

LEGENDS 351

Chapter 351: Round 4 of AFCON 22 Qualifiers II (A New Celebration)

As Jason ran forward after signaling for a pass, a Sierra Leone defender without any plans of letting Jason have the capability to receive the ball popped up in his vision charging at him with demolishing intent.

Jason didn't stop moving despite seeing the player coming at him and instead his mind started thinking of the best way to evade the player while the player drew closer to him with every passing nanosecond.

Jason had barely made up his mind and was about to jump out of the way of the Sierra Leone player when Osimen arrived and jumped in the player's path, setting up a screen for Jason to use to escape.

'Thanksies,' Jason thought as a little smile popped up at the corner of his lips and he skipped past the Osimen just after the ball came flying in.

The Sierra Leone player tried to push off Osimen, but Osimen held him off long enough to allow Jason to get away and reach the ball just before stepping into the penalty box.

The Sierra Leone goalkeeper didn't remain idle in the face of the counter-attack and rushed out towards Jason, but Jason just tipped the underside of the ball with the tip of his boot and chipped the shot over the goalkeeper before skipping over the goalkeeper's body that came flying in.

After jumping over the goalkeeper, he didn't even have to look and took off down the sidelines before the ball even flew past the goal line.

{GOAL!}

{They have two!}

{Splendid counter-attack, electrifying pace, beautiful screen, and a smooth and cheeky finish!}

{As if scoring wasn't enough, he decided to overdo it and humiliate the keeper while he was at it, yet no one but the men in Sierra Leone shirts is complaining!}

{This is what we love to see!} the commentator shouted as the ball landed into the back of the net.

Jason who had taken off to the sidelines stopped at the corner flag and looked back, making a gesture with his hands as if he was looking through binoculars at his teammates, then he shrugged with a mischievous smile on his face.

{It seems like a new celebration from the player, and what a time to show it off!} The commentator did not hesitate to mention Jason's new celebration even as the player was now smoldering in the excitement of his teammates' joyous reactions.

Jason barely smiled when he heard the commentator's words because the commentator wasn't wrong.

It was a celebration he had just thought up because he remembered what the Teni's husband, Tayo was saying to him earlier about him being the best player on the Nigerian national team.

The looking through the binoculars gesture was him looking at his teammates and assessing the points Tayo had made, and his shrugging was him reluctantly accepting that "maybe, he was the best player on the team..."

Although, he was never going to tell anyone about the meaning of the jubilation until he could fully accept that he was the best player on the team, no matter how long it takes till then.

His teammates however didn't care about the meaning of the jubilation and were just happy that the team had another goal and had taken a two-goal lead.

#44th minute...

With Nigeria taking a two-goal lead, Sierra Leone's efforts at attacking had become almost frantic and there was a huge sense of urgency in their movements which presented a huge danger to the Supa Eagles.

... but at the same time, it presented an opportunity.

The Nigerian players stole the ball from the frantically playing Sierra Leone players who had made a mistake and lost the ball, leaving themselves open for a counterattack.

The Nigerian players didn't need an invitation to burst forward and they were soon flying at the Sierra Leone half of the field with the ball in tow.

The Sierra Leone players did their best to track back and stop the Nigerian players, but the Nigerian players kept switching the ball among each other at the slightest hint of trouble, and they did all this while maintaining the pace and urgency of a counterattack.

However the Sierra Leone players efforts weren't completely useless and they managed to slow down the Nigerian players, but the Supa Eagles weren't willing to let the chance just get past them and they kept sending the ball from player to player until it finally reached the frontman, Victor Osimen.

On receiving the ball, Osimen's first choice was to shoot the ball, but the Sierra Leone players quickly appeared in the path to the goal and Osimen ended up faking the shot and passing the ball back to Jason instead.

Due to the counter attack attempt, Jason was free of his markers, but it didn't remain the same for long and they soon crowded him out, cutting off his passing lanes and shooting space and he had no choice but to move with the ball to try and create space.

A quick reverse elastico and a nutmeg on the same player later, Jason finally barely managed to create space to run into the left side of the Sierra Leone 18-yard box, but the Sierra Leone players just wouldn't leave him be.

Because he had managed to sneakily step into their penalty box, they didn't dare to tackle him too roughly and this was what barely allowed Jason to have some breathing space, but they were rapidly crowding him out and slowly pushing him towards the line while isolating him from his teammates.

Jason was slowly running out of options and decided to go out on a limb and make an attempt to break away instead of simply allowing himself to be shepherded out of play.

With his mind made up, he pushed the ball forward like he was voluntarily running out of play, but just as the ball was about to roll out of play, Jason turned to the right and his right leg snaked behind his left to catch the ball and send it flying, executing a rabona.

The Sierra Leone players marking Jason did not expect this move and one of them moved out of reflex to try and block the ball, but in his haste, he had forgotten that his hand was still in the air and the ball missed his head and instead smacked against the side of his palm before continuing its flight, but before the ball could make it any farther, the referee's whistle went off and the referee came running.

As the referee ran towards the players, his hand was pointed towards the penalty spot as what had happened was a clear handball inside the penalty area and was no doubt, a penalty.

Even though it was a clear handball, the Sierra Leone players still ran at the referee to try and convince him to change his decision, however, the referee wasn't budging on his decision.

Unfortunately for the Sierra Leone team, despite the International Football Association Board(IFAB) approving the use of VAR in official competitions since 2018, the use of VAR had yet to be implemented in Africa now.

Even if it had, it would only delay the inevitable as what had happened was clear for anyone to see and Nigeria would still have to take their penalty.

Jason picked up the ball and threw it to Osimen to take the penalty.

It was his way of thanking Osimen for setting up a screen for him to use to escape the Sierra Leone defender coming his way and score the second goal for the team.

Nobody argued with Osimen taking the penalty so the ball was soon laid down on the penalty spot with Osimen standing a few steps behind it and waiting for the referee's whistle.

Fweeeeeee

On hearing the referee's whistle, Osimen stepped up to the ball and coolly rifled the ball into the bottom left corner of the post.

{Well taken penalty!}

{They have three!}

{What a landslide! We expected goals for sure, but we weren't expecting this!}

{Three for the men in green before the first-half whistle! It seems they have learned their lesson from the last game against this opponent and are putting their knowledge to good use!} The commentator's voice wasn't excessively loud, but it still got across the message to the watching fans while the Nigerian players calmly celebrated the goal.

After a mild amount of celebration from the Nigerian players, the match kicked off again, but it wasn't too long before the referee blew the halftime whistle.

Fweeeeeeeee

On hearing the whistle, play stopped and the players of the two team began walking off the field and into the tunnel with the players in white looking a lot more up beat than their dejected opponents in blue.

{The first half whistle has been blown and what a half it was!}

{The match got off to a quick start when the Supa Eagles captain managed to get on the end of a cross from the new man, Jason}

{A while later, Jason cheekily sent the ball over the opposition goalkeeper to bring a beautiful end to an electrifying counter attack and finally... right before the second half, the team striker converted from the spot, bringing the scores of the game to three nil}

{The Nigerian side must be happy with the results while I'm sure the Sierra Leone manager must be raging at his players' performance in that half}

{Can he straighten his players during the break and will we see a different performance from them in the second half?}

{We'll find out soon enough!}

Chapter 352: Round 4 of AFCON 22 Qualifiers III

"... Jason, you'll be coming off for Joey Aribo in the second half," the first words of Gernot Rohri set off a wave of confusion in the Nigeria team's locker room.

