

Tech System 291

Chapter 291 True Neutrality

News of the successful series of launches had spread everywhere. And after more than two weeks straight of successful launches, they had finally come to an end. There were now fifty satellites in various orbits, from low earth orbit all the way to high earth geosynchronous orbit, and all of them were dedicated to serving Aron's growing conglomerate..

Together with the news, Nova kicked things up into a higher gear and started promoting the upcoming product launch all over Pangea. The data they had already collected from users of the app ensured that the advertising blitz was as laser targeted as she could make it. And even though people were only seeing ads they were interested in, it still spread out to catch any their lists might have missed, as people—and interaction bots—were all talking about what they had seen. Fans of GAIA Tech were already excited and had marked their calendars; the launch event was set for a week after the launches finished.

Together with the promotion, invites started going out to everyone she thought would be useful, including tech influencers. It was a time where not many of them had been invited to events like those, so it caused even more buzz around the upcoming launch.

As for the technology companies, they were in a completely different mood. Many of them had made their peace with GAIA becoming the monopoly of the OS market. Some willingly, and others only because their platforms had virtually no users at all, let alone developers. The GAIA OS had done what no software company had ever done before: consolidated the userbase. There was no longer a need for developers to work on multiple platforms, or for users to argue the merits of them. Adding to that, the revenue sharing was fairly generous to developers, so even amateurs entered the marketplace to compete, and usually fail, against the professionals.

But to those who hadn't been forced to give up their market share by GAIA Tech, the news was nothing good at all. Rumor had it that the upstart company was about to launch hardware products. And if the consecutive flurry of satellite launches was anything to go by, the executives of those companies all had nightmares as they thought of what product would be released and what capabilities it would have. It might even be as disruptive, if not more, than the first iPhone product launch!

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White House.

"So, we can consider them an ICBM-capable nation, right?" Obama asked as he read the final report that came from the Joint Space Operations Center (JSpOC) regarding the launches that had taken place over the past weeks.

"Yes, sir. Based on our analysis of all the launches that took place, we can say with certainty that if they develop a warhead and targeting system for their rockets, they can launch ballistic missiles without any trouble. But that's only if the government received a copy of the plans... or they can just ask for the company to build the boosters for them and they can focus on researching the second stage rocket engine and guidance system, so the conclusion is the same," replied General Welsh, the

Chief of Staff of the Air Force. He was the one who had been tasked with investigating Eden's space launches.

"Are we in their range?" Obama asked.

"Yes. But everyone is technically in range of an exoatmospheric ICBM. 'Range' stops being a concept when they can launch missiles into low earth orbit, after all. But whether they can hit us or not is a different topic entirely," General Welsh answered with confidence that stemmed from his knowledge of America's air defense systems.

Obama turned to his chief of staff and said, "Get the state department to reach out to them. If they can drop ICBMs on us, they're better friends than enemies."

He turned back to General Welsh and put the folder on the table, then asked, "So what's your personal view of the situation? What didn't make it into the report?"

"Although their tech seems to have advanced very fast, based on their ability to launch the satellites into different orbits without trouble, it only shows they've developed their own mature rocket tech. We didn't find anything that even hinted at them stealing the designs of anything that already exists. But we don't know whether or not they've developed warheads that matter, or guidance systems that work. So while we should assume they have and take them seriously, I'm sure a developing nation like Eden won't poke this particular bear so we don't have much to worry about."

"Although what you said is true, you failed to consider their international political stance. They declared neutrality, meaning they don't have allies to support them, yes, but at the same time, it also means there's no limits on who they can trade with. So there's really nothing stopping them from selling their tech to North Korea, or even the Taliban. And if they choose to do so, more and more countries may gain international launch capability. And the more ICBMs there are, the higher the chance that at least one of them will see some use," Obama explained.

"I don't think that'll happen," the general replied.

The people in the room waited for him to continue, a wait that stretched as the general gathered his thoughts. He knew if he said something dumb, he was likely to be replaced; the Joint Chiefs are political appointees, after all.

After taking a moment to gather his thoughts, he explained, "I considered their stance when I told you my opinion about them. Their neutrality is the main reason I didn't even bother to mention the possibility of them selling their tech to others. I'm sure that, before they announced their neutrality, they must've studied the history of other neutral countries before them, and the problems those countries faced.

"Taking that a step further, we can assume it means they know that, in order to defend their sovereignty while maintaining their neutrality, they'll be heavily investing in their defense. That's backed up by recent history, as well: President Alexander Romero replacing their entire state military with a PMC not only increased their defense capability, but also freed up the budget to invest in research and development.

"When you add oil money to the equation, their defense spending will probably skyrocket... even after you consider the socialist idealized health care system he wants to implement. But that then

circles back around to their neutrality, and why I think it's the main reason they won't sell any of that tech: why would they arm their enemies with the fruits of their own labor?" he finished.

"Good thinking there, but that's all under the assumption that they've studied history and are planning on avoiding the pitfalls they discovered. And that's nearly impossible, since their country is almost completely backward. It wasn't until recently that they even had clean water and reliable power," Obama countered.

"But doesn't Romero have unlimited power due to winning more than ninety percent of the positions in their government? He's also the one that picks the judges, so he has control of all three of their government branches, doesn't he? Then doesn't it follow that he's only a 'president' in name, but is actually just another dictator??" General Welsh asked. He knew that most of the countries that had previously attempted to maintain their neutrality had failed because of many different beliefs in their government, but Eden's difference lay in their own politicians and their unity. While the country may claim to be a democratic nation, their president was all but a dictator and his political party had almost every seat of power available. So what was the difference between him and his predecessor, other than Alexander's basic benevolent stance toward his people?

Chapter 292 Zeus One

February 15th.

As evening neared in Eden, one of the largest indoor auditoriums in the country was filled to the brim. The entire venue was sold out and people had already arrived, filling every available seat despite the launch event still being a few hours away.

Outside the auditorium, but still inside the building, people were walking around and talking to each other. For anyone interested in the international tech industry, they would realize that most of the people there were famous names in the tech industry, showing the level of the event that was about to take place.

As for the influencers, no one that had received the invitation even thought of declining to attend. But it wasn't just an invitation they had received; everyone that had received one had also been given a business-class ticket on whichever day they would like to arrive in Eden. Room and board were included as well, up until the day after the launch event concluded. That in itself showed that GAIA Tech was taking the launch very seriously.

When the time hit 8PM exactly, everyone had already taken their seats and the lights slowly dimmed. The crowd fell silent, since everyone knew the event was about to start.

After ten seconds of darkness, the lights on the stage started coming up and people recognized the shape of a man walking to the center of the stage. As the light grew stronger, they finally saw who it was.

