

Formula 1: The GOAT

#Chapter 1: Reborn After the

Checkered Flag - Read Formula 1: The GOAT Chapter 1: Reborn After the Checkered Flag

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Beep... beep... beep... Beee

The monotone of the flatline reverberated through the orphanage's infirmary, bouncing off sterile walls plastered with aging Formula 1 posters, the silent spectators to the close of a 25-year struggle.

"Time of death: 17:58," the doctor murmured, scribbling the final notation onto the chart.

No farewell. No ceremony.

Just the quiet passing of a bedridden Formula 1 superfan whose life had been nothing but a prolonged pit stop of pain.

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"Am I... floating?"

No light. No sound. No weight. Just the absence of everything. Not even darkness, just a void, like the blank space behind closed eyelids during a migraine.

But for the first time in years, there was no pain. No fire in my nerves, no ache in my bones. Just... stillness.

"So this is death. Peace."

They say trouble never comes alone. In my case, it didn't come *for* me, I was *born* in it.

A cluster of genetic disorders didn't grant me superpowers. They gave me constant, unbearable pain. Sure, over time, I built up a mental resilience, a tolerance for agony, but that just meant I needed *slightly* less medication.

Eventually, even walking became torture. The pain anchored me to a bed, where I spent my final years being pumped full of addictive and experimental drugs, just to dull the torment.

I was a child of surrogacy. My parents died before I was even born. No relatives stepped forward. No one claimed me.

So the orphanage became my world. Twenty-five years under its roof, seven of them spent staring at the ceiling, waiting for the pain to stop.

And now... it finally had.

In those bed-bound years, when the pain had whittled life down to moments between medication cycles, I discovered Formula 1. It became my lifeline, alongside the few friends from the orphanage who never stopped visiting, never stopped believing I was more than just a body trapped in pain.

F1 wasn't just entertainment. It became a sanctuary. Something about the precision, the speed, the strategy, it let me *tune out* the agony. When the engines roared, the pain quieted.

And thankfully, I hadn't discovered it at its inception. The sport had decades of archived races, interviews, documentaries, an entire history waiting to be consumed. During the endless hours between live races, I immersed myself in the past: legendary duels, historic crashes, impossible comebacks.

I watched other motorsports too, of course. But I always returned to Formula 1. It was *my* sport.

Still, not even that, nor the love of my friends, was enough to erase the thought of ending it all. The pain was too relentless. But instead of giving in, I made a choice: no suicide, no euthanasia. Just a quiet line drawn—A DNR. Do Not Resuscitate.

And now, it seemed, that line had finally come into play.

"So this is what it means to die? Nothingness... forever?"

If so, it wasn't terrible. There was no pain here. No screaming nerves. Just peace.

"Not so bad," I muttered into the void, preparing myself for an eternity of empty stillness.

But then, something *appeared*.

A flicker. A break in the monotony.

A screen. Blue, glowing faintly, yet bright enough to command every ounce of my attention.

"What... is that?"

I tried to move, blink, and turn my head, but couldn't. I wasn't even sure if I had a body anymore. Still, the screen was either close or massive, because I could read it clearly:

[System Initializing99%]

The loading bar moved fast, almost too fast. But when it hit **99%**, it froze.

Seconds ticked by, or maybe minutes. I had no way of measuring time in this void.

And then, without warning, the screen vanished.

"Wait—what? No, no, no... don't tell me it failed."

From the books I'd read, I knew what a "system" was. Countless characters had died, then awakened with abilities, powers, new lives... guided by systems tailored to their needs. I had dared to hope.

But just as quickly as that hope arrived, panic crept in. *What if mine had glitched? What if I ended up in one of those cruel stories where the system malfunctions and everything goes wrong?*

But before I could drown in panic, a new presence emerged.

This time, it wasn't just a screen; it surrounded me, wrapped around my awareness, and passed *through* my very mind. I could feel it, not in a painful way, but like gentle threads weaving through memories and dreams.

Then, words formed in front of me, calm and resolute:

[The user's desires and wishes have been determined. A system to help him achieve them is created.]

Relief. Pure, overwhelming relief.

Not just because I was getting a system, but because that sentence confirmed something far greater:

I was getting another chance at *life*.

And more importantly... I wouldn't be shackled to that same broken body.

Even if all I got was a new life without pain, that alone would've been enough. But the system, it was offering more. It was tailored to my *dreams*.

The screen dissolved again, replaced by a new sequence:

[.....]

A row of loading dots. They remained. Unchanging.

I wasn't sure how long it had been, five minutes? Ten? Maybe more? But I didn't mind.

After all, the best things in life... take time.

[The Greatest Of All Time (GOAT) System has been created.]

Please choose the sport and category in which you wish to have the potential to become the GOAT:

- **Motorsports**
- **Team Sports**
- **Individual Sports**
- **Combat Sports**
- **Water Sports**
- **Mind Sports**
- ...
-
-

The list stretched on, almost endless.

It was then I realized something: The system had pulled from the deepest parts of me, all the moments I had watched from the sidelines, aching with jealousy at what I could never do.

And it offered me a chance. Not just to *participate*, but to *excel*. To be the Greatest Of All Time.

There was no hesitation. I tapped Motorsports the moment I saw it.

This wasn't just a dream, it was *the* dream. The one that had carried me through the worst of it. The one I could never chase in my old life, no matter how badly I wanted it.

As soon as I selected it, the other categories faded away, and Motorsports expanded with a new list:

[Please select a motorsport category:]

Formula 1

NASCAR

MotoGP

Rally Racing

Drag Racing

.....

....

.....

Each name glowed with potential, but only one made my heart skip, just like it always had.

Without hesitation, I tapped **Formula 1**, making sure I didn't misclick and accidentally select another category.

[Loading100%]

[Generating Abilities100%]

[Creating the Perfect Body100%]

[Assimilating Abilities100%]

[...100%]

[...100%]

[...100%]

[...100%]

Each line blinked in rapid succession. Dozens... no, *thousands* of system processes executed in the blink of an eye.

When it finally completed, the entire interface shrank into a single point and shot straight into me.

I didn't feel pain. But I *felt* it, an avalanche of data cascading into my consciousness. Too much to comprehend, let alone process.

But I didn't need to understand it all immediately.

A new prompt appeared, calm and informative:

[To assist you in your journey, you have been granted 15,000 System Points. These may be used to purchase abilities and enhancements from the System Shop before temporary deactivation.]

The path to F1 wouldn't be handed to me, but the tools to get there were. And now... it was my move.

The prompt faded, replaced instantly by the **System Shop**.

Rows upon rows of abilities unfolded before me, neatly categorized and described. Each one offered a glimpse of excellence, skills that could elevate any driver to a top-tier Formula 1 competitor. And now, they were all at my fingertips.

For a moment, excitement surged. *With this many options, I could dominate!*

But when I saw the prices, all of the excitement went out the window.

Each ability required **System Points (SP)**, and the costs weren't trivial. Worse still, barring a few, nearly all of the abilities had tiers that significantly influenced their effectiveness, with the price doubling for each higher level.

[Ordinary → Good → Excellent → Genius → Ultimate → Limit Break]

[Ordinary] – A skill comparable to the average professional. Functional but unremarkable.

Good – Sharpened and refined, offering consistent, noticeable advantages.

Excellent – Exceptional. Begins to define a driver's style and provides distinct advantages.

Genius – Legendary. The skill achieves a level worthy of icons in the sport.

Ultimate – Near-perfection. Mastery over every aspect of the ability.

Limit Break – Transcendent. A realm where the impossible becomes possible.]

I could pour all my points into a single **Ultimate-level** ability, gaining unparalleled mastery in one skill. Or, I could distribute them across several **Good-level** abilities—the minimum tier of the abilities available for purchase of any ability—balancing versatility at the cost of specialization, becoming a jack of all trades but master of none.

As I examined the system's ability shop, something became clear. Every ability was designed solely to enhance *my* physical and mental capabilities. There were no options to alter the car's performance, or to interfere with my rivals like causing them to lose focus or make mistakes or manipulate the environment.

It became evident that the system's design was deliberate: To be considered the **GOAT**, my success had to come entirely from *my own skills*. By limiting the abilities to only impact me, it was clear that I would need to be the difference-maker, relying solely on my own mastery to excel

Chapter 2 - The Choices

Many of the abilities in the system shop overlapped, some being slight variations or subcategories of others, and their prices reflected that. After sorting through hundreds of options, I finally selected the ones I knew I would need right from the start.

But there was a problem.

Their combined cost exceeded the 15,000 SP I had.

[Simulation]

Category: Single Purchase

SP Cost: 10,000

Description: An immersive world where the user can practice, experiment, and refine their abilities without any risk to their real self.

Key Features: Allows the user to modify and change scenarios using SP. Enhances Mentor (if purchased), unlocking its full potential. Enables the registration of up to two vehicles via physical contact, with each registration costing 100 SP.

Limitations: Can be used for a maximum of 4 hours per day.

Why this? Because no matter how talented I became, the FIA's restrictions on practice time would always be a wall I'd hit. Real-world teams had limited hours of track time. I needed more, a sanctuary to push myself past the limits. A place to crash, burn, rebuild, and learn without consequence.

This would be my private circuit. My personal Nürburgring. Where I could run hundreds of laps.

