

The Oracle Paths

Volume 3: The Oracle Cities

Chapter 238 - End of First Trial

Somewhere on the island, many hours earlier, a young teenager of about eleven years old was catching his breath on all fours on the white sand. Unlike Jake, Sarah or the two sisters, the first event had been nothing special for him, but swimming such a distance had not been easy because he couldn't swim. That young boy was Tim.

His Danger Sense skill gave him an almost unrivalled ability to sense danger and anticipate it. Even though his Perception, Intelligence and Extrasensory Perception had been nerfed when he entered the Sanctuary Bubble, it didn't affect his Aether Skill too much.

Like the Fireball lvl0 of the two sisters, it was a passive, automatic, effortless skill. He had no idea how this foresight worked and he didn't care. What mattered was that it worked.

Tim had died many times in the beginning, but despite his young age he had adapted easily. After all, swimming was supposed to be intuitive. Babies knew how to swim when they were born, just like most animals.

His first Ordeal was inspired by the Spartan agoge, a stringent way of training young warriors. After the initial training, they would be left to their own devices and the last year of his First Ordeal was spent surviving alone in the wilderness.

The young boy was therefore extremely robust and mentally resilient despite his apparent physical immaturity. He had lost his mother and

could no longer clearly remember his father's face. He had virtually no memory of the years before his arrival on B842.

His first vivid memory in the Mirror Universe was of a man being devoured by Digestors, his meeting with Jake, followed shortly afterwards by his mother's death. Since then, something was broken in him and the joviality and candidness expected of a child his age was non-existent.

The fear of being eaten alive by a pack of wolves, the fear of being beaten up for stealing an apple, the fear of being whipped for insubordination or insolence, hunger, thirst, lack of sleep, cold; Tim was familiar with all of these feelings.

His ability to feel emotions had long since dulled and his only concern at the time was simply surviving that day without thinking about tomorrow. That was how he had spent the five-six years of his first Ordeal. This second Ordeal was in essence no different.

Tvu femrw jfl arhmqnfzfgiu, vu jfl ouzzadaut, gpo ovu hmrluypurhul juzu rmo azzusuzlagiu frt jaov val Auovuz Scaili ao jfl uflw dmz vaq om cuun vmnu. Efhv md val tufovl juzu fhhaturofi. Orhu vu vft guur dmmit ar mru jfw, vu jmpit laqniw ftfno om ulhfnu ovu ruko oaqu.

All children like him had been trained in Beskyr. Although the world was different from Jake's Ordeal World and the rest of his group, Beskyr was also a deserter of System A16, which the local people worshipped as their original god and ancestor.

The Beskyrians were endowed with a unique faculty called Inner Luck. The world seemed to bend to their whim in an inexplicable way and this passive influence on the environment increased in scope and power with age if this Inner Luck was sufficiently stimulated and relied upon.

Tim, like most children who had successfully completed their First Ordeal, had therefore inherited this Beskyrian bloodline and Inner Luck. This was the most primitive form of this bloodline, 80% impure, but it was enough for it to achieve Grade 8.

By unlocking this bloodline, he had obtained the Aether Luck stat and Lucky Body lvl 1, as well as the Inner Luck skill that complemented his Danger Sense. The Lucky Body lvl1 gave him a chance three times higher than normal (compared to randomness), while the Inner Luck skill allowed him to consciously influence the world according to his *désirés* and needs.

However, each time he used it, he would tap into his good luck capital and take the risk of being equally unlucky in the hours or days that followed. The Aether Luck stat was unfortunately extremely difficult to improve. It took a shimmering 1000 Aether points to encode a single point.

In other words, even when receiving a share of the sale of the Rank 7 Digestor corpse, his Aether Luck Stat had not even reached 20 points. His luck was therefore about six times better than normal. Where it was easily observable in simple acts such as dice rolling or slot machines, where the luck was focused, the effect was almost insignificant in complex situations, since the range was limited by his Spirit Body and Extrasensory Perception.

Regardless, it was a priceless bloodline in the Mirror Universe, and the last gift the Oracle System gave to young children to give them an opportunity to grow up. To do this, these children still had to pass their First Ordeal, but combined with the Aether Skill that each child had, it was normally highly probable.

