

The Ace at the Apex

### **Chapter 250 Such Strength!**

After the phone call was connected, Javier asked, "Where's this information you were talking about? I already have the Osborn Award in my hands."

However, the old fox was chuckling away as he said, "I watched the live broadcast last night. Not bad at all. You managed to win five out of the seven awards! Tsk, tsk!"

Javier rather enjoyed being complimented by the old fox.

However, at that moment, he wanted to know the information regarding his parents even more.

After he asked about it continuously, the old fox finally said, "You're the one who said that the information was on the underside, not me. I placed it in its stomach, so all you have to do is smash it."

Javier was slightly stunned. "I spent the better half of the past year to painstakingly win this award, yet you're now asking me to smash it?"

The old fox then asked in return, "Aren't you planning on breaking whatever record you just made? Are you planning on being content with the glory you have forever?"

Javier immediately understood the old fox's intention. "Thanks, Grandpa. I've got it now."

The old fox's teachings were everywhere. Everything the old fox did had its own reason, even if it was in the tiniest of details.

However, Javier was not going to smash the award yet because he had not gone to talk to Cillian about it!

Thus, Javier rushed to get on the second flight and returned to the country.

As soon as he got out of the plane, someone called him, saying that his Bentley was ready and that he could claim his car keys anytime.

Thus, what was originally supposed to be a six-month wait time before he could receive his car ended up being three months, which was rather efficient.

However, Javier was in no rush to pick up his car. Instead, he needed to get to Cillian's house urgently.

When Javier arrived at Cillian's house the next day, he opened up the door and arrived before Cillian's plaque.

"I fulfilled your wish, old man. I didn't use any of my powers or connections to intervene, so this award was won purely by you and everyone's genuine capabilities. I brought it here today to tell you about it and show you the trophy.

"On the way here after I got out of the plane, I heard the radio saying that this movie has become our country's cultural height and pride. You're now our country's pride and joy, and you're going to be given an honorary certificate that will exist for life.

“Although you won’t be able to accept the certificate, I suppose it’s fine since you’ve finally obtained the recognition you always wanted...Our country has now acknowledged how proud you’ve made us...”

Javier said a lot of things as he sat in front of Cillian’s plaque.

As he spoke, he could not stop the tears falling from his eyes while he pondered how such a decent old man could suddenly disappear from the world!

After mumbling for more than half an hour, Javier wiped his tears dry and told Cillian, “I’m going to have to break this trophy now because it contains information about my father and stepmother’s disappearance, so please don’t blame me for disrespecting it

“Actually, you could think about this from another angle, right? Me smashing this trophy to bits would mean that it’s going to you on the other side.”

Javier took out a cigarette and lit it up before he smashed the award against the ground ferociously.

The award was not made of pure gold, but an alloy. However, there was still gold mixed within. Thus, the trophy may not have seemed to be big, but it still weighed about eight pounds.

When Javier threw it on the ground, the trophy was not smashed to pieces. Instead, the floor tile ended up cracking, while the trophy was completely fine.

Left with no choice, Javier had to rummage through the drawers for equipment before he finally found a hacksaw.

Thus, the most tragic award was now being brutally tortured and mercilessly dismembered with a hacksaw.

Seeing the pitiful sight before him, Javier took out the metal box stored within the trophy’s stomach and closed the trophy back u

In fact, if one did not look at it carefully, the trophy would seem seamless, with no signs of being cut open at all.

Javier then opened the metal box, revealing... absolutely nothing! Not even a feather! Javier found it strange at first, but he suddenly realized that a QR code had been etched on top of the box. ‘I wonder how they managed to do this.’

“Looks like the old fox is a rather modern guy. He gave us money through QR codes, and he’s now giving me information through a QR code, which can be handled with just a single cell phone. Doesn’t he find all of this cumbersome? This is just unnecessary...”

As he mumbled away, Daniel took out his cell phone and scanned the code, but it turned out to contain nothing at all. It was the same even when Javier tried to scan it with other apps. 2

He suddenly realized something...

“The information here should be confidential, so it’s only normal for ordinary apps to be unable to scan its contents!”

Thus, he unlocked a customized program and scanned the code once more, which was successful.

'Your father was once involved in the automobile business. You'll obtain a new lead once you win the World Car Of The Year Award ( WCOTY).

Javier was now dumbfounded. Absolutely and thoroughly dumbfounded. "What kind of f\*cking clue is this?!"

Immediately, Javier gave the old fox a phone call to object to the situation. "Dad was in the war as well, so are you going to have me fight one in the end? This clue of yours is so unreliable! You're such a sneaky, shameless old fox!" 1

The old fox merely chuckled and said, "I've left so many leads that I've already forgotten which one's which. Why don't you read to me what you have with you right now?"

Javier impatiently replied, "You just asked me to win the WCOTY. You said that Dad was once in the automobile business, so you now want me to get involved as well. Are you going to somehow ask me to join the war he was once involved in as well?"

The old fox replied with a serious tone, "You're kind of right, but did your father have anything to do with the war, though?"

What the old fox meant was that Javier's father had been involved in the automobile business indeed.

"But..."

Javier was just about to say something else when the old fox shut him down completely.

"If you want to carry on investigating, be my guest. Otherwise, just forget about it. After all, he's my son, not my father."

After saying that, the old fox hung up the phone call, leaving Javier extremely depressed.

'He did seem to have a point, and I couldn't retaliate at all.

'On second thought, if I have no way of retaliating at all. I can't just leave my old man and Ciara's mother alone and not do something about it, can I?'

"D\*mn it... I feel like I'm a dog put on a leash, and that old fox is the one walking me around..."

Javier had once taken note of the WOCTY, which was organized by WCA, an independent non-profit organization that represented the highest level of honor for the cars selected to receive the award.

This award had been launched in January 2004 and was assessed by 73 professional reviewers from 23 countries all over the world. Then, they would give out the awards, which consisted of six categories, the World Car Of The Year Award, the World Performance Car Award, the World Urban Car Award, the World Car Design of the Year Award, and the World Green Car award.

The old fox's message only stated that Daniel was required to win the WOCTY award.

"The winner of that award in 2018 should be the Mazda CX-5. I'm not too sure what the criteria for winning that prize are, but I'm pretty sure it shouldn't be sales.

'After all, the CX-5's sales aren't all that great...'

Just as Javier was pondering this, the door suddenly opened.

Javier thought that it was Cillian's son who had returned and wanted to share the wonderful news.

However, it ended up being Dana, who also had a trophy in her hands.

Obviously, that was the Best Actor Award that Cillian had won

"I thought you might be here."

Dana entered and smiled before walking to the side of the table. She then picked up the Best Film Award.

Javier was extremely shocked! "Holy sh\*t! That's some strength you've got there! How did you manage to break the trophy in half?!" Dana looked at the dismembered trophy in her hand, looking dumbfounded.

### **Chapter 251 My Acceptance Speech**

"God, L...I don't know! I just took it to take a look at it, a-a-and it just cracked! I didn't do anything, so why did it crack?" Dana cried, flummoxed and not at all sure what was happening. The trophy had looked fine, like no other, so how had it cracked into two just because she had lifted it out of curiosity?

Then, her eyes drifted to the twitching lips on Javier's face, which formed a snicker, desperately trying to hold a smile back.

Damn it, she had just been trolled!

"You annoying little-!" Dana blustered, stomping her feet. "You pulled off this annoying prank to scare me!"

She was a forty-something-year-old woman in high heels, yet she looked adorable and not at all like other women her age. There was nothing jarring about her actions and age either. In Javier's opinion, this only added to her charm.

A beat later, Dana asked out loud, "Why break the little golden statue like that?"

Javier took a deep breath. "Aren't successes meant to be shattered so you can reach new heights? Or should we be happy basking in the glory of the past?" "Oh my god!"

Dana could feel her heart quaking at the sheer impact of his sagely words! God, she swore, members of elite families were always cut from a different, loftier cloth than others. From the way they talked to the way they did things, they were always so sensible and right!

He was absolutely, undeniably, totally right. So right, in fact, that his words pushed her own mind along to transcendence!

"You're right, I'll throw away all my old trophies too as soon as I get back. I've been basking in the feel-good glory of my past for so many years that these trophies have prevented me from going further. Javier, your actions and words today have enlightened me."

Javier nodded solemnly-but also in assent-as he himself had been enlightened by the same wise axiom. He had not come up with it. He had just copied it from that sly old fox.

Now, though, Javier had plans to enlighten Dana even further...with a billion-dollar deal!

After Dana and her master spoke for a bit, she put the award down before Javier led her away.

“H-Hey! Where are we going? Why are you so anxious to leave?”