Jason's mouth dropped open in shock and confusion, but before he could object to the manager's decision, Gernot Rohri continued talking.

"Iwobi, will also be coming off for Williem Troust-Ekong,"

"We have done well in the first half and have been able to secure a three-goal lead, and in the coming second half, I want you guys to switch to a more defensive gameplay so we can hold out against the pressure from our desperate opponents,"

"We already have a three-goal lead so as long as we can do enough defensively, then there shouldn't be any problems with ending the match in our victory,"

"Hence we will be changing our formation to 5-3-2 with Williem joining the two center backs, Joey joining the two midfielders in the center and Musa will move towards the center and join Osimen as a center forward,"

“Our two strikers will stay upfront and wait for an opportunity to catch our opponents on the counter while the rest of you will have to focus on keeping the ball away from our opponents and stopping them from scoring,”

“Is that clear enough to you guys?” Gernot Rohri asked after speaking.

“Yes... but why are we going defensive all of a sudden when we’re winning by three goals to nil?” Ahmad Musa immediately took the opportunity to ask the manager about his strange decision.

“Because it’s less risky that way,” Gernot Rohri answered.

“I don’t have to remind you what happened in the last match when we got comfortable after taking the lead,”

“Our opponents are professional footballers who have the capability to punish us should we make the slightest mistake and from the tally they racked up against us in the previous match, it’s not impossible for them to score against us,”

“So far in the qualifiers stage, we already have three wins and if we end this match with a win, our qualification for the AFCON 22 is as good as confirmed so I think it’s better for us to play it safe for the rest of the match,”

“Also, with how desperate our opponents have gotten, they may start making deadly tackles on our guys if we keep the pressure high on them, hence my decision,” the manager took a swig of a bottle of water after saying all that at a stretch.

The dissension that had threatened to arise when the manager had first started speaking had quietened down at this moment.

Most of the players still didn’t agree with the manager’s decision, but after hearing his explanation, they could see the justification for his decision.

Also, even if they didn't see it, it wouldn't matter as he was the manager and they had to do what he wanted if they wanted to keep being called to the national squad during the international breaks.

Jason wasn't happy about the manager's decision to take him off, but there was nothing he could do about it and he grudgingly began to take off his equipment while the manager began to further explain the new tactic.

He no longer bothered to listen to the manager explain the game plan as it no longer mattered to him since he was going to be watching the game from the bench in the second half.

Fifteen minutes after the whistle was blown, the players of the two teams were back on the field and ready for the second half.

Fweeeeeeee

{The referee's whistle has been blown and the second half of this game has taken off}

{After a thunderous bashing from Nigeria in the first half, Sierra Leone will be looking to somehow make a comeback despite the odds of them being successful looking as low as it can get}

{However, football is a game of "never say never" and we will see what the second half brings}

{It looks like the Nigeria side looks a bit different this second half}

{They seem to have a different shape from the previous half and there have been changes made to the line-up}

{The changes are a bit unexpected, and it looks like a tactical decision} the commentator immediately got down to his job as soon as the second half started.

The changes made to the team was quickly noticed by everyone watching the game and all the Nigeria fans couldn't believe what their manager had done.

In a beautiful house in the city of Lagos, a man sat down comfortably on his couch and watched the television screen with a slight frown on his face.

“This man has started his nonsense again,” the man scoffed as he saw the line-up changes on the Nigerian team when the second half kicked off.

“What did he do?” a woman seated on the same couch a few centimeters away from him looked up from her phone to ask.

“He has started his nonsense defensive tactics again,” Femi Badmus said, face palming as he watched in annoyance as the Sierra Leone team started pressuring the Nigerian players right off the bat of the second half.

“Everytime, any small lead that we have and he will want the players to start playing defensive football,” Femi groaned in annoyance.

It was obvious that he was fed up with Gernot Rohri’s antics.

“We have good attacking players, and we are already leading by three goals, but instead of this stupid man to put even more pressure on the opponent and let the players score more, he wants the players to start playing defensively,”

“Rubbish!” Femi spat out with venom laced in his tone.

“Don’t call him a stupid man. At least the team is winning matches, let him do his job,” Jola said with a glance at her husband and then at the television.

“Hmph!” Femi scoffed and returned his eyes to the screen.

He preferred to watch his team play attacking football and anything less than that felt like a sore on the eyes, hence he didn’t like what he was watching, but he could not do much more than complain.

**

#59th minute...

After the second half began, the Nigeria team had gone on the defensive and their opponents had taken the opportunity presented to them to push hard at their opponents as they began to look for the goal that would give them a lift in the game.

It wasn't easy as the Nigerian team was doing their best to keep them away from their goal by any means possible, but when inviting pressure, there was always a risk that came with it and it began to look like the Nigerian team would succumb to the pressure.

A chance soon came for the Sierra Leone team as their left winger managed to break free on the left flank before sending in a curling cross into Nigeria's penalty box.

The Nigerian players immediately got to work trying to defend the ball and prevent anyone in a blue shirt from reaching the ball, but all they managed to do was hassle the Sierra Leone striker enough to get him to hit the ball slightly off target after managing to out jump the Nigerian players.

{Header!} the commentator screamed, but the ball was slightly off target and slammed against the post before bouncing back into play.

The Nigerian players immediately chased after the ball, but they were a split second too late as a player in a blue jersey appeared behind the ball and slammed it back in the direction of the Nigerian goal.

Madika Okoyi lunged at the ball and got his hand to it in time, but he wasn't able to completely push it away and the ball smashed off the back of his hand into the goal.

{GOAL!}

{It's early in the second half and Sierra Leone already have one back!}

{Is this merely a consolation, or is this the beginning of a comeback!?!} The commentator's excited shouts gave life to the Sierra Leone fans watching the game, igniting their hopes for a comeback from their team.

#82nd minute...

After getting a goal back against Nigeria, the Sierra Leone players had put forth their utmost effort to try and get another goal, but so far they had fallen short against the Nigerian team that had begun defending desperately, not wishing for their opponents to get one back against them.

However, the Sierra Leone team did not give up and constantly moved the ball around, looking for the breakthrough chance and an opportunity soon presented itself as a splitting through was made by a Sierra Leone midfielder to the striker who was making a run.

Williem Trouost Ekong immediately reacted and held off the striker from running past the defense line, so the striker changed his direction slightly and just managed to reach the ball before it rolled past him and kicked it down the right flank.

The Sierra Leone right winger ran up to the ball and sent a lobbed pass over to the left flank where the Sierra Leone left winger was making a run.

The left winger caught the ball on his chest as he ran into the penalty box and soon brought the ball down to his feet before pushing forward.

Balogun Leone immediately gave chase and tried to stop the player before he reached the goalkeeper, but he was too late and the left winger sent the shot flying past Madika Okoyi, making it two goals for his club.

