

*The Supremacy of Reason Excerpt*

Chapter Four

“You look well,” Armen complimented, as Ryker joined him in the back seat of the limousine.

“Thank you. I’ve been able to get to the Dojo more often lately. If not there, then to the gym.”

“Are you ready for a shot at the title?”

“Not yet. I’m on schedule, though. I will take you down next year.”

“Doubtful proposition at best,” Armen said, grinning. “I suppose what is not so doubtful is Alchemy.”

“Raise the dividing window, please, Armen.”

Armen pushed the button that raised the glass separating the passenger compartment from the driver.

“Exercise more discretion,” Ryker warned.

“All I did was reference Alchemy. I gave no details.”

“I’m not sure that you realize the full scope, the incredible implications of what we have created.”

“What we are about to create, you mean.”

“No, Armen. It is created. We cannot go the usual route and beta-test the software, run trials, etc. but I have run extensive simulations using real-time data over a period of several months. I know with certainty that I have accounted for all of the variables that we—“

“How could you possibly account for all of the variables? Whenever a new program is rolled out, there are always surprises.”

“Modeling takes into account surprises, to a great degree. Join the twenty-first century, Armen. We are not Jobs and Wozniak building a PC in our garage for hell’s sake. My personal network is powerful and sophisticated enough to sufficiently challenge Alchemy. Of course problems will arise on implementation, but I’m telling you that it works, from all aspects.”

“Now we build the business structure.”

“Yes. All of my hard work on Alchemy means absolutely nothing if we don’t acquire the businesses required to implement the plan.”

“I’ll convince Orwell that he should fund the project. I have no doubt that he’ll do so.”

Ryker touched Armen’s right arm and gave it a not-so-gentle squeeze.

"We're talking about five hundred million dollars, Armen. I want to be clear with you — we need a team of analysts and accountants to build a proper set of documents. Even on a mad rush basis, that cannot be done by Thursday morning. Orwell Benedict will—“

"Please don't presume to tell me what Orwell Benedict will or will not do. I have worked for and with the man for two decades. I know exactly what is required to get him to provide the funding."

"Armen, be reasonable. We are—“

"Do you know how peeved you get when I challenge your assertions about Alchemy?"

"Okay...okay...I see where—"

"Trust me. I know what I'm doing."

Ryker let out a deep sigh as he turned away for a moment and watched the Hudson River pass by underneath them as they crossed the bridge on the way into Manhattan. Armen grabbed a can of club soda and poured it into a glass of ice.

"I trust you. You and you alone," Ryker said, after a few moments of reflection.

"It's not easy for you, is it? You and all your illusions of control. Let me handle the relationships. You're a genius, Ryker, but more than a bit naïve when it comes to people."

"Agreed. So please, tell me how you're going to persuade him to write us a check for five hundred million dollars without a business plan."

"Oh, you'll get your chance to give him the details, but that's step two, not step one. By the time Orwell reads our business plan, the funding will basically be secured."

"I'm listening."

"Two three-by-five-foot story boards."

"What?"

"I will make his dreams come true. Orwell has dreams, you know. Most men do; you being the exception, of course."

"I don't—"

"What does Orwell Benedict want, Ryker? Another island in the South Pacific? Another banking group? A bigger skyscraper? No, he wants none of these things."

"He wants...?"

"Orwell Benedict wants to eclipse his rivals, to be the undisputed top financial magnate on the planet, to be the 'King of Kings'."

"Ego , then. He is motivated by ego."

“That and nothing else. Try and keep that in mind when we speak with him. You see numbers and market share and businesses and opportunities. Orwell Benedict envisions himself on his mega-yacht bragging to Rupert Murdoch about how clever he is and how he built the most powerful financial services company the world has ever seen.”

“Your story boards—”

“Will get him to commit, to be emotionally pregnant. Orwell considers you to be the most talented executive alive, and he’s invested an enormous amount of trust in me. Together we can sway him, but we must first get him to fall in love with the idea, to allow him to experience how it will feel to best his rivals. Then you can follow up with the details.”

“What about Zev?” Ryker asked.

“What about him?”

“He will do everything in his power to block us. He is a curse, that man. But he has considerable influence with Orwell, to say the least.”

“Yes, he does. But after Thursday, we control Orwell’s dreams. Dreams are far more powerful than reality, Ryker.”

“I understand that, on some level at least.”

Armen chuckled. “No, you don’t, but I do.”

“When do we tell him about Alchemy?” Ryker asked.

“Not before it is implemented. You will be at the helm. Our new company will provide a multi-billion-dollar smoke screen. No one must see it coming or we are at risk.”

“That I understand. Armen, seriously, have you thought about personal security?”

“We’ll need a small army when the time comes.”

“When the time comes, we’ll be able to afford one.”