“I’ve got a billion-dollar deal to discuss with you.”

His proposal stunned Dana, who was sitting in the passenger seat. “Wait. Why me? I’m not even remotely knowledgeable when it comes to business. You’d be wasting your time!”

It was only after Javier parked his car by the main entrance that she finally found out what he had really meant. She was definitely knowledgeable when it came to this type of business. And she was so going to feel like a billion dollars...

By the time the deal was sealed, a rosy-cheeked Dana cleaned herself up while whispering to Javier, “You really had to put me in danger with that no-protection policy, did you? What will happen if I get pregnant, bad boy?”

Javier answered her very solemnly, “I don’t wanna have even the thinnest barrier between us, Dani. Not even a layer of film.” He leaned close to her ear and breathed. “You don’t know just how feminine you are...”

Hearing him say that sent a jolt into her chest, fondling an itch she could not stop no matter how hard she tried.

Luckily for her, Javier did not go for a second round. He still had some official business he had to attend to. “You free these days? If you are, come with me. I bought a car and I am about to pick it up.” “Really? You don’t even have to ask if I’m free,” Dana replied. “I’m supposed to be heading home anyway, so I can just give you a lift on the way.”

“Oh, there’s no ‘on the way’, ma’am. The car is all the way at East Tres, where the factory is.”

Dana was stunned. After a while, she finally replied, “...didn’t imagine an ultra-rich guy like you would be buying a secondhand car.”

Javier was a little speechless. What kind of assumption was that? Why was a car manufactured in another state somehow meant to be a secondhand car in the first place? The only reason he had to cross state borders was because the factory was located there.

He explained himself to Dana, who finally understood. She subsequently told him she had no plans at all. Being newly crowned as “Best Director” by the Osborn Awards had made Mr. Gander a very busy man, so he was currently busy dealing with a seemingly unlimited supply of work.

Luckily for Javier, though, the director had signed a contract with Reivaj Media before this deluge of fame and work. At the end of the day, his contract was still going through Reivaj Media.

Javier had little reason to worry about any of those things. "Fine by me. I'm a certified junkie when it comes to your sexy womanhood anyway, so let's drive there together, shall we? We won't even take the freeway-just some good old country roads to have a good old road trip. Anytime my addiction to your sexy womanhood acts up, we'll find a place to park and pacify my bad boy. New town, new motel!"

Dana's cheeks were flushing from her spot in the passenger seat. "God! I swear, the dirty things you say!"

She could not overlook just how brazen their affair was. It was almost wrong to call it an underground affair. It embarrassed her, and a part of her heart felt deeply sorry for her husband. But she could not help it! She was a junkie with a perpetual hunger for a Javier fix. She was so addicted to him that it was maddening. Every time Javier appeared in person, she wanted to go for a ride. She even wished she could be stuck to his body forever and never have to be apart from him.

Hell, she thought she would be happy being f\*cked to death.

Javier was more than just some bluffs and jokes too. He did exactly what he said he would. Getting to East Tres from Ferris Sky was supposedly a one-day trip, but he managed to stretch it out to three days. It was no sloth's doing either. Javier spent all his time driving when he was not sleeping.

Well, it was a busy trip for a man who had to ride two different things back-to-back.

Dana herself squeezed a big addiction-soothing kick out of it. She was starting to wish their journey didn't have a destination! Unfortunately for her, there was no such thing. Their trip ended three days later at noon, when the two of them arrived at the factory. Dana, who was a celebrity whose year-long marriage was far from unknown, balked at the thought of going inside. Everyone knew who her real husband was.

Javier did not make her go either. Instead, he drove her back to their hotel.

He had barely stepped inside the factory when Dana's call came. Apparently, Mr. Gander was about to return, so she had to race back home and beat him to it.

What a drag. Javier had planned to pop her like a bottle of champagne after getting his new car, but it turned out that this sweet, sweet bottle had just rolled away. Now that it was away, he could not shake it, build it up, and pop it open even though his fingers were ready.

How depressing.

Thankfully, his sour mood evaporated as soon as he saw his new car. It was sleek, sweet, sexy, and hella seductive! Just look at those skin-colored silk stockings! Those long, lean legs! That voluptuous frame! It was a thirty-something-year-old succubus and bewitching beauty in one!

The only praise Javier could come up with to accurately describe such a fine thing was...

"Noice."

The new car-oh, he meant to say "the new chick"-was a woman of ethnic minority descent named Quinna Aurum. Her father had been the last leader of this particular factory before his retirement, so she had been working here since she had graduated from university. She was already one of the higher-ups and she had been named the factory's brightest despite only being in her thirties.

Today, she was the one tasked to receive him, as well as the one who suggested some ceremonial grandeur for Javier's first meeting with his new car.

After a brief exchange and self-introduction, the two arrived at the hall where the factory hosted a grand car-meets-owner ceremony. For an extra flair of formality, she popped some confetti between taking multiple photos and then invited Javier to give an acceptance speech. 1

What kind of acceptance speech was he supposed to give? All he had done was shell out money to buy a car she was selling!

Still, maybe the fact that this was no ordinary car made up for all this pomp and circumstance. Javier took the spotlight and gave his most solemn speech yet. "This car and I share the same soul, ladies and gents—a passionate Chinese soul! That's all, folks!"

### **Chapter 252 Show Some Respect, Please**

"Well, Mr. Kersey. That was...something. As unique as it was curt."

Javier was about to get into his car with his documents in hand when Quinna gave the man her review.

He laughed "That's because you've been distracting me with your stunning beauty, Miss Aurum. My mind just got so utterly messed up that I could hardly think straight!" 1

Quinna captivated him with a sweet smile. "Really? You don't seem messed up."

Javier was about to woo his new target when he suddenly remembered the World Car Award. "Say, Miss Aurum, you're the expert here. I'd like to know something."

Certain that Javier was just another stereotypical playboy, Quinna had been smiling at him out of sheer decorum, work ethic, and little else. The H7 model would make decent sales if just a few clients with big coffers like him supported it, so there was not much to talk about.

Seeing the seriousness in Javier's features and speech pattern, though, surprised Quinna. Without so much as letting her smile falter, she replied, "I'll gladly answer any questions pertaining to the car, Mr. Kersey."

Any questions pertaining to the car? Was that supposed to mean she would decline answering any other questions?

The implication did not fly over his head, though he did not make any snide remarks or probe further. "What's the criteria one has to meet to win the World Car Award?" he asked, cutting straight to the chase.

Quinna was a little stunned. "You're...interested in that?"

Javier saw an opening to add another element to the conversation. "I'm also interested in you, but you wouldn't wanna talk to me if that was the topic. That leaves me nothing but some straight-laced, serious business to talk about, you know?"

"Quite the sense of humor you have, Mr. Kersey," Quinna reparteed, sidestepping his other point with ease. "There are a lot of metrics to be considered for each contender. The way the car looks, its

performance, safety, comfort, affordability, and even its system. Sales, however, are not part of it. Of course, poor sales figures might..."

She trailed off. She just could not bring herself to continue. The H7 model had been suffering from poor sales, and she could not help remembering what had happened last time. There had been only a single H7 model to show during a motor show-a moment too embarrassing to make one feel relieved.

That was not the point Javier was fixating on. He was interested in a candidate's qualifications alone, so he asked Quinna about those.

"There's really only one: The car has to be a new model that only hit the market within two years of the date of the current award ceremony. Everything else, like crash tests and such, is a no-brainer requirement, but every factory possesses facilities to ensure those things already," Quinna explained before remarking, "Hmm. You sound interested in the automobile industry."

Javier sidestepped the pointed question with a quip. "Can't help being interested in the things you're interested in!"

Quinna reeled in realization and smiled. "You must be a comedian in your spare time, Mr. Kersey."

The conversation went on for a little longer before Javier bade Quinna farewell. He got inside his one-and-only flagship L5 model and drove out of the factory.

Quinna considered the retreating silhouette and furrowed her beautifully-arched eyebrows. Javier was a little droll, alright. He had been studying her with those horny eyes as if he was very interested in her, and yet he had always known exactly where the lines of humor were. The way he had left had been amazingly curt too, as he had not overstayed his welcome. After all that banter, he had not even asked her for her number before he had taken off.

Quinna had enough experience handling men who cared only about her looks and body. It was enough of a daily occurrence that she had developed 100 ways to dance around their attempts. But Javier? Gosh, he was like Man 101-a man so unique and special that even she had never met someone like him before.

Or could he be playing hard to get?

Quinna was a little confused. Was this a ruse? Was he going to come back after a while with some excuse about forgetting something before revealing that it was her phone number he had come back for?