{GOAL!!!}

{They have two!}

{Are we about to witness the impossible here!?!} The commentator screamed in excitement while the Sierra Leone players quickly began heading back to the middle of the field with the ball.

#87th minute...

After getting their second goal, Sierra Leone's attacking play became even more frantic and they soon found themselves with another opportunity that could give them the equalizer they wanted so badly.

The left winger had managed to somehow blow past Ola Aina and had sent a grounded cross behind the defensive line and the Sierra Leone striker had managed to get away from his marker and appeared in the path of the ball.

Chapter 353 Skin Serenity I

The ball flew across the ground at an alarming pace and when the Sierra Leone striker made it past the Nigerian defenders to appear in the path of the ball, the heart of every Nigerian watching the game dropped.

Jason who was on the sidelines had his hands fly to the top of his head when he saw the Sierra Leone striker get away from his marker and appear in front of the goal with the ball flying his way.

The Sierra Leone striker tried to angle himself while running at the ball and as soon as the ball was near enough, he kicked at it, but in his haste, he suddenly slipped as his leg hit the ball.

Instead of hitting the ball like he planned to, the slip had caused the force in his foot to diminish greatly and the ball hit his leg instead and bounced off it and flew towards Nigeria's goal, but it had gained too much elevation and the ball flew upward, clipping the crossbar before flying out of play.

{Oh my God!}

{How has he missed that!?!}

{It was his one chance to be the hero and he's blown it! And with how much time left, it's unlikely he will get another clear chance like the one he just flopped!}

{It seems like he slipped there, but I can't figure out why! What poor finishing!} The commentator's shocked tone as he delivered the commentary wasn't able to do justice to the stunned looks of everyone watching as they watched the Sierra Leone striker miss out on the easiest chance of the game.

His teammates looked like they would bury him alive and even the Nigerian players who were relieved couldn't believe that they hadn't been scored against.

"What the hell just happened?" Jason asked nobody in particular as he sat back in his seat, not sure why he was standing in the first place.

"... I don't know bro, it all happened so fast," Aleix Iwobi said from beside him with a half laugh.

"I feel like Thanos just snapped his fingers to wipe out half the universe, but he didn't have the infinity stones," Zaidiu said as well with a strangely straight face, his words making everyone's eyes turn to him.

"What?" Zaidiu asked when he saw his fellow benchmates looking at him.

"...It was a... pretty apt description," Iwobi said with a laugh and the guys laughed a little, easing the tension they were currently feeling.

Their focus soon returned to the game and they watched as the rest of the time ran out.

The Nigerian players on the pitch managed to hold out for the rest of the match and when the final whistle was blown, everyone supporting the Nigerian side heaved a sigh of relief.

{The final whistle has been blown!}

{Nigeria have held out!}

{Their lead looked shaky quite a few times in the second half of the game, but they just wouldn't let go of it!}

{Some would argue that their luck played a great part in giving them this win, but what I know is that they have won and will be taking all three points from this match, leaving nothing for their opponents, and with this performance, they have qualified for the AFCON 22} the commentator began giving his closing remarks on the game.

The players on the field began walking off while some of them engaged in conversations and greetings with their opponents.

After a few minutes, Jason was called onto the field to receive the Man of the Match award and he took pictures with his new award before heading back to the sidelines.

A while later the players were in the locker room preparing to leave the stadium when the manager walked in with a few other coaching staff members.

"Good work out there guys,"

"While it looked a bit shaky for us out there a few times, we won and that's what matters,"

"Your performance for the national team is highly appreciated and I hope you can build off this performance at your various clubs and come back to give your best for the national team when next you receive a call up," the manager spoke, but his words sounded a bit too dreary for a post match address, but no one said anything as they understood how national call ups were.

Anytime could be a player's last call up to the national team as long as they did not impress the manager well enough with the performances to cause him to call them for the next international game hence everyone understood the reason for this slightly dreary address, but they weren't disheartened in the slightest.

The players had enough confidence in their abilities and knew they had a pretty high chance to be called back to the national team during the next international break... or at least most of them had such confidence.

About an hour later, most of the players were on a bus driving back to their hotel where they would be resting for the night, but from the following day, the coaching staff would be heading back to Nigeria by themselves as the rest of the players would be heading back to Nigeria by themselves now that the international break was over.

Jason was among the players not on the bus and was already on his way to the airport in a chartered car with Iwobi and Osimen.

Jason had a few things to do at Porto before training began and since the flight to Porto would take at least twelve hrs, he decided to get on a plane that same evening and reach Porto sometime before midday the following day.

If he had stayed at Sierra Leone until the following day, he would have to spend the best time of the coming day on a plane which would be a waste of the day and Jason didn't have that much time.

He had to sign an endorsement deal and rest before training began on the 19th which was just about a day away.

'Best to make full use of my time, I can just sleep on the plane and wake up in Porto so that I won't be too tired,' he sighed, knowing fully well that flying tired a person, so he would still feel quite tired even if slept through the whole flight.

Chapter 354 Skin Serenity II

****18th November 2020****

***8:47 am*0**

Jason walked out of the airport with his bag in tow and walked towards a blue BMW i8 that had just parked in front of him.

"Welcome back," Adele said as she got out of the driver's seat.

"Thanks," Jason said with a nod as he went to pull open the trunk and put his bag in.

"Catch," Adele said as she threw the keys of his car at him and Jason deftly caught it with one hand.

"You're not gonna drive me?" He asked with a grin.

"That's boyfriend privileges, I'm just your agent," Adele replied and moved over to the other side of the car and pressed the button to open the door.

"What if I increase your salary?" Jason asked while getting into the driver's seat.

"You don't exactly pay my salary," Adele said while rolling her eyes at him.

"Tch..." Jason clicked his tongue as he pushed the start button.

He wanted to trick her into driving him as he didn't want to do anything other than just lie down for a few hours, but tricking smart women wasn't up his alley unless he started using his sex appeal and he was too tired to do even that.

"Funny how sleeping on a plane only gets you more tired than you already are," he muttered as he drove the car out of the parking lane.

"Speak for yourself, I can sleep anywhere," Adele replied.

" Anyway, how were your first international games? I wasn't able to watch the matches or anything, but I checked the scores and you guys won... And then I watched the highlights and if you don't end up winning this year's Puskas award or Golden Boy award, then the world must have turned upside down," Adele continued while nodding to herself with a very straight face.

"The season barely started though, many things can happen between now and the end of the season," Jason laughed as he drove.

"Impossible! If they award anyone else, the person giving the award must have been kicked in the head by a donkey to allow such a thing," Adele remained adamant about her opinion.

"It's the reporters who have the majority vote in all those awards you're mentioning so anything could happen... Not that I don't want it though," Jason said with a half laugh.

It was one of Jason's greatest desires to get a Ballon'd'or or any such significant award, but he also knew that those kinds of awards were very deceiving due to the process in which the winners were chosen.

It was no longer just a performance or numbers game, but rather one in which one had to be liked by the reporters who were to vote for the awards.

Of course, others apart from reporters would also vote, but the majority of votes belonged to the reporters and there were many times when their choice was unsatisfactory to the players and the fans, but the awards were given anyway.

The concept of fair judgement was true and false at the same time otherwise how would a player like Thierry Henry not have a single Ballon'd'or even after all he had achieved in football?