But raw repetition wouldn't be enough. I needed a teacher who could dissect my flaws and help me evolve, a coach who would break down my weaknesses before they broke me.

[Mentor]

Category: Single Purchase

SP Cost: 10,000

Description: A personal coach dedicated to guiding the user toward self-improvement through structured missions and continuous feedback.

Key Features: Creates missions tailored to personal growth. Provides constant guidance and feedback. Grants SP-earning missions.

Limitations: Requires Simulation for full effectiveness—without it, mission variety will be limited.

Together, Mentor and Simulation would form my perfect training loop. But training isn't just about driving, it's about mind and body too. So next, I picked a pair of synergistic abilities:

[Sponge Brain]

Category: Upgradable

Level: Good

SP Cost: 1300

Description: Enhances the interpretation and absorption of information

[Sponge Body]

Category: Upgradable

Level: Good

SP Cost: 1300

Description: Optimizes the body's efficiency, accelerating recovery, enhancing physical training results, and improving overall coordination.

If I was going to train like a machine, I needed the brain of a scholar and the body of an athlete. Sponge Brain would make every lesson stick. Sponge Body would let me push myself further, faster, and bounce back by morning.

But learning and endurance alone weren't enough. Some races could be won or lost in fractions of a second, so I also added:

[Catlex]

Category: Upgradable

Level: Good

SP Cost: 900

Description: Sharpening reflexes and accelerating decision-making speed

And finally, I also added a wild card. A bit of chaos... but the good kind.

[Zone]

Category: Single Purchase

Level: Good

SP Cost: 1,000

Description: Raises all abilities by one tier for a random period of time.

Activation requirement: Random.

Although *Zone* had a random activation condition, what it offered was too good to pass up. When it triggered, it would be as if every ability I owned had been upgraded all at once. That kind of spike could win races—or save me from losing one.

But while going through the shop, something odd stood out: there were no abilities related to mentality. Nothing about grit, mental endurance, or pressure handling. I searched again and again, but the result was the same. It made me curious... but there was no time to dwell on it. I was facing a bigger problem.

A dilemma.

Two of the most important abilities in the system, *Simulation* and *Mentor*, were both essential. One was half useless without the other, and yet their combined cost was beyond my current SP balance.

I hesitated, then asked what felt like a stupid question: "Is there a way to get more SP?"

I wasn't expecting an answer, but I got one.

[The user may downgrade their innate ability from Limit Break to Ultimate in exchange for 10,000 additional SP.]

I blinked, stunned.

"Wait... I have an *innate* ability? Since when?"

The system didn't respond verbally. Instead, it displayed the answer:

[Invictus]

Category: Innate

Level: Limit Break

Description: Born from past suffering, Invictus grants the driver extreme mental endurance against all forms of pressure while heightening physical sensitivity.

"Oh my god," I muttered. "*Limit Break*? Was my suffering really *that* deep?"

The system didn't assign that level casually. It meant my past was intense enough to shape something... extraordinary.

But this put me in a real dilemma.

Should I downgrade *Invictus*, an ability at the almost mythical *Limit Break* tier, and gain something monumental in return? Or should I hold onto that power and settle for purchasing just one of the core abilities, hoping to gather the rest of the SP later?

I weighed both sides, my thoughts circling like cars in a wet qualifying session.

Eventually, clarity hit me.

At this stage, *Invictus* being at *Limit Break* wouldn't make much of a difference. Even at *Ultimate*, it would be near-perfect. And if I was planning to gather SP anyway, the time it would take to re-upgrade *Invictus* would likely match the time it took to buy whichever ability I'd otherwise delay.

The better choice, the *smarter* choice, was to act now.

"System," I said quietly, bracing myself, "downgrade *Invictus*."

A dull ache tugged at my chest, as if I'd just handed back something sacred. Losing a Limit Break ability wasn't easy... but the decision had been made.

[INVICTUS has been downgraded (Limit Break → Ultimate).]

[You have gained 10,000 SP.]

I wasted no time. With the full 25,000 SP now available, I confirmed the purchases of every ability I had carefully chosen. One by one, the transactions were completed. When the dust settled, I was left with 500 SP.

There were still a few niche options, like something focused on slow-corner entry optimization, but I resisted the urge. Better to hold onto the remainder until I identified a specific gap or weakness in need of solving. No use plugging a hole that hadn't even appeared yet.

The moment the final confirmation clicked, the screen blinked out, returning me to the void.

But the silence didn't last long.

Just like the moment I died, I felt consciousness slipping again, but this time, I wasn't sinking into death.

This time... I was waking up to life.

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Türkiye, İstanbul, Fatih, Gureba Hospital.

Inside a dimly lit labor room, a mother lay exhausted, her face drenched in sweat from the grueling hours of labor she had endured. Despite the pain, her gaze was tender as she cradled her newborn son, her heart swelling with a love that only a mother could understand. She stared at him in quiet awe as he slept soundly, his tiny chest rising and falling in peaceful rhythm, the crying that had once filled the room now replaced by serenity.

"Fatih," she whispered softly, her voice barely audible in the stillness, "Fatih Yıldırım, that's your name." She gently traced her finger along the curve of his small nose, her eyes never leaving his face. For a moment, she could forget the pain, the fear, and the loneliness. In this instant, it was just her and him, a new beginning.

"Give him to me, you need to rest." A voice, warm and authoritative, broke the moment. It was a woman in her fifties, her hands gently wiping the sweat from the new mother's forehead as she leaned in to take the child.

"I want to see his face a bit longer," the new mother replied, her voice tinged with a bittersweet smile. "He reminds me of his father." Her smile faltered as she spoke of the man she had loved, her husband. The sadness lingered for a moment, but it quickly dissolved as she gazed once more at her son, her joy returning.

For a few moments, she held her child in her arms, savoring the precious time, before finally relenting and handing him to her own mother.

"Our conqueror is sleeping so peacefully," the older woman said, her voice a mixture of pride and affection as she cradled the baby. She carefully adjusted him in her arms, not daring to mention his father. She didn't want to stir the painful memories of the man who had passed away too soon, just four months before the birth of his son.

The young mother had suffered terribly from the grief of losing her husband. The depression nearly took everything from her, even the child she now held in her arms. Yet, with her mother's unwavering support, she had found the strength to carry on. They both knew that this child, Fatih, was a living piece of the man they had lost, and a symbol of hope for their future.

"Which language is this?" Fatih wondered to himself.

Although everyone in the room believed he was asleep, he had simply shut his eyes the moment he became aware of his surroundings. The first thing he noticed was that he was crying, uncontrollably, as if on instinct. Through blurry, unfocused vision, he caught a glimpse of a woman's face, soft, tired, and full of love. His mother, he realized.

But the sounds around him, the words being spoken... they were unfamiliar.

He tried to piece it together, reaching into the memories that had been reborn with him. Yet despite his efforts, he couldn't identify the language. The headache that followed made it clear he was pushing too hard, too soon.

Frustrated but realistic, he decided not to waste energy. There would be time for all of that later.

For now, rest was the only thing he needed.

Chapter 3 - Life in Türkiye

That was the year he was born, May 16, 2003, a Friday, to be exact. It had taken him a full two years to learn the exact date, but that was also long enough for him to grow accustomed to the limitations of being a child who couldn't do much.

Now, at two years old, his brain had developed enough that he could think for extended periods without losing concentration or feeling sleepy. Thanks to his Sponge Body and Sponge Brain abilities, he had easily learned Turkish. He wasn't at a fluent speaking

level yet, but he could understand everything said to him, so long as basic words were used.

{An English commentator's voice drifted from the TV in the living room.}

{"Hello, everybody. What a cracking atmosphere here at Monte Carlo. Well, as we saw, a young prince has risen to the throne here recently, Prince Albert taking over from his late father, Rainier, and in a couple of hours' time, he will present the prizes to the winner of the world's most prestigious Grand Prix."}

{"In all probability, it'll be one of the young contenders to Michael Schumacher's crown who'll be stepping up to the royal box to collect the trophy this afternoon. Kimi Räikkönen and Fernando Alonso are in a league of their own here this weekend."}

{"The June jewel has been intense right from the get-go first practice on Thursday, throughout the two qualifying sessions as well. And the margin between them on the grid is just eight one-hundredths of a second. And I understand that Jenson Button is coming towards me now..."}

Fatih sat on one of the sofas, eyes glued to the screen, carefully watching the race that was about to start, determined not to miss a single moment. He had lucked out; his family had a subscription to a satellite channel provider that included international channels like ITV, which was now broadcasting the Formula 1 Grand Prix de Monaco 2005. The race was taking place on May 22nd, just a week after his second birthday.

"Can you understand it?" His mother, Rûmeysa, entered the living room just as the race began and Kimi Räikkönen maintained his lead into turn one. She smiled, noticing him engrossed in the English channel.

"Bu kadarlık (Just this much)," Fatih replied, forming a small gap between his thumb and pointing finger, his small hands emphasizing the point as he looked up at his mother happily.

These past two years, he had experienced familial love, a warmth he hadn't truly felt in his previous life. Though he had loved his friends dearly, this maternal bond was profoundly different. He had realized he had no father; he hadn't seen one since his vision cleared, and the meaning of Turkish words began to solidify in his mind. Yet, he wasn't sad. One loving parent would have been enough, but he had two: his mother and his grandmother. As if to ensure he never felt the void of his father's absence, both his mother and grandmother doted on him, showering him with attention.