Ew. That would be so lame.

To her surprise, that flagship L5 model did return!

"Oh gawd. He really is that lame, isn't he? Looks really can be deceiving," she murmured to herself as she strode toward the car."

Welcome! You're back so soon, Mr. Kersey!" She greeted him with a laugh. "What's the matter? Did you forget something?"

Javier opened the door and stepped out, surprised to see his car had its own car door light. Instead of projecting the car's logo on it, though, the Chinese flag shone brightly from the floor.

Javier had seen projector lights on other cars before, but being greeted by the Chinese flag like this improved his mood. It just felt good. Everyone else could take one glance at it and feel an immense sense of pride too.

"I'm not the one who forgot something," he answered Quinna. "You are, Miss Aurum."

Quinna smiled sweetly. "Ah, lemme guess. You're about to tell me that I forgot to return your heart to you, aren't you? I sure hope that's not it, sir, 'cause with all due respect, that is just cringey. You wouldn't stoop to saying something so cringey now, would you?" 1

Quinna was sure he had come back just to flirt, and honestly, she was not at all interested in a trust-fund, casanova-wannabe like him. That sort of attitude repulsed her so much that she would not even think of promoting her other car models for him even if he had the money to be a lucrative customer."

Her disdain was palpable in her retort, and one could reasonably argue that she might have breached the line of professionalism. But cool, suave Javier was above that, as his focus was on something else. "Please, Miss Aurum, show some respect. You and I are both representatives of national corporations. We represent our company and country just as much as we represent ourselves. I only came back because I need my temporary license plate."

A new car still needed a temporary plate-that much was legally required. Driving a car without one would be a felony.

Quinna froze. He was...telling her to "show some respect?"

Admittedly, she had been a little unprofessional just now. Besides, Javier's request had ultimately turned out to be a legal and reasonable one. Every other client would not care about it because their wealth and connections granted them a small road privilege, and they often handled their felony charges with a well-connected call and a little persuasion.

But Javier was different from all these other guys. He followed the law, and that meant getting his license plate. Of course, the deeper reason was that he needed it to use the freeway unobstructed by traffic cops.

Quinna opened her mouth, but nothing came out. She had no clue how to reply. In the end, all she could say was, "I'm so sorry for my mistake, Mr. Kersey. I'll have someone fetch it right away."

She waved at one of the employees, who sprinted away at Quinna's order.

Javier ignored her while they waited, focusing on the car instead. It met his demands splendidly, the specifications were tailored according to his requirements, and many other details had been changed according to his wishes.

A while later, his plate arrived. Quinna took it from the employee's hands. "My apologies, Mr. Kersey. My folly has cost you valuable time," she said as she bent toward the hood and stuck the plate onto his windshield.

Javier flashed her a smile and thanked her before getting into his car. He rolled the window down and looked pointedly at her. "So, Miss Aurum. Are you ever going to return the heart I accidentally left in your hands?" 1

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Quinna froze. That was the exact same cheesy pick-up line she had said he would use!

What now? Was he an honest flirt? Or was this jeering mockery of her previous remark? Even quick-witted Quinna was unsure how to reply.

Fortunately for her, she did not need an answer from him, as he just drove away.

Of course, he left with the most intriguing last words: "Hasta la vista, Miss Aurum. We'll meet again."

### **Chapter 253 There's A Lot of Heat In You**

Javier's L5 model tore through the freeway and went straight home.

It was a smooth ride. His new car was comparable to his experience driving luxury cars with much-touted comfort, like the Bentley. This proved that this country had always been capable of producing good cars, and it was their focus on making cheap cars that had cost them. To make cheap automobiles, one had to skimp on materials and quality, so the cars produced faced enough mishaps and problems that the public distrusted their nationally-produced cars more and more.

It was a little past nine by the time he got home. By then, Jade was training in their personal gym. A sexy, toned body needed maintenance after all. All that sweat was just tears of excess fat as it was bumed away.

Javier did not pay much attention to her activity at first, but the longer he watched, the more he suspected something else. His eyes began to widen in joy as he asked, "Don't tell me...you're gonna be a mom soon?"

"What? No!" She protested coyly. "I mean, fine. My period has been late for more than ten days now, and it's just not something that's prone to happen to me. My period has always been very timely-the worst delay I've ever had was two days. But more than a week? I mean... Could it really be?"

Javier frowned. "Then what the hell are you doing, Jade? Stop all this training before you hurt my precious princess!"

"How are you so sure it'll be a girl, huh?" Jade grumbled, though once again, she sounded more coquettish than genuinely displeased. "I was worried that you might be upset about the news, so I thought I'd just see how it went for myself. Honestly, though, if this level of exercise is all it takes to lose the baby, then whatever, I guess."

Javier's frown turned into a grimace. "Hey, that's just awful, okay? Why would I be upset, huh? I'm over the moon, babe! This is our baby, Jade. Yours and mine-our little thing! I don't care if it's a boy or a girl. I'll love it all the same. But more importantly, I want you to take care of yourself. That's the first step to taking care of our baby."

His rebuff was uncharacteristically verbose, but it was ultimately borne out of his concern for Jade and their child. Just thinking about the prospect of becoming a father sparked a happy dance in his system. If he had to complain about something, though, it would be that her pregnancy effectively barred him from having sex with Jade for a year. He'd be granted only the privilege of cuddling with a woman of such off-the-charts sexiness but not permission to ascend to fourth base?

God, this was going to be torment for both his body and soul!

Javier kept rolling on his bed that night. He was going to be a father! A father-that was uncharted territory, something so new and exciting that it just made him so, so very happy!

To his dismay, Jade reported to him in the morning that her period had arrived. Javier was beyond miffed. "Did you. Did you just give me false hope?!"

She smiled, and he caught twinkles of joy and vague hints of cunning in those bright pupils. Something was amiss, he realized. She had not given him false hope. The whole thing had probably been a lie to begin with.

He prodded her a little further until she finally spilled the beans.

Apparently, Jade had read somewhere online that telling her partner about a pregnancy was a good way to gauge the man's

his partner after all.

"I'm so sorry, honey. I know it's bad to lie, but I just...I just feel so insecure after finding hair on your clothes again, you know? I couldn't help but wonder if you've been sleeping with other women so much that you'd forgotten all about me again. I'm sorry..."

Javier was speechless. Had she just made a big deal out of a molehill?

Seeing how pitiful and pathetic she looked, though, made a pang hurt his chest. Javier had to admit that the fact that Jade had done what was unnecessary was because she cared a lot about their relationship. Why would she go through this trouble if she did not?

"Oh, I'm not mad at you, okay? I love you. I love you, alright?" Javier comforted her. "But please don't tell lies like that anymore, okay? It actually hurts." 1

Warmth unfurled in Jade's heart. She had always known Javier loved her, possibly the most too. She told herself she was never going to doubt how much he loved her from now on.

Never again.

Javier drove his new car to the company before leaving Josh to get his actual license plate. He himself went to meet Chad

"You what?! We're making-we're making cars now?! Mr. Kersey, my most honorable CEO, you can't just do business as though you're ticking boxes off a list! That's a no-no for very good reasons!"

Suffice to say that Javier's suggestion had ignited Chad's fuse, as he continued to protest hotly.

“We just started getting involved in the advertising and movie business, Mr. Kersey! We. Just. Started! You can’t suddenly say ‘alright y’all, how about we make cars too?’ on a whim. That just smells like a recipe for disaster. You heard me right-disaster. Besides, do we know anything about cars? No! So you want us to get into the market without any knowledge of what we’re getting into? That’s a risky gamble! Not good, not great, just bad!”

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He was vehemently opposed to Javier’s plan to expand into the automobile industry. In fact, he balked at the mere suggestion so much so that he dug his heels in and decided to die on this hill. “If you dare open up even one automobile factory, L...I’ll quit!”

It was a threat, plain and simple, though not completely borne from Chad’s own selfish interests.

He cared about the company, and this was him defending it and ensuring its survival. Javier could not fault him for his outburst.

Calmly, he flicked the ashes off his cigarette. “Damn, for a man your age, you sure are feisty. Full of unbridled heat seems more like it. No wonder you keep picking up women whenever your wife isn’t around. All that heat has to be channeled somewhere, huh?”

His remark embarrassed Chad, but it did not deter him enough for him not to argue. “That’s an irrelevant argument, man. My point still stands-no car factory will be opened under my watch!”