That was why Jason liked a particular phrase that Cristiano Ronaldo always used to counter anyone challenging him with the fact that Messi had more Ballon'd'or's than he did.

'The numbers don't lie.'

Numbers were as close to the truth about a player's level as one could get.

If the numbers a player can amass compared to his competitors gave a clear enough distinction, then everything would be clear to everyone watching and waiting and that was what Jason hoped to become.

He wanted to become a player who amassed such numbers season after season that it would be clear if he was robbed of an award.

'Incompetence breeds disrespect,' Jason remembered something a teammate of his in his past life once told him.

That guy was the closest thing Jason had to a friend in his previous life and it was not of his volition. The guy was simply a hardheaded guy who chose to constantly talk to Jason every day whether Jason liked it or not.

One day, they had played a match against FC Schalke in a pre-season competition and they had lost terribly, conceding 13 goals and being unable to register three shots throughout the match.

As the no-names that they were, it was an understandable result as there was no way they could match up against a team like FC Schalke, but the fans at the stadium didn't care about such a fact and sang jeering songs at them all throughout the match.

That day, everyone on the team but Jason was in tears and even the manager stayed silent as he had nothing to say.

What was supposed to be a match to help the players gain exposure and regain fitness ended up in the most demoralizing situation possible.

The only reason Jason hadn't cried as well after that match was because his emotions were terribly dull at the time, and it was not his first time in such a situation so he was able to stay unaffected on the outside, but on the inside was a different matter.

It wasn't Jason's teammates fault that they weren't as good as the Schalke players, especially when they didn't have a tenth of the resources the Schalke team had, but the truth remained that they were incompetent and could not match up in any way which ended with them having their asses handed back to them by their opponents.

Since that day, the rule of numbers became clear to Jason.

Overwhelming numbers conquered all and that was exactly what Jason wanted to be, a conqueror... He still had a long way to go though.

"What time is our meeting with Skin Serenity though?" Jason asked Adele as he drove to his house.

"I got them to agree to a meeting at 2 since I figured you'd be tired," Adele said as she pulled out her phone, wanting to give Jason the details.

"Did I ever tell you I love you?" Jason asked with teary eyes feeling touched.

Chapter 355: The Sails See Wind

"Did I ever tell you I love you?" Jason said while teary-eyed, touched by Adele's consideration for his physical state.

"No, you've never told me," Adele replied a bit surprised by Jason sounding like an emotional person all of a sudden when all she had done was her job as an agent.

"Good... I'll only tell you when you can hit a moving target from over 3 miles away with a McMillan TAC-50," Jason replied and kept driving, putting an end to Adele's fantasy that Jason had learned to be more emotional and caring.

"I knew it was too good to be true," Adele muttered, fighting the urge to facepalm at Jason's antics.

Most of the time, Jason acted exceptionally mature for his age and wasn't easily moved by instant benefits which made her job as his agent a lot easier than it would be for any other person his age, but there were random times like this when he would act similar to his age and it was usually him just playing a prank on her.

"Speaking of which..." Jason's words suddenly put an end to Adele's thoughts and she glanced at him.

"What?" she asked.

"I suddenly had the thought that on this trip, I discovered many hidden heritages that I didn't even know I had, and then I suddenly felt curious about your nationality,"

"I mean, you don't look Portuguese, or sound Portuguese for that matter... hell, your name is not even Portuguese, but I also doubt that you're American, or British as your name would suggest because you don't sound like them either,"

"So what are you?" Jason asked glancing over at Adele now that he had stopped at a traffic light.

"What am I?" Adele repeated Jason's words from her perspective with amusement appearing on her face.

"The way you ask makes it seem like I'm an alien," she laughed.

"Well, in a sense, you are an alien... if we are going by the definition of someone in another country," Jason replied, sounding like a nerd all of a sudden.

"... Good point, haha," Adele said after a pause to let Jason's words sink in.

"Anyway, I'm like you in the aspect of citizenship... I have two," she finally began answering the question.

"My mother is from Dominican Republic and my dad was well... British from what I heard, but I never met him as he disappeared a few months after I was born," Adele's tone became a little down towards the end of her sentence.

"... Oh... I'm so sorry... He must have gone to get some milk, but never found it," Jason said with a straight face, but his words caused Adele to look at him with a face that was struggling to contain her laughter.

"... This is not funny," she managed to say while fighting the urge to laugh.

"Says the one who is trying so hard not to laugh," Jason replied with an eye roll causing Adele to lose control of herself and spurt out laughter.

Jason watched her lose control of herself to her laughter and felt accomplished in his heart before he began driving again as the light turned green.

While his joke may be seen as insensitive, that was the way he always dealt with his pain... he just found something to laugh about and he hoped Adele could find something to laugh about as well if she ever felt down.

"Anyway... you're a Dominican Republic woman huh?" he muttered and glanced at Adele who was gradually recovering from her laughter.

"That explains a lot of things and confuses a lot of things at the same time," he said while eye-measuring her curves.

Dominican women were known for their especially curvy women, and Adele wasn't lacking in that aspect and was quite 'endowed'.

"Are you checking me out? Did your teenage hormones finally start working?" Adele asked as if the moon had fallen.

"They were always working, I just didn't know my agent was a Dominican Republic woman with daddy issues,"

"I would have put a clause in your employment contract so you'd have to call me papi," Jason said with a smirk, sounding like he was joking, but Adele couldn't tell whether he was joking or not.

"..." Adele just gave him a side eye and shook her head wryly.

"That will be €20 million," she finally responded, causing Jason to glance over at her.

"Go start practicing your Spanish," He smirked as he pulled the car to a stop on his house's driveway, turned off the engine, and got off immediately, leaving Adele looking at his chair with a stunned look on her face.

'He can't be serious...' Those were the words that flashed across Adele's mind, but knowing how erratic Jason could be, she knew better than to expect him to be constrained by common sense.

After grabbing his bag from the trunk, Jason called out to Adele who was still seated in the car with a doubtful expression on her face,

"Are you coming in or not, I need to lock the doors,"

"... Oh, I'm coming," Jason's words brought Adele out of her reverie and she got out of the car to allow Jason to lock the doors and they went into the house.

"Mi casa, su casa... Until noon, I'll be sleeping till then," Jason air dropped as he headed to his room after they got in.

Leaving Adele behind without needing to hear a response, Jason headed to his room, threw his bag to the side, and jumped on the bed.

Before falling asleep, he set an alarm for 11:30 am, and only then did he let himself fall back into the darkness of sleep.

1:35 pm

"Is that the place?" Jason asked as they drove up to a modern-looking building.

"Yes," Adele replied while glancing up from her phone, but her tone was a bit off and for some reason, she looked a little red.

To know why, we have to go back a little...

*

Jason had woken up at the sound of his alarm clock at 11:30 am and after having a much-needed bath, he dressed up once he was ready, he left his bedroom to go find Adele, but to his greatest surprise, she had made herself comfortable on his favorite couch and was sleeping with all the pillows he had in his living room arranged around her on the couch.

A devious smile rose on Jason's face as he pulled out his phone to take 'blackmail' materials and only after taking the picture from 69 different angles did he finally remember that he was supposed to wake her up because they had somewhere to be.

