

History: The Story of LostProphet's Awakening

Part 1

Edward Hirst was a wealthy man. A lottery winner at the tender age of 18, money had transformed his life in a way he never thought possible. He was now a major shareholder in several of MegaCity's largest firms, owned numerous exotic cars and boats. But he stayed low-key. Not wanting to be pawed over by the leeches of modern society he stayed hidden in his "down time" as he liked to call it.

Tonight was no exception. He was at a club where he was assured anonymity, and assured that none of his peers would there. Swathed in a leather trench, black beanie and an expensive pair of tinted glasses, he blended in perfectly with the underground elite.

As he walked slowly amongst the bodies, some writhing maniacally to the screaming music, others lounging against walls and bars, chatting despite the noise, he noticed a lone figure standing out from the rest. He was dressed in just a canvas jacket and black trousers, clearly not a regular. Edward walked over; people that stood out intrigued him.

"Hi there." he offered.

"Er, hey." the reply, nervous, wary.

"First time here?"

A nod.

"What's your name?"

"N..Thomas. Thomas Anderson. I'm er, I'm here with friends."

Edward looked around. There was a group nearby who he assumed Thomas was talking about. They were definite regulars.

Thomas' bottle of beer was emptying rapidly.

"Hey, you want another?"

Thomas eyed him warily.

"Hey, I'm not gonna drug it," Edward said jovially, "I can tell this isn't really your scene that's all. Might as well have it pass a little more pleasantly, right?"

Thomas cracked a smile, "Yeah, sure, OK."

The queue for the bar was a long one. Edward couldn't use his status here to get a quick beer. As he returned, a pale-skinned woman was talking to Neo. Edward grinned to himself. Perhaps he wasn't the only person intrigued by Mr Anderson. He took a different route back, but as he grew nearer he heard the conversation and stopped. Something in him told him to eavesdrop, even though he kinda liked the guy.

"...And when he found me, he told me I wasn't really looking for him, I was looking for an answer. It's the question that drives us, Neo. It's the question that brought you here. You know the question, just as I did..."

"What is the Matrix?" Thomas asked breathlessly, his voice so quiet Edward had to strain to hear it.

"The answer is out there, Neo. It's looking for you...and it will find you...if you want it to..."

Then the woman was gone. Edward showed up a moment later with the beers.

"Who was that?"

"Oh, it was ... nobody. Thanks for the beer. You never told me your name."

Edward smiled. "They call me the Lost Prophet ... Neo."

Thomas' eyes widened, he opened his mouth to speak when a group crashed into them, throwing Edward to the floor.

"Sorry dude!" a voice cried, laughing. As he got up and dusted himself off, it seemed that Mr Anderson had vanished.

Part 2

The next day Ed rose late and wandered about his penthouse flat. Neo. The name echoed in his mind. Restless, he flicked on the plasma screen to the news.

"...in other news, the hunt for the infamous computer hacker Trinity is alive again after eyewitness reports placed her at Club Succubus last night. Yes that's right, her. After years of speculation, the gender of the IRS Database cracker has finally been revealed. Police are encouraging anybody with more information to come forward. In events believed to be connected, a programmer at top software house MetaCortex was seen being taken away by federal agents this morning."

The picture on the screen was of a suited Thomas Anderson being pushed into a car. Ed clicked the screen off. So that's who he was talking to. Could Neo be another hacker?

Going to the police was out of the question. He couldn't reveal his secret haunts, plus he wanted to find out more for himself.

Four hours later, Ed knew that Neo was indeed a hacker. A very good one in fact. But there was no connection to Trinity. Her work had been carried out several years ago when Neo was a mere blip on the hacker network. As he lounged back in his chair, suddenly he remembered. "What is the Matrix?"

He was still online in one of the usual hacker hangouts.

LP>I'm looking for Trinity

*>So are the police, LOLS

*>D00d we dont even know you. Hey guys he's the feds! boot him!

*>Admin kick! Befoer he arests us all, lolol!1

LP>No, wait. I saw her last night. At Succubus.

*>Yeah, sure

*>Get his IP! Track him down!

LP>Why would you want to do that?

*>Coz if it's true, u need silencing be4 u go to the cops!

LP>I won't. She said something, I need more information.

LP>What is the Matrix?

*>Huh. OK, you bought yourself some time.

*>We don't know.

*>Shuttup mang!