"Welcome to the first GAIA event," Aron said. Simultaneously, the fifty-foot high screens behind him came to life and showed him on each of them. Subtitles appeared on the screen as he spoke, live translating his speech. As for the livestream, the option was there to use real-time speech-to-text translation, or to real-time dubbing.

But his welcoming speech passed in one ear and out the other for many of the watchers and attendees, due to the name that appeared on the screens. He was Aron Michael, the creator of the famous BugZapper and GAIA OS, who had never been seen in any event or interview before this.

For many, it was their first time seeing the handsome man and they felt their impressions of him shattering. They had thought he would look like a tech geek, but reality had slapped them in the face so hard it almost caused them physical pain.

"Let's see what we have to come." Only when they heard that did the audience come back into their right minds and focus on the event taking place. Some felt a burning in their cheeks as they blushed, realizing they had been mesmerized by his handsome appearance.

After finishing the introduction, Aron was immediately taken out of focus as the screens behind him started playing a history of the innovations that GAIA Tech had introduced over the two years since its inception. It reintroduced products from BugZapper all the way to their most recent product, Pangea. All of it was being shown through the incredibly clear screens.

When the video ended, attendees started clapping in excitement. They had been impressed by the steps the company had taken and the products they had released in the two years of their existence.

"Yes, that's certainly a history to feel proud of," Aron said in his calm voice, which caused the applause to die out. "Although our history is something we feel proud of, we still find it rather incomplete," he continued, and the screen behind him immediately started listing their products.

"But if you look at them, you'll realize that there's nothing but software. And with the hardware market as it stands, none of my software can work to their full capabilities. After all, it has to be designed while taking into account the different platforms it'll be installed on, making it take more space on each? devices than it usually would."

He paused for a moment to allow people to make some guesses in their minds, then continued, "So in order to solve that problem, I decided to release hardware that'll really give my OS the platform it requires in order to operate at full power." The moment Aron finished speaking, the stage was dimmed once again as the massive screens behind him played another video.

Like a usual product introduction, it didn't show the full product. It was just a hint, feeding the audience's curiosity and enhancing the impact of the eventual full reveal.

As the video ended, the focus came back to Aron and he immediately started talking. "I present to you Zeus One!" As he said that, the full picture of a smartphone was displayed, winning quite an impressive reaction from the people watching the event.

The phone looked nothing like any that had been released that year, or any year before. It was obviously different from the usual phones that were released every year, but the most attention-grabbing thing was that there was no selfie camera lens visible anywhere on the front of the phone at all. It completely bucked the trend that smartphone manufacturers had been following, where the integrated front camera was a major selling point of their hardware.

"A powerful machine made specifically for the GAIA OS to be able to work to the fullest of its abilities, thanks to the chip made specifically for its operation." As Aron spoke, the phone on the screens turned transparent, showing the components inside and "exploding" them out so that each one could be seen individually.

The display then zoomed in on the phone's CPU chip. "Meet Z1, our proprietary processor. It's at least five times faster than any chip that's ever been put in any smartphone." The screens displayed

an infographic showing their benchmark test results compared to all of the top smartphones from other manufacturers. "The Z1 processor chip will allow the GAIA OS to operate to its fullest capabilities, and all hardware devices sold by us will include the highest premium version of GAIA OS for free."

The entire audience broke out into applause; people were thrilled that a free top-tier subscription to GAIA OS would be included with what looked like a powerhouse of a smartphone. Not bad for a new company's first flagship release.

Chapter 293 Unbelievable Advances

"Now on to the screen," Aron said as the screens behind him focused on the phone's screen. Unlike the most recent iPhone, or any of the Android and Google phones on the market, the bezel around the screen was so unbelievably thin that it was practically invisible.

"The Zeus One's screen will revolutionize the way you see the screen, thanks to our quantum dot technology. It allows for unparalleled brightness and contrast, which means you'll get perfect visibility under any light. Unlike regular pixels, quantum dots can display any color natively, instead of as a blend of red, green, and blue. Also, thanks to our quantum dot technology, the screen resolution will be three times as detailed as the best display screen that exists, no matter the size.

"If you want to see what it looks like in reality, just look at the screens behind me. Those also incorporate our quantum dots tech, but scaled up to the size you see here." As Aron said that, a floodlight passed across the screens behind him, but didn't wash out the image at all.

"Now moving on to the cameras. It looks like many of you have noticed that there's no visible lens for the front-facing camera." A slight chuckle came from the audience. "But there's a camera there."

The display screens magnified the phone's screen on them, showing a camera lens integrated into the center of the screen.

"Yes, the camera is in the middle of our screen. That was the best place for it, and it's possible thanks again to our quantum dot technology. All quantum dots are completely transparent and clear in their resting state, which allowed us to combine the convenience of a front-facing camera with the power and resolution of a dedicated phone camera."

A display of the camera's specs popped up on the screens behind Aron, showing a rather impressive list of numbers. It was a fifty megapixel camera capable of 4K resolution and capturing videos up to 120 frames per second.

"Everything the camera sees while in use will be saved, allowing for seamless editing of still images and video. Even if you aren't focusing on something in the picture, the camera definitely will be, so you'll miss nothing! And with the GAIA OS AI assistant, editing your images and videos will be an absolute breeze. Anyone with a Zeus One will have the tools they need to make a perfect picture, all in the palms of their hands!

"I know it seems like I'm just talking nonsense and making unfulfillable promises because there's no way anyone can rebut me on stage, so let's test it right here and now," Aron said as he removed the phone from his pocket. It was none other than a Zeus One.

He raised his hand and showed it to the audience as the phone booted up. The displays behind him showed the process, then switched to the audience sitting in the auditorium.

It took exactly five seconds for the phone to fully power up, and since it was the phone's first time being powered on, Aron had to say, "Skip the introduction and consider me an experienced user." The moment he said that, the phone showed the home screen, where it didn't linger for long as he opened the front-facing camera without any delay at all using voice commands.

"Now screencast it to the screens behind me," he said. The phone understood and opened the connection page, which showed the screens that he could share the live feed of the camera with. "Connect to all of them."

With that, all three screens behind Aron showed the footage from the phone, which was crisp and clear beyond anything anyone had ever seen.

"It really is from the phone's camera, not one of the high-quality professional cameras in the room," he said, turning around and taking a selfie with the audience in the background and displaying it on the big screens behind him.

"Make it cool and post it on my Pangea account," he said, and the screens behind him that were still displaying what was on his phone showed the AI assistant editing the image. With every editing pass—displayed as a line that passed from the top to the bottom of the screen, with the newly enhanced image above and the pre-enhanced photo below—the picture became clearer and more polished. After a few passes, everyone in the audience could easily pick out their individual faces in crystal-clear resolution.

