

The Oracle Paths

Volume 2: The First Ordeal

Chapter 85 - Slave Auction (Final part)

The tension in the main square was at its peak. The Asian siblings were free and armed with swords. Jake had shattered his chains and was staring at Servius Cassius and the priest Agamnen in turn with extreme aloofness. Servius kept looking at the Pontiff menacingly, so intimidating that the guards had assumed a defensive posture in front of their master. Yerode, Lamine and the last slave stood indifferent to the general uproar.

‘Ser, Servius, don’t go too far! You’re nothing compared to Myrmid.

‘ Agamnen stammered as best he could, struggling to regain his composure. He was obviously frightened.

‘Hmm! I’m a Myrmidian just as much as you and the royal family are. Before the Myrmid hero, we are all equals. Might makes right. A common pontiff doesn’t have the authority to give me orders. »

Princess Livia and Quintus Helvius gazed at the man in the white toga in amazement. Since when did this Lanista have such a temper? His gladiators were among the best in the kingdom, but the man himself was often referred to as an obsequious serpent, crawling under the Myrmidian nobility to achieve his position.

His reversal of attitude had betrayed him, revealing his true belligerent personality. The Myrmidians loved competition, it was in their genes. In truth, it was his lack of backbone all these years that had been suspicious. The man had finally revealed his true nature,

and far from being a snake, it was a tiger hiding under these kindly features.

As if to confirm that he was ready to accept the consequences, he nodded his head to his two bodyguards, who immediately drew their swords. The old priest immediately turned pale when he saw the two elite gladiators pointing their blades in his direction.

The dark-skinned giant in particular was a terrifying entity, extremely well known in the midst of the Coliseum. His shaved head, bestial features, clawed nails and toenails, and ferocity in the arena had earned him the nickname 'Gerulf the Beast'. His stature was as imposing as that of the Throsgens.

The Southern Throsgenians were called the Kintars and had long since been enslaved. Most had been eradicated or were serving in the fields. Gerulf was an exception, a ferocious beast that had climbed to the position of Champion in the arena by erecting a pile of corpses. His reputation was by no means usurped.

The second slave was much older, more the age of Servius Cassius. His muscular body had not a gram of fat, and his faded blond hair slicked off his shoulders. His right leg was completely stiff, and his movements were hindered by a slight limp. Surprisingly, the aura of danger he emitted was even stronger than Gerulf's. A former champion of the Coliseum.

Myrmidians could also become gladiators. The blessing of the Myrmid hero meant that the Arena Champions were assuredly at the top of the Myrmid Empire's food chain. It was not for nothing that most of them were freed. These monsters weren't much weaker than the Emperor.

If Servius Cassius really decided to play the whole thing off, the priest wouldn't get out of that plaza alive. Swallowing painfully, his mouth suddenly frightfully dry, the old man made the wise decision to back off.

'Mmm, well... let's all try to stay calm. If you're so interested in those slaves, I'll leave them to you.' Agamnen conceded, not without resentment. 'In exchange, you'll let me take precedence when the next shipment arrives, what do you say? »

'That's fine by me. I hope you'll find it to your liking...' The man in the white toga replied in an indifferent tone, as if their entire altercation had not occurred.

Turning to Toleus, who had been petrified on the spot since the situation had escalated, Cassius simply said:

'I'll take them all. »

With these words, he entrusted the chest full of gold coins to the decurion without mentioning any price. Jake, the Asian couple and three other slaves from the last lot went without a word to their new master. Yerode and Lamine seemed disappointed that nothing had happened, but that was all right. It was only their first day after all.

'Wait a minute! I already said the girl would stay with me!' Princess Livia expressed her indignation, pointing an accusing finger at the balding Lanista. 'No way I'm letting you take them all so easily. You may not fear the royal family, but I don't fear you either! »

Servius Cassius frowned, slightly annoyed. It was obvious the two siblings did not want to be separated. By staying together, he could make the most of these two promising elements. Separated, the risk of insubordination would be greatly increased, and their training would be counterproductive.

‘My answer is no. Look those slaves in the eye. Are you sure, Princess Livia, that you want to separate them?’

The young woman bothered for the first time to check the cagey expression of the siblings. They had not yet put down the swords they had snatched from the two legionaries. On her answer depended whether or not the situation would settle down peacefully.

‘Very well! Nicely done this time, Cassius!’ Princess Livia grunted in a bitter tone, clenching her teeth in frustration. ‘Hmfm! We are leaving. »

Waovmpo dpzovuz jfzrare, lvu opzrut fzmprt frt jficut fjfw frezaiw. Tvu hmvmzo md iueamrfzaul ar hvfzeu md vuz nzmouhoamr qfzhvut guvart vuz ar nuzduho mztuz, dmiimjut gw vuz ruj fhypalaoamrl md ovu tfw. Dulnaou vuz artaerfro zufhoamr, ovu Pzarhull jfl ovu mru jvm vft mgofarut qmlo md ovu lifsul. Cvaitzur, jmqr frt qur. Tvuzu juzu numniu md fii feul.

As for Agamnen, far too embarrassed by the humiliation he had just suffered, he left the premises silently, escorted by his bodyguards. The fat man in fancy armor, Quintius Helvius, gave them a simple smile before leaving, followed by his own escort.

Soon all that remained was an empty stage and a few other traders and noblemen, hoping without too much illusion that a new slave trader would arrive with plenty of slaves for sale. Unfortunately for them, after Toleus no one came to replace him.

Little by little, the most reluctant left, leaving the area near the platform in the middle of the large market square deserted except for Servius Cassius and his group.

The latter then turned towards his new slaves, marking a slight pause when his gaze stopped on Jake’s. In the end, he still did not

know the identity of this Throsgenian. When he looked for Toleus near the stage, the Throsgenian had long since left.

‘As you may have heard for those who understand the Myrmidian, my name is Servius Cassius, and I am a Lanista. ‘ The man in the white toga presented himself, having recovered his harmless and benevolent demeanor.

‘I will train you and you will fight for me. You’re free to refuse, of course, and I’ll find you other duties instead. However, if you wish to regain your freedom, there is only one way, the Coliseum. »

At that moment, he gestured to the veteran gladiator to his left. This one came forward serenely in front of them with a slight limp. He then drew one of the three glaives at his waist. A wooden gladius sword shorter than the others was revealed to them. Some inscriptions had been carved in miniature along the wooden blade.

‘This is a RADIUS. Proof of your status as a free man. ‘Cassius coolly explained, pointing to the weapon with his finger. ‘There’s only one way to obtain this supreme reward. Prove your worth in the arena and become one of the Champions of Heliodas.’

‘My name, Servius, means ‘descendant of a slave’. With no citizen guarantor, every emancipated man in the Myrmid empire bears this clan name. My father, like you now, was a slave. He was a gladiator, and I am free thanks to him. You can be free too. »

‘Any questions? »

The slaves, who were about twenty, mostly men, stared at the small wooden sword for a long time, their eyes sparkling with hope. The Players, of course, stared at the RADIUS for different reasons.

Their main mission was only to survive two months. Jake doubted they would be thrown into the arena without proper preparation. Considering the fortune spent to get them, if they died stupidly the next day, it would be a total waste.

If there was a fight planned, it would probably be towards the end of the Ordeal, as the two-month deadline approached. So for the moment, all they had to do was train seriously and everything would be fine.

Following the silence of the slaves, Servius Cassius climbed back into his Sedan chair and signalled to his porters to set off, his two bodyguards and his new slaves forming a short procession behind him.

It was time for Jake to discover the place he would call home for the next two months.