'How do I wake her up though?' he wondered as he put his phone back in his pocket with blackmail material fully secured.

As a professional single player in life, he had never had to wake a woman up, not even his aunt.

He had never done it and due to his maturity, there had never been an urgent case where he absolutely had to wake her up, so waking up a woman felt strangely foreign to him.

People would argue that it was just the same thing as waking a man up, but Jason begged to differ.

He could choose to wake Viera up with an "Attitude Adjustment" and they would laugh it off after Viera woke up and returned the favor in the form of an RKO, but if he tried the same thing with Adele, the only thing he would be laughing off would be his jail time after he got hit with the most ridiculous assault lawsuit known to man.

"I can't pour a bucket of water on her face either, otherwise her clothes would be wet when we go out," he muttered as he stood beside her with a thoughtful look on her face.

After a few more seconds of thinking, he decided to just wake her up the boring way.

"Adele, wake up, we need to go," he said, but she didn't budge.

"Come on, we need to go," he called out again and shook her by the shoulder, but she barely shifted.

At this point, Jason could already tell that she was a heavy sleeper and could probably sleep through the Titanic if he let her be, but he couldn't do that at the moment as they had work to do.

Bending and coming closer to her ears so she could hear him clearer from the land of the beyond, Jason called out again,

"Wake up, or your dad will find your mum and give you a baby brother," he said in a louder voice with a smirk on his face but her reaction to his words stunned him and the aftermath was about to shock both of them.

"No!" Adele screamed as her eyes shot open and she flew up from her sleeping position.

Jason's earlier call had slightly awakened her, allowing her to hear what he had just said and that sounded like a nightmare, causing her to wake and fly up, but Jason's head was directly above hers and she didn't know this until their faces collided with their lips on each other in the most confusing way for both of them.

Because it was a 'lip-on-lip' collision, there wasn't much pain that registered in either of their heads which allowed them to stay stunned at the situation for a few seconds before both of them flew apart from each other with their shock still clear on their faces.

Chapter 356: The Sails See Wind II

"*Ahem*... Wipe off the drool on your face and meet me in the car, we're late," Jason blurted out with every last bit of composure that he could gather within him.

Immediately the words came out, he turned his heel and walked out as calmly as he could leaving Adele staring dumbfounded at his back view.

'... I don't drool,' Adele thought as she picked up her bag and pulled out a mirror to check her face.

She quickly straightened up her look with the aid of the mirror, walked outside, and got into the car with Jason who was waiting with the engine already turned on.

As soon as she got into the car and shut the door, Jason began reversing out of the driveway without a word. He got on the street and started driving while keeping his face forward.

“... So we’re just not going to talk about it?” Adele’s words flew into Jason’s head and sent a chill through his body, causing him to flinch slightly, but his emotional stability wasn’t so easily shaken and he controlled his body movements.

“Talk about what? What’s there to talk about?” He replied while keeping his face forward, still not daring to look her way.

“What’s there to talk about?” Adele repeated slowly, her disbelief could be clearly heard in her voice.

“You kissed me!”

“That’s what we have to talk about,” Adele said in a slightly higher tone than usual, her aggravation clear to Jason but he wasn’t having it.

“I kissed you? Girl, you kissed me!” He shot back at her.

“What!?” Adele immediately responded with disbelief.

“I was trying to wake you up, but how was I to know that you woke up like the undertaker?” Jason fired back.

“How was I supposed to know where you were if I was sleeping!?”

“Also, why were you trying to give me a nightmare instead of just waking me up normally?” Adele shouted back.

"How was I supposed to know that you were the type of Latina who could sleep through a flippin' Tsunami!" Jason fired back, not willing to be outdone when he wasn't completely at fault.

"I was tired! And you told me to make myself comfortable!"

"Why couldn't you just wake me up like a normal person," Adele shouted back.

"I tried but you were sleeping like a bear in hibernation!" Jason retorted.

At this point, they were already shouting at each other in a full-blown argument.

If the car windows weren't tinted, people would think it was a couple in a fight.

"Ah, fu*k, it's already happened and it was a mistake, let's just let it go," Jason said while rubbing his brows, the argument already draining him.

"No!" Adele retorted immediately.

"Why!?" Jason's voice immediately shot back up his annoyance beginning to flare up.

"That was my first kis- hmp..." Adele shouted.

In the heat of the argument, Adele had unknowingly let out one of her biggest secrets and didn't realize until she had spilled the beans.

Jason's annoyance disappeared immediately and bewilderment immediately took its place as he stared at Adele with shock written all over his face.

"... That was your... First kiss?" The words tumbled out of Jason's mouth, but he wasn't even sure if he was still in control of his mouth.

"How can it be your first kiss?"

"Aren't you like 22 years old?" The questions just kept tumbling out of Jason's mouth.

"So?" Adele shot back, her voice taking a defensive tone.

"... Never mind," Jason muttered and returned his focus to driving as the car returned to silence with the exception of the engine.

'Urgh... what a headache,' Jason began an inner monologue.

'... Wait, did I just become a cheating bastard?' he asked himself.

'No no no no, it was a mistake and I didn't plan for this to happen, though it is kind of my fault,' he started justifying himself internally.

"I've never been anyone's first kiss before..." He muttered, not realizing that he was no longer monologuing.

"Damn! I wouldn't have been able to tell, 'Mr. Player on and off the pitch'," Adele shot back sarcastically, her voice full of venom.

"... Really ni**a?" Jason couldn't stop himself from looking at her with his annoyance clear.

"That was one time! One flippin time!"

"I don't go around kissing every beautiful woman I see okay... Not anymore at least," Jason retorted.

“Exactly what I’m talking about!” Adele shouted like she had found the answer to an impromptu grammar quiz.

“What are you talking about?” Jason asked confused.

“The words “not anymore” already tell me everything I want to hear,” Adele stated with conviction.

“Well, you’re hearing wrong cuz it’s not what you think,” Jason replied as he understood what she was driving at.

“I’m pretty confident I’m not,” Adele retorted.

“Yes you are,” Jason replied immediately.

“No I’m not,” Adele shot back, not willing to believe Jason’s words.

“Yes you are,” Jason repeated.

“No, I’m not. You know what, let me just ask you directly,”

“How many ‘girls’ have you kissed?” Adele asked the million-dollar question, already tired of the back-and-forth debacle.

“And I want the truth... The truthhhhh!” She added with gusto.

“... Technically...” Jason began answering as she had asked him to be honest, but Adele immediately interrupted.

“Technically?” She repeated Jason’s words.

“At this point, I don’t even need to hear the numbers as I’m sure it’s going to be a lot,”

“Prove me wrong,” she said with a daring look on her face as she gazed fiercely at him.

“...” Jason’s mouth came open, but he couldn’t utter a word as he knew that anything he said at this moment would make it worse.

If he was to be completely honest, it would be impossible for him to claim that he had only ever kissed Sofia as he knew that was barely a half-truth.

He had only kissed Sofia... And now Adele, in this life...

That was the truth.

In all of his life, he had had lip-to-lip encounters with at least 100 women and he could have easily gotten a much higher number, but he had gotten bored of it after a while.

