

The Ace at the Apex by Nine Linked Rings Chapter 1

“Javier... Let’s get a divorce!”

It was to be Javier Kersey’s 24th birthday tomorrow and this was what Selena Lewis was telling him tonight.

Even though Selena had been picking fights up and down and digging out flaws in their relationship, it had never crossed Javier’s mind that he would be receiving a “special” gift like this on the night before he turned 24. Seated on the couch in the living room, Javier tried to salvage the relationship after a momentary lapse.

Selena, my birthday’s tomorrow and I wanted to give you a surprise, you know, a special present for—”

“No need.” Selena waved dismissively before Javier could finish his sentence.

“I can’t bear to see you work so hard—an office worker in the day and part-time food delivery man at night. A surprise gift bought using your hard work and sweat? I don’t need it. That’s too much on you, too exhausting.”

Javier looked hopeful, his gaze brimming with delight when he looked up.

“I don’t think it’s hard at all. Selena, for you, it’s all worth it. I don’t mind working even harder—”

“But I mind it. I do. I mind it, do you understand?!” Selena finally broke down shouting. With a stomp of her foot, she cut Javier off once again.

“I don’t want to be able to smell the stench of sweat on every single gift I receive from you!

“I don’t want my coworkers rubbing it in my face, saying that the delivered meal they had last night was sent by my husband!

“I don’t want to get into the cramped bus after work every day and have to avoid those perverts who try to grope me!

“I don’t want to have to come home and cook every day! I hate the smell of grease and smoke!

“I want an enchanting nightlife and romantic candlelight dinners. I want a luxury car that people are envious of. I want branded purses that my coworkers will be jealous of. Do you understand?!”

Javier had not known. He had thought that all those could be compensated with hard work and diligence, at least until the crucial age of 24. He had not expected Selena to be disdainful about the sweat of his hard work and efforts—it reeked, according to her.

Considering his feelings for the girl, however, Javier told her honestly, “I can give you all these tomorrow...”

But Selena just sighed with a shake of the head. “I’m tired of this. I don’t want to hear your fantasies anymore. That’s all. We’ll get a divorce tomorrow.”

Without allowing Javier a chance to speak, Selena went toward the bedroom, shut the door, and then locked it with a click.

Looking at the sweet wedding photo that hung on the wall, then at the bedroom door that was shut tight. Javier huffed and a wry smile spread

across his face. His love, indulgence, hard work, and diligence was not able to contend with materialism after all.

About half an hour of wallowing later, Javier got up to turn in for the night. As he was heading toward the guest bedroom, the bedroom door opened to reveal Selena's ever-charming but disdainful face. Javier was hit with a dose of hope, thinking that the latter still cared about their relationship.

However, at the moment, she tossed a small black box tied with a pink ribbon at his feet. It was a present Javier had left in the bedroom for Selena but it was currently being thrown out. Crouching to pick it up, Javier smiled bitterly for the last time. He made a final attempt to ask Selena, "Don't you want to see what I'm gifting you?"

"There's no need. I don't want to smell the stench of sweat ever again." After these words were spoken, came the click of the bedroom door being locked once more.

He dragged himself toward the guest room and sat on the bed, holding onto the small box. He pulled out a cheap pack of cigarettes from his pocket, fished out a stick that looked the least crooked before pinching it straight, and lighting it. It burned. He thought the cigarette had tasted fine previously but now, it seemed to burn his throat—and his heart.

After a few deep drags, he perched the cigarette between his lips before opening the small box that Selena had thrown out like trash. A silvery-white bank card made of metal and a cellphone that had never even graced the consumer market laid in the box lined with golden velvet. The cellphone looked cheap, like an imitation produced from old parts in a small workshop. It did not even have a logo. Despite that, it was an exclusive dual-system cellphone. Instead of the android interface that would usually show up when a finger was pressed against the screen, this

phone showed another operating system—Kersey Global Intelligent OS (KGI)—once the retinal scans had passed.

This was an exclusive Kersey-family operating system. Other than communicating, notifying, and scheduling internal meetings among the Kerseys, it could connect to the world's top underground market networks. The Messer-Reid Currency Marketplace, for example, was the most basic application available.

Lifting the customized cell phone to his face, Javier pointed the front camera at his left eye. With a beep, KGI was activated. The moment it started, realistic, colorful fireworks lit up the screen before the text 'Congratulations, Javier Kersey. Happy Birthday!' blinked in greeting.

The man checked the time. It was 12:03 am. Javier snorted, a puff of cigarette smoke escaping his lips alongside a low growl, "Happy birthday. Not."

He stubbed out his cigarette, threw it away, and tapped the inbox icon. Various congratulatory messages spammed his inbox but he did not know 90% of the senders. They were all his family members related by blood but not all of them shared the same last name and many of them were very distant relatives.

As for the messages, Javier did not have to read them to know that they must all be obsequious congratulations. The only message that he bothered to open was from Messer-Reid Currency Marketplace.

'Congratulations, Mr. Javier Kersey. You've come of age. Your Messer account has been automatically activated. Current balance: % 10,000,000.'

Ten million dollars. This was a small gift from the Kerseys to all of its descendants when they came of age. The Kerseys considered their younglings to only be an adult at the age of 24. Before this, they would not receive any financial aid or benefit from the family. Those who left the family, especially those who went to gain experience in the outside world, would not get a single cent in support.

Once they turned 24, however, aside from the one-time ten million dollar gift, they would receive a monthly bonus from businesses all over the world that the Kerseys were involved in. The monthly bonus was the real treat as direct descendants received an even bigger amount than those who were not. But none of that really mattered to Javier for now. The ten million dollars was enough to flip his current life around.

Pocketing the phone, Javier retrieved the silvery-white Messer card made of pure palladium. There was a nice weight to it. The man had weighed it back when he was younger—60 grams, just about double a regular bank card's weight. According to the market of the metal, the card itself would have cost over three thousand dollars, and that was excluding the speckles of diamonds embedded into the card holder's name.

Many oil tycoons in the middle east did not even know of the existence of such cards. It was not that they did not acknowledge Messer cards, they were simply unqualified to obtain them. They were not even worthy of finding out about the card's existence!

Twirling the Messer card between his fingers, Javier stared at the wall, in the direction of the bedroom next door that Selena was in. He murmured to himself, "I've paved the way of extravagance for you yet you choose to go on your own path. Great..."

His phone rang while he muttered to himself. His younger sister, Ciara Kersey, had called.

“Javy, happy birthday! I’ll celebrate with you tomorrow and meet my sis-in-law too. I’ve bought her a present!”

“Save it, Ciara. She and I are divorcing tomorrow... Why? Hah! Because she says I’m too poor,” Javier sighed.

“What? She said that you’re poor? I’ll bury her alive with money tomorrow!”

Javier’s self-deprecating chuckle was met with Ciara’s rage.