*>Fuck you! We don't. There are theories. But nobody has got close. And some of our guys disappeared after asking too many questions

LP>Cops? Feds?

*>Yeah, or worse. Nobody knows. Talk to WhiteBishop, if you can find him online. I'll tell him to talk to you.

It was 10pm before "WhiteBishop" signed on. And all he gave away was an email address and login details.

WhiteBishop>Once you've read this, you are vulnerable. If you get scared, using my name will make no difference. They have tried and failed to hunt me down. This will make you, or it will break you. The choice, like so few in this world, is yours.

WhiteBishop has signed off

Part 3

Edward sat cross-legged on the wooden floor. Papers were spread out around him, printouts of what he had found in the email account.

He realised he was sweating.

He had just been told that the world he knew was not real. That the real world lay somewhere else. This, the world that had given him everything, was a lie.

Here was the decisive moment of his life. Most people living in the Downtown district relied on the Matrix for their lives to flourish. They would never reject the system. But something in Edward's mind was wired differently. And the system knew it.

He was startled out of his reverie by the buzzer. Walking to the intercom he flicked the camera on. Three men, in dark suits and sunglasses.

"Mr Hirst, we'd like a moment of your time."

Wordlessly, he pressed the Door Unlock button. And 10 seconds later he was out of the door, racing towards the elevator.

There was one to the penthouse, and three to the garages far below. If he could make it to the main hallway his chances of escape would triple.

He didn't know what he was escaping from, but something told him to move, and to move fast.

Ping!

The door opened into the hallway. Ed glanced at the lights above the three elevators. They were all moving.

He started to panic. He hurriedly knocked on all the doors, but nobody answered. His breathing and heartrate were getting faster, his eyes darted around frantically for a place to hide ...

The three Agents stepped out of the elevators and slowly looked around. Nobody was there. They proceeded to the penthouse elevator and ascended.

As the whir disappeared upwards, the door of the laundry chute popped open and Edward pulled himself out and landed in a heap on the floor, drenched with sweat, his arms shaking for the effort it took to hold himself in there. He knew there wasn't much time. They would find everything on the floor and come after him.

Two minutes later he was in the garage, heading for one of his cars. He got in, hit the starter and relaxed for a moment. The air conditioning was rapidly cooling him off and he started to feel more in control.

He eased the clutch out and trundled away, accelerating gently as he reached the road. It was then he realised he had no idea where to go.

Part 4

As he drove slowly along the streets, busy as they were with 11pm traffic of taxis and party-goers, he saw a group of policemen point at his car. He locked the doors as he drove past. Glancing in his mirrors at them again, he caught his breath.

The suits!

"How the fuck..." he muttered, then saw one of them unholster a gun, "Fuck that!"

He swung the car into the centre of the road and rammed his foot hard on the accelerator. The engine screamed as it nudged the rev limiter and he neatly flicked it into third gear. The car took off like a rocket. Drunken pedestrians watched open mouthed, taxis honked in indignation as he flew past them.

He flicked right at the next intersection, giving it plenty of opposite lock as the back end stepped out, and got in lane for the highway. A black sedan peeled out behind him.

"How many of these bastards are there?" Ed despaired as he shifted down for another direction change. His speed was limited - he didn't want to risk hitting anything - and the sedan was close behind.

The phone rang. Ed glanced down at it. He didn't even remember bringing it with him. And he hadn't driven the Porsche in a week. How ...? Whatever, he answered it.

"Seems like you ticked them off. They're closing on you and they will bring you in at any cost."

"Who is this?"

"Say hello to White Bishop. I can help you, but you must do as I say."

"OK. Just get me out of here."

"The highway is the last place you want to be, but it's too late now. Take Exit 16 and head to the docks."

"OK, I'm almost ... shit!"

"What?"

"A traffic jam! A fucking great traffic jam at fucking 11pm at night!"

"This makes things more difficult. What was that?"

"Now they're SHOOTING at me. Alright, I've had enough of this. The docks you say?"

"Yes."

"I'll be there."

Edward hung up as he reached the top of the on-ramp. Stationary cars stretched for miles.

He stopped the car, flicked it into first, pulled the handbrake and floored the throttle. The V10 roared in protest as he wrenched the car round to face the other way, and took off down the hard shoulder.

The sedan gave chase, but it was far too slow.

He was reaching Exit 13 when the agents finally understood his velocity and planned accordingly. Ahead of him, Ed saw a car pull onto the shoulder and stop. "No no shitshitshitshit!"

