want to eventually team up, they’ll have to be at the manor by then, or I’ ll consider them absent.’