Sure, it would not matter much if Javier’s automobile business tanked. Chad knew how deep Javier’s pockets were, so the loss would not even make a dent. But there was more to business than just making profit. To Chad, doing business was like his favorite video game. He loved the avatar he had helped build with Javier, but he would not tolerate having his character decked in hard earned mithril armor, only for him to wear some bronze pauldron for kicks. What kind of bullsh\*t was that? He would rather cut off an entire leg than have a lame one,

“I didn’t say I wanna build a car factory, man,” Javier began. “How many years is that gonna take me? How much money? I’d need to get a supply chain, hire personnel, build the damn factory itself...All small problems compared to the funds needed for research and development! How many years and decades would I have put into R&D just to bet on uncertain profit? I’m not that loco.”

His admission managed to mollify Chad’s disgruntlement. “Okay, so what exactly are you getting at? You wanna buy an existing one?”

Javier waved him off. “No. I’ve been reading up on this lately, and I don’t think we need to build a factory or buy an existing one. We won’t get anything remotely significant in the near future, and that’s in spite of our high-rolling funds and efforts. What I want is to research propulsion systems and plug-in electric systems,” he explained. “Of course, we’re not gonna develop something ourselves. We’re just gonna invest funds, buy shares, or even buy patents. Then, we’ll outfit new cars with our own systems.

“We don’t have to build our own factory for production. We can work with existing local companies by providing them with supply chains. We could give them the technology by buying their shares. We could also...”

Chad listened intently, his head nodding even more. His stance had shifted to one of support.

“Sure, that’s way more plausible. Of course, we might actually need to start mass production for our green energy propulsion system in the future, but we could build a factory for that or outsource it to some other company too. It would not be too big of a deal.” He chimed in. “Our country’s encouraging the green energy market now, isn’t it? And that’s not even a national trend-it’s global. The world hasn’t seen a perfect green energy vehicle yet, so this is a feasible plan. It could really work...

“But we’ll need a professional market analyst to help us plan and compile reports on how feasible this could be.” He wondered aloud before Javier cut him short with a chuckle.

“That’s why I’m here, Chad, Come on, give me a name for the job. We need a new mad lad on our team.”

The prospect of a new teammate thrilled Chad. Feeling giddy, he announced, “As luck would have it, I do have a mad lad in mind. He’s gonna be perfect for the role!”

### **Chapter 254 Because I’m a Dirt-Poor Motherf\*cker**

Chad’s nominee was a nearly fifty-year-old man named Trevor Hammond. Javier had heard of him before on the news. He used to be the leader of one of the nation’s local car manufacturing companies. He had later been reported for bribery and fraud-charges that had caused him to go on a year-long sabbatical while being investigated.

No incriminating proof had ever turned up, but this had cost him his position in the company. His career had taken a nosedive, and he had lost his leadership role.

Javier was quick to bring this scandal up, which Chad countered by saying, “Nah. There was a civil war within the company back then. The whole investigation was meant to bring him down...”

He filled Javier in. Apparently, Trevor was a stalwart, intrepid reformist. The kind of maverick whose sweeping reforms would sooner or later move some of his colleagues’ metaphorical “cheese”. Unsurprisingly, when a political war had broken out over power and profit, it was his enemies who had won with ease.

“I’m telling you, Mr. Kersey, this guy is the real deal. He was still working abroad for an international company when I first met him, and man, he has been a ballsy maverick since then. All his details and information can be looked up online, so go ahead and check it yourself.”

Javier trusted Chad’s recommendation, but he still needed to run a background check on this “maverick’s” character. Usually, when there was smoke, there really was a fire.

He left Chad’s office and began to check into the black market on his phone, organizing a background check on one Trevor Hammond. It took only half a day for the investigation results to pour in: Trevor was about as decent as most people would reasonably be expected to be.

It was the board of directors around him, the ones who had launched the investigation against him, who had been corrupt. Trevor’s ostracization from central power had meant that even if he had been corrupt, he would have had no chance to act.

As for the reformation he had suggested back then, it turned out to be about green energy. He had been telling his company to step into the frontier of green energy development and research before everyone

else. The higher-ups, though, had opposed him. Some had been against it just to line their pockets. Some had just not believed that green energy had any true use.

The future, however, had proven Trevor right. Had those myopic Luddites supported Trevor's vision instead of getting in his way, their company could have very well been one of the biggest players in the electric vehicle market.

In other words, Trevor Hammond—a free-thinking visionary strapped for the stage and the legacy he deserved—was the kind of talent Javier needed to carve a mark in the automobile industry.

After Chad contacted the man, Javier drove his car over and raced to meet his newest genius.

The storm in his life had left Trevor a lone wolf with little ambition. He was still in his forties but was spending his life as though he was much older. He played chess and gardened in his yard, which was a typical day in his life. Anything more adventurous than that would just involve him buying groceries at a supermarket.

Javier came just in time. He had just returned from the supermarket, his hands full of green vegetables and toiletries. After a self introduction, Javier asked pointedly, "It's a bit of a waste for a genius' hands to just lift bags of groceries, don't you think?"

Trevor fished out a packet of cigarettes and handed one to Javier before lighting another one for himself. They were cheap ciggies by all means, but Trevor seemed to relish in their taste.

"What genius? There ain't no genius here," he replied. "Besides, my life is pretty good. I got food on the table, I have cheap beer; I live like I've retired, man. I've got not a single sh\*t to give. Ain't I free?"

Javier snickered. "You really believe that?"

Trevor considered him. "So what if it ain't true?"

Javier's retort was instant. "Nothing. I'm here to sate my amusement. Just wanted to see how hard the mighty 'green energy visionary' has fallen. I was wondering if he even tries to make his own lunch."

Trevor lifted his groceries. "Mystery solved. He does."

Javier nodded. "And now I wonder if I could eat too."

"Wow. You're as greedy as a crow."

"Nah. I would love to be more like a vulture. That's more like it. But I don't know if I'm allowed to do that."

Trevor let the conversation die. He lifted his grocery bags and went inside, Javier in tow. After inviting his guest to sit on the couch,

he sauntered away to the kitchen to begin making lunch, leaving Javier alone in the living room to study his house.

Not bad. It was a roomy house with electronic appliances on the higher-end of the market, and even the couch was a high-quality, custom-made piece of furniture. But Javier knew that all this money came

from Trevor's wife, Libby Lepore, who owned a modest boutique factory. Had Trevor been alone, he would not even have had the money for a cheap packet of cigarettes.

While he waited, the front door opened and a forty-year-old woman stepped inside.

Her make-up looked...more painted than applied. Everything was in excess, and she looked like an ogress hemorrhaging right from her lips. If one stared at her mouth long enough, one would start to panic.

Still, since the woman had the key to Trevor's house, she had to be his wife. Libby Lepore shot a glance at Javier and said, "You Trevor's friend?"

He nodded and got to his feet, smiling. "Nice to meet you, Mrs. Hammond! I'm Jav,"

Javier could not even finish his greeting, as Libby cut him off. "Trevor's got a guest! Who would have thought, amirite? You didn't come here to learn how to go grocery shopping from him, right?"

Her tone, though, made it clear that Javier was not the target of her attack.

The real target was the guy in the kitchen

Javier did not continue. She did not seem like she wanted him to finish his sentence anyway.

With her handbag still slung around her shoulder, Libby zipped open the bag and fished out 160 dollars before chucking them onto the table. A breeze blew through the open window nearby, and the money scattered before falling back on the floor.

Libby did not even shoot a look at the money.

Hearing the commotion, Trevor walked out of the kitchen and immediately faced her open strike. "Oh, fancy seeing you here, you waste of space. Can't believe I have to raise both a child and a useless adult! Why can't you just go to work already? Hey, how about you work as a mall cop, huh? You could at least earn 300 dollars or more, for God's sake!" she bristled "The only reason I'm putting up with supporting a useless sh\*t like you is for the sake of our child. You would have been sleeping on the streets long ago if it weren't for our kid!"

She didn't show Trevor even a mote of respect. Javier was just a bystander, and yet even he felt secondhand embarrassment by watching the ordeal. Libby sure was...spirited.

He turned quickly to Trevor, expecting him to shout back at her for disrespecting him and show her the same manly spirit. Instead, Trevor looked unfazed and unruffled. "You know, Xanthippe used to nag and lash out at her husband too. And her husband was Socrates."

Libby could not help snickering with a shrill.

"Oh my Lord, you did not just-you just compared yourself to Socrates?! All those cheap cigarettes you've been smoking must contain something else 'cause you just keep growing farther and farther away from reality, aren't you? Socrates, my \*ss. You really fancy yourself the smartest f\*cking man alive now? Please tell me Julius Caesar will come knocking on your door, invite the world's smartest man on an adventure to conquer the world, and then turn you around to screw you so hard his soldiers will sing about your squealing while they march! How's that for a reality check?"

