Limits 561

Chapter 561

Jack patted Samuel's shoulder. "You're the one who's driving the car now, so I'll leave the decision up to you. Also the car has insurance, so you don't have to worry."

Actually, Jack wasn't sure if the Ferrari was insured, but he trusted that Emily and Quintis wouldn't be stingy with him that way.

Samuel nodded gratefully at Jack before getting out of the car. He examined the Ferrari closely and realized that it wasn't damaged that badly-it had only been scratched a little.

He looked at Jenna and Kieran and said, "You guys can leave. I don't need you to pay for the repairs."

Samuel wasn't willing to stand by and watch a couple go at each other's throats over money, especially since one of them was Jenna. The couple stopped fighting as they directed their shocked gazes at Samuel.

Jenna's eyes widened to the size of saucers. Her tone was dripping with disbelief when she stuttered, "The car... But what about the car?"

Samuel didn't answer her. He opened the door to the driver's seat and slid inside before pressing on the horn. "Please move your car away!"

The Audi was still blocking the road since Jenna had left it where it was after the collision. With surprise etched all over his face, Kieran hurriedly moved the car away. "Oh... okay. I'll move it now."

After Kieran moved the Audi, Jenna watched with wide eyes as Samuel drove the Ferrari away. She had a complicated expression on her face. Only after the Ferrari had disappeared into the night did she come back to her senses.

Since he didn't need to compensate for the damages done to the Ferrari, Kieran finally managed to calm his hammering heart. He grabbed Jenna's hand and said, "What are you looking at? Let's go back to your dorm."

Jenna took a deep breath before she spun around to face Kieran. Her voice was filled with determination when she declared, "Kieran, we're over."

Kieran's expression twisted into one of irritation. He glared at her and yelled, "What did you say, you bitch? You want to get rid of me now that you've seen how that broke bastard has hit the jackpot?"

Kieran initially assumed that the car might not belong to Samuel, but after thinking about it a little more, he realized that Samuel had entered the driver's seat as if it was second nature to him. He had also generously given up the compensation that Kieran owed him that was worth millions. It seemed that Samuel had absolute ownership over the car.

Jenna stared in the direction that Samuel had driven off to. Her heart was in turmoil.

She looked back at Kieran and pinned him with a disappointed gaze and whispered, "No, you've misunderstood. I admit that I was a little moved just now because of how much he's changed, but I'm mostly disappointed in how you acted.

"You've revealed your true colors to me, and I've lost any expectations I once held for you. If I had to choose between you and a pig, I'd rather marry the pig."

She shot one final glance at Kieran before turning on her heel, leaving Kieran stunned where he stood. He was at a loss for what to do for a long time before he snapped back to his senses.

He shouted at Jenna, "Jenna, if you walk away now, we're really through! I won't want you anymore!"

Whenever Kieran threatened her in this way in the past, Jenna would turn around and come back to him. However, her body only trembled this time, but her steps did not falter. She kept walking until she disappeared from his sight.

Kieran finally realized that his relationship with Jenna was over.

Meanwhile, Jack and Samuel were speeding off into the night.

Chapter 562

Samuel remarked, "Jack, did you see Jenna's expression earlier? I think she

regrets it now. I'll admit it's a bit petty, but seeing that regret actually felt satisfying. Does that make me as despicable as her?"

Jack chuckled in response. "Can I admit that I enjoyed it too? So, you're really giving up on her?"

"Yeah. Some bonds, once broken, can't be mended. I'll just wish her the best with someone else."

Samuel gazed out the car window as he spoke, as if an invisible knot in his heart had suddenly loosened. Yet, after that fleeting satisfaction, a quiet melancholy settled over him.

They drove around aimlessly before heading back. That evening, Samuel and Jack carried two bottles of beer up to the rooftop, clinking glasses under the night sky, with laughter and conversation flowing freely.

With alcohol loosening his tongue, Samuel began to open up.

"Jack, did you know? My biggest dream used to be going back to my hometown after graduation and becoming a teacher or a small-town civil servant, then marrying a local girl, taking care of my mom, and supporting my younger sister.