"Who do you think is going to win?" his mother asked, taking a seat beside him and gently lifting him onto her lap so they could watch the race together.

"Kimi," he said, pointing a tiny finger at the onboard camera view of Kimi Räikkönen's car as it navigated the Portier corner.

His mother looked slightly surprised that her two-year-old knew the driver's name. Her surprise quickly faded, however, when the commentator mentioned, {"...Kimi Räikkönen holding strong..."}

Seeing her son, now resting his head on her chest, watching the race with such serious concentration, Rūmeysa decided not to disturb him with more questions and settled in to watch with him.

While the images of roaring engines and screeching tires filled his vision, Fatih's mind was also racing. Ever since he'd realized he was born in 2003, he had been trying to determine if this was the same world he'd left or an alternate universe with a different history. He wasn't well-versed in global events from this era beyond motorsport, so he was watching this race intently. Despite already knowing the results and any highlight-worthy incidents, if they unfolded as he remembered, he would be sure this world was the same. That confirmation would make his road to Formula 1 easier by several magnitudes. If things went differently, however, he would have to devise other strategies to ease his journey, a more difficult prospect considering their current living conditions.

He was fairly certain they were a middle-class family, judging by the size of their house. But for a family at this level, funding a motorsport career was a monumental task unless one had exceptionally wealthy benefactors or found other unconventional paths into Formula 1.

With each lap, as the counter ticked down on the screen, Fatih's smile grew wider. Events unfolded exactly as he remembered: Karthikeyan, Coulthard, Friesacher, Liuzzi, all of them DNF'ing (Did Not Finish). His heart pounded in anticipation as the final laps approached.

{The commentator's voice rose with excitement: "We're going to be watching Räikkönen win the race. Kind of understandably. And Kimi Räikkönen comes through, out of the final corner! Two in a row for the Finn! Another dominant victory, and Kimi Räikkönen wins on the streets of Monte Carlo!"}

As Räikkönen crossed the finish line, Fatih couldn't hold his happiness in any longer. He jumped from his mother's lap, startling Rūmeysa, who was amazed that the driver her son had predicted would win had actually done so, even if Kimi had been leading when he'd made the call.

"Yaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!" Fatih cheered, running in circles around the room, ecstatic for Räikkönen's victory but even more so because he was now certain: this world was, most likely, the same as his previous one.

Rūmeysa watched him, a fond smile on her face, as he celebrated. "Do you like cars that much?" she asked once he started to slow down.

"Yes! I love racing! I want to be a racing driver!" he declared. He stumbled over a few sounds and pronunciations, his two-year-old tongue still mastering the words, but his intent was crystal clear.

After more than five minutes of exuberant celebration, his little body ran out of energy. He walked back to his mother, climbed onto the sofa beside her, and laid his head on her lap, drifting off to sleep.

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While his physical body slept peacefully in the real world, his mother gently stroking his hair, Fatih's consciousness was elsewhere. He found himself inside the Simulation, sitting on a paddock chair at the Silverstone circuit. Although he had yet to register a car he could drive, the Simulation was still accessible. It was just an empty circuit of his choice, so long as he spent SP to unlock it. So far, he had only unlocked Silverstone, the very track he was now visualizing.

"Now that I'm sure," he murmured to the empty air, "I need to come up with a plan to make my journey up the racing ladder as easy as possible." He began to meticulously think through the ways he could achieve this.

"The largest problem is going to be money," he mused. "I haven't seen Mom or Grandma go to work at all. This means Mom is either on an extended maternity leave—more than two years now—or we're living off her savings, Grandma's money, or perhaps an inheritance from Dad. Whatever the source, it's unlikely to be enough for the massive investment motorsport requires, especially for what Mom would initially consider just a hobby for a child."

He continued, "The easiest way is to be signed by a racing academy. They would cover most of the costs. But that requires showcasing massive talent, which I'm confident I won't lack. The problem is, I'm not sure if they even have scouts in Turkey during this period, or even in the next decade."

"Other than that, there's the route of using my future knowledge for investments. The memories I have that could be financially helpful are few, and some of the best opportunities haven't even come into existence yet. Those will be crucial once I reach the money-hungry part of the ladder—the moment I leave karting. But even if other avenues open up, I still plan to exploit these memories."

Slowly, he began to create a roadmap, piecing together the best path for his career. He used his memories and knowledge of upcoming regulation changes, the creation of feeder series, and the evolving ladder to Formula 1. Gradually, a rough plan started to take shape.

"What do you think of it?" he asked once he had visualized the basic framework.

A figure shimmered into existence beside him. Tall and imposing, with an aura of calm wisdom, it resembled the Greek mythological god he was named after. "It is a good basic plan," Apollo, his Mentor, replied, his voice resonant. "But you haven't considered your mother's input, Fatih. How will she feel about letting such a young child travel for all these events? Or if she will even agree to buy you a go-kart in the first place?"

Fatih smiled. "That, I can try and convince her of. It will be difficult, but not entirely impossible."

Chapter 4 - Life in Türkiye II

For weeks, Fatih had repeatedly asked his mother for a go-kart at every opportunity. His plan was to continue asking until his next birthday, hoping persistence would secure it as a gift. Unfortunately, that plan was abruptly interrupted when, one day, his mother sat him down for an important conversation.

"Mother has to return to Germany for work next month," Rûmeysa said gently, her expression serious. Although she knew he might not fully understand the complexities, she felt it was better to tell him than to simply disappear one day, leaving him confused and questioning.

"You have work?" Fatih asked, his small face tilted up to hers.

"Yes, Mom does," she affirmed, choosing her words carefully. "I've been on parental leave for the last two and a half years, ever since your father passed away. Now, I need to return, or my three-year leave will expire, and I might have to reapply for my position." She spoke slowly, using simpler terms, ensuring he was focused.

To her constant surprise, raising Fatih hadn't involved the difficulties other mothers often described. She often wondered if it was simply her deep love for him, the invaluable help from her own mother, or if Fatih was truly one of those children often labeled prodigies. Unlike the stories she heard from friends, her son rarely engaged in dangerous antics, caused little trouble, and didn't create messes when left unattended. He didn't exhibit the typical childhood stubbornness or lose attention during conversations; instead, Fatih usually listened intently, as if he understood everything. And, barring a few complex topics, his actions often showed he did understand. She'd even worriedly asked his doctor about it during a check-up, only to be reassured that he was a perfectly normal, albeit very observant, child.

"When are you leaving?" Fatih asked. He tried to remain calm, but his two-and-a-half-year-old body betrayed him, his face telegraphing a wave of emotions.

"Next month," she answered, her own emotions welling up. This was why people said mothers had a weakness for their children; the look on Fatih's face was almost enough to make her reconsider everything. But she knew she had to return to work.

"Will you come back?" His voice was small.

"Yes, of course. I'll come visit you every chance I get, and you'll be with Grandma."

A flicker of his usual determination returned. "I want a go-kart when you come back," he said, sensing the emotional current. He needed to divert the topic before his mother cried, but also saw an opportunity to secure his most cherished wish.

Rümeysa looked at her son, a mix of sadness and amusement in her eyes. "I will buy you one for your fifth birthday," she finally relented, "but only if you behave well and don't trouble Grandma while I'm gone."

"I promise I'll be good to Grandma!" Fatih exclaimed, hugging her tightly, not wanting her to retract the promise. A go-kart three years away felt like an eternity, but a promise was a promise.

Rümeysa was flabbergasted by how quickly her son's sadness transformed into pure excitement at the mere mention of a go-kart. It was the final confirmation: her son was utterly captivated by motorsport. It was the only thing that elicited such an immediate, intense reaction. She made a mental note to research go-karting more thoroughly when she had the time.

For the next month, Rümeysa, Fatih, and his grandmother spent nearly every day out together, visiting playgrounds, amusement parks, and anywhere a child his age might find joy. But inevitably, the day of her departure arrived. They parted sadly at the airport, and she returned to Germany to resume her work. Fatih had tried to learn more about her job, but she always answered vaguely.

He had, however, managed to learn that his father, though of Turkish descent, had held German citizenship. This meant Fatih would have dual citizenship until he turned eighteen. After that, if Germany or Turkey allowed dual citizenship to be maintained, he would do nothing. If not, and he was required to choose one, he would make that decision when the time came. It was a problem for a much older Fatih, perhaps one with access to a computer to research the relevant regulations.

For the next two years, Rümeysa called almost daily and used all her vacation days, a full month each year, to visit him in Turkey.

During this period, Fatih diligently spent his allotted four hours daily in the Simulation. He meticulously wrote down everything he could remember from his past life, race details, technological advancements, and even significant global events. His Sponge Brain ability kept his memory sharp, but he wanted a written record for reference, reinforcement, and later verification. He dared not write these things in a physical book in the real world; if found, it would cause nothing but trouble.

Thankfully, Apollo was there to keep him company during those long hours in the Simulation. But on the night he celebrated his fourth birthday, things changed.

He logged into the Simulation after falling asleep, as usual. Instead of the familiar adult-sized Apollo, he was met by a child-sized version of his Mentor, waiting for him with an air of quiet anticipation.