The assistant then opened the Pangea app and Aron logged into it, his password displaying as a series of asterisks and the two-factor authentication blurred on the shared screens.

After successfully logging in, he input a caption and the assistant added hashtags and posted the image to his Pangea account.

The audience went silent for a few minutes as they opened their own individual Pangea accounts and found the picture Aron had just posted, then burst into raucous applause and cheers; they all knew the process of what had happened, and it was impossible to fake because they could see themselves in the picture!

"As you can see, the photo is pretty high-quality despite being taken in a dark room with a front-facing cellphone camera. And with the camera in the center of the screen, instead of at the top, you can even look yourself in the eye as you take pictures," he said, prompting a chuckle from the influencers in the audience.

"The same level of tech is incorporated in the speakers, which use our proprietary SLAS—SpeakerLess Audio System. Instead of generating sound with a vibrating speaker, we accomplish the same result using advanced wavefront manipulation and acoustic technologies to generate sound directly in the air, essentially forming 'sound holograms.' That eliminates the need for speakers entirely and allows sound to be projected freely anywhere in three dimensions. And you're currently experiencing that very technology right now," Aron said, the sound seeming to "float" around the auditorium instead of the stage as if someone was messing with the mixer. Halfway through the introduction, everyone in the audience heard his words in English in their right ears, and their native

languages in their left ear. They turned to the people next to them, and some asked if their neighbors had heard what they had, and the affirmative response caused another round of applause.

"As you've just personally experienced, with this technology we can create personalized sound zones in a room, where each person hears a different audio stream without the need for headphones. That'll be particularly beneficial for shared spaces, like living rooms or vehicles, but at the moment the phone version is limited in the number of zones they can create.

"Now on to one of the most important main features of the Zeus One. The 'ecosystem' that's been made possible by our Q-chip allows for instant, large data transfers between two compatible devices within 250 meters. Thanks to that, anyone using one of our new phones will be able to transfer any file from them to their friends, even if they're a couple of football fields away. That's also the range limit of our wireless earphones and speakers, which also use our proprietary SLAS and will be released alongside the phone as peripheral devices," he said, then paused to wait for the resulting applause to end.

"Any device that has all these features naturally requires enough power to support them, and we've all seen phones running out of battery at the worst possible time. To that, I say there's no need to worry with our Zeus One—you can use it with everything maxed out for 24 hours continuously on a full charge. For more normal usage, you can expect the battery to last anywhere from four days to a week without requiring a charge. And when you do need to charge it, our new proprietary fast charge system will take these batteries from zero to full in just under an hour and a half.

"Now for something I'm sure you all want to know: the price," he said, then paused as the screens behind him showed the three versions of the phone he was launching. "There's three initial versions of the Zeus One. Though they're each different sizes, their capabilities are identical, so the size difference is only cosmetic. The starting price for the Zeus One is \$999, the Zeus One Pro is \$1,299, and the Zeus One EX is \$1,499."

The audience let out a collective gasp, as they had expected that the phone would be at least \$2000, and that itself would be a break-even price, or even a loss. Everything that had been introduced about the phone was proprietary tech, meaning they had to absorb the full cost of research and development, plus manufacturing, instead of just licensing or buying previously existing patents.

Chapter 294 Sarah's Time To Shine

"Now let's welcome the president of GAIA Technologies, Sarah O'Connor to introduce our other products," Aron said when the applause died down, then smiled at his friend as they passed each other.

Sarah arrived at her position, but had to wait before she started speaking since they were still clapping. When the applause died down, she started speaking. "With the Zeus One being our first product from the smartphone line, I'd like to introduce the first product from our computer line: the Olympus."

She stopped speaking and, like Aron's introduction of the phone, the screens behind her started playing a video that introduced the device before ending with an image of the laptop and desktop versions. They both had a sleek, majestic, and clean look.

"They, too, are powered by another of our proprietary chips—the O1, which is ten times faster than any other desktop or laptop CPU on the market." As she said that, the benchmark results were shown on the screens behind her, evoking slight gasps from the impressed experts in the crowd.

"The O1 is a graphene chip and will act as both CPU and GPU for both the laptop and desktop. The chip is manufactured using our proprietary 10nm photolithographic process, so it's faster, more energy efficient, and can handle more tasks than a standard silicon processor. The form factor isn't limited by how many pieces of hardware we can cram into it, so both the laptop and desktop editions of the Olympus are sleek and comfortable for both indoor and outdoor use, while still maintaining a power and performance that leaves our competitors in the dust." The computer being displayed on the screen behind her turned transparent and "exploded", much like the cellphone that Aron had presented, and the O1 was highlighted.

"The screen on the laptop version uses the same quantum dot tech as in our Zeus One, but is more capable due to its larger size. That allows for more quantum dots in the display, thus a higher resolution. The only thing that limits the Olympus laptop's screen resolution is your eyesight, and even then, our GAIA OS AI assistant can compensate for that," she joked, drawing a chuckle from the audience, then continued her prepared speech. "The Olympus laptop webcam is also incorporated into its screen for crystal-clear video calls to keep you connected to your friends and family no matter how far you may be from each other.

"Although you can use third-party monitors for our desktop edition, we recommend ours. Our screens have up to a 680hz dynamic refresh rate with a 0.5ms response time, again leaving our competitors in the dust. And our power saver mode ensures that your display screen will last a long, long time, while not increasing your electricity bills.

"Our monitors also incorporate a scaled-up version of the same SLAS tech in our phones, with three times the number of channels available. So why settle for the rest, when you can have the best?

"Our proprietary battery can be fully charged within an hour and will last three days under max load. If it's running under more normal usage, expect it to go ten days or more between charges. We've incorporated our batteries into both the laptop and desktop version, with the desktop battery acting as an uninterruptible power supply in case of power outages, or if you decide to take it with you on the go.

"Both of them also come with the Q-chip for seamless integration into our GAIA ecosystem. So our other peripherals are wireless, as well as secure. We've ensured that all of our hardware is as secure as possible by including BugZapper with every purchase, so there's no need to worry about your private data being used against you." Sarah gave the camera a knowing smile. There would be no more "Fappenings", if she could help it; the mere fact that people that would hack the cloud accounts of individuals and publish their private photos existed had disgusted her for quite some time.

"The starting price of the 11" Olympus laptop is \$1299, the 13" is \$1399, and the 16" is \$1599. For the desktop version, the starting price is \$999, with \$499 and up for our proprietary display monitors.

"Orders for our laptop, desktop, and phone will open tonight at midnight, Eden Standard Time," she said. It set GAIA Tech apart from other companies, where the product introduction conference would be held weeks before the hardware was actually available for purchase online and in stores.

Sarah went on to introduce speakers, earbuds, headphones, and a tablet, and every time she introduced something, she reminded the audience of its connection to the GAIA ecosystem.