"My dream was just to live an ordinary life. I never wanted anything grand. And I always thought the gap between someone like me and city folks like you was too wide. I never dared to hope for the life you guys have.

"But you... you changed my fate. You changed everything," Samuel said emotionally, his eyes glistening under the dim rooftop lights.

After all, Samuel was just a small-town guy-a nobody from a prestigious university. He was not even a "small-town academic overachiever"; he was just a regular person.

Before meeting Jack, he never imagined he'd be part of a venture reshaping the digital world. He never dreamed he'd ride in million-dollar luxury cars, even if they weren't his.

Samuel certainly hadn't expected Jack to offer him a monthly salary in the tens of thousands of dollars, allowing him to send home seven or eight thousand dollars -sometimes even 20 thousand dollars-to his mother.

Samuel would never forget the day his mom had called, voice trembling with disbelief when she had received his first transfer. In her world, where annual earnings barely scraped two thousand dollars, a monthly income of ten thousand dollars might as well have been fantasy.

Watching Samuel's face light up with pride, Jack raised his bottle and said, "Believe it or not, I have a feeling that Haven Net will become something great- because of us."

It was a grand vision, one where a bright future waited just beyond the horizon. What Jack didn't mention were the storms they'd face to get there.

Haven Net might collapse before dawn. But if it didn't, they'd charge forward until they succeeded.

After finishing their drinks, the two headed downstairs to rest.

That night, Samuel slept more soundly than he had in years. For the first time, he truly felt the beauty and joy of life.

When his father passed away, he had believed his world would be shrouded in darkness forever. But he now discovered life's radiance and purpose. He anticipated and dreamed about tomorrow. Samuel owed it to Jack.

As preparations for Alnewgo University's centennial celebration kicked into high gear, more and more accomplished alumni began frequenting the campus. Many of them were faces usually only seen on television.

Alnewgo City's government, education authorities, and various organizations sent congratulatory letters. Even a high-ranking central official, an alumnus of Alnewgo University, announced plans to personally attend the festivities.

Meanwhile, Haven Net's expansion was explosive. Its user base had already reached a staggering 300 million.

Then, someone leaked the news that the quietly viral social platform sweeping the globe was developed by a domestic company called Haven Net.

The revelation sent shockwaves everywhere.

Chapter 563

The domestic investment circles were sent into a frenzy.

Despite tech giants like Pentime Group dominating the domestic social media landscape with near-unrivaled supremacy, their influence pales in comparison to global behemoths like Facebook and TikTok on the international stage.

Haven Connect, however, was the exception-a homegrown platform that, while making modest waves domestically, has taken the world by storm.

With over 300 million users and peak concurrent users numbering in the tens of millions, it stands as nothing short of a miracle.

Haven Connect shattered the stereotype that domestic tech can only thrive locally. It was rewriting the rules.

Today, Haven Connect had become a source of national pride, and it showed no signs of slowing down, continuing to break new ground.

Its explosive growth had also caught the eye of investors. Social networking- related stocks on the A-share market had been riding the wave of Haven Connect's hype, with prices soaring on speculation.

Then, out of the blue, Haven Connect received an invitation from Facebook's local division, proposing a meeting to discuss a potential collaboration.

Jack knew better. This so-called "collaboration" was likely a smokescreen. Facebook probably wanted an acquisition.

The meeting took place in a small conference room at an international chain hotel.

Facebook's delegation was massive-a lobbying team of about ten, including some of the country's top persuasion experts.

In contrast, Jack's side was modest; it was just him, a few negotiation specialists, Samuel, Josiah, and a handful of R&D staff.

After both parties were seated, an attendant made the introductions.

Brimming with arrogance, Kyle said, "Hello."

Jack replied politely, "Hello."

The negotiations cut straight to the chase. Kyle produced a document bearing a massive numeral "1" followed by a string of zeros.