"What's the occasion?" Fatih asked, surprised by the change.

"You are now at an appropriate age to begin your training journey," child-Apollo stated, his voice still holding its characteristic calm. "This is the best age to build a perfect foundation. Starting tomorrow, your formal training commences."

The moment Apollo finished speaking, a quest window materialized before Fatih:

[Daily Quest (Repeatable)]

A thousand-mile journey starts with a single step. Yours starts now.

Tasks:

- * Neck Training (Incomplete)**
- * Balance and Stability Training (Incomplete)**
- * Reaction Training (Incomplete)**
- * Endurance Training (Incomplete)**

Time Limit: 24 hours

Reward: 1 SP

Punishment: None

(ACCEPT] \[DENY])

His first quest! Even though the reward was only one SP, it marked the beginning of him actively earning points. After quickly reading and understanding the terms, he pressed [ACCEPT].

"I will demonstrate the exercises," Apollo said. "Observe carefully. The System will notify you upon the completion of each training category."

Apollo then began. "First, neck training." He stood straight, then gently moved his head from side to side, then up and down, for about a minute.

"Next, balance and stability." He stood on one foot and performed light, controlled squats.

"For reaction speed, the System will project targets in the Simulation for you to interact with. For endurance training, it will be a light jog for five minutes."

The exercises seemed more like gentle stretches than rigorous training, but Fatih understood they were appropriate for his four-year-old body.

"Now, perform them so I can correct any mistakes before they become bad habits," Apollo instructed, stepping aside as a pen and notebook materialized in his hands, ready for note-taking.

One by one, Fatih repeated the exercises, trying to perfectly match Apollo's demonstrations. Despite their simplicity, Apollo still made several corrections. Exercising was foreign to him; in his previous life, any physical exertion beyond basic movement had only amplified his pain.

Once all adjustments were made, and Fatih had repeated the corrected forms a few times to Apollo's satisfaction, he was finally allowed to return to his note-taking within the Simulation.

Later, back in the real world, a new thought struck him.

"Looks like I need to make friends," he murmured to himself. He realized he'd need an excuse, like playing with friends, to go to the park regularly. This would allow him to do his daily exercises without his grandmother questioning why he suddenly wanted to go there every day, and without requiring her to accompany him constantly, as she had when he was younger.

In the last two years, he hadn't made any friends. He'd preferred staying indoors, partly to reduce the burden on his grandmother, and partly because, after years confined to a room in his previous life, he was still unaccustomed to spending extended time outside. His old room had been a prison, yes, but also a strange sort of safety cocoon. Unless he was with his mother or grandmother, he hadn't ventured out much alone both because he was too young, and until now, he hadn't had a compelling reason.

Now, he did.

Chapter 5 - A Birthday, A Promise, and a Glimpse of the Future

"What are you doing?" a boy, about six years old and holding a football, asked Fatih when he saw him methodically moving his neck from side to side.

"I'm exercising," Fatih responded, not pausing. He glanced at the mental overlay from his System, which showed his neck training at 85% completion.

"Wanna join us? We're missing a person for our team," the boy offered.

"Sure," Fatih agreed. Immediately, a notification popped up in his vision: [Neck Training (Complete)]. A small smile touched his lips.

"I'm Emir," the boy said, bouncing with energy as he led the way towards the football pitch in the park. "What's your name?"

"Fatih," he replied, quickening his pace to keep up with Emir's longer strides and enthusiastic speed.

"When did you move in? I haven't seen you around before."

"I've lived here all along," Fatih explained. "I just hadn't come to the park much." He wondered if their current pace would contribute at least ten percent to his endurance training for the day.

"Guys!" Emir announced as they reached the fenced-off pitch. "This is Fatih, and he'll be playing on my team!"

With the teams now even at five players each, and after quick introductions, the game started. Thanks to his Catlex (Good) ability, Fatih found himself to be a surprisingly adept goalkeeper, his reflexes sharp.

Throughout the game, Güldane, Fatih's grandmother, watched from a nearby gazebo with a warm smile. She was happy he had finally made friends. She'd been a bit puzzled when he first started asking to come to the park only to do strange exercises by himself, but now, seeing him playing football so enthusiastically, her earlier concerns vanished.

With Emir now a friend, Fatih had more freedom to visit the park. Emir would often come to pick him up, or Fatih would wait for his grandmother to finish her chores (helping as much as his small body allowed) before they went together. This new routine allowed him to earn his daily SP while also enjoying playtime with Emir, especially when Emir was back from school—which Fatih himself was expected to start when he turned six.

Time passed quickly, and before long, the much-anticipated day arrived: May 16, 2008. His fifth birthday.

His mother, Rümeysa, had returned from Germany on Wednesday, two days prior, and had rested up.

Fatih took a moment to check his System status:

[Name: FATIH YILDIRIM]

[Gender: Male]

[Age: 5]

[Date of Birth: May 16, 2003]

[Abilities: Invictus (Ultimate), Simulation (Single Purchase), Mentor (Single Purchase), Sponge Brain (Good), Sponge Body (Good), Catlex (Good), Zone (Good)]

[System Points: 840]

[Evaluation: A youngling performing basic conditioning in preparation for his first drive. Yet to truly start his journey, but diligently building the perfect foundation.]

A satisfied smile spread across his face as he looked at the amount of SP he had managed to collect. His initial 500 SP reserve had decreased to 475 after spending 20 SP to unlock the Silverstone circuit in the Simulation and an additional 5 SP on miscellaneous virtual items like notebooks and basic supplies. He had then earned 365 SP from completing his daily mission every single day over the past year. (If he completed today's exercises, that annual earning would actually be 366 SP, as 2008 was a leap year.)

"If I keep this up," he thought to himself, "I should be able to upgrade an ability every four years or so, or buy a new one every couple of years." He closed the System screen, his eyes refocusing on the world outside the car window.

The 2005 Chrysler Town & Country was being driven by his mother, with his grandmother in the front passenger seat. Fatih was securely strapped into the middle seat in the rear.

"I've looked into karts quite a bit over the past two years and learned a lot," Rümeyza said, her eyes meeting his in the rearview mirror. "For your first kart, we're going to buy a used one. You'll outgrow it quickly, and you'll need a different one if you want to participate in proper competitions later. So, we'll pick out the kart after we get you all the other equipment, okay?"

To her slight surprise—or perhaps, as she expected—Fatih didn't throw a tantrum about wanting a new one. He just gave her a thumbs-up, the excitement on his face undiminished.

...

"Welcome! How can I help you?" a shop worker greeted them warmly as they entered the karting store.

"Woooooow," Fatih breathed, his eyes wide as he took in the sight. Bare kart chassis of different categories hung on the walls like metallic skeletons, and shelves were packed with colorful gear.

"Thank you," Rümeysa replied. "We're here to buy him racing equipment. We need a CIK-FIA Level 1 certified racing suit, a Snell K2005 certified helmet, karting gloves, racing shoes, a neck brace, and a rib protector." She recited the list as if she had memorized it, gesturing towards Fatih, who was already captivated by the karts on display.

The worker listened attentively. "We have all of those available," she said with a smile, then looked at Fatih. "What's his name?"

"Fatih," Rümeysa answered. Fatih's attention snapped back to them, and his mother beckoned him over with a wave of her hand.

"Nice to meet you, Fatih," the worker said, crouching down slightly to his eye level and extending her hand.

"Nice to meet you too," Fatih replied, shaking her hand politely.

"He's very respectful," the worker commented, glancing up at Rümeysa and Güldane, who were watching the interaction with pleased expressions. "First, let's get your measurements and find you the right equipment." She gently placed a hand on his shoulder, guiding him towards the measuring area.

Once his measurements were taken and the worker had gone to gather the items for him to try on, Fatih looked pleadingly at his mother. "Can I look around?"

"Be careful and don't cause any trouble," Rümeysa said, granting permission. She had yet to see him cause any real trouble when she gave him such instructions.

"Thank you!" he said excitedly, giving her a quick hug before darting off to explore the massive shop, his eyes searching for fully assembled go-karts.

And there it was. A sleek, aggressive-looking machine sat on a raised platform, gleaming under the shop lights as if it were a show car. "That's a KF1 class kart," Apollo's voice echoed in his mind.

Knowing he didn't have much time before he'd be called back, Fatih walked straight to it and reached out to touch one of its slick tires. As if prompted, the System immediately asked:

[Would you like to register this vehicle? (First vehicle registration is free)]

[Yes] [No]

Without a second thought, he mentally clicked [Yes].

[Vehicle Registered! KART_KF1_2008_BASILINE_001 added to Simulation.]

He felt a thrill that the registration was free, saving him 100 SP. He immediately opened his Simulation ability interface.

[Simulation]

Registered Vehicles (1/2):

> KART_KF1_2008_BASILINE_001

He clicked on the highlighted name, and the detailed description appeared, just as he'd hoped.