With every product she introduced, people grew more enthusiastic and excited by the products... that is, as long as what she said wasn't proved wrong in the future. In the internet age, the line between love and loathing was very distinct and easily crossed, after all.

From the time Aron entered the stage to the time Sarah left it, the entire introduction only lasted about an hour and a half. And most of that was spent while they were idle on the stage, waiting for applause and cheering to die down. Tech enthusiasts sure had no qualms about showing their enthusiasm, often leaving the two presenters of the night at a loss. At one point, Nova had even considered using the sound system to mute the applause, but that would cause much havoc for little purpose and she quickly discarded the idea.

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"You can handle the rest, right?" Aron asked as he and Sarah were escorted out of the underground VIP entrance of the auditorium by their ARES details. With so many people invited to the event, the extra security had been deemed necessary.

"Sure. The hard part's done, so now it's just waiting for the orders to roll in. I won't even have to do anything, it'll all be up to Felix and Rachael."

"Alright. I'll see you in a week or so," Aron said as he got into his car and headed toward the airport in a convoy with two ARES Reaper teams.

Chapter 295 The Junket

A week after the GAIA Tech presentation in Eden, Aron was laying in a beach chair on a gorgeous white sandy beach in Hawaii, with Rina laying on the chair next to him working on her own suntan. When he had told her he was headed to Hawaii for their next presentation, she'd offered to show him around the islands, as he'd never been there before. Besides, he was still due to meet with her father, and now that GAIA Tech had gained some traction and cachet in the global marketplace, it was high time to keep that promise.

Meanwhile, Ryan Walker, the newly minted president of Asclepius Biotechnology, Inc., was settling things for an upcoming medical conference hosted by him. He had rented out the entire Halekulani Hotel in Waikiki as the venue for the conference, and invited all of the top names in the biotech industry, as well as some representatives from Big Pharma, and even some TV hosts like Dr. Oz, who was famous for pushing products to a wide audience.

Meanwhile, over the past week, the marketing department executives from Asclepius had been busy laying the groundwork to have the new Asclepius products on store shelves everywhere around the globe.

It was the afternoon of the start of the conference, and everyone had arrived. All of the keynote speakers had accepted their invitations—a week-long vacation in Hawaii's top luxury resort was hard to pass up, after all—and they were wandering around the banquet room, where Ryan was hosting a brunch and handing out brochures to draw interest in the new startup company. That evening, he was scheduled to introduce the products Asclepius Biotechnology had developed, as well as some of their more interesting research results.

Soon, the clock struck 7:30 PM and the conference room Ryan was to speak in was filled.

"Good evening everyone, I'm Ryan Walker, the president of Asclepius Biotechnology, Inc." As he finished the self-introduction, the stage dimmed and an introduction video started playing on the projector screen behind him. Since no one knew the company at all, an introduction was in order.

"In a world where possibilities are boundless and science meets imagination, there emerges a beacon of innovation," came the voice of Nova, who had produced the intro video and done the voiceover narration for it.

The video cut to a state-of-the-art laboratory bustling with scientists in white lab coats. The audience recognized the cutting-edge lab equipment, and some even grew jealous; just how much money did this upstart company have, anyway?

Nova's voice continued, "Introducing Asclepius Biotechnology, a company that will shape the future of healthcare and beyond. We are pioneers, driven by a shared vision to unlock the mysteries of life and harness the power of biotechnology to transform our world."

The scene changed from the cutting-edge lab to a bed of plants and showed them grow from sprouts to maturity in time-lapse videography, then to a doctor drawing an injection from a vial and injecting it into a hanging bag of saline that was attached to a smiling child.

"From agriculture to medicine, genetic therapies to sustainable solutions, we are pushing the boundaries of possibility. At Asclepius, innovation is in our DNA."

The video cut to a shining Asclepius logo, then Nova continued, "Asclepius Biotechnology—where tomorrow meets today."

After the introduction video came polite applause from the attendees. Medical professionals were much more subdued than tech enthusiasts, so to get any applause at all for a brand-new startup company was already surprising enough.

Ryan took to the stage and began his prepared remarks. "I hope our introduction gave you all a general idea of what we're all about at Asclepius. And to show our commitment to making the world a better place, I'd like to introduce to you our first product: Pneuma, a complete and lasting cure for asthma."

The attendees were stunned into silence, not knowing whether they should applaud or storm out after such an outrageous claim.

"Right now, we've applied for fast-tracking through the approval process through the regulatory bodies around the world, and we expect our products to be offered to all of you by your regular drug reps. If you're curious about the detailed information, there's a brochure in the packet we handed out to everyone when you came in the room for my presentation. But to summarize, we've seen a 100% cure rate in asthma in every age range and across both genders, and the side effects are mild and comparable to those from vaccinations, such as pain and swelling at the injection site, mild fevers, and so on. Basically, it's no more harmful than a flu shot, which is where our confidence in the regulatory approvals comes from.

"Pneuma will be available for prescription in all countries the moment it's approved by those countries' regulatory bodies. And we have much more in store than that as our trials are completed and products developed to a safe level."

He gave the attendees a minute to look over the Pneuma brochure in their welcome packets, then continued, "Now on to our next product. This is categorized as a supplement, and as such, it'll be available starting next week in stores and pharmacies around the world, as well as for online ordering.

"I present to you the Biogen product line. Biogen was developed to combat a problem faced by 39% of the global population: obesity." Murmurs came from the attendees, who were wondering why such a rich company would be so shameless as to market a "supplement" that did absolutely nothing to slim people down, but everything to slim their wallets.

After the murmuring died down, Ryan continued, "Many weight loss products put the user in a very difficult cycle of binge and diet, because they need to stop eating their favorite foods. And even after succeeding in reaching their target weight, they have to change their lifestyle and continue that behavior for the rest of their lives. But not Biogen.

"Biogen is a series of nutrient-dense food additives in a variety of flavors with different delivery methods. For those on the go, they can use it as a shake. For those eating out, they can sprinkle it on their food at the restaurant, much like salt and pepper. For those who prefer meal prep, they can either rehydrate or cook one of our frozen meals. There's something for everyone, and unlike traditional diet plans, the only lifestyle change is bringing it with you wherever you go."

Ryan continued introducing Biogen and its benefits, and by the thirtieth minute since starting his presentation, he began wrapping it up. "I know that all of you are anxious to get on with your paid vacation," he said, eliciting a chuckle from the audience, "so I'll let you get to it. If you have any questions, the conference will be running all week and you have my assistant's number in your welcome packet. Feel free to contact her with any concerns or questions you have after taking a look at our documentation, and one of our researchers will reach out to you with answers. I'll see you all later at the cocktail party...."