This Beskyrian bloodline was his biggest secret. Since it did not change his appearance, he had disclosed to the rest of the group that

his Danger Sense skill had been upgraded after his first Ordeal. It was in fact a half-truth.

This skill had indeed become more effective, but it was because of the excellent synergy with his Inner Luck skill.

Sm Taq vft usuropfiiw zuffhvut ovu alifrt gw fhoasuiw plare val Dfreuz Surlu lcaii frt ukvfploare qphv md val Lphc. Pzutfomzl ourtut om aermzu vaq mz hvfreu tazuhomr, jvau val tmteul frt lnmrofrumpl zuofiafoamr juzu plpfiiw ukuqnifzw, fijfwl vaooare f spiruzfgiu lnmo mr val uruqaul.

The swim had not been easy, but he was confident that he had achieved one of the highest scores. He was eager to see how he fared against the other participants!

[Congratulations Tim Paradis for being the 996th contestant to reach the shore in just 3 hours 6 minutes and 27 seconds.]

[10,000 points for passing the first event and 1000 points for placing in the top 1000.]

Having recovered his breath, Tim listened silently to the artificial voice and pouted when he heard his score. However, when he remembered that there were over 11 million participants at the start, a big smile curved onto his lips. It was an authentic childlike smile, something he no longer thought he was capable of.

Upon reflection, his smile faded and he regained a dull and jaded expression. It was time for him to focus on this second and subsequent trials. The Ordeal was far from over.

Long after the first trial had begun, long after Will, Tim or the two sisters, a woman with long golden hair set foot on the beach like a

goddess springing out of the sea. Her golden irises emitted a sinister glow, while her face disturbingly resembled the faces of those psychopaths who loved torturing kittens.

At that very moment, although she was practically naked, Sarah had no sex appeal. Most of the men who kept ogling her would have run away upon seeing her, their testicles shriveling like two raisins at her sight.

Significantly affected by her Myrmidian drives, this Ordeal had completely awakened her sadomasochistic tendencies. Where Jake was more reserved and maintained a rather stable personality if he was sufficiently calm and rested, Sarah's temper had changed irrevocably when she had assimilated her bloodline, but it was a change she fully embraced.

Between the superficial, teasing and manipulative woman of the past, she preferred by far the strong, proud, belligerent and fearless woman she had become. She didn't want to be a nobody. It was something that had never changed, either before or now.

On her first attempt, she found herself caught up in a fight to the death with a sea dinosaur instead of swimming to shore. It had taken several dozen resurrections before the mental nerf was sufficiently reduced to make her realize the absurdity of her actions.

This did not stop her though. Like Jake, that first trial had only awakened her thirst for combat and challenge, and that trial in the ocean had quickly turned into a playground where she could let off steam and fully familiarize herself with her new abilities.

When she heard the artificial voice announcing her score, Sarah snickered derisively, as if she had been expecting this pitiful result all along.

Yet when she heard the series of notifications that followed, she was dumbfounded for a long time. Who would have thought her madness would be rewarded.

Shortly after Sarah, as if the two Players had agreed beforehand, a man of impressive stature also walked out of the water. His muscles were protruding, his claws and fangs were visible and dripping with blood, while his golden and silver hair mane flapped around wildly because of the wind.

Behind Jake, the corpse of one of the pterodactyl vultures was floating in the air. With each step forward he took, the body of the giant bird advanced an equal distance. He had already decided long ago that this would be his next meal.

As he swept across the beach in search of what he needed to light a campfire, the artificial voice began to resonate in his ears.

[Congratulations Jake Wilderth for being the 10127th contestant to reach the shore in just 13 days, 18 hours 6 minutes and 27 seconds.]

[10,000 nmarol dmz nflare ovu dazlo usuro. 0 gmrpl nmarol dmz rmo guare ar ovu omn 10,000]

Like Sarah a few moments earlier, Jake let out a raucous laugh, falsely embarrassed. He expected nothing less than such a result after his vendetta.

Then the artificial voice began to speak again, and like the young woman before him, he stood agape in amazement. Who would have thought that being the culprit of a genocide could award so many points?

