Limits 18

Chapter 18

Soon, more people gathered, until nearly everyone in the cyber cafe was drawn

in.

At first, they whispered among themselves, then the chatter grew louder, until the entire room was buzzing.

"This guy is the top science student in the state? That's insane!" one person exclaimed.

"Every year there are some serious contenders, but this one is something else," another muttered, shaking their head.

"I always thought of myself as a genius, but in front of someone like this, I'm happy to bow out," a third said with a resigned smile.

"This has to be someone from Crestfield High School. It looks like they'll have more to brag about this year," someone else added, glancing around at the others in agreement.

The clamor in the cyber cafe was deafening, but it couldn't drown out the legend of Jack's achievement.

Though the top girl, Bella had always been confident, there was no denying the vast gap between her status and Jack's legendary position. She was probably regretting how she had looked down on him earlier.

But Jack, a person of such greatness, wouldn't care about someone like her, who was just another so-called "top student".

With a calm smile, Jack stepped out of the cyber cafe, hopped onto his bike, and rode toward the town, the sound of his bell ringing in the air.

The flowers in the fields were in full bloom, and the willow fluff danced in the breeze, as if the world itself was heralding the beginning of Jack's brilliant life.

He turned into an alley, where he saw Eddie talking to a beautiful girl, none other than the stunning Feena.

She was riding a pink bicycle and waved goodbye to Eddie, saying, "I'm planning to apply to Alnewgo's School of Music. I'll be heading there for the summer tomorrow!"

With that, she left, her laughter like the sound of silver bells, fading away like a fleeting sunset.

That moment of beauty, like the sunset on the horizon, was unforgettable. Eddie noticed Jack coming and asked, "How'd you do?"

"Not bad," Jack replied, his voice calm and confident.

Eddie nodded, but since he was in a rush to get home, he didn't linger to talk further.

Jack arrived home to see Jeffrey sitting at the door smoking a cigarette, Helena busy in the kitchen, and Joanne standing at the doorway, craning her neck in anticipation.

The moment Joanne spotted Jack, her face lit up with joy as she called out, "Jack is back!"

Jeffrey stood up quickly, and Helena rushed over from the kitchen.

She asked anxiously as she grabbed Jack's arm, "How... How did you do? What's your score? Can you at least make the minimum passing mark?"

"729," Jack replied calmly.

Helena clapped her hands on her thighs and groaned, her face full of despair. "Oh no! Jack, how could you only score that little? 279? How can 279 get you into college?"

It turned out that Helena had misheard Jack's score, thinking he had said 279 instead of 729.

Jeffrey froze, his face mirroring Helena's expression. He assumed that Jack had only managed 279 points too.

It was over. Everything was over.

Luckily, Joanne's sharp ears picked up on the discrepancy. Her eyes widened in shock as she said, "Wait. Jack, what did you say your score was?"

Jack kept his tone steady but deliberate. "Seven hundred and twenty-nine. First place in the entire state."

He deliberately added his state ranking to ensure there was no misunderstanding this time.

For Jeffrey and Helena, who had always been familiar with Jack's middling academic performance, this was a mind-blowing revelation. It was utterly beyond belief.

Anyone who knew Jack would probably find this news utterly unbelievable too.

Jeffrey stammered, "W-What did you just say? Y-You're not joking, are you?" Jack nodded firmly, his gaze steady.

Joanne let out a squeal of delight and leaped into the air. "Jack, you're amazing! You're my superstar!"

Jeffrey finally snapped out of his stupor. He gave Jack a solid pat on the shoulder and exclaimed, "Good! That's perfect! You've made your dad proud!"

As he spoke, tears unknowingly welled up in Jeffrey's eyes. Helena was also overcome with emotion, tears streaming down her face.

The four of them came together in a tight embrace, sharing this life-changing moment of joy and pride.

But Jack's achievement wasn't destined to stay within the walls of their home. The incredible news was already starting to ripple outward, stirring waves of astonishment across their community.

And the first person to feel the impact was none other than Marcus, Jack's homeroom teacher at Seaton High School.

While students were busy checking their results at cyber cafes, Marcus, the homeroom teacher at Seaton High School, sat in his office manually entering the ID numbers of his students one by one to access their scores.

The results were disheartening. The highest score he had seen so far was only 490, a score that was unlikely to meet the criteria for the prestigious first-tier universities.

This also meant his bonus this year was likely to shrink significantly.

Marcus furrowed his brows, his heart growing heavier with each passing moment.

As he scrolled through the remaining list, the results only became more disappointing.

When only a handful of names were left, a thought struck him. His eyes scanned the list until they landed on a familiar name, Jack.

Without hesitation, Marcus entered Jack's ID and password.

The numbers that appeared on the screen made Marcus freeze. He rubbed his eyes, staring at the screen to make sure he wasn't mistaken.

After a moment of stunned silence, his heart raced so hard it felt like it might burst from his chest.

Marcus instinctively reached into his pocket for a cigarette to calm his nerves. But his hands trembled so much that it took several attempts to steady himself enough to light it.

Puffing on his cigarette, he exhaled a plume of smoke and squinted at the screen again.

Taking a few deep breaths, he tried to calm his excitement. To ensure he wasn't imagining things, he re-entered Jack's information multiple times.

Each time, the same score appeared.

A wave of euphoria surged through Marcus. It was real.

Marcus recalled the time Jack had nearly hit 700 points in a mock exam. Back then, Marcus had suspected Jack of cheating. Who would've thought that the boy had been holding back all along?

After finishing his cigarette, Marcus lit another one, this time savoring it like a well- earned reward.

"Top scholar," he whispered to himself, the words tasting sweeter with each repetition. "The top scholar of the state!"

This was it-the stuff of legends. Marcus reveled in the thought of what this achievement would mean for him.

The bonus? Easily tens of thousands.

A promotion? Practically guaranteed.

And then there was the impact on Seaton High School. Marcus chuckled at the thought. In Perthter City, only Crestfield High School, with its storied 80-year history, had ever produced a top scholar.

For a private school like Seaton High to achieve such a feat? It would catapult their reputation to unparalleled heights.

Marcus was excited. He grabbed his phone and called the school administrator to share the good news.

However, Marcus was so overwhelmed with excitement that his explanation came out jumbled, making the school administrator think he was joking. Marcus repeated the details over and over, swearing on his life that it was true. Finally convinced, the administrator's disbelief turned into overwhelming joy that he fainted on the spot.

At the same time, in Crestfield High School, Arthur, Jack's former homeroom teacher, sat in his own office, feeling immensely satisfied.

He reviewed the scores of his current class, especially Phoebe's impressive 688 points, which all but guaranteed her a spot as one of the state's top two students. Arthur leaned back in his chair, lighting a premium cigarette and sipping on freshly brewed tea.

"Thank goodness for my uncle, Shane Sayer," he muttered to himself, reflecting

on how Shane's influence had landed him the prestigious role of teaching this

class.

With the bonuses coming in, Arthur couldn't help but smile at the fortune awaiting

him.

Just then, his phone buzzed. Glancing at the screen, he saw Shane's name.