God. No wonder her lips were that red. With a tongue that cold and harsh, one would not even doubt she drank the blood of her victims for tea. She eviscerated Trevor so hard, the man was left with nothing to say.

Javier could not help but ask, "If you hate his guts so much, ma'am, why aren't you two divorced already?"

Perhaps it was just as acerbic and inappropriate for a stranger like Javier to ask such a question, but Javier was profoundly puzzled by what he was seeing.

Libby loathed Trevor. So why not split up?

Trevor himself was always skewered by this shrew. Again, why not split up already?

Libby answered first, "Because my kid is stopping me! I would have kicked this useless deadweight to the street otherwise!"

Trevor followed up with an answer of his own-one that was so boldly pragmatic that it landed squarely on the territory of undignified shamelessness. "Because I'm a dirt-poor motherf\*cker

### **Chapter 255 Then Youll Be My Liege**

Trevor's honesty was insane based on its sheer audacity. So insane, in fact, that Libby was fuming.

What's this supposed to mean, huh?! That just because you're a dirt-poor mother\*cker, you have the god-given right to leech off of me?! That just because you're a dirt-poor motherf\*cker, you have the f\*cking privilege to demand sh\*t from me?! You are a f\*cking parasite living in my colon, eating and living off of me, and now you're announcing your uselessness as though you're f\*cking proud of yourself! You f\*cking piece of sh\*t, have you no shame?!"

Trevor shook his head. "Believe it or not, there's something else I have even less of: money."

As if to prove his point, he picked up the money scattered across the floor without giving a damn about Javier watching him. If anything, reality had made a strong case of proving Trevor's shamelessness.

History, however, was rife with examples of people who thought having shame was detrimental to their success before they hit their stride. The leading figure of the Chalemetan Revolution, Georges Jacques Danton, had boasted the kind of brazenness that would solidify him as the chief force toppling monarchs and establishing the first Chalemetan Republic. What, to him, could preserve the revolution he had brought home? '

"11 nous faut de l'audace, et encore de l'audace, et toujours de l'audace!"

'We need audacity, even more audacity, always audacity!'

To Trevor, shamelessness had been a lesson learned. He had cared too much about his dignity and reputation back then, and look where that had gotten him today. Why would he still give a damn about shame after all the tribulations it had brought him?

Libby exploded. "Would you look at this son of a b\*tch?! Lord, how can someone so...shameless even exist?!" She shrieked in front of Javier's face.

Her insult was suddenly interrupted by the sound of a knock.

As though knowing the identity of her guest, Libby turned on her heel instantly and opened the door.

A man in his thirties strode in with the kind of ease one usually reserved only for their own home. He was dressed dapperly too. He had oil-slicked hair, a carefully maintained face, and he was only wearing branded clothes. He turned to Libby, and his eyes softened.

“My boo, I’ve been waiting for you for so long! You’re not done talking to that useless thing over there? You okay?”

Libby returned the same degree of gentleness. “I’m fine. I was about to end the conversation anyway. Sorry, I just...I couldn’t control how mad I got. I can’t believe someone so shameless could exist, you know?”

“Hey, hey! It’s alright. Don’t get worked up over it. Here, a kiss to soothe your soul...”

The man pulled Libby into his arms and closed his lips around her bloody, post-massacre-red lips right in front of Trevor’s face.

Javier whipped his face in his direction, but a look of indifference greeted him back. It was as if the husband had gotten used to it

Unless, of course, one did not notice his hands moving behind his back and clenching. It was a subtle gesture, but Javier could feel the inferno inside of Trevor.

His lack of response was not out of tolerance. It was out of impotency-out of the understanding that he had no grounds to express his rage. The reasons behind it might be plenty, but at the root of it all, was money.

He had no money. A man without money was impotent, in a way even more eviscerated than the usual meaning of the word.

Javier fished out a cigarette and lit it before tossing the rest of the packet and his lighter to Trevor. The latter caught them, and Javier asked, “Tell me, if you had 150,000 dollars right now, what would you do?”

He had never told Trevor why he had come, but the latter did not need him to. Chad McCool was the one who had introduced his guest, and that alone had clued Trevor in on Javier’s motive for visiting him.

He answered, “I’d divorce her.”

Libby stopped kissing her lover and cast a jeering glance at Javier. “Whoa, 150,000 dollars from you? Give me a break! Are you going to write \$150,000 on a piece of paper with a Sharpie pen and give it to him?”

She turned and shot daggers at Trevor. “If you’re really that good at anything, by all means, divorce me! If you’re really as good as you think you are, don’t f\*cking spend a single dime I earn, you useless piece of sh\*t!”

“Who’s that poser, babe?” Her lover chimed in. “He doesn’t know who your boss is, does he?”

Libby, snorted. "Who the hell knows under which sh\*t hole he crawled out of? Maybe that useless thing over there has gotten son

sick of never sleeping with a woman that he had to expand his options to men just to get some!"

These two complemented each other's roasting routine so well that no one could deny they had chemistry. Couple goals, perhaps?

Javier ignored them all the same. His attention remained nailed on Trevor. "What if you had 800,000 dollars?"

"I'd fight for custody of my kid," Trevor replied, looking unfazed.

"1.5 million?"

Still as placid as ever, he said, "I'd hire a hitman to make mincemeat outta' her."

"What about 8 million then?"

A change finally shadowed Trevor's expression. He linked eyes with Javier and answered, "Then you might as well be my king and my liege."

Libby watched their exchange in contempt. It was like watching two posers engage in this elaborate fantasy aimed to stroke their ego. 150,000, 800,000, 1.5 million, and now, 8 f\*cking million? They spoke about money as though it could be pulled out of their arses.

Trevor had never pulled that much out of his \*ss even back at the height of his career. Libby herself had never seen what 8 million could ever look like.

Before she could hurl another mocking jab at her husband, though, Javier fished out his phone and told Trevor, "Bank account number?"

Trevor clenched his fists again. This time, out of anxious bewilderment rather than rage.

He reported his account number as he heard Libby's mocking snicker. "Oh God, Trevor Hammond. I get that you're trying really hard to put on this delusional performance, but can't you at least remember reality for a second? You forgot, didn't you? That account is in your name, but the phone number attached to it is mine! I'm the one who's gonna receive the notification. Y'all can't fool me!"

While Trevor fell silent, Javier grinned at her. "Oh yeah? We'll see, then. Let's see if you're gonna receive that message."

He thumbed through his screen for a bit before slipping his phone back into his pocket. A few seconds later, Libby's phone rang, indicating that there was an incoming message.

She froze and turned to her lover, who looked just as stunned. He had thought the two of them were just putting on a cringey bluff too.

He still believed it was a bluff. Who would even think of giving Trevor money anyway? And was this guy really as rich as he claimed to be?

Libby took her phone out of her handbag and read the message.

The couple turned pale.

It was true. Ludicrous as it was, Trevor was really worth that much money to that guy.

“No. No, no, no! This is f\*cking bullsh\*t! It’s a scam! I read about it on the news before-there’s this...this tech that allows a scammer to change their number into someone else’s number. This has to be it! This is bullsh\*t!” she blabbered, her fingers furiously dialing the number of the bank’s customer service.

Even as she waited for her call to be picked up, she shot daggers at Trevor, like a viper on high alert.

She was wary of him-wary that the sleeping titan might be awakened very soon.

She had gotten so used to stepping all over him as though he was the floor beneath her feet that she had forgotten how powerful a titan was when awakened. She had simply never thought a day like this one would ever come.

Who would have thought that an unassuming man would waltz into her house and suddenly make the dormant titan stir?

He would kill her. He would make her pay for all the things she had done to him if this was true. She hoped against hope that it was all just a bluff.

In a panicked flurry, she chose to talk to the human operator and keyed in her PIN number. A polite voice soon followed, greeting her pleasantly. “Hello, ma’am! The current balance of this account is 8 million dollars.

“Is there anything you’d like me to help you with? Ma’am? Is there anything you need help with? Any questions you might need help with?”

“Ma’am? Are you still there?”

Trevor took a deep puff of smoke.

The titan had awakened.

“No, miss.” Heavy footsteps marched in Libby’s direction before his voice rumbled clearly into the customer service operator’s ear on the other side. “She’s a goner.”

### **Chapter 256 Acing That Test...Hard**

Javier did not stay in Trevor’s home any longer. He came to reawaken the titan-it did not mean he was going to stay for the rumble. Solving this imbroglio between Trevor and Libby with her lover was between those two.

Javier descended the stairs, got into his car, and waited quietly. He had come here alone but did not intend to go back alone.