Chapter 296 To Keep A Promise

The reaction to GAIA Tech's launch was enthusiastic, and online orders started pouring like there was no tomorrow. Since Aron could produce as many as he wanted, he didn't set an amount of them to be sold in the first batch and allowed anyone to order as many as they wanted. Scalpers, who thought there would be a limited number of them, were initially especially thrilled... but would soon learn their mistake as it became apparent that there was no limit to the orders that would be accepted.

Aron and Rina entered the presidential suite of the hotel and logged in to VR to hold a meeting with Ryan and Sarah, the latter of whom was still in Eden, to discuss their tasks.

Rina immediately went and hugged Nova, then turned to Aron and said, "The patent application was approved an hour ago, but as you asked, they'll only make it public a week from now."

Aron smiled.

"But why'd you want me to delay the patent being made public for a week?" she asked.

"There's a few companies that I wanted to have a hope of filing the patents before us. They wasted a few million before realizing that we already applied for them."

"Also why did you only apply for a patent on the graphene chips and nothing else from the tech?" she asked. If it were her, she would have patented everything in order to protect it.

"Because they can't replicate those even if they wanted to, or even hypothesize how they were made. During production, we mix in a material that they can't detect yet, creating invisible layers on top of them that would make it impossible for them to accurately discover the composition of the materials, or even figure out exactly how it works," he answered. He couldn't reveal that the parts were mixed with mana, so it was a happy coincidence that since they couldn't detect it anyway, they would just think that it was an anti-piracy process they had yet to discover.

"How's the ordering going?" he asked as he looked at Nova.

[five million orders and counting have already been received since we opened ordering on the Zeus One and Olympus, and the number is still climbing. Sales for Pneuma are being held up by regulatory bodies and I expect those delays to clear up in a week or so. Biogen is being well received by brick and mortar purchasers and should be on store shelves within two weeks, but online ordering is anemic since the public hasn't been exposed to it yet,] Nova said, popping up a screen with current sales and future projections over the conference table in the meeting room.

"Looks like orders will start picking up after the first buyers test and review them, since many of the things seem unbelievable for the tech at the moment," Aron said. He was sure that many people were still skeptical and weren't convinced by the GAIA Tech event. They would only commit when they were completely assured of the worth of the products.

"On that end," Ryan interjected, "Our marketing team at Asclepius has started an ad blitz and we should start seeing online orders of Biogen picking up over the next few days. If we could've done it earlier, sales would've already started, but we had to wait until after the conference because there's a limit to the amount of disruption one market will bear and we can't offend the 'experts' by skipping them in the process if we want optimal sales."

[I'll ensure the reviews spread to as many people as possible when they start buying it,] Nova said, finally showing the level of influence she'd gained since Pangea became the most-used social media app across the globe.

After a bit more discussion, they logged out of VR. Aron and Rina boarded the waiting convoy and headed toward the Waikiki airport, while Ryan and Sarah went back to their own tasks.

It was time for the lovebirds to keep their promise.

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The next day.

Aron's private plane had landed at LaGuardia and unloaded him, Rina, and his security detail. Rina's presence got them through security in a manner that only a Rothschild could and they were on their way to the Rothschild family compound to introduce Aron to Rina's parents. That was the most important of his objectives for being in the US this time; it wouldn't be fair to anyone if his girlfriend knew his parents while he had never met hers, after all.

He had a very happy smile on his face as he surfed Pangea to waste some time during the drive. Reviews had been coming in and the public was still enthusiastic; the buzz generated by the launch

event hadn't faded over the past week, but had instead grown. Especially after the initial positive reviews had been purposefully spread by Nova, causing a virtuous sales cycle for the Zeus One and both Olympus models.

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"Your family is really extravagant," Aron said when he got out of his car at the Rothschild family head's mansion. The drive from the front gate of the compound to the mansion was ten minutes long, and that was despite the speed they were driving at. It was a testament to the size of the property.

"The compound isn't even a quarter as big as Avalon Island, and you call us extravagant," she teased back. Aron's private island was truly massive.

"Yep, I can't really complain," Aron chuckled. It was enough to calm him and he returned to his usual demeanor as they were escorted inside the mansion where her parents were waiting for them.

"Mom, dad, this is Aron. Aron, these are my parents, Herschel and Virginia Rothschild," Rina said when they entered the mansion and found her parents waiting for them in the living room. Her mother moved to hug her, showing she was closer to her than her father.

"Welcome," Herschel said to Aron and extended his hand for a handshake with a neutral expression on his face.

"Thank you," Aron said as he shook Herschel's hand with a smile on his face. His towering body overshadowed the older man, but he still came across as non-threatening.

"Let's move to the dining room," Virginia said, breaking the awkward silence between Rina's father and her boyfriend. It likely would have gone on if she hadn't interfered. She hadn't expected her husband to be unable to maintain a polite conversation, which showed how he was feeling deep inside.

Chapter 297 Something He Had in Abundance

Aron couldn't help but look at the dinner table with surprise, since the table was filled with enough to feed more than fifteen people and there were only four of them. Although he was rich, he hadn't reached a ridiculous level of extravagance, since his parents hadn't changed at all and only cooked enough for the people in the family. There was no excess at all, so he wasn't used to the scene in front of him.

Still, he acted like he was used to it and took a seat. Rina took the seat next to him, facing her mother, who was on the other side of the table. Her father sat at the head on their right.

"When did you two first meet?" Virginia asked, her tone carrying curiosity and excitement, something Rothschilds normally didn't show much of.

"About two years ago," Aron answered, trying not to be too specific since that will make her feel weirded out. But for him, ever since the day he woke up after the system assimilation he'd had an eidetic memory. He might forget to think of things, but if he actively tried to recall something, he would remember everything about it.

"Isn't that around the time she divorced Rottem?" she asked. When she mentioned the name Rottem, she turned to her husband and gave him the side eye, causing the mighty Rothschild family head to avoid eye contact.

"Yes, we met because he had something that could help me," Rina interjected. If she left it to Aron, he would blabber everything as he found it a hassle to lie.

They continued chatting through dinner, with Herschel mostly remaining silent and leaving everything to his wife. She, on the other hand, was using the opportunity to learn everything there was to know about Aron and only asking a few questions about their relationship. She treated him like a mother interviewing a prospective son-in-law, giving him an idea of how Rina must have felt when he introduced her to his parents.

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"You weren't too surprised when you came here, as if you knew everything about us," Herschel said, speaking for the first time since dinner.

The two men were in his office without the women present. Virginia knew they needed to talk, so she took Rina out and left the men alone in Herschel's office.

"Yes, I knew a few things about her before we met, then learned the rest later," Aron calmly answered. It was quite unlike what would be expected of a man meeting his girlfriend's father for the first time.

