

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 2: The First Ordeal

### Chapter 98 - The torture has just begun

[Side Mission: Follow Lutex's Training (0/60)]

[Rewards:]

[-Better rating]

[-Physical Enhancement and Combat Skills]

[-Experience points for Authority level]

[Risks: Injuries]

It was the new mission that popped in front of him when he entered the training area. No probability of failure or success was provided, indicating that he could not fail this mission as long as he did what he was told and as his Shadow Guide would show him.

He then remembered his previous Side Mission where he had to make a name for himself at the Heliodas auction. He noticed that the expected reward in experience points to increase his Authority level had not been distributed. The mission was indeed considered 'completed', but the rating and rewards were 'pending' until the end of the Ordeal.

It was quite annoying because he was hoping to increase his Oracle rank during the Ordeal to make up for his shortfall. This setback meant that he had to pass his entire Ordeal with a rank disadvantage, which could directly affect his performance.

‘Any reason for this delay, Xi?’ Jake, as usual, asked his A.I. directly.

[To avoid conflict and insubordination. Your Oracle rank is too low and doesn’t give you authority over other Players, but from the fifth it can be a problem if your rank rises abruptly.]

‘ And why is that ? ‘

[Because your identity in the Ordeal is largely determined by your rank.] Xi answered calmly. [For example, in this Ordeal, if your Oracle Rank was that of a General, you could have obtained the identity of a legate or a Myrmidian legion general.]

[A Private like you would have been forced to obey, since the corresponding identity would probably have been that of a mere legionnaire of the 9th or 10th cohort under his command. In the first four Ordeals, the Oracle trains you, so it doesn’t matter. But later, the objectives given will meet real needs].

[It can be resources the Oracle needs, or a target to eliminate. Even if a Player fails individually, the Ordeal’s Main Mission must be successful. The Main Mission is often the same for a number of Players. Cooperation is therefore strongly encouraged).

‘Mmm, I get it...‘

It was very clear. If a Colonel was suddenly appointed General, although his Ordeal identity would not change, he would no longer be under the authority of the original General. Of course, it was almost impossible to meet a General in a first Ordeal. God only knew how many promotions it would take to reach that rank.

Turning his attention to his new instructor, he studied the jovial-faced man in front of him.

Lutex, as he had learned during his meal earlier, was ranked number 5 among the professional gladiators of the ludus. Despite his puffy appearance, his muscles were well developed and his physical condition excellent. His forearms and hands were abnormally wide. He had to be terribly good at arm wrestling.

Just like the new recruits he was bald, but where the new recruits had shaved their heads, the gladiator was actually bald.

He had joined the Ludus some twenty years earlier and was therefore the oldest gladiator in the ludus still active after Priscus. He was now in charge of the smooth running of the ludus, not only training the new recruits, but also acquiring them. By and large, he was a resourceful man in his prime of life, and one in whom Servius Cassius had complete confidence.

The training yard in which he was stationed also had palus, wooden sword boxes and other equipment of all kinds. There were many different types of gladiators in ancient Rome. Depending on their fighting style, their equipment and training were adapted accordingly.

The Samnites were gladiators wearing heavy armor with the long rectangular shield typical of the Romans. The Retiaries usually wore neither mask nor armor, armed with a trident, dagger or net. The Thracians, on the other hand, fought with a simple helmet and sword, light fighters with little protection. Finally, the Mirmillons were similar to the Samnites, but their shield was shorter.

The Myrmidian Empire seemed to function according to a similar model and the first thing Lutex asked them was what style of fighter they wanted to be.

Jake's choice was obvious, he used a machete out of the Ordeal, so learning to fight with a sword would serve as an excellent reference.

It didn't matter whether he wore armor or not. A shield was probably a good thing in this world, but where the heck could he find one in the middle of the wilderness on B842 ?

With the exception of him and Elias, most of the White recruits were real scaredy-cats. Most chose to become Samnites or Retiaries fighting with a long trident. A few idiots tried to combine the two roles into one, carrying both the trident and a long shield.

A few really wanted to become authentic warriors and sought advice from Lutex who patiently explained to them the advantages and disadvantages of each position. In any case, it was preferable to know how to use all weapons to a certain extent, for an accident could quickly occur in the arena.

Once each of them had decided what kind of gladiator they wanted to be, training began. And, they were soon disappointed. Since the type of gladiator they wanted to be had no influence on the beginning of it.

It was conventional body weight training, exceedingly rigorous. After a quick warm-up of about fifteen minutes, Lutex recorded their performance in all sorts of exercises.

A 60-meter sprint, their maximum load when deadlifting, bench pressing or squatting. He also noted how many pull-ups, push-ups and other body weight movements they could perform, as well as their flexibility.

After all this, they still had to do an endurance test or they had to run around the yard in a certain amount of time, the pace increasing every minute to the rhythm of a drum. In other words, after all this, the normal slaves, even with the innate robustness of the Throsgenians, were completely washed out.

It was different for Jake. Although he was momentarily exhausted and dripping with sweat after lifting more than two tons at the deadlift, his muscles stopped shaking very quickly. Too quickly.

His constitution and vitality were so high that it made it difficult to assess his endurance with conventional tests. He could do an infinite number of pull-ups or push-ups without stopping, only Lutex's boredom and pity having put an end to his misery.

The endurance run was even worse. He had finished the test by running alone at a speed close to his sprint speed, unable to run out of strength for the minute corresponding to his maximum cadence. At the next gong, he only stopped because he was too slow.

Nusuzovuiull, ovulu oulol juzu f ezufu ovare dmz Jfcu frt Eiafl, fl ovuw fiimjut ovuq om crmj ovuaz ukfho iaqaol. Fmz ukfqniu, Jfcu vft f npzu suzoahfi bpqn msuz dasu quouzl vaev. Hu hmpit film daralv val 60-quouz lnzaro ar bplo prtuz ojm luhmrtl.

Even without counting the time it took to accelerate, his top speed was therefore above 150km/h. Since his actual strength was twice as great as his agility, if he decided to jump instead of making normal strides, he could probably go even faster.

Jake realized that he had become a superhuman in the span of a few days. A week earlier, he would have been unable to imagine himself running at that speed. And yet today he was performing these feats without any particular difficulty, as if it were normal.

When the tests ended, it was already late in the afternoon and Lutex decided to stop there, informing them that he would give them their personalised training programme the next morning.

Jake had to admit that Lutex was an ideal trainer. The gladiator was in a good mood, did not humiliate them, and his explanations were

clear and concise. He didn't hesitate to show them how to do the right moves, especially for certain weight-training exercises that some were discovering for the first time.

Nor did the plump man show any particular surprise at Jake and Elias' incredible physical prowess. He merely noted their performance with detachment, which for them was both frustrating and a relief.

Frustrating because it meant they couldn't take it easy, but a relief because it ensured they wouldn't waste their time in this ludus. If they were diligent, they would be able to catch up in technique with the other Players.

Their great initial strength and stamina would allow them to train harder, longer and more often, which would allow them to widen the gap with the lower stats participants.

As a matter of fact, Jake was immune to muscle soreness or overtraining to some extent, since his combined vitality was more than six times greater than normal, he could recover from severe muscle soreness in as little as 10 to 12 hours.

And this advantage was clearly felt by the next morning, when the recruits in each group were again forcibly awakened by Priscus, with terrible aches and pains torturing them as a direct result of the previous day's physical tests.

Tvuaz omzopzu vft mriw bplo guepr.