About two minutes later, the lover clambered downstairs in a flurry suggesting a panicked man running away. One look at that face and one would have thought someone had died inside. Javier doubted that was possible, though. Trevor had been suffering this abuse for years on his end. He did not endure all of that torment, saving money just to be locked up for manslaughter.

Reality proved to align itself with Javier's prediction. Another ten minutes passed before Trevor and Libby came down the stairs in tandem. As the man passed his car by, he informed Javier, "Please be patient, boss. On my way to get a divorce. Will be right back."

His impassive tone made divorce sound like a trip to the convenience store for a packet of cigarettes.

Javier had no problem waiting, of course. His car was a moving luxury cabin, and he especially enjoyed his massage chair-cum driver's seat.

Half an hour later, the passenger door was yanked open. Trevor burrowed inside and fell onto the seat. "You take the wheel, boss. I don't drive."

Javier laughed "Spoken like a true big man of a company! They never needed to learn."

Trevor was visibly embarrassed "That's what I thought back then...until I had no one to drive my car for me. That was when I realized I don't even have the money to buy a car." He huffed. "Never gave a damn about getting a license ever since."

That was candid. Javier asked, "So, it's over?"

Trevor nodded "Libby and I are legally divorced. Gave her 4.8 million while I get my kid's custody right." He paused upon finding his explanation underwhelming and added, "After all the abuse she dealt me, even after her infidelity, that woman still gave me 160 dollars a month. She had never done anything to deprive me of my basic daily expenses. I thought.. I thought I should at least pay that debt."

And to pay the debt of the unkind, he had taken out 4.8 million and given it away. All that because of Libby's paltry charity of 160 dollars per month.

Javier sniggered. "And what about my 8-million-dollar magnanimity? How are you gonna pay me back?"

"Nothing," Trevor replied solemnly. "My life is already yours. What else could pay better?"

His answer could sound like an ingratiating attempt to butter someone up if stripped of context. Still, Trevor meant it. He meant every word of it from the bottom of his heart.

Javier was pleased with the sentiment, but he patted the other man on his shoulder. "I don't want your life! I want cars! I want the World Car of the Year! Not just any Word Car-our World Car."

Trevor stiffened a little. "Christ! How much money do you actually own?"

Javier deflected the answer with a question of his own. "Got any idea to get us there?"

Trevor did not even need to think twice. "Green energy."

"But that's not exactly breaking new grounds in the market, is it? There are plenty of electric vehicles of all stripes, both locally made and imported. The roads are crawling with them. The nation encourages the industry's growth through scaffolding laws.

That means it's not easy for us to break out from the rest of our competitors. Carving our marks will be difficult."

Trevor knew this was his test, so he answered it with appropriate gravity.

"I have never stopped watching the automobile market all these years, Mr. Kersey-especially in EVs. I can see where the national trend is heading. We've come to the very end of the era of traditional cars running on internal combustion engines, and yet, when it comes to green energy, every player in the industry began on equal footing. It's like y'all have skipped Gen 3 and gone straight to Gen 4. The way I see it, the automobile industry is trying to cut the line, you get me?"

"Sure, right now, the government's encouragement is right. But all capitalists care about is just that, capital. Money. They twisted good intentions and the need for electric vehicles into something completely alien to their two origins. Battery packs are perhaps the biggest offenders in sheer infeasibility. I don't know what exactly is going through those so-called professors and experts' minds when they throw their support behind battery packs, but if you ask me? It's all a load of b\*ll. I've been against this solution

since back then, but well, everyone chose to go down this path anyway, didn't they?"

"I came across a set of statistics relevant to this very issue. According to our year 2017 national energy generation data, thermal power accounted for 2.21 hundred million kW-69% of our power generation. When our total power generation reaches 10,632 hundred million kW, thermal power accounted for a whopping 77% of that total! In comparison, wind power accounted for less than 1%, while hydropower provided only about 24% of energy. That's a yearly amount of 14.8%.

"It's undeniable that the nation's number one power source is still thermal energy. How green and eco-friendly can we be if the source of our electricity-the very energy that powers our vehicles-still comes from fossil fuel? From fuel to chemical energy, and then to a general power source for our electric vehicles... If that's the foundation of our cars, then how green are we really?"

"EVs might not produce pollution of their own, but the process of converting chemical energy to electricity and finally to mechanical energy? The pollution this very process produced is nothing to sneeze at. We take the need for fossil fuel off our vehicles but shift the demand to fossil fuel-generated electricity. Is this sustainable? I can tell you in no uncertain terms: not at all!"

When it came to electric vehicles, Trevor changed. He talked with the acumen and authority of a sage dispensing advice to a young king under his care.

"Yes, these vehicles are still much greener and energy-efficient than normal internal combustion engines, but the real root was the lack of pollutants when driving. If our national power generation source were hydropower, then the cars we are using now would be perfectly safe and unharmed to the environment. But that's not how this country generates its power now, is it? We rely on thermal power most of all, and so our cars are adding to that consumption simply because they rely on electricity produced by fossil fuel!

"According to my analysis, EVs were never the best type of green vehicles. There is a reason why EVs aren't as popular as they might seem. The production wastes a lot of energy. It adds much to the burden of electric power, you see? Compared to the 15 to 20 years lifespan of typical internal combustion energy. Most battery packs can last only about 5 to 7 years, and when that time is up, the car owner has to change into a new battery pack or the entire car. Sending cars to junkyards to be recycled will only produce even more waste, not least because the electricity needed for the process adds up to the growing size of EVs' own electricity consumption.

“That is why I’ve long predicted that only hydrogen fuel is the true green energy for automobiles. Take a look at what Yuzu and Sammius have been doing. They are promoting hydrogen vehicles, which run on hydrogen one could get from water alone! Great power output with its only waste being water! The advantages cannot be overstated. There’s a limitless supply of hydrogen from seawater itself. The waste produced is completely clean, with no harmful greenhouse gas. A good many mainstream car companies around the globe are developing hydrogen cars already, with Toyota and Hyundai deploying some of their models into the market. Sammius, too, is expanding its market.”

The more Trevor talked about it, the angrier he seemed to be. His hands had tightened into fists while his face contorted into exasperation

“I talked to technological experts 15 years ago and suggested using hydrogen as fuel. No one had agreed. They thought it was a pipe dream. They worried about its safety because its low ignition energy makes it risky. Were they so lacking in imagination that they didn’t even imagine nuclear-powered cars in the future? Isn’t nuclear power even riskier?”

“No one wanted to believe me. No one agreed, too, because my idea is gonna hurt their profit. Well, will you look at this! The whole world is scrambling for green energy, and we’re late to the race. The very thing I envisioned back then became a reality in both Yuzu and Sammius!”

### **Chapter 257 Truly Incredible!**

Trevor’s rage was palpable.

He should be. He used to be the commander, then someone stole it away from him and framed him for more than a year. His life had been plunged straight to the nadir.

However, there was more to his fury. He was angry that the nation’s technological advancement had once made it possible to take the lead before every other country. And yet a small cabal managed to stall an entire generation worth of innovation...over their myopic profit

What angered him most was that these were the very same people whose family members enjoyed clear blue skies and fresh, unpolluted air overseas. The same people who drove around in luxury cars and lived in posh mansions while insisting indignantly that they had worked themselves to their \*sses to advance the nation’s technology.

These were the leeches who had banished Trevor from his position of power. And now, they posed as successful names and the pillars supporting the nation’s automobile industry.

Trevor did his damndest to collect himself and calm down before picking up from where he left. “Aside from HVs, another possibility we can pursue for greener energy is improving a car’s propulsion system to become more energy-efficient. That way, that vehicle consumes less fuel for more power. An example of that technology is Mazda’s Gen 2 SkyActiv technology. It improves on the gasoline engine to achieve even better energy efficiency. After all, to require less fuel without a cost in power is, in fact, greener. 1

“In a similar vein, we could develop PHEVs-plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. They use battery packs in tandem with internal combustion systems to lower the need for gasoline. An example of that is Toyota’s Atkinson cycle engine. Efficiency can be improved greatly with the help of battery packs, costing less fuel.

“Personally, out of all types of green energy vehicles, I’ll stake all my money on the future of hydrogen vehicles. All other methods are good. But looking for them as solutions ain’t different from us looking for ‘cleaner filtered smoke’. Might harm us less than the other stuff, yeah, but the real help comes in discarding the habit of smoking entirely,” he argued. “That’s exactly what HVs are. We ditch fossil fuel altogether. Saves a lot of fossil fuel and achieves true green energy. More importantly, the cost of driving will be greatly lowered, and the country can even remove eco-friendly tests and metrics from cars altogether simply because HVS guarantee zero carbon emission and greater power. It truly is the future of cars-the main protagonist, I’d say! 1

“If HVs ever have a rival character, I’ll say it’s nuclear-powered vehicles. But that’s advanced tech. Maybe we could make it happen if we start researching it now, but we can’t guarantee its safety yet. It’s just fundamentally different from hydrogen fuel...”