"Were you planning to use her family power and benefit from it for your business?" he asked, maintaining eye contact and trying to pressure the younger man into revealing his true intentions.

Alas, Aron was completely unbothered by the parental pressure that was being exerted and just answered, "Yes, I introduced myself to her because I needed your family's political power. I couldn't be bothered to build mine at that time, because I was focusing on other things." He couldn't be bothered to hide anything.

Rina's father couldn't help but be surprised by the pure honesty from the man in front of him. "Are you saying that you're using my daughter in order to benefit from my family's political power?"

"No, no, you misunderstood me. I had those intentions when I first met her, but I wasn't the beneficiary when we first met. Rather, she was on the receiving end at that time, since she had none of the 'family power' you mentioned. Instead, she had been kicked out of the competition, so in order for her to be helpful to me I had to help her win back her position. Only after I did that could she have the power to help me in my endeavors," Aron calmly said. There was no judgment in his tone at all.

"What!?" Herschel exclaimed. He hadn't been expecting that answer at all.

"Yes, I helped her regain her position in the family competition, and in return she helped me handle a few things," Aron said again.

He received no response, as Rina's father was too stunned to speak. His brain was still trying to comprehend how a man who was only a millionaire at the time had managed to interfere with their family's matters and dictate the tempo of the competition. Not even their archenemies could do that, but the man in front of him had managed it without being discovered at all.

The silence continued for a few minutes before Herschel finally said, "What kind of help did you even provide to her?" He couldn't believe Aron's words, so he needed some clarification to tell whether the younger man was just blowing hot air.

"Information, something I had, and still have, an abundance of," he answered.

"Like what?" Herschel asked. He was sure that nearly all the information that could be used against the family was protected in their private network, making all the information that could be gathered from outside quite useless.

"I'm sure you've already read a file about me, so you should already know what field I specialize in. And I'm pretty sure you can fill in the blanks about how I could help her with information," Aron said, trying not to go into any more details as he was afraid of causing his girlfriend's father to have a heart attack.

There was another silence as the older man connected another set of dots.

"We'll continue this later," he said after realizing the weight of the revelation he had just received. He decided to go and prepare himself for the next round, since he wasn't sure if he could keep his cool if their meeting continued.

"Shouldn't he be the one sending me out of the room? Why was he the one to leave?" Aron asked after he was left alone.

[Why'd you decide to reveal everything? Are you trying to intimidate him?] Nova countered.

"No. If I lie now, it might cause some troubles later.... I've seen too many movies where the protagonist caused needless problems when they tried hiding things instead of coming clean and avoiding all the mess that followed. People only fear the unknown since their minds don't have a limit on how outlandish their imagination can be. That's the root cause of most problems.

"And another thing—if I didn't tell him about the help I gave Rina, can you think of any other reason to warrant a face-to-face meeting between her and the me of that time?" Aron said.

[There aren't many,] she retorted, then put her quantum computers to work so she wouldn't lose the argument. [You could've said that she met you because she wanted you to sue Rottem for defamation of character as an additional revenge she wanted to inflict on him,] she said after a while, finally having come up with a reasonable scenario.

Chapter 298 Just Another Tuesday

Vladimir was inside an office in the Kremlin with a few documents on his desk and one on his hand. He had become a team leader and was responsible for leading a team that reports directly to the president of Russia, a team that was a result of the president not trusting everything from the FSB, since no powerful leader that's afraid of being overthrown would. Thus, he had separated the powers of the different agencies and was the only one maintaining overall control over everything in the country.

After looking at the file for a few seconds, he closed the folder and moved to the next one. That process repeated until all the folders on his table had been read through, even if only for a few seconds.

He adjusted his glasses, then leaned back in his chair and settled into a comfortable position before closing his eyes.

"Here to report and ask for support, ma'am," he said the moment he opened his eyes in a less decorated, but still dignified room where a stunning woman was waiting for him.

[Go on,] she said and materialized a chair beside him, then gestured for him to have a seat. She hadn't raised her gaze from the pile of papers on her desk from the moment Vladimir appeared in the room until then.

"I've completed my move to the Kremlin, and at the moment I'm leading a team that's responsible for fact checking the intel coming out of Ukraine and through the FSB. If anything looks tampered with or doesn't fit the reports from other agencies, my team and I are the ones tasked with investigating it," He explained. His position was still in the lower ranks, and his task wasn't very critical, so he knew it was nothing but a test. Only if he passed it would he really be put into the organization.

"I need some help in order to prove myself and rise in the government ranks faster. Is it possible to receive support from you?" he respectfully asked. His current actions were the opposite of his previous personality.

[Yes.] The woman was still focused on the documents in front of her as she had been throughout the entire report.

Vladimir smiled and left the room without even stating what kind of help he required; he was sure she would know what to do and would be assisting him to the best of her abilities. Those were the orders she had been given as she was brought into the fold.

Once the woman was alone in the room, she immediately disintegrated it as she was only visualizing it for Vladimir's benefit. Now that she had no reason to provide anyone with an environment, realistic or not, she had no reason to sustain the simulation.

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Back on Aron's side, he spent the next few days touring different places in the Rothschilds' compound. He had grown quite fond of Virginia Rothschild, and the feeling was mutual. The two spent as much time together as they could.

During the second meeting between Aron and Herschel, the older man had already come to the conclusion that Aron had already been inside their private network without being discovered and could monitor everything through that. That must have been the tool that he had used to help Rina regain her position, and with that connection in mind, he finally found the reason the board members hadn't voted for Arie. He now knew that Rina had known everyone's weaknesses—including his—and had used the knowledge to control everyone except her father, which warmed his heart.

But that didn't remove the dissatisfaction he felt when he realized that his daughter had sold their family's secrets to an outsider just to regain her position in the competition. Still, she had already won and he hadn't discovered it during the competition all the way until the winner had been announced. So he chose to do nothing about it now other than politely request that Aron not spread the information any further than himself. Coupled with that was the implied threat that, if he did,

not only would Herschel not support the relationship between his daughter and the man, but he would also face the full wrath of the Rothschild family.

"You don't have to worry about anything. I don't have a use for your secrets at all," Aron had replied, and didn't try to convince the elder at all.

The awkward relationship between the two men continued for a few days, but not much longer. On the fifth day of Aron and Rina's visit, and the third meeting between father and son-in-law, he finally felt comfortable enough to ask Aron's opinion on the upcoming general election. It resulted in a very interesting communication between the two of them at the dinner table.

"I don't think your candidate is going to win," Aron said with confidence when the topic of the election was brought up.

"Why do you say that?" Rina's father asked.

"I don't think you have a chance of getting a woman elected. After all, there's nothing more divisive than a woman in power, and her party is famous for being fractured to begin with. Plus, the Morgans already leaked her private email server and she's already been getting hammered over the attack in Benghazi," Aron explained.