That was the cumulation of his two lives and was the complete truth, but he couldn’t tell that to Adele.

Like, he could, and normally he would, because he knew that she would not believe such a thing and would take it as a joke and that was what would happen if he said it now.

The only difference was that she wouldn’t simply take it as a joke, but rather would think that he was joking around even in a situation like this one and Jason didn’t want that happening right now.

He didn’t want this whole situation to become more annoying than it already was.

“... Why are you even so angry?” He opted to ask instead of answering her question.

“How would you feel if you were consciously keeping something for over twenty years and it was snatched from you?” Adele replied to him with a question of her own.

“...” Jason opened his mouth to speak, but for the umpteenth time since they left his house, no words came out.

When taken from that perspective, Adele had every right to be angry.

He had been messing around and they had mistakenly ended up lip to lip... Which wasn't his intention, but he couldn't free himself of blame in this matter.

“... I'm sorry,” Jason finally spoke the magic word, but Jason soon realized that whoever called 'sorry' a magic word was a liar.

“Sorry isn't going to bring back my lip virginity,” Adele retorted sharply.

“Was mistakenly kissing me that bad?” Jason ignored the original question that had popped up in his head and asked, suppressing his curiosity.

“No,” Adele's answer surprised Jason and his right eyebrow rose immediately.

“Then why are you so angry!?” Jason couldn't help asking again in aggravation, tired of the whole fiasco.

“I don't know!” Adele shouted back at him.

“Oh my God bruhhhh,” Jason groaned, his annoyance fully escaping from his lips.

“You know what? I ain't even gonna say nothing,” he had officially given up on this argument and wanted nothing more to do with the topic of kissing for a few years at least.

Adele's mouth shot open and she was about to talk, but Jason wasn't having that and his right index finger immediately flew on top of her lips, shushing her.

“Ah ah ah... You shut up as well or I’m kissing you again,” Jason said with seriousness in his voice... He wasn’t going to do it though... Maybe.

“... That’s called sexual assault,” Adele spoke as soon as Jason’s finger shushing her lips was removed.

“No, it’s called a sacrifice for World Peace and Quiet,” Jason said as he slammed on the accelerator.

Since he wasn’t planning to kiss her again to keep her from restarting the whole fiasco, he sped up and had internally decided that if she so much as said another word concerning the whole lip-on-lip encounter, he would make sure her internal organs would have been rearranged by the time she got down from the car.

By driving crazy... Not anything else.

Chapter 357: Skin Serenity III

Jason and Adele arrived at the building where a conference room had been rented for their meeting.

Since Skin Serenity was not based in Portugal, this was the only way they could meet with Jason without it being a public setting.

Skin Serenity was a unisex skin-care brand that dealt with lotions, soaps, oils, skin-care face-masks, etc. and they had contacted Adele a while ago for an endorsement deal which Jason had put on a hold due to his injury, but now that he had gotten back to regular football, he finally had time to listen to their offer which had further increased thanks to his growing worth as a player.

Originally, Jason hadn’t been exactly ecstatic to sign a deal with them as he already had a commercial with a perfume company, Scentual Escapades, and he was already thinking that one self-care endorsement was enough.

Especially with the deal with Skin Serenity having a clause that would require him only to use their products.

Jason was generally apprehensive of a controlling contract like that, but when he heard their offer, he made a U-turn on his decision.

Skin Serenity wasn't a big company yet and their worth just barely reached 70 million dollars which put them at the level of a start-up brand in the worldwide skincare industry so far.

They weren't exactly rapidly rising either and their progress had stalled just barely three years after their start.

Perhaps they were looking for a boost to their popularity which would give them the push they needed to rise and because of that, they had come to Jason with a particularly ludicrous offer.

They wanted Jason to become the face of the male part of their brand for five years with a starting offer of 2 million dollars which in itself was already a sizeable percent of their company's worth.

However, that wasn't all, they had also put forth a contract clause stating that on every brand he represented, he would get a percentage profit of every single sale and that was not just ludicrous, it was something any normal businessman would call stupid.

Jason was merely a start-up celebrity, and he didn't have a particularly strong fan base , yet the company was so stupid as to literally put all their hopes on him and still giving him the benefits of a major investor in the business when all he did was endorse the product.

If that wasn't stupidity, then what was?

The business world was a world full of sharks, yet these guys were out here being overly nice and that immediately tingled Jason's money senses that he didn't know he had until now.

He immediately noticed that there was a sliver of desperation in their offers to him.

It was like they didn't want him to even think of rejecting the offer.

Almost like not signing him would damage them greatly and that was strange so Jason had asked Adele to look into their situation to see what was wrong.

He didn't want to sign a deal that would be particularly damaging to his reputation no matter how huge or tempting it was.

It had taken a while and was what had caused the delay till now, but Adele had managed to find out the situation behind the company.

The first thing Adele found out was that Jason wasn't the only one to have received the offer from Skin Serenity, though the terms of the offer made to him were a lot more enticing than the others, nevertheless, he wasn't the only one with the offer from Skin Serenity.

It seemed the company had cast out a wide net and hoped to get at least one favorable response, and their targets were young, quick-growing celebrities.

It wasn't only footballers, the company had also contacted debuting actors, singers, and even online celebrities, but so far, no one had signed the deal because they were still negotiating with Skin Serenity and trying to increase the benefits for themselves.

The offers Skin Serenity made to the others were vastly different from what they made to Jason which meant Jason was a focal point in whatever plan they had and the others were just add-ons.

The second thing that Adele found out was an interesting story that took her a lot of effort to be able to listen to.

The story went like this;

Skin Serenity Co., a cutting-edge skincare brand was founded three years ago by innovative chemist, Dr. Maya Singh.

With a revolutionary new product, Skin Serenity was poised to disrupt the industry and they did for a while, turning a company that started up with less than a million dollars to a company worth 100 million in less than two years.

However, such good fortune didn't come without consequences.

There is a Chinese saying that says that the bamboo that rises the fastest gets hammered by the wind and Skin Serenity was the proverbial bamboo.

Their speedy progress had aroused the interests of others in the same field and while some of the competitors barely made changes to their products and put more effort into marketing their product, another group decided to try and take over the goose that was laying golden eggs.

Thus a conspiracy began to unfold and it started with someone bribing the lead researcher of the company, Victor Delgado.

With his greed aroused, he used his influence to push out a research product that wasn't yet ready for production. He framed good results for the product and made Dr Maya Singh believe that this was the next big thing after their original recipe.

For Dr. Maya Singh who had been swamped by administrative duties and no longer had time to tinker with chemicals at the lab, this was good news and she believed the words of Victor who she thought was her friend, and began working hard to launch the new project.

The company took huge loans to finance the project's launch and after a lot of work, the new product was launched, but barely a week after its launch, the product's inconsistencies were revealed.

The product began to be returned and soon the company was bombarded with quite a few lawsuits.

Chapter 358: Skin Serenity IV

Things looked dire for Skin Serenity, but Victor wasn't done yet and was making all sorts of moves to make sure he was the final victor in this espionage battle.

He quietly sold the original recipe of Skin Serenity to a rival company, Aurora Skincare, while also hatching a plan to try to push Maya out of the CEO's position, but unfortunately for him, he had miscalculated.