[KART_KF1_2008_BASILINE_001]

VEHICLE ID: KART_KF1_2008_BASILINE_001

CLASS: CIK-FIA KF1 (2008 Homologation Era)

STATUS: Ready for Simulation

[CHASSIS SPECIFICATIONS]

- > Type: High-Performance, Direct-Drive Kart Chassis (CIK-FIA KF1 Homologated)
- > Material: Chromoly Steel Alloy Tubing (Typical Diameter: 30mm/32mm)
- > Wheelbase (Est.): ~1040mm - 1050mm
- > Adjustability:
 - Front Geometry: Caster, Camber, Toe-in/Toe-out
 - Ride Height: Front & Rear
 - Track Width: Front & Rear
 - Rear Axle: Interchangeable (Varying Stiffness)

- Torsion Bars: Front (Standard), Side/Rear (Optional/Tunable)
- > Bodywork: CIK-FIA KF1 Homologated Aerodynamic Package (2008 Specification)
- Includes: Nassau Panel, Front Spoiler, Side Pods, Rear Protection System

[ENGINE SPECIFICATIONS]

- > Model Designation: Generic KF1-Spec Power Unit (Representative of 2008 Homologation)
- > Type: 125cc, 2-Stroke, Single Cylinder, Water-Cooled, Reed Valve Induction
- > Max Power (Est.): ~35-38 HP @ ~13,000-14,500 RPM
- > Max RPM (Est.): ~16,000 RPM (Regulated Limit May Apply)
- > Carburetion: Homologated Diaphragm Type
- > Cooling: Water-cooled via external radiator & belt-driven water pump
- > Exhaust: Homologated Tuned Expansion Chamber

[DRIVETRAIN & STARTING SYSTEM]

- > Drive Type: Direct Drive (Chain to Rear Axle)
- > Clutch: Centrifugal, Onboard (Engages/Disengages at low RPM)
- > Starter: Onboard Electric Starter Motor
- > Power Source (Starter): Onboard Battery Pack

[BRAKING SYSTEM]

- > Type: Hydraulic Disc Brakes
- > Configuration:
 - Front: Dual Discs (One per wheel), Hand-Operated or Pedal-Operated (Configuration Dependent)
 - Rear: Single Disc (Axle Mounted), Pedal-Operated
- > Bias Control: Driver-Adjustable Front/Rear Brake Bias

[TIRES - DEFAULT LOADOUT]

- > Type: High-Grip Racing Slicks
- > Compound: Soft (Optimized for Maximum Grip, Moderate Wear Rate)
- > Size (Est.):
 - Front: 10x4.50-5
 - Rear: 11x7.10-5
- > Note: Tire model and compound can be modified within Simulation parameters using SP.

[PERFORMANCE METRICS - SIMULATED BASELINE]

- > Acceleration (0-60 mph / 0-100 km/h Est.): ~3.5 - 4.5 seconds (Surface/Gearing Dependent)
- > Top Speed (Track Dependent Est.): ~85-95 mph / ~137-153 km/h
- > Cornering Capability: Extreme Lateral G-Force Generation (>2.5 G)
- > Handling Profile: Highly Responsive, Physically Demanding, Requires Precision Input.

[SYSTEM NOTES / QUIRKS]

- > The KF-era engine includes an integrated electric starter and clutch system, adding weight and complexity compared to later OK-generation karts. Battery management and starter system reliability were notable characteristics of this formula.

[SIMULATION OPTIONS]

- > **[DRIVE]**
- > **[SETUP & TUNING]**
- > **[COMPONENT SWAP]**

Chapter 6 - Purchase Complete

"If you are aiming for Formula 1, this is the highest level of FIA-sanctioned karting," Apollo's voice stated as Fatih finished reading the KF1 kart's description, his eyes still wide at the speeds it could achieve on a long straight.

"The regulations will change eventually," Fatih murmured, a satisfied smile playing on his lips, "but until then, practicing on this should be more than enough." He was thrilled to finally have a vehicle registered in the Simulation, but even more excited because, after five long years of waiting, he would finally start driving.

"Your mother is calling you," Apollo interjected, cutting through Fatih's excited train of thoughts, which had made him oblivious to the real world.

"Coming!" Fatih called out, snapping back to reality. He walked back towards his mother, finding her with the shop worker who had already gathered all the equipment for him to try on.

"Sorry," he apologized to the worker, who offered him a warm smile. Rûmeysa then led him to a changing room to test the fit of the clothes.

He began by putting on the fire-resistant racing underwear: long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, and socks, followed by a balaclava. Next came the race suit itself, then the rib protector, neck brace, gloves, and shoes. Lastly, with a sense of ceremony, he put the vibrant red helmet on.

The moment it settled over his head, an extreme sense of calmness washed over him. It was as if the outside world had been perfectly isolated, yet his connection to his immediate surroundings became incredibly acute. His legs, the only part of him touching the ground, felt hyper-sensitive to the slightest tremors. His eyes seemed to gather more information, every detail sharper, and his ears amplified the ambient sounds, each distinct and clear.

With each passing second, these heightened senses intensified. '*So this is how it feels when **Invictus (Ultimate)** activates,*' he realized, immediately understanding the cause of his current experience. The ability's description mentioned "...all forms of pressure while heightening physical sensitivity." He had initially wondered about the seemingly contradictory nature of that phrase, but now it made perfect sense. His ability was turning his body into an advanced sensor, picking up and categorizing vast amounts of data from his surroundings, all while keeping his mind perfectly calm under pressure.

"How does it feel? Is it too stuffy?" his mother's voice gently pierced through the strange sensory bubble, bringing him back to a more normal perception.

"It feels fine!" he answered, his voice brimming with excitement.

"Good," she said, pleased to see his undisguised joy.

They then carefully removed all the gear, layer by layer, before leaving the changing room.

"Any problems?" the worker asked as they returned.

"None, he's happy with them, so we'll take them all," Rûmeysa confirmed, placing the items on the counter.

By the time they left the shop, Rûmeysa had spent the Lira equivalent of about five hundred US dollars. It didn't seem to faze her; she appeared to have budgeted for it.

Picking out the actual kart was straightforward but was left for last. First, his mother took them to a restaurant for a birthday celebration meal. Consequently, by the time they arrived home after collecting the used go-kart, it was already evening.

"You can drive it tomorrow," Rûmeysa said, looking at the darkening sky with a slightly apologetic smile. She knew how cruel it could feel to get a new toy and then have to wait to use it.

To her surprise, instead of the tantrum she half-expected, Fatih simply replied, "Okay." He glanced towards the boot of their car, parked in the underground garage, where the Bambino go-kart and the newly bought equipment lay waiting. He then turned to help his mother carry some of the smaller bags.

"Is that normal?" Rûmeysa asked her mother with a puzzled look on her face. "His behavior, I mean. I was sure it would have been difficult to convince him to wait until tomorrow."

"I remember buying you new clothes for Eid when you were his age," Gûldane said with a chuckle, reminiscing. "You nearly kept us awake all night when I told you that you'd have to wait until morning to try them on."

She looked towards Fatih, who had placed the items down and was now jumping to reach the elevator call button, having arrived before them. "He is very mature for his age. I don't know what made him that way, but it seems like you got lucky," she added.

"I'm starting to get worried that he's growing up faster than he should," Rûmeysa confessed, watching Fatih, who now stood patiently by the elevator, smiling at them. A pang of bitterness hit her as she wondered if his accelerated maturity was because his father was gone and she herself was away for work so often.

"Don't worry so much," Gûldane reassured her. "Each child grows at their own pace. And it's not like he's growing up this way due to hardship or neglect. You should be grateful he isn't one of those troublesome kids."

She paused, then added gently, "But if you want to be with him more, why not quit your job and spend time with him, at least until he starts school?"

"And how are we supposed to live without an income?" Rûmeysa countered.

"You're an executive already," Gûldane rebutted, a familiar note in her voice. "And you can use the insurance money. It should be enough for you to not work for decades and still look after him comfortably. We covered this two years ago when you were planning on returning to work."

"As I said then, that money will only be used for Fatih's needs," Rûmeysa stated firmly. "And from the looks of it, he's completely infatuated with motorsport. If that passion continues, even that insurance money won't be enough. I need to keep working to prepare for that possibility."

"You know best, dear. But instead of worrying so much about the distant future, isn't it better for him to grow up with his mother by his side now?"

"I know that, and I'm working on a solution," Rûmeysa said, her answer sincere enough to show she wasn't just trying to end the discussion.

"What is it?" Gûldane asked, surprised.

"Let's wait until I have a definite answer. I don't want to raise our hopes only for it to potentially fail," she replied as they entered the elevator, where Fatih had already pressed the button for the 4th floor.

.....

"Finally," Fatih breathed as he entered the Simulation later that night, after finishing all his real-world routines and settling into bed.

On the main screen of his Simulation interface, his registered vehicles were listed:

[Registered Vehicles]

> KART_KF1_2008_BASILINE_001

> KART_BAMBINO_2008_USED_002

The smile didn't leave his face.

"Let's start with the easiest one first," he decided, resisting the immense temptation to jump straight into the powerful KF1 kart. He knew he had zero real driving experience from his previous life, so he had to follow a logical progression, even if he couldn't get physically hurt in VR.

Just as he was about to select the Bambino kart, he paused, a thought striking him.

"Ah, I need a proper karting circuit, or it'll take me fifteen minutes just to drive one lap of Silverstone in this thing," he chuckled to himself. He navigated to the Circuit Shop within the Simulation.