He slid it across the table to Jack. "Care to count how many digits that is?" "That's one billion dollars," Jack replied coolly, barely glancing at the figure.

Kyle smirked, impressed by his quick calculation.

"Correct. And not in the local currency, but Federia dollars. One billion dollars, so that's seven billion dollars. We're offering this to acquire 100 percent of Haven Connect."

Jack's brow furrowed slightly.

Mistaking his hesitation for temptation-because really, who wouldn't be tempted? -Kyle pressed on.

"Well? For a young man like you, this sum must seem unreal. Do you know what that means? You can spend 10 thousand dollars daily, and it'll still last you 1,600 years. Your family would be able to live in luxury for generations.

"You could also buy 600 luxury cars or a fleet of jets. Only the richest men in the world can afford such luxuries. You'll be one of the richest men in the world and enjoy life to the fullest."

To drive the point home, Kyle signaled an associate, who opened a briefcase crammed with stacks of hundred-dollar bills-over a million in cash.

"If you agree to sell Haven Connect today, this is yours upfront. Consider it a goodwill gesture."

Most young men would tremble at the sight of that much money. But Jack's eyes held no greed-only calm resolve.

"Sorry. Haven is my team's life's work. It's not for sale."

Undeterred, Kyle leaned in and continued to persuade Jack.

Chapter 564

"I know you're the real decision-maker here. One nod from you, and this fortune is yours," Kyle said.

Jack shook his head. "Even if I wanted to sell, that offer isn't enough. Haven is worth tens of billions of dollars now."

"Tens of billions of dollars?"

Kyle's smile vanished, replaced by a snarl. "Are you seriously claiming that your little app is worth that much?"

"Do you have a problem with that?" Jack feigned innocence.

Kyle burst into laughter before slamming the table. "Do you actually think you'll get that valuation? Keep dreaming, and you'll end up with nothing!"

"I know what it's worth," Jack said firmly.

Kyle leaned in and said, "Refuse this deal, and your life might become negotiable too."

Jack lit a cigarette. "Try me."

"You arrogant little shit!" Kyle's composure shattered as he nearly flipped the table. "You'll regret this. You'll be penniless and die a horrible death!"

A muscle-bound enforcer added, "Step outside, or we'll dump your corpse in a dumpster. No one will be saving you."

Jack stood abruptly. He took a long drag, then flicked the cigarette at Kyle's feet and said, "Listen up. I don't play these games. Let's see who breaks first."

With the facade gone, Jack didn't bother to pander to Kyle. When one's wealth reached a certain threshold, wolves would inevitably circle. Mystique, Drakengard Games, even Genesis Games had faced

the same. Haven wouldn't be spared. Kyle rose, eyes locked on Jack. "I thought you were smart. Turns out you're just another dead man."

Jack turned and walked out. Kyle's furious pounding echoed behind him.

He knew what came next. Haven would face a tough time. Survive this, and it would emerge a titan-a true rival to Facebook, a global powerhouse to challenge TikTok. Haven would be a great international corporation.

With Jack and Kyle's negotiations collapsing spectacularly, the two companies were now sworn rivals—and the coming storm would be merciless.

Yet Facebook would find Haven Connect no easy prey. The platform had gone global, shedding its underdog skin to become a force that couldn't be bullied. Reality had delivered a stinging slap to every skeptic.

Against all odds, Haven didn't just survive it thrived, its resilience galvanizing a wave of patriotic support.

Meanwhile, as the university's centennial neared, Phoebe returned from her exchange program-though rumors swirled she'd soon leave again for full overseas studies, possibly straight through a PhD.

Jack occasionally visited Wesley, who'd recently started dating. Like most engineering majors, Wesley doted on his girlfriend despite her complaints about his unrefined habits. Still, they loved each other like a normal couple.

Chapter 565

Bella wasn't present in this academic year, so Jack devoted himself to honing Haven with the meticulous care of a master craftsman perfecting his masterpiece.

Free from emotional distractions, he and his team forged ahead, transforming the platform into a gleaming sword-razor-sharp and cutting through industry giants with dazzling brilliance.

