

CHAPTER 9

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The following week Zach was at his desk when the new warehouseman yelled through the open door. "Mr. Slenski, there's a Mexican up front wandering around. He says he's got a meeting with you."

Zach looked up from a stack of spreadsheets. "I don't have a meeting scheduled. Did he give you his name?"

The new hire stepped back from the door turned his head and yelled. "Hey! What's your name?"

"Carlos, Carlos Gomez!" Echoed off the warehouse walls and then bounced into Zach's office.

Zach got up from his desk. At the door he sternly said to the new hire, "He's not Mexican, he's Hispanic."

"Okay, Mr. Slenski." The intern turned and headed toward the forklift. Under his breath he said, "Mexican, Hispanic whatever, just another wetback looking for work."

Zach walked up front to a twenty by ten foot fenced off lobby area. He lifted the latch on the green metal gate. "Come on in Carlos. What brings you down to Texas?"

Carlos entered through the wire security fence. "Mr. Rubin wanted me to see about scheduling another meeting."

"I'm not planning to have another meeting with Mr. Rubin."

"What! You can't do that." Carlos blurted out in an anxious tenor.

"Let's go talk in my office," Zach gestured down the hallway.

Mr. Gomez hurriedly followed. A knot tightened in his stomach. He had strict orders to get Zach back to Chicago.

In the office Zach took the red and silver boombox out of the chair and set it on a filing cabinet. "Have a seat Mr. Gomez." Zach moved around to the back of the desk.

32 Carlos plopped down and immediately blurted out. "Mr. Slenski you
33 promised Mr. Rubin! He's gone to a lot of trouble and expense to set a
34 meeting up with Solyndra Power."

35 Zach leaned back into the tall black leather chair. "What about that
36 message you slipped me at our first meeting? You wrote down that
37 Solyndra was going bankrupt?" Zach glanced over at the computer
38 monitor on his desk when a new email popped up.

39 "That was before I found out that congress is going to fund
40 Solyndra with another five hundred million dollars. This President is all
41 about a green deal and zero carbon."

42 "That's a lot of money. Are you sure about that? "

43 "Oh yeah! The Department of Energy is behind the President on
44 this. You know the tax payers will always support anything with the
45 words, **green deal**. Just like when politicians blast out the words
46 **carbon emissions** as evil. But the truth is, as scientists we both know
47 that oil will always be the number one energy source! That is unless
48 nuclear makes a comeback."

49 "Not if solar cost per watt drops and the price of oil per barrel
50 increases. That's why my quad panels will change the world."

51 "Then come to this meeting and change the world. Great men are
52 never measured by what they gain but by what they give!"

53 Zach sank further back in the executive chair and thought to
54 himself. *That's right. My name should go down in history, next to*
55 *Thomas Edison, Benjamin Franklin, Albert Einstein and the likes.*
56 *'Zachary Slenski' had a good ring to it. I will be measured by what I*
57 *gave to this planet and not by greed.* Zach rocked forward and then
58 stood up. "Carlos, I need to share a breakthrough that you are partly
59 responsible for."

60 "What breakthrough?" Carlos stood.

61 "The tinting on the windows of the Chicago Tower solved the
62 thermal break down issue. Your hunch about the dark tint helped
63 make a complex thermal problem simple."

64 "So the dark tint solved the fracturing problem?"

65 "That's what I've been working on since our top floor meeting in
66 the Sears tower." Zach headed toward the door. "The preliminary tests

67 on tinted panels show no diminishing power. Tomorrow we are
68 disassembling a quad panel that has over a hundred hours of full on
69 Texas sunlight.”

70 Zach led Carlos further down the hall and tapped on the clean
71 room observation window. Troy looked up from a solar panel that he
72 was testing. Zach introduced the two and suggested that Troy show
73 Carlos the testing rack on the roof. Troy and Carlos headed up to the
74 rooftop and Zach hurried back to his office.

75 A quick search on the web found Solyndra Power Company in
76 Hillsboro, Oregon. Zach checked both the Dow Jones and the NASDEC
77 stock exchanges to see if Solyndra Power was a public company; it
78 was not. Some more searching on the web and Zach found a money
79 trail of almost a billion dollars of grants from the Department of
80 Energy. He found another hundred million of grant money to a
81 different solar company in Bend, Oregon.

