

The Oracle Paths

Volume 2: The First Ordeal

Chapter 84 - Slave auction (part 4)

‘The two masterpieces of this last batch are this brother and sister Throsgen couple. ‘Toleus went straight to the point. ‘ The Throsgen blessing of Robustness is more intense in them, and the young woman seems to be a mixed blood, since General Flavius recognized the Eltar blessing of Spirituality. They are suspected of being bastard children of the royal family.’

For the first time the emaciated old priest in the red toga showed a response.

‘A double lineage? She’ll make an ideal offering for the hero Myrmid. ‘The pontiff simply declared in a hoarse, sizzling voice without mentioning any price. In his eyes this slave was already his.

Jake had recognized the Asian brother and sister couple. Both were in excellent physical condition and had a build characteristic of martial artists. The man had a banal appearance, but had an overprotective attitude towards his sister.

The latter was comparatively more reserved, and he now noticed in her long white hair typical of the Throsgenians some fine golden strands at the roots. Her eyes were also different from theirs, since instead of being pale blue or green, her irises were golden like Livia’s.

He had his own little idea of why their identity differed and why their initial social status was so different. He didn’t even know until now

that there existed different levels of Throsgen blessings. The IQ loss of the other participants may have been greater than he imagined.

‘Xi, does it work the way I think it does?’ Jake immediately checked his assumptions.

[It does.] Xi confirmed in a formal tone.

[The Oracle rank as well as the initial stats to some extent may influence the Ordeal, but that’s no guarantee. The Oracle rank is still extremely important, especially in the higher ranks.]

[Your Private rank is abnormally high for a first Ordeal, but not so rare on a large scale. It remains a rank without any hierarchical authority. A Private cannot command a Recruit without being ordered to do so. This changes at rank 4 Corporal.]

[Don’t underestimate this young woman. To have such a unique identity, she’s probably rank 3 or 4, and her brother’s rank 3. If not, then she possesses an Aether skill that has greatly boosted her value to the Oracle System.]

Jake frowned slightly jealous. Looks like they weren’t all in the same boat.

[The Ordeal provides an identity for the participants, but it’s not completely random. The principle of the Ordeal is that it must be tedious but achievable for each participant. Her mission is the same as yours, but what her Ordeal will hold is different.]

‘I see... That makes sense.’

[Don’t forget that the First Four Ordeals are just tutorials for the Fifth and subsequent Ordeals.] Xi reminded him in a serious tone.

[The Ordeals won't be so friendly after that. You'll have real missions that serve the Oracle's purposes, and the danger will be incomparable. The Oracle Rank is a true military rank guaranteeing your authority among the other participants.]

[This one's of no use here, since the event is individual and there's no specific stakes.] But that won't always be the case.]

'Hmmm, then I don't need to get involved. She must have a reasonable way to escape from this priest. »

Xi remained silent. There was always a way out, but that didn't mean he wasn't part of it.

The brother and sister couple had a lot of energy to spare. When the Pontiff signalled to his guards to requisition the young woman, her brother miraculously broke free of his bonds and jumped on the nearest legionary.

The chains at his feet prevented him from making great movements, but he did not need to. His springiness was the equal of a cheetah's and the legionary was stripped of his sword before he realized what was happening to him. After that the Asian man severed the rest of his chains easily.

Without wasting any more time, he then neutralized a second guard before freeing his sister. From the beginning to the end of the action, the young woman had not changed her expression. As if she had absolute confidence in her brother.

After that, she grabbed the second guard's sword that her brother had given her, and adopted an elegant defensive stance. Jake felt no fear or anxiety coming from her. Just weariness.

‘Toleus! What kind of a farce is this?! You let your slaves revolt like this?! You know what happens to those who stand against the great temple of Myrmid...’ The old priest barked madly, revealing a row of half rotten yellow teeth.

The decurion in question was sweating profusely, wondering how he could have gone from heaven to hell in a matter of seconds. If he was still alive at the end of the day, he would ask General Flavius for permission. He needed some time off.

‘I-I don’t know what could have happened. Our chains are made of the finest quality pure bronze. No, no Throsgenian should be able to get rid of them in such a short time.’ Toleus argued as best he could, looking for a lifeboat in the middle of the storm.

