

Chapter 473

You, Sir, Are a Dumb*ss “You...didn’t secretly study all this before we left, right?” Suzanne asked aloud, feeling shocked. The breadth of his encyclopedic knowledge was just too hard to believe. Javier smiled and nodded. “Definitely! I even learned how to predict the future last night. That’s how I knew ahead of time that we were gonna visit Gauthé’s residence.”

Suzanne knew he was joking. Javier would never learn any form of augury, and it was even more impossible for him to have known that she would want to visit Gauthé’s house. It had been a spur-of-the-moment request on her side, as Javier had never made any formal traveling plans. In other words, Javier had not been secretly memorizing trivia about Gauthé—he was genuinely a pro. As the two of them talked among themselves, another foreign couple stepped closer to them. Judging by their conversation and the language they used, they were Chineseans too. The woman, Mallory Cadman, told her boyfriend, “I’ve never read Fowst before, but I know it’s like, super-famous and everything. What’s it about?”

Donny Mummery was proud to answer her inquiry right away. “Whoa, so you don’t know what it is about? Ah, well. I can’t turn down anyone who’s humbly seeking more knowledge, so I’ll indulge you. See, Fowst is the name of the main character, and his story is about love. He was a pauper when he was young, but then one day, he fell in love with this girl. As it turned out, though, she was really a princess!

“The princess fell in love with Fowst too, but the emperor poo-pooed over the whole affair and was adamant about splitting these two up. They could not be together, and in his extreme grief, Fowst developed an incurable sickness and died young. The princess, meanwhile, missed Fowst. After hearing the news of his passing, she dragged her grief-stricken body to his grave. There, she killed herself by ramming into the gravestone bearing her lover’s name, and her corpse transformed into a butterfly! Fowst’s corpse transformed into a butterfly too, and the two of them danced and fluttered in the wind before waltzing into the sky as a couple eternally in love.

“The story is an allegory, you know. It’s about the evils of a feudalistic society, as well as the author’s own hopes for the beauty of love. It’s that kind of story,” Donny finished.

Mallory was moved. “Oh. My. Gawd! That is the most beautiful story I’ve ever heard! Oh gosh, darling, how could you be so knowledgeable and smart? You are amazing. I’m so proud of you!”

Donny waved, acting modest. “Oh, this is nothing. I have read way too many books like these since I was a kid, so I’m no stranger to literary treasures like Fowst. But once formal schooling started, I realized that the ‘literature’ we were forced to study was what? The three piggies and the big bad wolf? Thomas the tank engine? Just insulting, really. Couldn’t rouse even a modicum of my interest!”

While the two of them continued, Javier shook his head helplessly, Suzanne caught it and asked, “What’s wrong?”

He shook his head again. “Nothing. I’m just glad that he doesn’t speak Hildegardan, I guess. Can’t imagine how embarrassing it’d be if anyone caught wind of what he said and beat him

up!”

Javier’s remark had not been particularly loud, but as it turned out, Donny had a surprisingly good pair of ears. He began to approach Javier and Suzanne, looking clearly aggrieved. Then, he saw Suzanne, and his expression turned from sullen to genuinely awed.

He was in awe of her mesmerizing beauty. She was a piece of eye candy with an alluring figure! In comparison, Mallory was...Well, she was completely incomparable to a woman of Suzanne's perfection. The only way Mallory could be remotely good enough was if she covered her face with a picture of Marilyn Monroe.

His eyes drifted to Javier's face beside her, and contempt filled his gaze in a snap. In fact, now that he was in Suzanne's presence, Donny almost looked a little pugnacious and eager to fight.

"What the hell, man?" he began. "We're all Chineans, aren't we? So what's up with you backstabbing your own countryman while abroad, huh? You even wished someone would beat me up! What was that for, huh?"

Javier opened his palms wide innocently. "Nothing. I trust that you're aware of how much you're making up, right? And since we're all Chineans, I'm telling you this as a fellow compatriot: Shut up and listen. Talk less before your crap is spread and humiliates all of us." Being skewered by another man in front of his girlfriend and a beauty like Suzanne bruised Donny's ego. "Who let you decide if I should talk or not, huh?!" he bristled. "Last time I checked, I was the one who owned my own mouth, not you. And me humiliating Chineans? Oh, I get it. You heard how knowledgeable I am, and in your pathetic attempt to impress the beautiful woman standing next to you, you went 'oh, he's just bullsh*tting', didn't you?"