As Alnewgo University's centennial celebration approached on New Year's Eve, Hannah, president of the Entrepreneurs Association, sat frozen in her office, staring at an official invitation in disbelief.

This wasn't just any invite-it was the university's most prestigious summons, reserved for luminaries.

Everyone on the invite list was top in their fields. For example, the academicians from the National Science and Engineering Academy, distinguished scholars, and financial titans like Clarice.

Yet, the name embossed on this particular card read "Jack Holland".

Hannah knew exactly who he was. At the Entrepreneurs Association recruitment fair, she'd publicly vowed to bar him from membership for as long as she held office.

The university was now inviting a third year student? It made no sense.

Hannah couldn't help but suspect there had been some mistake with the invitation.

Even if Jack had once been the boss of Genesis Games, the company was now in decline. Moreover, according to her investigations, he was no longer its owner.

Why would the university send him an invitation?

Unable to figure it out, Hannah simply dismissed it. She preferred to believe it was

a clerical error-some administrative oversight that had allowed a nobody like Jack to get his hands on such a prestigious invitation.

Not that she minded. Watching a small fry like him embarrass himself on such a grand stage might just be entertaining.

With a faint smirk, she picked up the invitation and walked out.

Jack, on the other hand, had received the invitation through Isaac.

When Isaac first got hold of it, he was equally baffled. How could his roommate qualify for an alumni event like this?

The invitation bore only Jack's name and address. If not for the precise details listed, Isaac might have assumed it was some prank.

Jack was just as confused. Why would the university invite him?

But the invitation was unmistakable. It was emblazoned in gold-embossed black lettering against a red background, complete with detailed seating arrangements.

Moreover, it had been officially issued by the Entrepreneurs Association, leaving no room for doubt.

Just as Jack was puzzling over its origin, a call from Alexi, currently in Osmo, unraveled the mystery.

"Future titan of industry, I couldn't let you miss this milestone for our alma mater- nor let the school miss the chance to celebrate its most promising student."

Jack was taken aback. "You arranged this invitation?"

"Yes, and no. Although I didn't send the invite, I encouraged the university to extend it. The world's next best CEO shouldn't skip his school's centennial. It'll be a huge regret for us."

This was a formal invitation from the university. Had Jack been an external guest, he might've pleaded a busy schedule.

But as a current student? Declining could lead to consequences for his academic future.

Chapter 566

News of Jack's invitation to the university's centennial celebration spread like wildfire across the third-year dorm floors.

Classmates buzzed with theories on the reason for his invite, but most settled on it must be some colossal administrative mistake.

As the centennial approached, Phoebe gathered Jack, Wesley, Feena, and a few others for what she billed as a birthday dinner-though it felt more like an intimate gathering.

The real purpose soon became clear- this was her goodbye. Tomorrow, she'd board a flight to Vexburg to begin her studies at Brightland University.

The group toasted her future, though some of the male classmates couldn't hide their melancholy. With a woman like Phoebe, who was brilliant and radiant, leaving for foreign shores, the odds of seeing her again seemed slim.

At the table, Calista teased, "I'm so jealous! Phoebe isn't just a genius. She's the face of our university. Try not to wreck every Vexburg man's heart over there, okay?"

Phoebe flushed, her gaze briefly lingering on Jack before she pinched Calista's arm playfully.

Wesley, emboldened by alcohol, said, "Phoebe's been top of the class since middle school. Jack topped the high school exams. And Feena? Not only did she enter Alnewgo University, she's a full-blown celebrity now. Turns out I've been surrounded by legends since my school days!"

The table erupted in laughter.

While Jack acing the college entrance exam school was impressive, it paled compared to Phoebe and Feena's achievements.

Phoebe was now the university's golden child, bound for elite overseas study; Feena was a rising star with millions of fans. Jack didn't seem as impressive.

They were surprised that Feena, the dazzling actress, was Phoebe and Jack's former classmate.