There had been no space during Trevor’s monologue where Javier could squeeze a word edgewise. Trevor had talked up a storm with a magisterial air and authority, his confidence undergirding his explanatory power. It was the kind of confidence only a veteran immersed in the market for decades could possibly nurture.

He was no professor nor expert, but Trevor thought these people and their preoccupation with theories made their opinions as useful as dogsh\*t. He had his own theories too, but his were superior-his were empirically evaluated.

At that moment, Javier understood how insane Chad’s mad lad was. If Javier were in Trevor’s shoes, he would not have devoted his mind and effort to researching theories and technicalities of the automobile industry. No, Javier would have spent most of his

energy exacting revenge for the harm they did 15 years ago.

Trevor, however, was cut from a different cloth. He continued his research and kept on overseeing the market and its future. He had been waiting for someone to recognize his genius. Someone who understood and admired his talent-and to his luck, this knight had finally found his King Arthur.

Javier studied the confidence brimming in Trevor’s eyes and asked, “Hydrogen vehicles are as good as they come, no denying that. But what are we gonna do about hydrogen fuel stations? Can’t we just invent a car capable of converting water into hydrogen before using it as fuel? I’m no science whiz, but 50 liters of water don’t really produce much hydrogen, do they?

“Besides, this will require an additional motor system and a storage space for hydrogen within the car. If we add all necessary equipment together, the only vehicles we can produce to carry them all will be trucks!”

Trevor nodded. “You nailed it. It’s why all HVs in the market have to rely on hydrogen stations to run. To date, only the biggest metropolis in the cities have them. They don’t exist anywhere else, with availability even more inferior to EV plugs.

“One hobble against limiting the use of battery packs is the fact that we simply have too few charging stations. Convenience is compromised this way,” he added. “It’s one of the biggest problems HVs are facing. But! I’m pleased to tell you that one of the professors I once worked with had already come up with a solution!” 1

Trevor's tone perked at the tail end of his proclamation, obviously giddy. He would not be the only one. Javier himself was excited to hear it as well. Building hydrogen stations would cost him very dearly, so if they were to popularize HVs, they would have to make hydrogen stations as quotidian as petrol stations of the present. But to outfit a city with multiple hydrogen stations, all of which were more high-maintenance than petrol and diesel, was to ask a hefty sum from his funds.

Javier's guesstimate was that it was financially feasible with his wealth. That was, if he could endure being pummeled to death by that old fox. This was a high-stake investment all over. Any oopsie, and the entire Kersey family could kiss their fortune goodbye.

It was why Javier had no intention to humor such a prospect. And yet, he had fallen in love with the idea of hydrogen fuel. Now that Trevor mentioned a solution, he could not help but ask the man for more information.

"...actually have no idea how it works when it comes down to it. I'm not a technical expert at all," Trevor answered. "But I can tell you the dummy version that I understood. We don't need to build hydrogen stations if we can just have car service and add solid hydrogen."

"S-Solid hydrogen?"

Javier knew a bit about the property of hydrogen. At a certain degree under zero Celsius, hydrogen would become liquid. When the temperature was lowered, it turned into a snowflakes-like solid. He had no idea how exactly one should make this, though.

"Yeap. Solid hydrogen. Its density is 0.086 g/cm<sup>3</sup>, which makes it about 78kg or so. Believe it or not, 78kg of solid hydrogen can provide enough energy to support a thousand or even several thousand kilometers.

"Of course, knowledge on the compression rate of that machine is that of the professor's, so I'm not actually sure how exactly it's done. Still, even by conservative estimates, all we need is a service shop within 1,000km. Solid hydrogen storage is not inconvenient, either. We just need to extract pure hydrogen, cool it down to negative 259.1 Celsius, and voila! Solid hydrogen!

"We then move it into an insulated vacuum container. Hydrogen will remain in its solid form like that for as long as it's in there. That way, the limitation of our cars-the hydrogen station-will be no problem at all. Service and repair shops are everywhere, after all. We just need to send out trucks to distribute all of this solid hydrogen storage to them.

"In fact, if our funding could afford it, we could set up a solid hydrogen station, where pure hydrogen becomes compressed into solid, in every state. That way, we can save some cost on delivery trucks across the nation. I've calculated the cost of setting up such a hydrogen station before, and it's not as expensive as one might think. You need only about 150 thousand dollars or so..."

Trevor spent three hours explicating the process of turning hydrogen into mechanical energy from every aspect. Even as Javier kept bringing up questions, the older man answered every single one of them with superhuman comprehensiveness. He had thought of everything-even key points that had slipped Javier's mind. He had a solution at the ready.

Trevor Hammond was incredible. Inhumanly incredible! The things that were in his head had made those 80 thousand dollars Javier had paid worth down to its last penny! 1 Javier was beyond thrilled and galvanized, so he immediately brought the conversation to that old professor Trevor had mentioned.

### **Chapter 258 Money Is Not the Problem**

“Where’s the professor? We’ll go meet him now and get the technology in advance-no matter how much is needed!”

There must be a lot of people who were after a technology so amazing as well. Javier could already foresee someone else who was there asking for it when he got to meet the old professor!

Trevor was quite close to the old professor and had decided to take Javier there. It was just that...

“Boss, I need to pick up my kid first and can only go there with you after I take care of the kid.”

Javier waved his hands. “No need. Just let me know the address and contact number. I’ll go on my own and call you if something isn’t right. You’ll definitely be free to answer a call.”

Trevor was exceptionally delighted that Javier was as passionate as him.

“Of course, I’d have the time for that. Don’t worry. I’ll call him now to talk about this.”

Trevor pulled out his phone to do exactly that, only to find out that he was unable to make the call. It was only then he recalled that he had not paid his phone bill for two months.

A maverick like him was so poor that he owed the telecommunication company his phone bill. Despite such a predicament, he had not given up exploring and researching green energy vehicles.

Javier thought that such passion and talent were the true treasures to the country-the nation’s working hands!

After Trevor made contact, Javier rushed over, driving through the night. He did not take a flight as the earliest flight was at noon tomorrow, nor did he take a high-speed rail since that would be the next morning. He wanted to go there as soon as he could, so Herschel, who had been protecting him from afar, was waved into the car.

“Get in. We’ll take turns and drive through the night. I’ll take a nap in the car.”

Javier needed sufficient rest and energy to meet the old professor the next day. He had to win over the creator of the hydrogen fuel system!

As they drove overnight, Javier finally arrived at a small factory around eight the next morning. If Trevor had not told him the exact location, it would be hard for him to imagine that a proficient professor like this would study about something so great in such a small factory.

When Javier had brought it up to Trevor back then, the latter had only explained, “He thinks like me. What we want is to revive the country’s automobile industry so our people can afford the good cars we make and so our locally manufactured cars can step into the world.”

“But a lot of people don’t think like this. All they think about is...what about their internal combustion engine (ICE) if green energy is developed? Who will pay for their investment of millions and billions of dollars?”

“A new trend will definitely retire a large batch of old technology. Back when they succeeded, it was the same case. But it’s also because they’ve experienced terminating others that they don’t want others to terminate them.”

For personal profit to affect the people’s welfare and even the nation’s technology development was not the complete reason why technology was lacking behind. Still, it was an important part of human factors.

Javier saw the old professor who was measuring a model with Vernier calipers in a small factory workshop.

The professor’s name was Liam Jepson, and he was 70 years old this year. Like his name that meant guardian or protector, it was like he was born to guard the nation.

Liam looked robust, like he was in his early sixties. People might buy it if he was said to be in his fifties.

Liam was wearing his reading glasses and a pair of overalls, and he was currently comparing measurements on the Vernier calipers carefully

There were several young people in the workshop, probably Liam’s students. All of them were talents equipped with knowledge of advanced technology, but they were all wearing greasy and filthy overalls, looking no different from the average workers of a factory.

It was hard to imagine that these people were graduates of prestigious universities and absolute elites.

Seeing that no one else had come, Javier inwardly sighed in relief. He was simply afraid of someone competing for the technology with him

To be honest, it would be fine if a fellow countryman had acquired the technology first, but it would be embarrassing if a foreigner

grabbed it. It was like how a Chinese had invented explosives, but foreigners had taken them, improvised, and used them against Chinese. It was a humiliation and something Javier forbade from happening!