"Please, I'm not stupid. I know you made all of those factoids up just to charm this beauty right here. Looking for a way to puff up your pathetic little ego, I bet! But your trick is juvenile. I can see through you. I only kept my mouth shut because I didn't want to embarrass you, smart*ss!"

It was no cynical accusation-Donny genuinely believed that to be the case. He really thought Javier was just a showboating, confident man. It was also why he did the same thing himself. He already knew Mallory was a bimbo, so he'd started making things up to seem cool too. He had just managed to impress Mallory when Javier had decided to judge him and make it an issue, which had p*ssed Donny off! Why was this even this guy's issue? It was Donny's business!

Not in the mood to engage with a pick-up poser, Javier decided it was time for him and Suzanne to leave. Unfortunately, Donny misinterpreted his motive for a confident man's attempt at an escape after being exposed. This emboldened Donny into clinging onto the issue, especially since he thought it was high time he impressed this world-class beauty standing next to him,

"You seemed to disagree with the version of Fowst I mentioned just now, man. Fine, then! You're welcome to join me and have a debate!" Donny proclaimed. "Trust me, your tongue's gonna be tied really soon if you're going up against me. I'll eviscerate you so hard, you won't

even believe it. By that point, I hope you don't lose your cool and start cursing left and right, man, 'cause that will taint our people's renowned civility!"

Javier was so exasperated that he laughed. This moron had been willfully making sh*t up just now, and now he was talking about civility? Oh, God! He had invited him to have a debate too? "You know what? Fine! You wanna hear about the 'other version' of Fowst so much? I'll indulge you!" Javier replied, looking straight into Donny's eyes. He then began to speak." Fowst is a play with 12,111 lines in its entirety. It's a work based on 16th-century folklore concerning Dr. Fowst, a historical figure who lived

during the 15th century. He was a polymath, so people began spreading stories with embellished details, attributing his success to the help of the devil.

“Fowst was a brilliant scholar with an incredible reputation, but his life was boring. He was unhappy and lost, not knowing how else he should further his knowledge. His merits in academia had failed to make him feel fulfilled too.

“This is the part where the epic battle of reason versus emotions waged. In the end, reason won, and he began suppressing his emotional needs. “Immersed in feeling lost and the anxiety that followed, Fowst’s first response was to kill himself. Of course, it didn’t work out that way, or Gauthe would have had no more plot to write about.

“Fowst overheard the sounds of tolling bells and Easter music. He remembered all the good things that had happened or had been done by him in his childhood, and the memories just came back. The crowd, who was celebrating Easter, helped him change his mind and steered him into a different way of thinking.

“Meanwhile, Mephisto, the Devil, had just made a bet with God over Fowst, who knew nothing about this. The Devil lulled Fowst into an agreement: The Devil would fulfill every need he ever needed. The price, though, would be his soul. The Devil would claim it after he died...”

Javier continued speaking for more than ten minutes, recounting the story as he had read it and even including his own analysis of the characters and themes.

“Fowst’ truly is Gauthe’s magnum opus—the amalgamation of all of his thoughts and artistic exploration. Planning and writing the story was the lifelong cause of his life. He worked on it from 1768 up to 1832.64 years he spent on the work, and it was only finished a year before he died,” Javier said.

“Fowst was epic in scale and intricate and complex in content. It was a titan among literary works that boasted a perfect blend of realism and romanticism. He had written it by describing reality while juxtaposing it with liberal thoughts. As a result, he mixed the life of that era with myths of a bygone era.

“He was good at using paradoxes to set up scenes, settings, and characters. The tone was sometimes comedic and other times tragic. There are many moments of equal praise and mockery too. It is a colorful work showcasing a diversity of techniques, which is how it reached the pinnacle of art!”

Staring into his rival’s confusion-laden eyes, Javier added, “What you were blabbering about just now, though, is a shoddy mix of fairy tales and legends! “Turning into a butterfly! Really? Are you really that stupid that you do not know that that’s the story of Leon and Jo? You, sir,

are a dumb*ss!” Donny was stupefied.