Wesley's girlfriend, Nina Atkin, yanked his ear playfully. "Why are all your classmates so extraordinary, but you're so lousy?"

Wesley pointed at Jack and protested, "Aren't we in the same situation?"

Nina glanced at Jack and conceded the point before releasing Wesley's ear.

Wesley chuckled and added, "Don't laugh at me for saying this, but back in the day, I thought it'd be interesting if Jack and Phoebe got together. They'd be like some modern-day power couple! Now, I feel embarrassed. Let's be real, this guy wouldn't stand a chance with Phoebe!"

The table erupted in laughter, with everyone nodding in agreement.

While Jack had his moments of brilliance on campus, he'd largely faded into the background.

Jack didn't mind Wesley's teasing. He had long outgrown the need to prove himself in these gatherings.

Perhaps only Samuel truly knew the extraordinary story hidden behind this seemingly unremarkable man—a story too grand for their current student lives to comprehend.

The dinner was lively, but a bittersweet air lingered over Phoebe's impending departure.

The women mourned losing such a dear friend and were sad about parting ways with their good friend. The guys, however, were more distressed about losing a beauty like Phoebe. Without her, even their motivation to attend class would plummet.

But as the saying went, no feast lasted forever. A beauty like Phoebe was never meant to be kept within their orbit.

Chapter 567

Jack stepped out onto the balcony after a few drinks, gazing at the view beyond.

The hotel overlooked the university campus, its sprawling lights glittering in the night—a sight that would normally captivate. But tonight, Jack barely registered it.

Phoebe's impending departure left a quiet ache in his chest. Professional success aside, his personal life seemed determined to disappoint him.

Both Phoebe and Feena had once been his dream women. Now, Phoebe was going abroad for her studies, while Feena had long since left the old neighborhood behind, signing with Starlight Entertainment.

Speaking of Starlight, Jack had history there too.

Felix, the company's general manager, had once offered to mold Jack's stage persona "Soul" into a music superstar. But Tristan's interference killed that plan. Ironically, Feena had now joined Starlight Entertainment.

And Bella? She'd vanished without a trace. She had left a letter behind but removed all traces of her contact information. It was as if she'd never existed in his life at all.

One by one, the women who'd once carried fragments of his dreams were slipping away. The weight of their absence settled heavily.

During dinner, Phoebe hadn't spoken a single word to Jack. He bidded farewell to Phoebe with a heavy heart.

Back in his dorm, Jack collapsed onto his bed-only for his phone to ring unexpectedly.

Phoebe asked, "Jack, do you remember that finance book you borrowed from me? Could you return it?"

For one fleeting moment, seeing her caller ID had sparked hope. After hearing her request, he couldn't help but feel disappointed.

Then it hit Jack-he had borrowed that book years ago, back when he'd schemed to keep her away from the predatory Leslie.

Now that Phoebe was going abroad for her studies, it seemed reasonable for her to ask for the book back.

Jack asked, "Do you need it right now?"

"Yeah. I'm probably leaving tomorrow," Phoebe replied.

"I'll bring it over now."

Jack quickly found the book in his drawer and headed out. The walk between the male and female dorms wasn't short.

That building housed women from the Finance, Music, and Arts departments-a place shrouded in mystery and longing for most guys.

When Jack arrived, Phoebe was already waiting downstairs.

The weather had turned chilly. She stood there quietly in linen clothes, a pink silk scarf fluttering around her neck in the breeze. Even just standing still, she captured the attention of every passing male student.

Suppressing his admiration, Jack approached and handed her the book.

"Here. I've been busy lately, so I completely forgot about it."

Phoebe flipped through the pages with a faint smile. "It's fine. You've helped me far more than this."

"Will your studies be more intense there?" Jack asked casually, hoping to prolong their conversation.

Phoebe nodded. "Yes. The program focuses on global financial trends, which will be valuable for our domestic market. The workload will probably be heavy."

Jack replied, "I wish you great success. You'll undoubtedly become a leader in the finance industry someday."

Chapter 568

Phoebe chuckled softly at Jack's words. "Thank you for the praise."

