

The Oracle Paths

Volume 1: The Oracle

Chapter 15 - Having fun

All of a sudden, the scenery around him changed. He could still sense how he was suspended from the ceiling, but he was now in a small size plane, with a twenty-two something woman standing in front of him. There was only space for a few persons, the furnishing was minimalist. You could hear a loud throbbing from the plane engine and high-speed rotating propeller.

It was the typical private touristic plane transporting thrill-seekers desiring to skydive. Jake carefully inspected himself. He was carrying a parachute. Ruby had one on her back too. He now understood what simulation game she wanted him to play.

Jake's composure didn't change, though. He was still totally impervious to the situation. Skydiving? So what? Was it real? Could he die? Was he even falling? In the end, he was just hanging one meter above the floor. But he swallowed his cutting remarks for himself when he saw her confident eyes. She was convinced he would change his mind.

For his first mission's well-being, he persevered with this farce. Ruby had legs in the game and her appearance was very different. Her skin was smooth, her chest filled out her clothing this time and her shiny wavy hair was snow white. Clean snow this time. Only her eyes stayed the same. One deep blue, the other one amethyst-colored.

'So what should we do?' He broke the ice. With the roaring engine noises, he had to shout just to hear himself.

‘Look out the window. When the plane will be at his highest, his altitude will stabilize and the pilot will signal us it is time for us to jump.’

‘All right, let’s wait then.’ He said, still as placid as ever. He truly didn’t care at all.

‘Did you turn on all the simulation special effects in your VR room?’ She reminded him.

‘Of course, I’m not stupid.’

‘Oh sorry...’

After this, they stayed silent, waiting patiently for the tourist plane to reach the right altitude. When the latter was more than thirty thousand feet above the ground, it finally ceased to climb up. Standard parachute jumps were done at twelve thousand feet, but it was a game. There was no need to worry about a lack of oxygen or dangerous temperature in the negatives. The pilot knocked on the locked door isolating the cockpit, informing them they could begin.

Rpgw tuhalasuiw mnurut ovu eifxut tmmz almifoare ovuq dzmq ovu mpolatu. Io immcut iacu frw movuz jartmjl md oval nifru frt hmpit uflaiw euo qakut pn. Ao oval nmaro, Jfcu loaii duio artadduzuro om fii md oval. Tvu hmit jart jfl lifnnare val dfhu, gpo vu hmpit loaii lmzo md aqfearu ovu nmjuzdpi suroaifomz dprhoamrare fo dpai hfnfhaow.

Then, he familiarized himself with the strips used to release the main parachute and the rescue one if the former was defective. Naturally, in a game, it was all for visual realism purposes. The first parachute would always be triggered as it was supposed to. There was also an altimeter to check your altitude anytime on your wrist.

Once ready, he stared at Ruby, awaiting the next step.

‘And now?’

‘Now, we jump!’ She pushed him off the plane head first.

His body was thrown upside down in an instant. The blood rushed to his hair, the air whipping him stronger and stronger as his speed soared. His heart was pumping faster and faster despite all his efforts to remind himself it was just an illusion.

He was upside down in reality too as the straps attached to him were rigid enough to allow the VR capsule to change his position. The ropes hanging him were partly composed with nano-components that could easily change their structure, becoming harder or more flexible depending on the game script they followed.

Whilst Jake was still trying to adapt to the new sensations, Ruby passed by him at full speed, diving like a comet toward the ground. It was clearly not her first time doing this. He tried to spread his arms and legs in order to stabilize himself, but he was pathetically failing at the moment.

As his speed got faster and faster, his adrenaline levels skyrocketed, making his ability to reason less and less predominant. Yet, he could still convince himself all of this was fake. But as he was repeating to himself how false this simulation game was, his reptilian brain was going into a panic more and more.

His fall speed broke through two hundred kilometers per hour, while he skydived under the six thousand feet mark. After this, he truly lost his cool and was barely able to grasp the environment around him.