Javier hurried to Liam and greeted him fervently. “Professor Jepson, hi, I’m-”

Liam waved his hand as Javier spoke.

“This data doesn’t seem quite right!” he muttered and continued studying the model, ignoring Javier completely.

The latter could not possibly say anything since the professor was in the midst of solving a problem, so he could only take a few steps back and wait, standing at the side. The wait then ended up lasting from eight in the morning to seven in the evening-one more hour, and it would be half a day.

It was until Liam called it a day and took off his overalls that he approached Javier. "You're the one Hammond introduced to the place?"

Hammond, Trevor Hammond, Javier nodded quickly without looking upset. Forget waiting for half a day, he was willing to wait for three days and three nights as long as he could get his hands on the technology.

Liam glanced at him and told him, "Good patience. You're the first one to wait until I took the initiative to speak."

Javier felt his heart drop. In other words, did he mean that there were already plenty of people who had come?

He asked hastily, "Professor Jepson, does the research fund you accept come from fellow countrymen or foreigners?"

Liam fished out a cigarette and perched it between his lips, lighting it himself before Javier could do it for him after the latter pulled out a lighter to help light said stick.

"I don't accept research funds. It's all from my past technology transfer fee."

Not being funded for research meant that the technology patent was still with Liam. The knowledge made Javier heave a long sigh of relief.

Liam then asked, "I heard from Trevor that you want to manufacture cars with this system of mine?"

Javier nodded at the straightforward old man. "Yes. I want to manufacture a car model and participate in the WCOTY, then promote it to the country and the world."

Liam did not comment but continued asking, "How much do you think the retail price should be if the manufacturing cost per car is 12.5 thousand dollars?"

Javier did not know why the old man asked about this, but he answered honestly, "I'll add 800 dollars per car after deducting all the costs."

Liam chuckled. "Wouldn't you make only 1.6 million dollars in profit if you sell two thousand units per month? Pay the tax, and you won't even make 15 million a year. That 15 million dollars must be allocated to keep up with the market and research funding. You'll be making a loss." 1

"If I sell 20 thousand cars per month, my annual profit will be around 150 million dollars. Besides, I won't just hike 800 dollars for overseas sales but higher. That's where I actually make money," Javier replied.

Liam plopped himself down on the mold of the engine casing at the side. "Sounds like you're quite patriotic."

"Mainly because I'm not pressed for money," Javier answered truthfully.

Liam was amused. This was his first time meeting someone so frank.

"Why are you in the automobile industry if you don't need that money? You make it sound as if you're not here for the profit. Besides, how much do you have?"

## Chapter 259 Technology Is Borderless

Javier did not answer that but asked Liam instead, "How much do I need to buy yours and your students' patent?"

Liam pursed his lips. "That'd be costly. I'm guessing probably a year's worth of profit like what you said-if you sold 20 thousand units per month."

That would be 150 million dollars. They had just talked about the annual profit just now.

According to the market rate, it seemed like a high price point to purchase the talents and patent of a technology using 150 million dollars, but Javier replied without hesitation, "Sure. These 150 million dollars won't include your research lab and the likes as I'll provide them additionally. I guarantee that they'll be the most advanced the world has. I'll have Trevor discuss that with you. He'll make instant purchases of any equipment you need. Even if you need the Large Hadron Collider, I'll buy it without a second word!"

Liam was baffled "You really aren't pressed for money?"

"Not at all!" Javier nodded seriously..

Liam was curious. This young man in his twenties did not look like he was here to create trouble. Since that was not the case, he had to want some sort of profit at least. Otherwise, what else was he looking for?

When Liam asked Javier about it directly, the latter pulled out his phone and showed him news about the film Ackerman and Reivaj Media's page.

"I don't mean much by showing you these. I just want to let you know that I'm the chairman of Reivaj Group, and my goal is simple. It's true that I want to make money, but at the same time, I want to do my best to bring up what the country's lacking behind one aspect after another. It's cliché to say that it's patriotism, but one should be thinking of doing something to leave their name behind when they're rich.

"See it as materialism or patriotism, whichever you like, but my sole purpose is to shoot a good Chinese film that the world recognizes and manufacture good Chinese cars that the world envies.

"I've already finished shooting the good film, so I'm onto manufacturing cars now, and I know that Trevor Hammond's a prodigy in the automobile industry-you, too. So, I'm gathering you, talented people, no matter what it takes for us to manufacture a car that we can show off to the world."

Javier feigned the narcissism of wanting to leave his name behind in history. It was not a great look-self-sabotaging, almost, but it also reflected realness. He was genuinely patriotic, but rather than admitting to it, it was easier for others to believe in his narcissism. The process did not matter much when the outcome would be the same.

Liam studied Javier for another moment before commenting, "You're really frank.

"Alright. I won't stall either, given you're so direct. I do lack the research funds and intend to sell the patent. Selling it to someone Hammond approves wouldn't be too bad, but there's one condition that you have to promise me."

Not expecting the negotiation to go so smoothly, Javier was delightfully surprised. He nodded easily to what Liam said. "Do tell."

Whether it was money or research, Liam could request whatever he wanted. Javier was not worried since he truly did not lack that sort of money.

Nevertheless, Liam asked for something Javier would never have imagined.

"The cars you make in the future have to be named after me."

Javier was stunned. He could almost see the auto show narrator fervently and formally introducing the cars his company made.

"This is Liam I, this is Liam II, this is Liam III..."

Goodness, the names were very domineering, were they not?

Other cars were called BMW, Audi, or Aston Martin. What was up with Liam I, II, and III?

Imagine how awkward it was to answer "I'm driving Liam III!" when one stopped their car at the traffic light and was asked, "Hey, bro, what car is this?" by the car next to him.

The name was over the top! It was too lofty and solemn, so Javier did not approve.

"Sir, why don't we change the condition to something else?"

Liam waved his hand. "No, no. I invented the propulsion system. I ought to leave my name in history too."

Javier could understand this. People named their own children, and this system was like a child to the researcher. It was just that it did not sit right to name a car Liam.

"Sir, we'll name the propulsion system Liam. You can still have your name recorded."

It would be fine whether the engine was named Atkinson or Liam I since no one would scrutinize it. Naming the car was different. Similarly, it would be fine to nickname a kid Potato or Poop, but it would be appalling to give them those names legally.

Despite that, Liam stood firm on this. He refused to budge and insisted on naming the cars Liam.

Javier was immensely troubled. Everything else had gone smoothly, but why was Liam so insistent on the name?

"It's just a name. I agree to it. We at Imperial Sun Group have no objection at all. We agree to any condition you name, Mr. Jepson. No bargaining or negotiation!"

While Javier was hit with the headache, a short fatty with a goatee came in with two bodyguards following him. Javier knew that there would be competitors for the technology, but he had assumed they would have come before him, not after him.

Liam took one look at the short fatty and threw his cigarette on the floor before extinguishing it with a grind of his foot. While he exhaled the last puff, he told Javier, "Bejit Tate, representative of the Imperial Sun Group from Yuzuia. He has come a few times already."

Javier knew about the Imperial Sun Group. It was a heavy industrial company with a military background, involved in manufacturing combat jets, and it must not be underestimated in terms of ability. Nonetheless, that was to the top 500 companies in the world

To Javier Imperial Sun Group was nothing!

Bejit Tate came over and courteously greeted Liam before telling Javier, "I don't care who you are or who you represent. You're unqualified to compete for the technology with our Imperial Sun Group.

"My advice to you is to leave nicely, lest you're embarrassed."

Javier beamed in reply, "Fatty, that's very confident of you."

The nickname disgruntled Bejit, and his bodyguard barked in Yuzuese, "Idiot!"

Javier turned to the bodyguard. "Whatever. I'll also have you know that I dislike your attitude, so it's with honor that I'm informing you, you won't be able to return to your home country anymore."

Another bodyguard was enraged as well. "Idiot, are you threatening us?!"

Javier shifted his gaze to said bodyguard and shook his head. "Why would I threaten you? I'm just stating a fact. Just like how you won't be able to return to your home country now as well, simple as that."

Both bodyguards were furious, but Bejit stopped them before they could do anything in rage.

"Do not be rude in front of Mr. Jepson. We're educated people with class. There's no need to stoop so low."

As if realizing his scolding was less than appropriate, Bejit looked at Liam with a pandering grin.

"Please do not misunderstand, Mr. Jepson. I still respect your people and you very much. I only mean him."

Bejit wanted to say more, but Liam waved his hands. "You don't have to come anymore. I've told you before. I won't sell this technology patent to you, not even if I have to destroy it."