Dr. Maya Singh was no soft persimmon who had luckily come into money, but rather she was a fiery woman with a lot of spirit who had a great business talent and had already found out about his betrayal.

She had already begun making her moves and soon she was able to oust Victor while also regaining a hold of the situation.

She quickly recalled the new product, junked it, and hired lawyers to help with the lawsuits, stabilizing the situation, but things were already in a dire situation for the company.

Dr. Maya Singh's efforts had barely managed to make Skin Serenity stay afloat and they were now stuck with a ton of lawsuits, a huge debt, a damaged reputation, and doubtful investors to deal with.

Maya Singh's efforts had barely bought them some time, but the inevitable bankruptcy still loomed on the horizon...

However, with every misfortune came a blessing.

While returning to her roots because of the huge blow her company had received, Maya Singh had been able to correct the issues in the new product that they had released, and from what had been heard, this product supposedly had more potential than the original recipe.

This was the big break that could save Skin Serenity and put them back on the path to growing into one of the biggest skincare companies in the world, however, there was a problem.

They couldn't launch the product.

They were already in huge debt and were already running on a deficit and only managing to slow down their decadence thanks to the little sales from the few staunch customers they had managed to amass in

their first two years of success, hence there was no way for them to launch a new product as they already had their hands full with slowing down their inevitable bankruptcy.

There was also the problem of their damaged reputation which would make it hard for them to make a splash in the market thus they were stuck at an impasse yet again, only able to slow down their bankruptcy while their competitors eyed them like sharks while doing all they could to quicken their fall so that they could claim everything that Skin Serenity owned once they were done.

However, once again, Maya Singh came to the rescue and came up with a structural plan that could potentially bring Skin Serenity to salvation and that was by turning public opinions back in their favor, and their way of doing that was by endorsements and not just anyone, but people who could command people's hearts.

On hearing this part of the story, Jason had been amazed and had realized what she was trying to do.

People like Taylor Swift, Selina Gomes, Justin Bieber, Lebraun James, Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo, and a few others could potentially change the public's opinion of her company and cause Skin Serenity to start selling like hotcakes.

Something like that had happened not long ago, even... Just before Portugal's Euro 2020 match against Hungary, Cristiano Ronaldo had just moved two bottles of Coca-Cola bottles away from the microphone, took up a bottle of water, and said 'Aqua' which meant 'water' into the microphone.

He was probably just saying it because of his personal choice, but that singular effortless action of Ronaldo had caused Coca-Cola's stock price to plummet and the company lost around \$4 billion in value.

That was x40 of Skin Serenity's value at its peak.

That singular incident had given Maya Singh confidence in her plan, but there was just one teeny-weeny problem.

They couldn't afford such a person.

The endorsement fee to bring in someone with enough influence to do what Maya Singh needed would drown the company's finances.

For a company living from hand to mouth and just barely worth \$70 million, it was impossible to amass the hundreds of millions needed to even attract the agents of such people, hence Maya Singh had chosen to try and catch someone with such potential when they were still young and the focal point of her efforts were on Jason, one of the fastest rising footballers on the planet.

Not to mention his face that would instantly quadruple their female fanbase if he so much as appeared in a picture with any of their products, his talent and star quality were rapidly rising at a lightning-fast pace, hence Maya Singh wanted Jason's signature at any cost.

There were other options available as there was no shortage of "young star quality" but Maya Singh seemed dead set on Jason as the focal point of her plans for reasons unknown to Jason.

After hearing the story, Jason could not say he was not interested in meeting Dr. Maya Singh who was single-handedly holding her company back from bankruptcy.

Also, he had a lot more to think about now concerning the offer from Skin Serenity.

If he let himself get carried by 'Superwoman Singh' he could potentially end up with an endorsement deal worth hundreds of millions or even billions in the future... or he could end up with a stain on his reputation and at least \$2 million...

Or... he could reject the offer and simply continue as he was now, hoping for better endorsement deals in the future.

... Naturally, Jason was more tilted towards the riskier choice as he knew from experience that the riskier the option, the better the profits that lay beyond for the claiming if they survived the danger that they would need to confront.

Dr. Maya Singh was sitting on a potential golden egg that could overturn the skin care industry in the near future if only they could survive now and Jason signing with them would give him a share of the pie thanks to the ludicrous contract offer he had received.

Jason couldn't deny his greed for such an endorsement deal.

In fact, so great was his greed that a ludicrous thought had appeared in his mind.

'Why should I get a mere piece of the pie?'

Chapter 359: A Pirate of Fortune I

'Why should I get a mere piece of the pie?'

'Why can't I get the whole pie?' This absurd thought had popped up in Jason's head when he had been considering whether to put pen to paper or not.

This thinking had opened to him a new option and that was what he was about to implement.

Jason parked the car and got out with Adele who had switched to a business face despite what had happened earlier.

Since Jason had come to not just sign a contract, but to talk business... he had not come dressed casually and was instead dressed in a pitch-black suit with a black shirt, tie, shoes, and socks.

For once, he wasn't even wearing any male jewelry and only had a watch on his left wrist.

He and Adele walked into the building and after receiving directions from the lobbyist, they made their way to the conference room where the meeting was to be held.

On reaching the entrance of the conference room, Jason didn't hesitate to push open the door and walk in.

On walking into the room, Jason's eyes darted around quickly and fell on the four people seated at the table.

Before Jason could even begin to visually assess the two men in the group, one of the women in his view instantly stole his attention, and without needing an introduction, Jason immediately knew that this woman was Maya Singh.

The woman looked like she was of Indian descent as her name suggested and she looked like she was in her early thirties at most and had an impressive professional air surrounding her.

Beside her, the aura of professionalism that Adele had around her seemed premature at best.

The impressive-looking woman, the second woman, and the two men with her stood up from their seats as Jason and Adele walked in and walked over to them after which introductions ensued.

After the introductions, Jason found out that he was in fact correct and the impressive-looking woman was Maya Singh, the superwoman behind the skin care company, Skin Serenity.

The second woman with her was Maya Singh's secretary, one of the men was from the publicity department while the other was a lawyer.

Jason and Adele didn't need introductions but they introduced themselves either way before they sat at the table to begin the discussion.

A few pleasantries were exchanged between both sides, but Jason and Maya Singh stayed quiet and simply stared at each other like it was some sort of staring contest.

Maya Singh was trying to see what Jason wanted from her gaze as Jason's condition for further discussion on the endorsement was for her to be in attendance which she didn't have a problem with as she would do just about anything at this point to keep her company afloat.

The problem was that she didn't know what Jason wanted which was disconcerting for a woman like her.

In the business world, information is power and currently, she had no information on Jason's plan for her which required her to be in attendance which was why she was trying to gather some information from Jason's gaze which could help in the negotiation, but Jason's naturally impassive gaze wasn't giving her anything to go off of.

There was nothing in his eyes as he looked at her... or so she thought.

Ignorant of her thoughts, Jason was inwardly trying to estimate how old she was with how young she looked.

Since she looked like she was in her late twenties, Jason estimated that meant she probably started the business in her early twenties and that she had managed to grow the company this much was without a doubt, impressive.