The trees were growing before his very eyes, just like the buildings of the city below. Three thousand feet! Jake couldn't find Ruby anymore, she was too fast. The fact that he was alone, almost one kilometer above the ground didn't help him to get a grip on himself.

Somehow, he succeeded to snap out of his irrational fear. He remembered that he just had to tug at the strip when he would be close to one thousand feet. Then he would just have to enjoy the sight and relax until his landing.

Unfortunately, he was out of luck. When he went down under one thousand feet, he tugged at his parachute's trigger, but nothing happened. His panic then gladly

resumed with greater intensity. As his fall continued, he scratched his head looking for a solution, almost pulling off a few strands of hair.

When Jake finally remembered that he still had a rescue parachute, he triggered it. However, he was already very close to the ground by then. The irony was that the rescue parachute didn't work either!

At this moment, he saw himself splattering on a bus like an overripe fruit falling off his tree.

Unconsciously, he averted his eyes at the last second, covering them with his hands. His heart skipped a beat and his breathing stopped. He really saw his entire life passing before his eyes as if he was truly about to die.

Nonetheless, the crushing sound he was expecting didn't come. When he reopened his eyes, he realized he was floating a meter above the bus he was supposed to smash onto. He was miraculously alive.

He couldn't help himself but burst into laughter, tiny tears in the corner of his eyes. He felt so much relief that it seemed unreal. He became aware that despite all his laziness he had never felt so happy and relaxed.

Then he heard some stifled laughs, rapidly becoming louder and louder.

'Pfffffft! Mwahahahaha! I got you, right?! If you could see your face when you thought you were going to die! Hahaha, you made my day. I can't stop laughing!'

Rpgw jfl ovuzu guvart vaq, hpziut pn mr ovu ezmprt, lnflqare azzuepifziw guojuur ojm dao md ifpevouz. Huz dfhu jfl diplvut frt lvu jfl vpddare frt npddare guojuur vuz eaeiul. Sv vft omofiiw hzfhcut pn.

Realizing it was her plan from the start, Jake couldn't help but feel a deep shame. His face also reddened in consequence. She had totally seen through him and gave him a memorable lesson.

To be honest, Jake had enjoyed his first parachute jump. He now knew that even an illusion could feel real. He was eager to try again.

‘All right, I admit my defeat. Now stop laughing stupidly like this. ‘He said with an exasperated face.

A few minutes later, Ruby finally calmed down. In the end, she made him try many simulation games during this afternoon. There hadn’t been any new customer after her, so he didn’t have to be begged to keep playing with her.

Harry and Camille didn’t bother them either, probably bogged enough with their own preoccupations.

From the several simulation games Ruby made him play, he soon realized that they were all related to high-speed and freedom. Ruby’s favorite was a Flying simulator. Not flying in the sense of piloting planes, but a real superman flying mode. You could basically fly at any speed around the Earth. Even Jake had a lot of fun looking for his own house.

They visited many historical monuments, flew above the oceans, even tried to go up to the moon. Curious, they also visited the nuked cities. It was obvious however that the game was lacking information about these areas. Except for some ashy sands, there was nothing else in these wastelands.

When finally came the time to close the VRGF center, Jake could sincerely declare that he had passed one of the best day from his whole life. And at work, on top of that!

He said goodbye to Ruby, wishing her a safe return to New London with her aunt. Jake knew he probably wouldn’t see her again before a long time and surprisingly felt a little sad deep inside him. She was still one of the ugliest girl he had ever seen, but comparatively, her inner beauty was resplendent.

Esur imre fdouz lvu iudo ovu VR hurouz, Jfcu jfl loaii imlo ar val ovmpevol. Hu hmqniuouiw aermzut ovu rmoadahfoamr hmqare dzmq ovu Cmfhvare dprhoamr,

loaii jmrtuzare vaqluid jvur ovuw jmpit quuo fefar. Tmqmzzmj? Ir f duj wufzl?
Tvu Ozfhiu jmpit rusuz frljuz.

[First Mission: Take care of the next customer as if it was your soulmate]

[Mission accomplished. Perfect rating.]