# Soul Training

After a long and interesting life, Neo went to bed, and in sweet slumber, he passed away. Unexpectedly, he awoke and before him was a small square glass window. He realized he could not move nor feel his limbs, but he could still hear. The small glass window was encased in a metal door that appeared to be encasing Neo in a chamber.

Neo could not turn his head, nor even speak, but there seemed to be commotion outside of his chamber. Something moved past the window, and then came back. A man’s head bobbed in the lit square, peering in at Neo.

Then the door opened. As light poured into the small chamber, Neo’ eyes adjusted and the silhouetted man came into focus. He was holding a glass panel with all sorts of stats and levels and measurements lighting up the screen.

“Ok,” said the man, “83 Years at level 41, scheduled upgrade to level 42 with lifespan in the 21st century.”

The man hummed a little tune while he clicked through different screens, and since it was a simple pane of glass, Neo could see a reverse of the man’s screen. At the top Neo could make out the heading “Lifetime Score” and below was a list of metrics for 41 iterations and at the end of each line was a small video montage where Neo could just barely make out a vision of himself in each one doing different things. In one he was pulling a line on a ship, in another he was on his knees crying, watching a huge building burn, in another yet, he was dressed in primitive furs walking through a thick forest staring intently at the ground, and in another he simply sat cross-legged with his eyes closed. Each one was scored with different percentages for aspects of performance and development and at the bottom of the screen was a combined tracked score labeled “Soul Development Progress”.

“Ok,” said the man, flipping to another screen that was filled with alerts and instructions. “Gonna have to transfer you to a different life pod. This one is scheduled for hardware upgrading.” He tapped a few buttons on the screen and suddenly Neo jolted from the chamber cradled by a mechanical upright bed that Neo could partially see reflected in the glass screen. He could see his feet and legs with some sort of support restraint holding them and different wires and tubes that fed into the restraints and presumably from there into his body.

“It’s just over here,” the man mumbled to himself as the mechanical bed turned on a track and began to zip along with him down a long corridor packed with identical chambers.

A chamber door opened and Neo swiveled again and the bed began to back into the chamber. Just before the man blocked the view, Neo could make out a face behind one of the small windows on the other side of the corridor. The man was tapping away, selecting settings.

“Scheduled birth will be 2018, you originally asked for the 3rd astrological sign, but according to the data accumulated from your last iteration, you’ve now decided on a December birthday.” The man chuckled a little. “Oy, you really set yourself up for a challenge on this one. Which is strange, you’ve been scoring so well.” He looked up at Neo and studied his face for a moment. “Your score credits could easily get you starting in a better situation.” Then a sly smile crept across the man’s face. “Aw, you’ve had a lot of this figured out for a while, you’re one of those soul monkeys. Well that’s what we’ve started calling them lately. People who’ve intuitively figured out the soul-building algorithm. Yea, yea, I get it, shit’ll be way harder but if you can score even remotely well, your soul branching will totally level-up. There’s a bunch already who’ve already unlocked 4th dimensional organisms and stuff. Pretty neat how all of it is coming together. Anyway, you’ve really got your cake cut for you, some tough decades you signed up for on this one.” The man laughed. “Damn those are some doozies and with your lack of resources, well, good luck. Have a mince pie for me, why don’t ya.” He smiled and swung the door shut. In the small window, the man winked, and just before Neo’ consciousness went dark, he saw the image of the man in the small window flicker purple, the man’s movements stuttering, the whole of him disappearing for the tiniest slice of a second.