

# The Oracle Paths

## Volume 1: The Oracle

### Chapter 4 - The Oracle System (part 2)

Jake stayed silent for a long while after digesting such an amount of information. Not because he couldn't understand these values. After all, in the 22nd century, VR technology was mature and you could easily find a good VRMMORPG just by randomly choosing a game with closed eyes in the first VR game store you come across.

Did we mention how Jake the king of procrastinators was earning his living? As the latter never arrived at work, you never figured it out. Well, he was in fact simply doing what he was best at: doing nothing.

It was a bit of an exaggeration but that was essentially true. Using his informatics and cybernetic bachelor, he managed to obtain a job in the VRGF, the Virtual Reality Games Federation. It was the reference in the matter of VR games. On these days, they were more famous than real sports and an international competition as famous as the Olympic games or the World cup of Football in the past was held every two years.

Virtual reality was still far from perfect, you still had to move with your real body in real life. However, with good quality gears, you could have very immersive gaming experience. A multi-directional treadmill big enough could allow you to walk, run, even jump without feeling yourself limited by a lack of space. A fitting VR suit with captors could reproduce to a certain extent the feeling of touch. A set of cameras could triangulate your position and movements in the game combined with the VR suit feedback. If you could suspend yourself with some adapted ropes, you could even reproduce flying and acrobatics in the game. As for the graphics in the 22nd century, they were flawless.

If you had to choose one flaw, that would be that it was expensive. Most lower-middle-class could barely afford a VR helmet, not to mention the complete equipment set. That's why a new business opportunity was soon smelled by the investors. VR game arcade rooms.

Most of them, those with the best facilities, belonged to the VRGF. These places generally were composed of a few tens of fully equipped VR rooms and a VR store selling any materials you might need. The VR competitions or tournaments were also hosted in these VR centers.

Indeed, cheating also existed with VR games. Especially with VR games. And what Jake could say about this was that he himself was a genuine professional cheater too. No, it was not what you imagined. He truly wanted to experience VR by the rules. But even if he didn't cheat, people would continue.

Take any popular battle-survival fps of the moment. The average duration game was 45 minutes. Your character could easily run 4 to 6 miles in a single game. Seen like this, modern VR games were the perfect medicine for obesity. Any fat dudes you knew playing video-games all day would be beyond recognition in a few weeks.

That is what allowed VR games' popularity to surge. The health and fit body enticement. By the way, you could still hear the advertising slogan 'One hour of playing VR games a day will keep the excess weight away' on every junk food-related publicity.

For a time, obesity indeed withdrew, but that was until the first cheater's arrival. A few years later there were more cheaters than honest gamers. Only VRGF centers were considered safe. That is why the official competitions were all held there.

Cvufoare jfl, om gu dzfrc ypaou laqniu. Tvuzu juzu f imo md hmrouro frt opomzafil mr ovu jug ovfo uknifarut usuzwovare, loun gw loun. Ymp hmpit vfhc ovu hfquzfl frt duut ovuq lmqu aqfeu immnl. Ymp hmpit zuqmouiw hmrozmi ovu

ozuftqaii mZ f vpqfrmat zmgmo jufzare f VR lpao. Io jfl f gao hmloiw frt ouhvrahfi gpo rmo aqnmllagiU dmZ ovu tuouzqarut mrul.

Hence the origin of his skinny fat body. Laziness paired with being a poor loser. The irony was that he worked in such a place. He worked in one of these VRGF centers. Not the biggest ones, but there were still a few tens of employees like him. His job was to maintain the VR equipment and give advice to the customers. The perfect cushy job.

So, to get back to the topic, game mechanics were as natural as breathing for him. The mind-blowing thing was the implications behind such data.

How did this device recuperate all of his information? Sure, it felt like a part of his body, but there was a big difference between feeling like having an extra limb and having an alien device stuck to your arm squeezing out every little secret of yours.

[No need to ponder further.] The Oracle AI explained. [ We are fused together until death does us apart. My personal interests lie in yours. You will soon fully understand this.]