"Which circuit is best for starting out in karts?" he asked Apollo, valuing his Mentor's input since Apollo would be guiding his training.

"I suggest this one," Apollo replied, and a specific karting circuit was highlighted among the many listed in the shop.

> La Conca

With the suggestion provided, Fatih immediately clicked to read the circuit's description.

[La Conca]

TRACK ID: CIRCUIT_INTL_LACONCA_ITA_001

NAME: La Conca International Circuit (Muro Leccese)

LOCATION: Muro Leccese, Lecce, Italy

STATUS: Ready for Simulation Deployment

[CIRCUIT CONFIGURATION - PRIMARY INTERNATIONAL LAYOUT]

> Length: 1,250 meters (0.777 miles)

> Width (Average): 8-10 meters

> Direction: Clockwise

> Number of Turns: 12 (Typically 7 Right, 5 Left)

> Surface: High-Grip Asphalt

> Kerbing: CIK-FIA Standard

> Run-off Areas: Asphalt & Gravel

... **[Press for more details]** ...

[Price: 10 SP]

"Grade 6 tracks seem to be the lowest priced, with the price increasing by 2 SP for each higher grade. It seems the System has some conscience after all," he mused, noticing the price was significantly lower than what a Grade 1 F1 circuit like Silverstone had cost.

He immediately clicked purchase. **[10 SP Deducted. Current SP: 730]**. La Conca was added to his purchased list.

[Purchased Circuits]

> Silverstone

> La Conca

After selecting La Conca, his virtual surroundings instantly shifted from the familiar Silverstone paddock to the pitlane of the Italian circuit.

Not wasting a second to even look around, he selected his vehicle: **KART_BAMBINO_2008_USED_002**. The little kart materialized before him. Simultaneously, his virtual avatar's clothes changed from casual wear into the full racing suit, gloves, and shoes, with his red helmet waiting on the kart seat.

Picking it up and putting it on, he eagerly jumped into the Bambino kart.

Chapter 7 - First Laps, First Lessons

"Wow," Fatih breathed the moment his virtual body settled into the Bambino kart. He instantly felt something he had only experienced once before: his Invictus (Ultimate) ability activated, making him feel as if his very being was absorbed and assimilated into the kart.

Although it was the first time he was truly experiencing this sensation in a dynamic context and he couldn't quite describe it, he could say for sure that he felt everything. He felt how his breaths shifted his weight minutely and how this, in turn, affected the kart's balance, its center of gravity. He could sense the subtle flex of the chassis, the grip of each individual tire.

'I wonder what this would have felt like at Limit Break?' he mused, but without a shred of regret for his earlier decision. He knew downgrading Invictus had been necessary to build the best possible foundation, and it gave him more time to understand his abilities and how to exploit them to their absolute limits.

Now seated comfortably and acclimatized to the new, heightened sensory input, he started the kart. The engine coughed to life, and its tremors coursed through his body. He revved it a few times, his foot lightly on the brake to keep it stationary, enjoying the raw sound and the vibrations.

Satisfied, he lifted his foot from the brake and steered towards the pitlane exit. The moment his Bambino kart entered the main straight of La Conca, he immediately floored the accelerator.

He approached the first fast right-hander (Turn 1) at the end of the main straight. Being his first time truly driving, he braked earlier and more heavily than perhaps necessary. He then navigated the following right-hander (Turn 2), braking hard for the tight right-hand hairpin (Turn 3), focusing on a smooth exit into the subsequent left-hander (Turn 4). He accelerated down the short straight before tackling the double left-hand bend (Turns 5 and 6), trying to maintain momentum. Approaching the next left-hander (Turn 7), which led into the downhill section, he braked again. Then came the iconic descent: he carefully guided the kart through the downhill, tightening left-hander (Turn 8), then transitioned into the downhill then uphill right-hander (Turn 9), feeling the kart compress and unload. Exiting this section, he accelerated towards the wide right-hand bend (Turn 10), followed by the quick flicks of the right-left S-bend (Turns 11 and 12). He then braked hard for the wide left-hander (Turn 13) that led back towards the pit straight area, before finally navigating the last right-hand hairpin (Turn 14) onto the main straight.

[Lap Time: 2:24:043] flashed on his virtual dashboard. Without a second thought, he continued, pushing for his next lap.

For the following ten laps, he consistently shaved off at least a second with each run. He was attempting to get used to the overwhelming feedback coursing through his body, trying to filter and differentiate what each sensation meant, where it originated, and how to react.

Throughout this initial exploration, Apollo watched in silence from the virtual pit wall, a faint smile on his face. He saw the raw improvements Fatih was making with each lap. They were crude, unrefined, but considering this was Fatih's absolute first time driving anything, he was doing remarkably well.

It wasn't until an hour had passed, and Fatih showed no sign of even considering a stop, that Apollo finally intervened. He disappeared from the pit wall and reappeared at the start/finish line, a checkered flag materialized in his hand, waving it aggressively to signal the end of the practice session. Since the pit lane entry was at the beginning of the main straight, Fatih decided to take one final, slightly more aggressive lap before returning.

"Why did you stop me? I was just getting into the rhythm!" Fatih protested after bringing the kart to a full stop in the pit lane, a hint of frustration in his voice. He felt like he was losing precious time he could have spent driving and enjoying himself.

"Driving blindly, even in a simulation, won't benefit you much in the long run," Apollo stated calmly. "It risks ingraining bad habits that would take significant time and effort to correct later. Let's first start with foundational knowledge and progressively increase the difficulty as you master each task." He clapped his hands, and a large, holographic whiteboard shimmered into existence beside them.

"Let's start with the basics of the basics: types of corners," Apollo began, as images started materializing on the board. "Depending on interpretation, there are nearly limitless variations, but today we will stick to the fundamentals: right-handers, left-handers, hairpins, double-apex corners, and chicanes."

"The images are largely self-explanatory, so let's move to taking the corners. Cornering is essentially a three-step process: Entry, Apex, and Exit. How you execute these three phases can win or lose races."

"Anything related to slowing the kart—either lifting off the throttle and coasting, or active braking—is done during the Entry phase, along with the initial turn-in. Depending on the type of corner, you will either be accelerating during the apex or after the apex to maximize your exit speed..."

What followed was a clear, concise explanation of basic cornering theory, delivered in an easy-to-understand manner, with Apollo ensuring Fatih grasped every concept.

After the theory, practice followed. Being a proponent of action over mere words, Apollo said, "I will now demonstrate how to take each corner on this circuit using only the principles I have taught you. We will not move to the next lesson until you understand this." His own Bambino kart, identical to Fatih's in every specification, materialized beside him. He hopped in and took it onto the track.

Apollo rocketed down the main straight, the small engine screaming. He attacked the first fast right-hander (Turn 1) with precision. He flowed into the following right-hander (Turn 2), then executed a perfect late braking maneuver and rotation through the tight right-hand hairpin (Turn 3), getting on the power early for a strong exit into the left-hander (Turn 4). He powered down the short straight and carved through the double left-hand bend (Turns 5 and 6) as if it were one continuous, flowing motion. For the left-hander (Turn 7) leading into the descent, Apollo demonstrated a wide entry for a late apex. Through the descent itself, his control was sublime: a committed entry into the downhill left (Turn 8), then a perfectly balanced transition through the uphill right (Turn 9), using the compression to his advantage. He carried impressive speed through the wide right-hand bend (Turn 10), then flicked the kart effortlessly through the right-left S-bend (Turns 11 and 12). His approach to the wide left-hander (Turn 13) was smooth and fast, setting up perfectly for the final right-hand hairpin (Turn 14). Here, he

demonstrated another masterclass in braking, rotation, and maximizing exit speed to launch the kart onto the main straight with optimal momentum.

[Lap Time: 01:50:563]

Apollo repeated this for the next five laps, each time matching his initial lap time almost exactly, ensuring Fatih saw and understood the consistency and precision required.

"Now, you have half an hour to work on perfecting your cornering for this circuit," Apollo said after his kart came to a stop in the pit lane beside a still surprised and deeply impressed Fatih. Despite driving for an hour, Fatih's fastest time was still over ten seconds slower than Apollo's demonstration. It was a stark reminder that simply watching races in his past life wasn't enough to be good; specific instruction and dedicated practice were essential.

The moment Apollo finished speaking, a mission prompt appeared before Fatih:

[Training Mission]

You have learned the basics of cornering and have been shown an example.

Objective: Achieve a lap time within **1.000 seconds** of Apollo's time.

Target Lap Time: 01:51:563

Time Limit: 30 minutes

Reward: 10 SP

Punishment: None

[ACCEPT] \[DENY]

He accepted immediately. With no punishment for failure, there was no harm in trying.

As the timer started, he launched back onto the track, determined to perfect one corner at a time, then link them into sectors, before attempting full, fast laps in the final closing minutes.

Chapter 8 - Lucky Discovery

For the first five minutes of the mission, Fatih focused solely on perfecting his corner entries. He adopted a focused approach: on one lap, he concentrated on the odd-numbered corners (**1, 3, 5, etc.**), and on the next, he worked on the even-numbered ones (**2, 4, 6, etc.**). He repeated this cycle, drilling the initial turn-in and braking points until he felt he had made them as precise as he currently could.