Their conversation, as always, seemed to hit a wall. Her calm, detached demeanor left Jack struggling to find the right words.

He couldn't just force some meaningless small talk—someone as sharp as Phoebe would see right through him, just like when she'd uncovered his original excuse for borrowing the book.

The silence stretched awkwardly. Finally, Jack said casually, "Well, goodbye then. Have a smooth journey. Maybe we can grab a meal when you're back."

Deep down, he hoped Phoebe would ask him to stay a little longer. However, she merely nodded.

A pang of disappointment struck him. Did he really mean nothing to her?

Jack sighed and turned to leave. Since Phoebe showed no intention of continuing their conversation, it would be awkward to insist on staying.

"Jack, wait."

Her voice stopped him mid-step. Jack turned back to find Phoebe gazing at him, her eyes bright.

She asked, "Do you have time right now?"

Joy surged in his chest, though he kept his expression neutral. "What's up?"

She hesitated, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear. "We haven't talked much since the semester started. Would you walk with me around campus? Like we used to in freshman year?"

Jack's heart leapt, but his tone remained calm. "Sure."

Alnewgo University's campus was picturesque-modern buildings framed by lush greenery. Strolling through this scenery with a beautiful girl by his side was practically every college guy's dream.

Yet Jack knew with perfect clarity—this remarkable woman was never his to keep, and tomorrow she would cross oceans to distant shores.

Years might pass before their paths crossed again, if ever. It wouldn't be surprising if she put down roots in Vexburg permanently-combined bachelor's- master's-doctorate programs made such outcomes common.

The allure of developed nations-their promising futures and superior social benefits—drew many exceptional talents to stay indefinitely.

Without deep patriotic conviction, few chose to return.

Tonight might well be their final walk together. So, Jack allowed himself to look at Phoebe a moment longer.

Phoebe noticed his gaze. A faint blush colored her cheeks as she asked softly, "Is there something on my face?"

Jack replied, "No. You'll be going abroad soon, and I might never see this beautiful face again. So, I couldn't help stealing a few extra glances."

This might be his last chance to speak so freely.

Phoebe's face warmed further. She shot him a glare but didn't respond to his teasing.

Suddenly, Phoebe broke the silence.

"Jack, can I ask you something?"

When he nodded, she glanced around to ensure no one was nearby before feigning nonchalance.

"Did you really break up with Bella? Are you two still in contact?"

Jack stared at her in surprise. He had always seen Phoebe as someone aloof and untouchable.

Never did he imagine she would care about such trivial gossip-about who had broken up with whom and who was dating whom.

Chapter 569

Jack answered truthfully, "Maybe we did break up. But I don't really know."

Though they'd never formally ended things, Bella's farewell letter had sketched out a reunion ten or twenty years in the future. But what would be the point of meeting again by then?

Phoebe tucked a strand of hair behind her ear and pressed further. "Why did you break up?"

Jack clasped his hands behind his head, sighing. "Hell if I know."

It was perhaps the most baffling breakup of the century. He didn't even

understand why he'd been dumped. And even if he did, what difference would it make? Nothing would change.

Clarice had likely orchestrated it all.

Phoebe's eyes widened in surprise. "Wait. Bella broke up with you?"

Jack laughed bitterly. "Weird, right? I can't figure it out either. Why would she ever want to leave me? It makes no sense!"

Phoebe laughed heartily and did something unusual. She rolled her eyes and said, "Narcissist."

The sight of her smile sent Jack's pulse racing. It was like watching a hundred flowers bloom at once.

Then, she said softly, "You know, I've always envied people who dated in college. I used to wonder—what's it really like? Does it actually feel as magical as they say?"

Phoebe's tone carried a longing for love. Jack hadn't expected her to say that. The fact that she'd even broach the topic with him meant she trusted him deeply -maybe even saw him as a confidant.

Suppressing the thoughts in his head, Jack stroked his chin, playing the faux philosopher.

"Too bad I'm no love expert. But from a guy's perspective? It's mostly about stolen kisses and sweet nothings."

