

The Oracle Paths

Volume 1: The Oracle

Chapter 10 – Good night

Jake waited stoically for the ten minutes to pass. A point of impatience was slowly building up inside him, but he still kept his cool. When the time was up, he hurried to check his bank account with his smartphone.

Great! From 3200 dollars or something at first, he had now more than 40 000% . Uncle Kalen was quite reliable. That was one of the good aspects of the 22nd century. Money in cash had very limited use, as above a few hundred dollars you had to justify the origin when making a cash deposit.

This law nipped any chance in the bud to fiddle your taxes or use easily laundered money. On these days, most transactions were now done by credit cards.

The advantage was that it was fast and simple. As long as your checking account was healthy and you as a customer trustworthy enough, you could basically make a transfer of any amount in your possession instantly.

By following the Shadow Guide, he should now call his cousin Anya, but he knew that she was not as wealthy as his Uncle. She would only lend him a few thousand, and compared to his fortune now it was insignificant.

Henceforth, it was time to execute the plan.

It was the most anticlimactic thing he had ever done. He was so eager with the idea of multiplying the former sum of money that he had imagined himself like an awesome trader.

The reality was boring. Investing in stock markets could be done from his smartphone and that is what he did. Imitating his Shadow Guide, he blindly clicked on a random obscure start-up annnnd... that was it.

The Path was still activated. The Coach didn't give any length when it came to walking through a Path until the very end. He only knew he would earn in a short time close to four hundred thousand dollars.

Naturally, it was a one-time occasion. Owing to the appearance of Oracle devices, the stock market would crash soon. Well, it wouldn't really crash, but it would become really uneventful. No speculations, risked investments or shady deals to manipulate the market.

There was nothing to speculate about. Whatever an immoral businessman would try to influence the exchange rates or the stocks was deemed to fail. With the Oracle, except for a few retards, no one would fall to any dubious schemes.

Same story for casinos. Slot machines should have been one the easiest and funniest way to earn a large sum of cash in a night, but most casino owners were ruthless businessmen themselves.

A breaking new already announced that almost ninety percent of these establishments had closed down. They were already looking for a way to rewire their slot machines to trick the Prediction ability.

Well, they could keep dreaming. If this alien technology was so easily countered, humans would have invented it themselves. Nonetheless, there was still the possibility such a Path existed, allowing these millionaires to adapt their random-based money games to the new trend. Their motto would always be to keep milking a cash cow until there's nothing left.

In the end, exhausted with everything that happened this day, Jake overcooked his steak. A bitter tear dropped while he was chewing a chunk of meat tough as old boots. Comparatively, Crunch was enjoying his new life. The cat joyfully engulfed his kibble, crunching noises breaking the silence nonstop.

He brushed his teeth, then directly went to bed. It was still early, but he needed this sleep to digest all these new things. The day after would be his first day of work with the Oracle bracelet. It was quite hard at first to relax, as he had a very clear impression of being watched. Xi's eyes were always on him.

Wvur vu darfiw lofzout om imlu val hmrlhamprull, vfnaiw hmproare lvuun, f ovmpevo hfqu pn ovfo gzmpevo vaq zaevo gfhc dzmq val tzufqifrt.

'Xi? You're sleeping?' He probed like an idiot., already knowing the answer. He didn't have any good opener to break the ice anyway.

[...]

There was no answer, but somehow he felt an almost tangible contempt arising from his Oracle device.

[I am an AI. I don't need sleep.]

'Of course, you don't! Can you get bored? How do you keep yourselves busy?' He asked curiously.

[Authority level insufficient.]

'Whatever! I mused about something. No one can see my Oracle System nor my Paths, right?'

[That is true. For everyone else, you will look the same but with a new black shiny bracelet to your right wrist. If you decide it, you can even dissimulate it under your skin, thus appearing perfectly normal.]

'Is it why the Oracle Overseer denied the possibility of this mouse not having an Oracle device?' He suddenly remembered that the bracelet could indeed have been invisible under the mouse fur, even though the latter skin was quite translucent so it was unlikely.

[...]

[A low intelligence mammal would never be able to consciously hide their Oracle device. Only animals with a highly-evolved brain would have a remote chance to accomplish such a feat. Giant octopus and sperm whales can definitely do it. Some apes, dolphins, whales, elephants too. Maybe a few parrots or crows, but certainly not a mouse. In comparison, a rat has a better chance to succeed.]

She was basically admitting that there was something wrong with this rodent. Anyway! He didn't intend to have a nightmare tonight. So, where were we? Ah yes, seeing the Paths.

'Is there a way to know when someone's actions are guided by the Shadow Guide?' He wondered, spontaneously thinking of a few ways.

[There is only one sure way. Put your Oracle device in contact with the suspect's bracelet. But the Oracle A.I or the owner can refuse you the access to his System if your authority level is insufficient.]

'Wait, wait, wait.' Jake became agitated hearing this. 'Do you mean anyone with a higher level of authority could check my Paths and data anytime? That's a breach of privacy!'

[It is more complicated than that. Not every information is accessible to the one initiating the forceful contact. Your memories are safe; I can guarantee that. Other Shadow Guides and Paths can't be seen either. However, Status, and the numbers of Paths currently trodden can be seen.]

'Phew. It is not as bad as what I imagined for a moment.' He sighed with relief. 'So what are the non-sure ways to know when someone follow a Path?'

[Observation. Vacant look, latencies in reacting or responding abnormal behavior, eyes focusing or moving from left to right as if reading and so on. If you look carefully enough, you will naturally see flaws appear.]

[Paths are great tools to grant your wishes, but you can't become over-reliant on them. With every living being on Earth having an Oracle assisting them, you will

soon realize that Prediction and Shadow-Guide are not all powerful. They are only tools. A monkey will use a rifle as a stick. Don't be the monkey.]

[As you improve yourself more and more, new Paths will open to you. So from now on, you can't be lazy as you had always been. Otherwise, you will be left behind on the starting line.]

Xi's warning repeated in a loop inside his head, while he yawned. At last, Morpheus's arms were coming for him.

'Good night Xi.' He said half-asleep.

She responded softly a few minutes later. Jake serene breathing showed how deeply asleep he was.

'Good night Jake. I hope you can still sleep peacefully like this when you will know what the future holds for your planet.'

Jake never heard her last sentence, his consciousness already blown away by the wind of sleepiness.