[The Oracle functions exist to help you to evolve. If you have not any questions, I will now explain the second feature of Status, Knowledge and Skills.]

Jake immediately swallowed back the words on his tongue. Damn, it really looked like a game. Did this Oracle also have the ability to extract and tidy such a mass of memories?

‘I have many questions to ask, but I will wait till the end of your explanations.’ He decided with a firm expression.

[I am delighted to hear it. I will now proceed with Knowledge and Skills explanation.]

[This is the second feature of Status. Every skill or mastery that the Oracle System deemed proficient enough will thus be represented in your skill list. Knowledge or

Skill that you look favorably upon will also be displayed, even if you have almost zero knowledge about them.]

[Huzu al wmpz lcaii ialo:]

Another huge amount of data engulfed his mind. The discomfort soon receded, but what he saw after that almost made him throw up. His skills? Fuck yes, they were his, for sure. This wretched Oracle was far too meticulous for his own good. They needed to talk about privacy after all this.

[Knowledge and Skill Masteries:]

[Procrastination: 53241 points (Normal human: 28 points). Grand Master proficiency. You procrastinate like no other. You can powerfully put things into perspective and postpone the urgency of every task, duty or chore.]

[Masturbating: ... Do I really have to explain how high the level of mastery coming from a nerd with no girlfriend like you could be?]

After x numbers of shameful skills, all more useless than the others... At last, actual skills and masteries he could be proud of appeared in the listing.

[Informatics: 76 points (Normal human: 8 points). You're not at the Novice level anymore.]

'...' Jake sighed. 'You do realize it is what my bachelor is all about, right?'

The AI ignored him.

[Cyber engineering: 51 points (Normal human: 1 points). You are not a Novice anymore.]

[Communication: 4 points (Normal human: 10 points). Being solitary for too long gave birth to social anxiousness. You can barely talk with your workmates and clients. Your body language and word choices rarely convey your true intention. You also don't have the confidence nor the oral skills needed to perform a public speech or holding a conference.]

[Back-flip: 50 points (Normal human: 0 points): Not bad, you do know some stunts to amuse the crowd.]

Jake chuckled seeing this skill. It was one of the rare accomplishments he was proud of. He remembered having passed entire days trying to master this move on a trampoline. To impress some friends at school, he finally succeeded to do one on hard ground. However, one failure was enough to put an end to his enthusiasm. Just once, he didn't leap with a good enough footing. As a result, he smashed himself on the secondary school playground in front of all his friends, almost breaking his neck. He was so ashamed that he had not felt any pain. It was the last time he did a back-flip. Who knew that his mastery of this move was still so high!

[Fighting: 7 points (Normal people: 5 points). You didn't practice any martial art, but you have a ferocious side inside you. You don't play by the rules. Should a hypothetical fight break out; the groin, throat, and eyes would be your instinctive targets. You're not courageous, but don't have any fleeing instinct.]

Another strange skill. He didn't think he had it in him. He never fought anyone, not even bothering with his cousins that loved seizing every chance to give him some hard time. He did not have an herbivorous mindset, but he was quite rational. Should his procrastinating talent kick in, he would instantly find many reasons telling him why fighting was a bad idea. And do not forget, he was a nerd. His self-confidence was basically zero when it came to having body contact, friendly or not.

All the remaining skills at the bottom were common abilities or basic knowledge everyone normally educated should have. Basic actions or specific moves that were considered mastered usually had a skill proficiency of 50. It included basic things like walking or breathing. However, some frequently used skills could have a very low level of mastery. For example, his cooking skill.

[Cooking: 1 points (Normal human: 4 points). You only know how to avoid starving to death. Making pasta or cooking a steak to your liking is not cooking.]

Or this one:

[Bed making: 1 point (Normal human: 5 points). Pulling up the quilts does not mean making your bed well. A well-done bed brings tidiness in your life. Success begins with a first meaningful action.]

If he had not realized by now that the Oracle AI had a sense of humor— and a dark one at that— he could just hang himself.

Now, he just had to learn what was the last function: 'Guidance'.