He stood on the brakes but was still going too fast. He saw an opening in the traffic, and took it. The tyres squealed and he sideswiped several cars as he dived through the gap. The traffic was thinner here - they had waited too late. He

swerved and dodged, trying to keep his foot as planted as possible. But his luck ran out in spectacular fashion.

A driver, totally oblivious to the oncoming car, pulled forwards slightly to close the gap to the car in front.
Ed hit it. Hard.

He launched the Porsche into the air, the engine wailing as the rear wheels broke free of the asphalt, and went into a roll. The car flew over the walls along the on-ramp and crashed passenger-side down onto a rooftop.
It fell off the roof and finally came to land upside down at the side of the road.

The door popped open and a bloody Edward Hirst crawled out. Thanks to the mayhem, nobody fully registered what was going on and so no agents came. Ed staggered towards the nearest car - a taxi - and grabbed the stunned driver who was standing by the door.

"Hey man, are you OK?"

"I need your car."

"What? After doing THAT to a fuckin Porsche?"

"I don't have time to argue, just give me your fucking car!"

The driver was down on the road. Without realising it Ed had punctuated the last two words with sharp headbutts.
He hopped in - thankfully the guy didn't have a passenger - and quickly drove away, leaving the emergency services to deal with the wreckage. He just knew he had to get to the docks. It now seemed that his life depended on it.

Part 5

The brakes squeaked as he pulled to a stop, the sound piercing the night silence so much that Edward actually ducked down in case somebody sprang up to find out what the noise was.

There was nothing.

He sat back up and swivelled the rearview mirror. His face was covered in small cuts and was starting to bruise. His hair was full of glass and in the last few miles he'd become aware of his ribs aching, they were probably broken.

"What are you doing. What the hell are you doing?"

He rubbed his face with his hands, getting both slightly more bloody than they were before. Sinking back down into the seat, he reflected on the events of the last day.

Just over 24 hours ago he had met a hacker, by chance, called 'Neo'. The feds got the guy, now they were after him. He couldn't make the connection. Perhaps somebody had identified him?

Impossible. He was disguised and it was the last place anyone would expect him to be.

Having read the contents of the email account, Ed felt sure that there was something deeper, something more sinister at work.

Maybe what those people were saying about 'Big Brother' watching was true.

Of course the answer was much darker than that. He just didn't know it yet. He also didn't know that, as he sat in the car, Neo was meeting Morpheus and starting a chain reaction that would change the world forever.

The phone rang, and Edward almost jumped through the roof. He had left the phone in the Porsche. He had left the phone in the Porsche. Yet it was lying on the passenger seat. His skin crawled. But he picked up the phone.

"Hello?" he whispered.

"Good, you've made it this far. It won't be long before they trace you though. Go to Row 5, Warehouse 6. Park the car in the bay, and come up the stairs."

"I have a question."

"We don't have time."

click

He coasted round to the warehouse, its roller door raised, but hardly invitingly.

The lights were off, it looked like nobody was home. Or a trap.

He parked the car as requested, got out, and stood on the first step.

There was the click of a hammer being pulled back, and the gun that it belonged to pressed against his neck.

"What the hell?!"

"It's necessary to protect us." the holder of the gun said quietly.

"From me?!"

"From you."

"But you asked me to come here!"

"Keep walking. All will be revealed."

The room at the top of the stairs was sparse, except for a small polished aluminium desk.

A bald man walked in and faced Edward.

"Hi, my name is Soren. We've been tracking you for a few months now."

"Months? What the hell ... I only got into this whole situation last night ..."

"When you met Neo, yeah we know. That was a coincidence that accelerated our plan. But the fact that you're here after all you've been through shows that we were right to watch you."

Edward grimaced. Just what on god's earth was he into?

"We know that you're a wealthy guy. Wealth and power usually stop people questioning their surroundings, questioning the world they live in. They become dependant on their world, the system that they are plugged into, and they never come out of it. You are different."

"Am I?"

"We've studied you, seen you ask questions that nobody in your position would normally ask. And then your perseverance at finding the truth about Trinity. That was the clincher my friend."

"So what, I'm here because I ask too many questions?"

"In a manner of speaking. Yes."

"And what, you're going to put a stop to it."

Soren laughed. "Far from it. The agents that were chasing you ... they wanted to put a stop to it. We're here to show you that you were right to question the world. And we have the answer to the question that has been bugging you most. The question that sums up all the other ones that you have been asking in your life."