"But I thought the email server was just a trivial thing. Besides, it's already been in the news for about six months and nothing bad's happened yet. And Benghazi wasn't even her doing at all—it was a failure on every level, not just the top," Rina's mother interjected. She didn't understand why Aron had even bothered mentioning the email server rumor, or something that had happened years ago, like Benghazi.

"I'm sure you know more details about it, but why do you think it's still circulating even after so many months? Although she's campaigning for president, someone's driving the narrative and keeping it in the public consciousness. I suspect the server will come into play in the future, and Benghazi is just being used to hammer her in the meantime. She's too clean, so there's nothing else to use against her right now." Nova had already generated a report on what could possibly happen during the election, which gave Aron plenty of things to talk about regarding it.

"So what could they possibly do with an email server?" Virginia asked once again, acting as the mouth of her husband who she was sure wanted to know more.

"Let's say an FBI investigation," Aron said. It was one of the scenarios Nova had given him.

"They won't be doing that, since we can argue against it and even use it to our advantage. It'll be nothing but a political witch hunt." Although Rina's mother didn't really care about politics, she still had conversations with her husband about it, so she at least had a bit of knowledge.

"That depends on who's doing the investigating. If an Obama-appointed FBI director, like James Comey, is the one heading up the investigation, you can't really use it against Trump or the Morgans. After all, Obama's already announced his support for Clinton. And even then, let's say that Comey announces there were no laws broken—will that really change people's minds?

"Just the accusation alone will be enough to destroy her. Whether or not it's criminal doesn't really matter. After all, she's also still got Benghazi hanging over her head, and since she's a political animal that knows how to deal with scandals, people are going to assume that there has to be more.

"She's nothing like Trump, who has so many scandals that people believe there can't possibly be anything else, let alone anything that's worse than what they already know. A good person only has to do one bad deed for everyone to believe that person is a demon in human skin. But a bad person doing bad things? That's just what they expect from them on any given Tuesday," Aron joked, but the joke caused Herschel to fall into deep thought and ultimately agree with Aron's point of view.

"Then what do you think we should do?" he finally asked. He wanted to know if Aron had an idea or if he was just parroting things that he'd heard from somewhere.

"Why not just let Trump win? In fact, help him win. Push him up—he's a rabid dog and he'll be sure to bite the hand behind him," Aron said. His tone was the same as when he had earlier suggested brainwashing his new companies' presidents a few weeks before.

Chapter 299 Politics and Profits and Losses, Oh My!

"What?" all three people at the table asked in unison, but in different decibels befitting of their personalities.

"Yes, just flip the board since you can't win," Aron said without missing a beat.

"I understand you think that Clinton can't win, but why ask us to support their candidate?" Rina asked.

"We all know that they have a plan, and will do nothing but cause you troubles in the future. So by secretly supporting their candidate by the time they realize what's happening, they'll have no choice but to continue supporting him. After all, he'll be the only candidate they have that still has a chance of winning. But at the same time, they'll be hesitant and their trust in him will wane since they'll be sure that you aren't doing it out of charity, but for a deeper plan.

"With the trust between them already hanging by a thread, it'll provoke internal conflict," Aron explained. He truly thought it would be the best move to avoid unexpected upsets in the future, while also putting the might of the Rothschild family to work for his own benefit.

"And what do you have that you can use to prevent him from causing problems for us?"

"There's way too many things we can use against him to force him to do some things for us, like footage of his golden showers in Russia, his tax returns, his footage with Stormy Daniel, the audio from his backstage conversation with Billy Bush about sexual assault, and so on. But keep in mind that although they should be enough to make any candidate do what you want, there's a possibility of him doing the opposite if he's pushed too far. So you should use it at your own discretion and be careful," Aron said, though the warning in his tone was offset by a glint of mischief in his eyes.

"I'm going to need to take a look at the evidence before I make my decision," Rina's father said, and both women at the table were surprised.

"Sure, I'll send it to you later. Take a look at it, but act with your own discretion, not because I suggested it as I'm still new to politics," Aron said. He wasn't too worried, as if things didn't go to plan, he still had backup plans for most possibilities, or at least those within the realm of foreseeability.

After that, their conversation moved to lighter topics, but Aron sensed that he had left a good impression on Rina's father that offset his act of hacking them and keeping hold of their secrets, so the meal continued and ended on a good note.

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While Aron was fostering his relationship with his girlfriend's family, Biogen had made it through the regulatory process and started showing up on the market. The first buyers were people who saw the ads on their Pangea accounts and fell 'victim' to the targeted marketing driven by Big Data.

Although Pneuma hadn't been approved in America, Russia, or the EU yet, it had been approved nearly all across Africa and most of South America, where they were enjoying a drastic decrease in childhood asthma sufferers. It was being hailed as a miracle cure, as it took effect within 24 hours and there were almost no side effects. Asclepius Biotechnology had become an overnight giant in the field of pharmaceuticals, and the governments in the African and South American countries it was approved in were already making concessions and all but kneeling and begging for more.

And they weren't shy about publicizing it, either, as the louder they were about their efforts to cure asthma in their countries, the more political points those leaders won.

The successful record Pneuma was displaying put a lot of pressure on regulatory bodies in those countries that hadn't approved it yet, and Pangea again played a major role, as people who couldn't get access to it at home and couldn't wait any longer were already booking flights to Eden. And a third-world country being a medical tourism destination was absolutely unheard of!

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"How the hell is he walking once again?" a researcher at Johnson & Johnson exclaimed as he watched a shaky cellphone camera recording of Ryan's presentation at the recent medical conference Asclepius Biotechnology had hosted in Hawaii. He knew the newly minted president and was sure that he had been crippled in an accident... but there he was on video walking without any trouble at all. And no one had ever been healed of quadriplegia that severe.

The ringing of a phone in his office interrupted his thoughts and he immediately answered it.

"Yes, sir," he said.

"Unfortunately, we're still trying to reverse engineer it, but it'll be difficult since the structure of the medicine is something I'm seeing for the first time in my thirty-seven years as a researcher. It's fascinating, and I've got our share of Folding@Home working overtime on it to hurry up the process," the man said.

"So, how long will it take to have our version ready for internal testing?" asked the voice on the other side of the call.

"At least six months, and that's an optimistic estimate," the researcher replied as he massaged his temples. He knew that, if he wanted to come up with a test version of Pneuma in that time frame, neither he nor his team would be seeing their families very much over the next six months.

"Make sure you finish it, the faster the better. I'll delay the FDA as much as I can on my end, but there's some serious weight at the top trying to fast-track it so there's only so much I can do. If you can get me a working version by the time the FDA approves Pneuma, your bonus will choke you all

the way to early retirement. But if you can't get it that fast, at least get us a working version by the time their patent expires."