82 Troy and Carlos came bursting into his office. Zack quickly
83 minimized the information on his computer screen. “What’s up?”

84 “Can I show Carlos last weeks power output readings?” Troy asked.

85 “Sure.” Zach pulled a box from behind his desk that had long rolls
86 of paper sticking up on end. He found the last chart and started to
87 clear a spot on his desk. The boombox teetered on the edge when
88 Carlos caught the stereo by the handle.

89 “Put it over on the filing cabinet.” Zach pointed toward the corner
90 of his office.

91 As Carlos lifted the boombox to put it on top the filing cabinet his
92 eyes caught the jet plane taped to one of the speakers. He looked
93 back over his shoulder and asked. “This here jet replica, where did it
94 come from?”

95 “I found it on the roof under the test rack,” Zach answered.

96 “Oh,” Carlos pulled off the tape and examined the gold plane. “I’ve
97 saw one of these someplace else. Even with the same UFAF decal.”

98 “Really?” Zach walked around the desk toward the filing cabinet.
99 “Where have you seen one?”

100 “I don’t know.” Carlos scratched his head. “I know it wasn’t in
101 Mexico. You know that its a piece to a war game.”

102 "That's what Troy has been telling me." Zach held out his hand for
103 the plane. "I think it's a toy."

104 Carlos handed the plane to Zach and said, "Look at the detail on
105 the decal. The UPAF stands for a country that someone has laid claim
106 to." Carlos held out his hand again. "Can I look at it closer?"

107 "Sure." Zach handed the dull gold plane back to Carlos.

108 Carlos kept his thoughts to himself. *A few weeks back Agent Brown*
109 *was asking about some of Mr. Rubin's missing gold. Maybe Zach. . .*

110 "Oh, no! It can't be! Carlos is right!" Troy yelled from his hunched
111 over position and pointed at the rolled out graph paper.

112 "Right about what?" Zach rushed back to the desk.

113 "He's right! The dark tint has cut down the power output of the
114 quad panel by almost half.

115 "What!" Zach looked at the red continuous recorded line and
116 unrolled the graph paper to its end.

117 "Mr. Gomez is right about the tint! I've only been checking to see if
118 there are any dips, not power levels." Troy pointed to a steady straight
119 red line and then pulled an older chart from the box and unrolled it.
120 "Look at how much higher this line was on a quad panel we tested last
121 month."

122 "That was a panel that we were putting coolant on. That's probably
123 why the power is higher?" Zach laid the older chart on top of the new
124 one.

125 "I don't think so," replied Troy as he pulled another older chart
126 from the box. "It's my fault. I'm not a scientist like you guys."

127 Still next to the filing cabinet Carlos slipped the gold piece into his
128 pocket. *I've seen this UPAF decal someplace. I think Mr. Rubin plays*
129 *war games on that illuminated 3D table. I bet the identity of the*
130 *player's are kept private by those seven booths stored out by the*
131 *transmitter room.*

132 Zach felt as though he had been sucker punched as he examined
133 more charts. There were no dips or a decline in power to indicate thin
134 film silicon cell breakage. But the newest power level lines were all
135 consistently lower—almost by half.

136 As a scientist Carlos knew that hundreds of failures always precede
137 any major breakthrough. The cloud of negative results was a good
138 time for him to make an exit. Plus, he needed to give Mr. Rubin an
139 update and also wanted to send a fax from the motel of the gold war
140 piece in his pocket to agent Fletcher.

141 Ten minutes past eight Sally called and laid into Zack for missing
142 Ben's soccer match. Troy had apologized the umpteenth time for not
143 notating the lower readings. When Troy whined that he wasn't
144 qualified to work in a lab or at Son Source, Zack told him to go home
145 and sleep on it. Finally, Zach locked up and called Ben so that they
146 could meet at their favorite burger joint. Ben's carefree living in the
147 moment attitude was always a great distraction—just the opposite of
148 Zach.