"What ... what is the Matrix?"

Soren smiled. "We can show you the Truth. This world you know is a prison. You, and everyone else, were born into slavery. Born into a prison your mind cannot escape from on its own. We can help."

"How?" Edward said, suddenly interested. Calm. His mind clear.

Soren placed two small objects on the desk.

"It is time to make a choice. Take the blue pill, and it ends here. You'll wake up having had the mother of all nightmares. We'll even put your Porsche back. You can believe whatever you want to believe. Take the red pill, and we can show you what the Matrix is."

"Drugs? You can't just tell me?"

"Unfortunately, nobody can be told what the Matrix is. You have to see it with your own eyes."

Part 6

When the three figures went into the adjoining room, only the blue pill was left on the table.

"Take a seat over here," Soren said, leading Edward to the only chair in the room. The whole place was filled with bizarre equipment. It looked like old hardware, but the screens betrayed the advanced nature of the operation.

"So what did I just take? Am I gonna believe I can fly now or something?"

"The pill disrupts your input/output carrier signal. It helps us get a lock on you, and stops the agents from finding us. You'll understand soon enough." Soren replied.

The people in the room with them were all doing specific jobs. One was dialling on a decrepit modem, whilst the others were all monitoring their screens.

"OK, I'm starting to pick up a signal." one of them muttered, eyes still fixed on the screen.

Edward began to feel ill. His skin crawled, he felt cold, his vision blurred. Then there it was.

"I've got him!" cried a voice from in the room. He felt a pain in the back of his neck. Then small hotspots of pain all over his body. Then they intensified, all together. He screamed in pain, his eyes clamping shut.

His brain took a few moments to adjust to what was going on. When it had decided, Edward found himself lying. He could hear a humming noise all around him. His skin felt strange somehow, there was something on the back of his head, and a tube down his throat.

After the few milliseconds it took to process that information, he opened his eyes.

Pink. Wet. Panic.

He flailed out and found his hands against a barrier. Trapped! But it moved. He dug his fingers into it and stretched again. It seemed to move. He heaved himself upwards into the warm air, pulling the tube out of his throat as he did so. He opened his eyes again. It was a wonder his brain didn't shut off out of shock. He was standing in a pod. And he was looking at hundreds ... thousands of them. He looked from side to side. There were people in there.

Slowly he examined himself. He was thin, a lot thinner than he remembered. And there were thick wires sticking out of his body.

It was when the robot came that he passed out. Even the icy waters of the waste system couldn't revive him, and it was only once aboard the Hovercraft Vigilant that he reopened his eyes.

There was Soren, looking a little less perfect than he had before, and dressed in ragged clothing.

"Welcome to the Real World, Lost Prophet."

Part 7

After weeks of the crew rebuilding his body, LostProphet was taken back to Zion for training simulations.

A fortnight later he was slowly getting to grips with his surroundings. He was no longer in his penthouse flat, no longer rich. But he was an equal amongst 250,000 others, in the real world. And that felt good.

He had accepted the truth of the real world as a matter of course, and gladly gulped down the training simulations that were thrown his way. In his old world, knowledge was power. That mantra was even more tangible in the real world, and he was determined to learn everything he could.

In fact, he excelled. At first a number of teenage redpills were running around after him, saying that he was "The One".

Prophet questioned 'The One' in a briefing with Commander Lock. He was swiftly beaten back.

According to Lock, The One was bullshit. A fairy story told by somebody plugged into the Matrix. A number of captains believed this 'Oracle' figure, but Lock did not, and took a dim view of those that did.

He later found out from other sources that Captain Morpheus had rescued Neo, and that he was believed to be The One.

The first time they returned to Zion, redpills found out that Neo had freed Morpheus from the grasp of the Agents, had killed an Agent, and was able to fly. Such feats spoke volumes to LostProphet, but he stayed quiet, anxious not to get on the wrong side of Lock and the power givers of Zion.

Prophet never got to meet Neo. In the next four months, he concentrated on his own skills. He eventually ran missions into the Matrix regularly and became a highly valued soldier of Zion.

Unfortunately, or luckily (in hindsight) an accident confined him to quarters just as the machines attacked. On medical grounds he was no longer trusted on a

hovercraft nor in an APU. And so he stood in the temple on that day, the day that the war ended, and experienced a bittersweet moment.

He had met the man that saved the world, but before either of them realised what they could be.