But while Jason was thinking all this, Maya Singh had had enough of the coded silence and lack of information so she cut into the ongoing pleasantries.

"Mr Bolu... perhaps you can elaborate on why you requested for my presence at this meeting," she said, her voice overshadowing the others and her gaze firmly locked on Jason.

Jason returned her sharp gaze with a colder gaze of his own,

"... I heard an interesting story..." he began, his voice taking on a particularly emotionless tone.

"... A story of a young aspiring businesswoman who got into the business and made a splash, but wasn't able to keep up and got hit hard by people who had set their eyes on the golden goose she possessed, their minds overtaken by greed,"

"She even got betrayed by one of her close associates..." Jason continued speaking, his tone emotionless as he watched Maya Singh's expression harden as words flowed out of her mouth.

"... But somehow, they survived that dire situation. She wasn't a gymnast, but she bent over backward to ensure that her company wasn't washed over, and she didn't stop there,"

“She had begun planning a comeback and hatched a plan that could potentially bring them back in the game and to do that, I came into this story...” Jason paused at this point to realize that everyone was listening to him with rapt attention, which wasn’t what he intended, but at this point he just rolled with it.

“My part in this story is not very clear, but I have made some conjectures based on what I have heard...”

“Since this young businesswoman’s company cannot afford to launch a project in these dire times, they probably want to have me somehow whitewash their image in the market and push their already existing projects back into the limelight after which they would then launch a new product which should hopefully make them a profit and push them forward...”

“Dr Singh... what do you think of this conjecture?” Jason threw a question to Dr. Maya Singh.

“... I... I’m not going to beat around the bush and say otherwise,” Maya began, quite amazed by the intense presence Jason was giving off that made them listen raptly to his words right from the moment he started speaking.

“Yes... you heard correctly about what happened to us... to me... and it is clear that you know what our plan is,”

“I personally believe you have the potential to have as much star quality as people like Cristiano Ronaldo, LeBron James and the likes, and not only that, you are likely to hit a high level more quickly than the other people we are looking at,”

“There are other people who could probably reach a high level of star quality like you, but you seem to have a particularly clear consistency which makes it clear that you are playing the long game which is the best for us, hence why we want you to become our flagship,”

“You’re also right in that we wish you could help us to white wash our products and give the public a reason to patronize us, but that being said, I don’t understand why you laid all that out, or why I am here,” Maya finished, her gaze not leaving Jason’s face.

“... Dr. Singh... Are you familiar with the concept of a savior?” Jason said with a huge, wicked grin appearing on his face.

Chapter 360: A Pirate of Fortune II

“... Dr. Singh... Are you familiar with the concept of a savior?” A wide, wicked grin appeared on Jason’s face as he asked the female CEO a question.

“Surely you don’t mean yourself, do you?” Maya Singh returned a question to Jason, amused by this young man.

“Oh, me? Surely not,” Jason laughed.

“I’m a shark, a pirate of fortune... a calculated risk-taker if you will,” he continued, his wicked smile growing wider by the second.

“I’m the oriole behind the mantis stalking the cicada... only this time, I don’t wish for the mantis to kill the cicada as that cicada has the potential to be something greater,” Jason stated.

“Where are you going with this?” Maya Singh asked Jason because as amused as she was by his words, they seemed to have a meaning behind them and Maya wasn’t patient enough to wait for Jason to continue talking at his own pace.

“Due to your company’s previous misfortunes, your investors lost faith in your vision and most of them pulled out, leaving you with most of your company’s stake but nothing to show for it. In fact, that was what had accelerated your plunge as you had to sell a lot of your assets to settle those people so that you could avoid the situation where your competitors get a stake in your company,”

“Hence, you have no extra funds which is why you can’t launch your new product... but what if...”

“What if you could launch the new product earlier than planned?... by, let’s say next month?” Jason asked with a grin.

“Highly improbable, but if we can launch the new product earlier and it can make a big splash in the market, then we will be well on our way to recovery and maybe even growth,” Maya Singh responded, half-heartedly.

She was not one to expect sudden strokes of good fortune, especially in their current situation, so she hadn’t given it much thought and had kept her thinking realistic so far.

“What if you received enough money in cash flow to help with your efforts to save your company from the inevitable fall?” Jason asked another question, but unlike before when Maya Singh had replied half-heartedly, hearing Jason’s words this time had caused her to pause and raise an eyebrow.

“And who’s going to want to do such a thing?” Maya Singh asked with her eyebrow raised.

What Jason was asking was a question she had asked herself quite a few times in the past.

As someone who had seen a lot of things, she knew that money could solve almost every issue in the business world and if it could not, it was because you were not throwing enough money at the problem.

If there was someone with enough money to spare who wanted to save Skin Serenity, then they would be able to do it easily.

With enough money, they could help Skin Serenity hire lead researchers who could help them create a few new recipes to sell.

With enough money, they could launch these new products.

With enough money, they could hire famous people to help them whitewash their brand name, or they could just change their brand name altogether.

With enough money, there wasn’t anything they couldn’t do, but no sane businessman would put that much money into saving their company.

The money required to launch a new product wasn't the problem, the problem was the whitewashing part which could cost hundreds of millions.

Rather, they would just let it go bankrupt, then they could acquire it at a low price and then probably turn it into a subsidiary of another much bigger brand, changing the name and all.

Hence, Maya Singh had long given up on receiving any monetary help from anyone as no such good Samaritan was willing to put that much money into saving a drowning company and she voiced her thoughts to Jason.

"Yes, if we received a few million in cash flow, we could offset our debt to buy us some time, and then launch a new product, but then we would still have to deal with the reputation aspect. It's not impossible and it would make things a lot easier if we could get more money, but who's going to give us that kind of money?"

"Unless there is that much of a significant benefit that can be gained from investing that much, then there is no one who would do so," She said.

"What you think can happen is not important right now... What I'm asking is what you can do if you were given a chance?" Jason cut her off before she could go any further.

Maya Singh paused as Jason's question resonated with her, and even though she still didn't understand why he was asking all these questions, she decided to answer him anyway,

"... We can recover, and we can grow..." She stated confidently, her gaze firm and that was all Jason wanted to hear.

"Then let me make you an offer," Jason began and held out his hand to Adele who immediately pulled out a document signing pad from her bag.

"\$35 million in investment for a 50% stake in your company," Jason stated and placed the signing pad in front of Maya Singh.

The already silent room seemed to become a lot quieter in an instant as soon as those words came out of his mouth.

“What are you talking about?” Maya Singh’s secretary said as she took up the document pad and opened it, while the rest of the Skin Serenity crowd could only stare at Jason in surprise.

The secretary quickly looked through the documents to see what was written and after a while, she passed the document pad to the lawyer among them.

“Boss...” The lawyer passed the document to Maya Singh after looking through it as well and saw what was written in the document was no different from what Jason had said.

“... What is this?” Maya Singh asked as if she hadn’t been listening to what Jason had been saying so far.

“A contract... You sign it and you hand over 50% of your company’s stake to me, and you get \$35 million in funding,” Jason repeated, his grin having reduced into a little smile at the corner of his lips.

“Simple, isn’t it?”