Next, he moved on to perfecting each sector individually, dedicating five minutes to refining his lines and flow through Sector 1, then Sector 2, and finally Sector 3.

Twenty minutes of the thirty-minute mission had evaporated, yet he hadn't put in a lap time that was even within five seconds of the target (**01:51:563**). Surprisingly, or perhaps expectedly given his unique mental fortitude, he felt no pressure despite only ten minutes remaining. His **Invictus (Ultimate)** ability seemed to neutralize the anxiety, allowing him to think clearly and analytically instead of being dragged down by the ticking clock.

Feeling he had integrated the sector practice sufficiently, he decided to go for a full push lap. As he navigated the final right-hand hairpin (Turn 14), he committed. The moment his Bambino kart hit the main straight, he floored the accelerator. As he crossed the start/finish line, a holographic qualifying-style timer appeared in his vision, showing sector splits and his current delta, but he ignored it, focusing entirely on the track ahead as he barreled towards the first corner.

He hugged the left side of the straight approaching the fast right-hander (Turn 1), using the entry kerb before braking moderately while turning in, hitting the apex precisely with the inside wheels, and letting the kart drift wide on exit, using the external kerb under full throttle. He kept the power down until turning into the second right-hander (Turn 2), braking later this time, keeping the kart close to the inside kerb without mounting it. He positioned the kart wide for the entry of the tight right-hand hairpin (Turn 3), braked heavily, released the brakes as the kart rotated sharply, clipped the apex kerb, and powered out towards the middle of the track. He kept the steering lock applied slightly longer than usual as he accelerated through the subsequent left-hander (Turn 4). He didn't brake for the double left-hand bend (Turns 5 and 6), carrying speed through both apexes before braking on the short straight that followed. He attacked the next left-hander (Turn 7), leading into the descent, braking firmly before turning in wide, hitting a late apex, and using the exit kerb with just his right-side wheels – correcting a mistake from practice where taking too much kerb had unsettled the kart.

Leaving the kerb, he immediately prepared for the descent. He braked briefly before turning into the downhill, tightening left (Turn 8), keeping it tight to the inner kerb. As he transitioned into the uphill right (Turn 9), he accelerated hard. For a split second, the rear of the kart stepped out in a small slide – about a meter and a half – but thanks to **Invictus** heightening his senses and Catlex speeding his reaction, he caught it instantly, maintaining a tight line. He accelerated out towards the wide right-hand bend (Turn 10), cornering smoothly near the middle of the track before braking slightly near the apex. He powered off the brakes and attacked the right-left S-bend (Turns 11 and 12) at full throttle, using the kerbs aggressively but staying within limits. He carried speed through the wide left-hander (Turn 13), staying slightly towards the center of the track to optimize his entry for the final right-hand hairpin (Turn 14). He braked heavily, rotated the kart, got back on the accelerator right at the apex, and kept his foot planted, determined not to lift until he crossed the finish line.

[Lap Time: 01:50:983]

The timing screen flashed the result. Sector 1 was yellow (slightly off optimal), Sector 3 was green (personal best), and unexpectedly, Sector 2 – the section where he had the slide – was purple (fastest overall)!

[Mission Completed!!!!]

[+10 SP]

He was so stunned by the mission completion prompt and the purple sector that he instinctively slammed on the brakes, sending the little kart into a long, screeching slide before coming to a stop. Overwhelmed, he quickly turned the kart around and headed back towards the pit lane, entering unconventionally from the track exit side.

"I'm pretty sure the second sector should have been slower than optimal since I slid. Why did I get a purple sector for that one?" he asked Apollo as soon as he stopped, his voice filled with genuine surprise and confusion.

"That slide is the reason you achieved the purple sector," Apollo explained, looking quite satisfied with his fast-learning student. "Inducing a controlled slide can allow for faster rotation in certain corners, effectively shortening the path or allowing earlier throttle application. It's an advanced technique, something I planned to introduce after you mastered the basics. Congratulations on successfully completing the mission, and discovering a new technique, albeit accidentally."

"However," Apollo continued, his tone shifting back to instructive mode, "you are not done just because you achieved the target time once. Consistency is paramount. Go back out and give me at least ten consecutive laps under **01:51:500** before we move to the next lesson."

"Copy," Fatih acknowledged. He turned the kart around properly this time and headed back out, eager to replicate his success. He consciously tried to induce the slide again through Turns 8 and 9, but this time, he overdid it. The kart snapped sideways more violently. His Catlex reflexes kicked in as he counter-steered rapidly, but he couldn't save it completely. The kart slid off the track, bumping through the grass and nearly tipping over before he wrestled it back under control, heart pounding despite the simulation's safety. Shaken but undeterred, he drove back onto the track to complete the lap. Thanks to **Invictus (Ultimate)**, the fear vanished almost instantly, his focus returning as he started the next lap, pushing hard again.

It took another focused period of driving – perhaps twenty minutes – for his mind and body to fully adapt to the constant stream of information from **Invictus** and the nuances of the Bambino kart at the limit. He learned to differentiate the subtle feedback, understanding how tiny shifts in weight or steering input affected the kart's balance. As a result, his driving smoothed out, and he began consistently lapping in the low 01:51s,

occasionally dipping just below. Apollo, seeing the established consistency, reappeared at the finish line, waving the checkered flag once more. Fatih completed one final cool-down lap before returning to the pit lane.

"How are you feeling?" Apollo asked, seeing Fatih still sitting in the kart, visor lifted, a look of exhilaration on his young face.

"This is... exciting," Fatih said, his voice thick with emotion. "I can't believe I'm actually experiencing this." A wave of thankfulness washed over him for the second chance, for this incredible opportunity.

"Then you must ensure you do not let it go to waste," Apollo replied, recognizing the genuine gratitude. "If you maintain consistency in your training, combined with the abilities you possess, one day people will look to you as their inspiration, just as you watched others." He knew the System was tailored for motorsport; Fatih's abilities would provide benefits in daily life, but they reached their peak potential here, on the path to Formula 1. But despite all of that, the System had no ability to force him if he didn't truly want it, hence his genuine encouragement.

"Don't worry," Fatih said, his expression hardening with conviction. "I won't laze around. I rested enough in my previous life. Now it's time to achieve the dream I couldn't then."

"Good," Apollo said, a smile touching his features. "Now that the basics are established, I will demonstrate a lap pushing this kart to its absolute theoretical maximum, using all available techniques. This will be your new benchmark – the target lap time you will constantly strive towards as you learn and improve. From now on, for every new car you register, I will set the optimal lap possible under ideal conditions, and your training will focus on consistently achieving times within a few tenths of that benchmark."

As Apollo spoke, another identical Bambino kart materialized beside Fatih's. Apollo boarded it, ready to set the ultimate target time for this kart on this track.

Chapter 9 - From Simulation to Reality

[Lap Time: 01:44:047]

The timing screen in the Simulation flashed, displaying Apollo's new benchmark. He had shaved more than six seconds off his previous basics-only lap, showcasing the true potential of the Bambino kart on La Conca when driven with advanced techniques.

But he didn't stop at one lap. Apollo reeled off nearly ten consecutive laps, each one almost an exact replica of the first, his driving a mesmerizing display of precision and control. Throughout this demonstration, Fatih watched intently from the virtual pit wall, his mind a sponge, absorbing every detail of Apollo's lines, braking points, and throttle application. He planned to dissect the reasoning behind every action later.

"That," Apollo stated, patting the sidepod of his virtual kart after coming to a full stop in the pit lane, "is as fast as this little machine can go on this circuit. When you can consistently match that time here, under these perfect conditions, few in your age group, in this class of kart, would be able to touch you."

"I have a few questions about the things you did during that lap..." Fatih began excitedly, eager to understand the nuances. But he paused as Apollo, who was slowly reverting to his more familiar adult form, raised a hand to stop him.

"Before you ask about what I did," Apollo said, his tone firm but fair, "first, try to replicate it. Attempt to deduce why I made certain inputs or took specific lines. Then, and only then, will your questions be truly constructive. Spend the rest of today's session attempting to emulate what you saw. I will answer your questions and correct your mistakes afterwards. This approach will help you learn and develop a driving style that best suits you, rather than just blindly copying me. There are often multiple ways to achieve a similar result on track, and discovering what works for your innate talents is crucial." Apollo wanted to prevent Fatih from becoming reliant on simply being given answers, encouraging him instead to think critically and develop his own problem-solving skills – a vital trait for any top-tier racer.

"Copy that," Fatih replied, a new sense of determination filling him. He boarded his own Bambino kart and launched back onto the La Conca circuit, ready to push himself to understand and replicate Apollo's masterclass.

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The next morning, Fatih emerged from his room feeling fully refreshed. Despite having just woken up, the excitement from his previous day's simulation session was still clearly visible on his face. "Good morning," he greeted his mother.

"Good morning, sweetie. How was your sleep?" Rümeyisa replied, pausing from mopping the patches of the living room floor not covered by the rug.

"Good," he said, hugging her leg and looking up at her with a bright smile.

"Go and clean yourself up before we have breakfast. Then, we'll finally try out your new kart, okay?" she said, affectionately ruffling his hair.

"Okay!" Fatih chirped, already heading towards the bathroom.

It took nearly two hours before they finally finished breakfast. Part of that time was spent waiting for Rümeyisa to cook once she had completed her morning cleaning routine.