A click announced the end of the call, and the researcher sighed and then got back to work. He could call his wife later.

"What happened to you?" He said after putting the phone down and returning his focus back to the phone that still had the video showing Ryan playing.

He immediately picked up the phone and dialed a number that he hadn't dialed in a long time, Ryan's number he had during the time they worked together.

The call didn't even connect as the automatic teller informed him that the number had been deactivated, so he immediately ended the call and dialed his secretary.

"Yes sir," his secretary said after answering the phone.

"Find a private investigator and tell them to find every bit of information about a person known as Ryan Walker," he said and ended the call before the response.

"Let's see if you can help me shorten my time frame in reverse engineering and become the golden goose," he said to himself as he immediately stood from his chair and headed to the hanger to pick up his white coat and headed to the elevator on his way to the lab to continue leading the reverse engineering of the medicine.

Chapter 300 Beloved Presidents and Beloved Wives

Aron had now officially removed himself from American politics after handing the responsibility to his girlfriend's father. Or in other words, he had passed it on to Rina. And after spending more than a week in the US, he finally left the Rothschild compound and headed back to Eden, this time by himself since Rina had to stay back and deal with overseeing some things before she could come to Eden once again.

During that time, changes had been taking place in Eden. The US, which had sent a low level member of the government when they were invited to the celebration parade, had sent their deputy secretary of state, William Burns, to Eden in order to foster diplomatic ties. He had promised a swift approval process in the FDA, as well as beginning negotiations for a trade agreement that would bring oil from Eden to America, bringing the countries closer than they'd been before. If it weren't for the fact that the current US Secretary of State was, at that very moment, on a campaign bus somewhere near Idaho, Hillary Clinton herself probably would have been the one to go to Eden.

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Also during that time, the new company presidents had gotten to work just days after waking up from their genetic enhancements. With newly reinvigorated bodies and peace of mind from having their grudges settled, they took full advantage of the time dilation in the simulation and had managed to do many things in a short period of time.

Elizabeth Oppliger, the president of Helios Energy & Utility, Inc., had gotten used to her position and implemented many things.

With all the construction projects under her company having been finished before she became the president, she had focused on efficient integrations of the tasks delegated to her company. Among

the many things that she did was placing competent people in important positions of each Helios branch office to oversee the local operation and what repairs that required people to do. That wasn't a lot, as the patrolling atomic printer handled all of the underground repairs save a few, which were mostly for show to prevent the printers from being discovered at work.

She had also implemented a payment structure on an income- and value-derived sliding scale so that utilities would remain affordable to all. It was a complex calculation based on the value of the property and the income of the people living on, or using it, so the more affluent Edenians paid more in an absolute sense than the poorer citizens. She had also cooperated with president Chakrabarti of the Coeus Foundation to set up a charity fund to keep lights on and water running in case of disaster, so people were quite relieved and Liz had quickly joined the ranks of the most-beloved leaders in Eden, alongside Sarah and Felix.

At the moment, she was in her office with her eyes closed, taking a power nap—or so her secretary thought—but she was in Lab City. She was wearing a white lab coat and doing something she could only have dreamed of during the ten long years she spent studying in school: researching new energies. And she was doing it in a lab that had everything she could only have dreamed of, and more.

"I really can't believe that Aron discovered such a magical form of energy," she said.

"How's our new formula holding in the mixture with the energy?" she asked.

The other researcher in the lab with her answered, "Although the new formula is stable, it only holds its stability for a few months before evaporating if it's not in a perfect environment. So nobody will really approve of using it when they know it'll disappear if it's not properly stored in a rather expensive and maintenance-hungry environment." The researcher didn't know what to call the low-grade mana liquid, and thought it was just something Aron had discovered after doing many, many simulations. At the moment, they were trying to find a way to make a mana liquid that was stable enough to introduce to the world as a source of energy.

"It's really fascinating," Liz said as she looked at the data she had already read about the formula.

"It's at least a hundred times more energy dense than any other form of energy. And depending on the way it's harnessed or used, it may result in an energy efficiency of more than 80%." If that held true, it would be incredibly unprecedented.

"Increase the concentration of the stabilizing agent to 85% and see if it holds for a longer period of time," she said, then walked to the door to leave the lab. The moment she passed through the doorway, she opened her eyes in the real world and ended her short "power nap" with a smile on her face. The hard work she was putting in wasn't exhausting to her at all, as it was what she had been dreaming of doing for her entire life.

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"We should be ready to implement a 24-hour delivery time for premium subscribers to our shopping app, as long as they're in Eden".

Rachael Richardson was listening to the team leader responsible for overseeing the introduction of premium features and benefits to those using the Hermes app to buy and sell things. Hermes would

be responsible for warehousing and shipping them, much like Amazon was doing in most of the rest of the world.

"Did we receive the delivery vehicles in all of the planned locations?" she asked as she perused the document in her hand.

"Yes. We also used their delivery as a test to see if we can accomplish our planned promise of next-day delivery, and we managed to complete 97% of them in time. So I think it's safe to say that we can roll out the premium subscription service," the team leader answered.

"Then go ahead and start the roll out process," she said, then returned her focus to the papers in her hand.

Once the team leader had left and she was alone in her office, she put down the papers and leaned back in her comfortable, luxurious chair as she closed her eyes and logged into the universal simulation.

She appeared in a long corridor that was brightly lit by powerful white LED lights. She was the only one in the entire corridor, as evidenced by the echoing clack of her heels hitting the floor as she walked to the end of the corridor, which had only one door.

The moment she reached the end of the corridor, the door automatically opened, revealing a large room. It had a few pieces of furniture, but nothing flattering or comfortable.

"Now, shall we continue? We're only five percent of the way there," she giggled to the man who had started shivering on the bed when he heard her voice, which anyone would think was coming from a composed and calm person.

"You don't have to worry too much. I promised that I'd let you leave when I'm done inflicting exactly what you inflicted on me, nothing more and nothing less. And since time passes faster here than in the real world, it won't take too long to experience everything. You should be rejoicing," she said in a calm voice.

Although she still had some sympathy for others, she had none for the man in front her. Aron had shown her everything he was feeling when he was inflicting pain on her, together with the reason why he had become abusive. And as a result of that information, she felt nothing but vengeful anger that she had been slowly chipping down by inflicting the same pain she had received from him. She also knew it was being used as therapy for her, and she would be completely healed by the time she reached a 100% completion rate.

As for his real body, it was laying in a hospital bed. He had suffered an air embolism and left in a coma. His "loving wife" Rachael had brought him to Eden and put him in a VIP hospital room with round-the-clock care and technologically advanced versions of everything a care team would need to ensure his survival.