They both knew the clichés. Asking him was pointless anyway-strictly speaking, Jack was a failure at romance. By Phoebe's count, he'd been dumped at least three times!

Phoebe changed the topic. "Do you remember our trip to Orthawt? Thank you for saving me again. Sometimes, I wonder if you're the guardian angel I've been waiting for all along."

Jack responded, "We were literally fighting for survival together. If I didn't save you, who would?"

Phoebe studied him with an intense gaze before saying, "I'm not actually that eager to study abroad. It's too far away. But the problem is..."

Her eyes locked onto his as she continued, "I still haven't found a good enough reason to stay."

Her gaze held an unreadable depth, like untold secrets beneath its calm surface.

Jack sensed something hidden in her words, but the meaning slipped through his fingers when he tried to grasp it.

What reason could she possibly need? Should he muster the courage to confess?

The words nearly tumbled out, but he held back.

In the end, he just looked at Phoebe silently.

Chapter 570

Phoebe glanced at Jack twice before finally looking away. "It's late. Let's head back."

"I'll walk you back," Jack said, standing up.

Phoebe neither agreed nor objected. She simply moved forward quietly, stepping on fallen leaves as Jack accompanied her to the girls' dormitory. Only after watching her disappear into the hallway did he turn and return to his dorm.

By 9:00 am the next morning, Phoebe had already boarded her flight. Jack didn't go to see her off-nor had Phoebe invited him.

Their relationship hadn't reached the point of warranting a private farewell. More importantly, he couldn't find a suitable reason to be there.

In the end, Jack only learned of Phoebe's departure from Feena. A pang of deep regret struck him at that moment.

As the university's centennial celebration approached, Emily sought out Jack with increasing frequency.

Ever since he'd accepted gifts from her and Quintis, Emily had taken it as a positive signal. She wasn't one to waste momentum. Lately, she'd been making frequent campus visits, offering Jack small gestures of concern and the occasional lavish present.

Not long ago, it had been a limited-edition phone and an expensive watch-each item exorbitantly priced. The Patek Philippe alone was worth millions of dollars.

Emily had considered even grander gifts but held back, wary of overwhelming him with extravagance.

However, she noticed Jack never wore or used any of those luxury items-neither the watch nor the phone. Instead, he stuck with his modest, thousand-dollar smartphone.

Emily wondered if Jack disliked extravagance or if he just didn't want to show off. She didn't dare to ask outright, leaving her to speculate. If he hadn't used any of them, maybe he genuinely didn't care for them.

Today, Emily went to Alnewgo University to find Jack. She arrived not with lavish gifts, but with just a bag. Inside the bag was a thermos of broth that she had painstakingly prepared.

She remembered how much Jack had loved that broth as a child. After all these years, Emily wasn't sure if his tastes had changed, but she had to try.

She hoped this gesture would show him what no luxury ever could; that his mother had never forgotten him. She still remembered the exact way he liked his bone broth, with the balance of spices and the tenderness of the meat.

In anticipation of Jack's return, she had never stopped honing her cooking skills, clinging to the hope that he might one day taste it again.

And now, at last, her efforts bore fruit. That carefully simmered broth would finally serve its purpose.

To ensure the broth stayed fresh and flavorful, Emily had chosen to prepare it right there in the van. She worried that making it in advance and transporting it to campus might compromise its taste and by extension, how Jack perceived her efforts.

By the time they arrived at Alnewgo University, the broth had just finished simmering. Emily carefully opened the van doors to let the steam escape, then instructed her assistant to ladle out a bowl. If Jack was in his dorm, she planned to deliver it herself, before it cooled and lost its perfect warmth.

It was lunchtime, and students streaming out of classes couldn't help but stare at

the odd sight. There was a pot of broth inside the luxurious van parked on campus. Emily, who was elegant, impeccably dressed, was overseeing its preparation.

However, Emily ignored their stares. She would do anything that Jack likes. Her only wish was to bring him home as soon as possible.