"Let's see... a **16-to-1**

ratio of fuel to oil," Rümeysa murmured, consulting the notebook that contained all the information on how to prepare and run the Bambino kart. Fatih watched her every move carefully, memorizing each step so he could eventually do it himself when she wasn't around.

"Now, let the engine idle for a few minutes to warm up," Rümeysa instructed after successfully starting the kart. She used a new cleaning towel to give the seat a final wipe-down while Fatih eagerly picked up his helmet.

After five minutes, she finally gave him the nod. Fatih carefully boarded the kart. He started driving slowly across the underground parking lot, heading towards the exit ramp, waiting for his mother to catch up on her bicycle. She wasn't planning on letting him go to the park alone just yet; there was always a risk he could do something dangerous, or that someone might try to interfere with a young child driving a motorized vehicle.

Thankfully, the kart was fitted with a silencer that reduced the engine noise significantly without noticeably harming its performance.

He spent a good three hours at the park, even having to return to their car once for Rümeysa to refuel the kart. The park was massive, and its network of paved pathways allowed him to mentally map out several different circuit configurations. He soon started pushing the little kart, applying everything he had learned in the Simulation. It seemed his **Invictus (Ultimate)** ability was incredibly effective at translating the muscle memory and sensory feedback from his virtual practice into the real world. He felt almost no disconnect. The main difference was the surface: the park pathways were mostly covered in bricks, with some unpaved sections, making it a much slipperier and more unpredictable surface than the simulated high-grip asphalt of La Conca. Yet, he adapted to it with surprising ease.

"He seems to have forgotten the outside world even exists," Rümeysa remarked with an amused sigh, turning to her mother, Güldane, who had arrived about an hour earlier, intending to call them for lunch but ending up staying to watch Fatih's enthusiastic driving.

"At this point, I consider everything he does as being normal for him," Güldane answered, her eyes fondly following Fatih as he skillfully adjusted his route to ensure the pathways he was using were clear of pedestrians.

"If this interest of his persists," Rümeysa mused, "I'll have to look into registering him in a proper karting academy or club so he can learn professionally. Plus, I'm sure it won't be long before we start receiving complaints from neighbors worried about their own kids being hit by him." She glanced at a group of other children who had stopped their games and were now watching Fatih with wide, envious eyes. She knew that tonight, at least a few parents would be pestered to buy go-karts, and depending on their

reactions, some might complain under the guise of safety, hoping to stop Fatih from inspiring more such requests.

"Give it at least six months before making any big decisions like that," Güldane advised. "I don't want him to feel obligated to pursue this just because he showed some initial interest, only to lose that passion later. If he's still this dedicated in half a year, then we can explore academies. And who knows? Maybe this truly will be his career."

As they conversed, they momentarily lost sight of Fatih. Then, the distinct buzz of the kart's engine grew louder, and he came into view, pulling to a neat stop beside them.

"Is there a problem, Fatih?" his mother asked.

"No, Mom," he replied, lifting his visor. "That's enough driving for today. I need to do it in moderation." At least, that's what Apollo had told him earlier, reminding him that he still had his daily physical training mission to complete. The mission's difficulty had recently increased, but in return, completing it now earned him 2 SP daily.

Chapter 10 - Rain, Recession, and Return

The following days settled into a predictable rhythm for Fatih. Nights were dedicated to the Simulation, relentlessly practicing with his virtual Bambino kart on La Conca. During the day, he'd spend at least an hour driving his real Bambino kart in the park before returning it home. Then, he'd head out again, this time to play football and other games with Emir and his friends. He consistently had to deny their requests to drive his kart, explaining that they didn't have the necessary safety equipment. He didn't want his own karting privileges revoked because someone else got hurt.

By the third week of this routine, Rûmeysa had grown confident in Fatih's carefulness. He had yet to hit anyone or have any dangerous accidents on his own. This led to her permitting him to take the kart to the park by himself, with either her or his grandmother still responsible for mixing the fuel, refueling, and starting the engine.

Once Rûmeysa returned to Germany after her vacation days were exhausted, Fatih diligently continued his schedule: his daily physical exercises, at least an hour of real-world karting, and then playtime with his friends.

Surprisingly, no neighbors had come to complain to his grandmother about his karting. Or, if they had, it happened while he was at the park, and Güldane handled it discreetly without burdening him with the details.

In the Simulation, his progress was tangible.

[Lap Time: 01:44:050]

The timing screen flashed as he passed the start/finish line on La Conca. He didn't ease off, pushing straight into the next lap.

[Lap Time: 01:44:047]

Then another.

[Lap Time: 01:44:058]

And another.

[Lap Time: 01:44:049]

Lap after lap, he was consistently hitting times within a few thousandths of a second of Apollo's benchmark **(01:44:047)**.

He continued this relentless pursuit of consistency until Apollo materialized at the start/finish line, waving the checkered flag. Fatih completed a cool-down lap before returning to the pit lane.

"Congratulations," Apollo said, a note of approval in his voice. "It took you a month, but you can now hit the target lap time with remarkable consistency. We can now move to the next lesson."

As if on cue, just as Apollo finished speaking, a brilliant flash of lightning split the virtual sky, followed by a deafening clap of thunder. The previously sunny sky above La Conca was rapidly consumed by dark, ominous clouds, and moments later, a torrential downpour began.

Within five minutes, the track was thoroughly soaked. The System then adjusted the rain intensity to perfectly match the track's water clearing rate, ensuring a consistent level of wetness across the entire circuit.

"Good luck," Apollo said with a hint of a smirk, now holding a virtual umbrella as he stepped aside.

A new mission prompt appeared before Fatih:

[New Mission!!!!!!!!!!]

All true racing greats excel in the rain. You must master it as well.

Mission Objective: Complete one thousand **(1,000)** laps under these rainy conditions with a lap time of **01:55:000** or below.

Time Limit: 1 Year

Reward: Aquaman (Good)

Punishment: None

(ACCEPT] \[DENY])

Although he would have accepted the mission regardless of the reward, Fatih's curiosity was piqued. He clicked on the Aquaman (Good) ability to read its description:

[Aquaman]

Category: Upgradable

Level: Good

Description: Enhances the user's innate feel and control in wet or low-grip conditions. Improves the ability to read changing track surface moisture, predict hydroplaning risks, and optimize driving lines for maximum grip when water is present. Reduces the negative impact of spray from other vehicles on visibility.

It was exactly what he thought it would be – perfect for this challenge. He immediately closed the ability screen and accepted the mission. He instinctively floored the gas pedal, intending to head out, but the rear tires of the Bambino kart just spun uselessly on the slick virtual tarmac, sending up plumes of spray. He quickly released the accelerator, then gently reapplied it, feeling for grip as he carefully navigated out onto the track for an initial reconnaissance lap before attempting any timed runs.

...

Time passed quickly, his days falling into a structured rhythm. While asleep, his four hours in the Simulation were meticulously planned. Apollo would spend the first two hours teaching him new racing concepts: advanced overtaking maneuvers, defensive driving techniques, tire management strategies, precise braking control (like mastering late braking without losing control or speed), throttle management (balancing acceleration to optimize traction and minimize tire wear), and more.

Sometimes, Apollo would even act as an opponent, and they would battle lap after lap, Fatih either trying to pass or defend. The remaining two hours of simulation time were dedicated to driving under the relentless virtual rain, chipping away at the thousand-lap mission.

It wasn't long before September 15, 2008, arrived. The previous day, Sebastian Vettel had won his first-ever Formula 1 Grand Prix at Monza, becoming the sport's youngest race winner at the time, sending shock waves across Formula 1. Now, a different kind of tremor was about to hit the world.

"After exhaustive efforts to stabilize our financial position, Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc. has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. We deeply regret the impact this will have on our employees, clients, and the global financial system. We are working..."

Just as in his past life, the news of Lehman Brothers filing for bankruptcy blared from the television, marking the definitive start of the global financial collapse.

Fatih, watching the news with his grandmother, knew that while he wouldn't feel the crisis directly in the same way many others would, he might even benefit from some of its side effects, like the expected plummeting of oil prices, which had been very high. However, a knot of anxiety tightened in his stomach.

This was going to be a very risky period, depending on how the sector, and specifically the company his mother worked for in Germany, would fare. Things could either continue as they were, or, in the worst-case scenario, his mother could be laid off. The thought worried him immensely.

As if fate delighted in toying with him, just a month later, in mid-October, with the world rapidly sliding towards what would officially be termed the Great Recession, his mother returned. She hadn't mentioned an early visit. And she arrived with a large amount of personal belongings, far more than usual for a short trip. It was a clear indication that she likely wasn't returning to Germany anytime soon. What he had worried about had most likely happened.

His face filled with concern for his mother as he wondered how she was feeling. He didn't even care that his real-world go-kart driving might have to stop if she had indeed lost her job and they needed to reduce spending; he had the Simulation for practice, after all. His mother's well-being was paramount.

"What is the problem, dear?" Rümeyisa asked, her voice gentle, noticing his worried expression the moment she stepped into the house. She had intended her return to be a happy surprise.

"Mom," Fatih began, rushing to hug her tightly around her legs, "were you fired?" He raised his head to meet her gaze, his young eyes searching hers for an answer.