Of course, that was a lie. They had had plenty of time. They’d been chained together since they came into this world. Jake hadn’t wasted any time either. Those old bronze chains weren’t as strong as their jailer claimed, and pretty thin. He could break his in an instant with his strength over 13 times that of a normal human.

$(34 * 39.3 / 100 = 13.36)$

‘Come, come, there’s no need to get so angry, Pontiff Agammen.

‘Livia stepped in between the priest and the slave couple, speaking in a light tone, as if there was absolutely no danger.

‘Sacrificing this beautiful young woman would be a waste.’ The Princess elaborated on her arguments one by one. ‘And no one really knows what’s in it for you. The weather is fine, the crops are good, we’re winning the war, why the rush? Let me buy her, please? If our Empire is hit by a plague or a curse, there’s always time to think about making a sacrifice, okay?’

The old priest visibly relaxed as he listened to the Princess' words. It was true that there was no hurry for this sacrifice. They could wait for the return of the Emperor to sacrifice the offering. Regardless, this did not mean that the insubordination of these slaves would go unpunished.

'Princess Livia, you may keep the woman. However, the man shall be flogged to death here and now!'

'No!' The young Asian woman suddenly panicked at this turn of events. Her brother was the only family she had left.

Yerode and Lamine watched the drama unfold without any reaction. As long as they were alive and successful with their Ordeal, they didn't care much about the fate of the other participants.

The young Asian boy sentenced to be whipped to death and his sister looked at Jake unexpectedly, as if they were waiting for him to do something.

Jake felt that the situation was taking an unpleasant turn. If he didn't come forward, he could end up as an offering for this fanatical priest. His Shadow Guide and his instincts were driving him into action. Glancing at the important clients who could change the tide of events, his gaze finally stopped on the balding man, his chest filled with gold and his two terrifying bodyguards.

Without having received permission, he suddenly stepped forward onto the stage, staring at the man in the white toga with an air of defiance. Then slowly, in front of an astonished crowd, he violently contracted his muscles, veins similar to large earthworms swelling under his skin.

CLACK!

The chain binding his handcuffed hands snapped, freeing both his arms. Then in the same way, he raised his left leg towards his chest, as if he was kneeling, and after a slight resistance, the chain binding his feet broke in turn. He then got rid of the chains connecting him to Yerode and Lamine, finally regaining his total freedom of movement.

‘You, you, you, how... how is that possible?’ Toleus stammered, completely flabbergasted. The couple had employed a mysterious method to sever their restraints, but this?! It was a show of sheer power!

‘Practice.’ Jake replied with a sly smile in perfect Myrmidian. He hadn’t taken his eyes off the man with the chest for the entire duration of his feat.

Aefqrur, Pmroadd md Mwzqat, jfl film tpqgdmprtut, rmo prtuzloftare vmj f laqniu npgiah lozuuo fphoamr hmpit efovuz lm qfrw lifsul md lphv hfiaguz. Id vu hmpit fhypazu f giullut mdduzare md lphv lozureov, vu jfl lpzu om gu vfrtlmquiw zujfztut.

‘I will join your Ludus. I will fight for you, but this man must survive.’ Jake pledged in a tone indifferent to the heavy atmosphere around him. ‘Will you accept?’

The man in the white toga stared at the condemned Asian slave, Agamnen, Quintus Helvius, Princess Livia, and then closed his eyes. After a long minute during which no one dared to disturb his musing, he opened them again. His decision had been taken.

‘Please forgive me Princess Livia, Pontiff Agamnen, it would be a waste to let warriors with such potential die. If they must die, let them die in the arena before the eyes of the Hero Myrmid.’

‘Mmmm, not a chance!’ The old priest harrumphed, his flaccid chin trembling with anger.

‘It wasn’t a request.’

‘Cassius! Don’t forget who you are, where you come from and who you are talking to!’

The aura of the balding man in the white toga, who until then had seemed harmless, changed without warning, so icy that the rotten teeth of the old priest clattered with fright. His bodyguards drew their swords, adopting fighting postures.

‘And you shouldn’t forget that either. My name is Servius Cassius. You have no idea what I’ve had to do, nor what I’m willing to do to get where I am. And believe me, you don’t want to know, old priest.’