149 Over hot fudge sundaes Ben defended his position that not going to
150 college wasn't against the commandments—even if he was offered a
151 scholarship. Outside the restaurant Ben quipped that there was a
152 power bigger than the sun running the world just before he skate
153 boarded off toward home. He told Zach he'd climb in through his
154 window like he always did. Zach secretly wished he had some of Ben's
155 DNA and headed back to work.

156 First thing in the morning Carlos unexpectedly showed up and
157 confessed. "I don't how it happened? But the war piece ended up in
158 my pocket."

159 "No problem." Zack wearily extended his hand. "I've been up all
160 night going over measurements."

161 Carlos handed the gold plane to Zack and said, "I talked to Mr.
162 Rubin last night."

163 "Oh, did you tell him my quad panels are a failure?"

164 "No, I told him that you were still hard at work with R&D."

165 "You didn't tell him about the low power output reading? Zach
166 carefully taped the gold plane back on to the boombox.

167 "No why should I?" Carlos said and then winked. "Actually that is
168 what Mr. Rubin wants. He's all about failure and playing on weakness."

169 "Since you're here do you want to be part of the first inspection of
170 a tinted quad panel?" Zach walked in front of Carlos to a locker and

171 removed two clean room suits, hairnets and masks. "Here put this
172 stuff on."

173 "This is similar to the garb I put on after my daughter's last
174 operation." Carlos took the garb.

175 "Oh? I hope that the operation was successful?"

176 "We hope so too. It an experimental procedure to help the sinus
177 and hearing problems that Down Syndrome children have. That's why
178 we moved from Mexico."

179 "What's your daughter's name? I'll put her on my prayer list."

180 "Thank you. Her name is Cecelia, she turns eleven next month."
181 Carlos pulled on the hairnet and then suggested, "My wife has a rosary
182 prayer chain to our Lady. On Fridays you just say one Hail Mary."

183 "A. . ." Zach paused; his expertise was in science not theology. "I'll
184 just pray direct to Jesus on my own."

185 "I understand," Carlos replied.

186 In white coveralls, masks over their mouths and hairnets on both
187 Zach and Carlos held their breath. Troy carefully pulled apart the
188 frame and then lifted the tinted glass off the thin silicon wafers. "Do
189 you want to do the first inspection?"

190 "Yeah, I've been here all night. You go ahead."

191 Troy pulled over a high power magnifying lamp and tried to lessen
192 the tension by humming to himself. He started at the top cell and
193 spent a full minute examining it. He spent the same amount of time on
194 the second cell and then moved on to the third. Troy wanted to prove
195 that he could be a trusted lab technician; especially after not noting
196 the low power reading.

197 After the ninth cell was inspected Carlos broke the mind-numbing
198 hum of Rudolf the red nose reindeer. "I was sorry to hear about your
199 coworker that fell off the roof. He must have been clumsy to fall over
200 that wood railing."

201 "The railing is new. It was recently installed for insurance reasons,"
202 Zach replied. Eric was a good lab tech. He was very much into detail
203 and his heart and soul was into alternative energy."

204 Troy looked up from the magnifying lamp and added. "Eric played
205 his rock and roll music way to loud. It wasn't safe."

206 "He did like his music. That boombox in my office was his," Zach
207 replied and took over looking through the magnifying lamp.

208 "I don't miss the blaring music, but I do miss Eric." Troy replied
209 and then under his breath said, "Eric wasn't clumsy."

210 "I'm sure he is in a better place now," Carlos added, sorry that he
211 didn't know a better word for clumsy. This often happened when
212 translating certain words from Spanish to English

213 "That is if you believe in that after-life of nonsense," Troy replied
214 with a look of resentment shot over Zach's hunched over head.

215 Carlos looked back over at Troy, he felt the resentment. "My
216 daughter loves mucho music too." Carlos replied.

217 "Don't you mean loud music?" Zach asked from his bent over
218 inspecting position?

219 Yes, I mean mucho volume. Cecelia is hard of hearing."

220 "She's probably hard of hearing from listening to loud music," Troy
221 suggested with spite.

222 "No, she was born that way."

223 Finally, Zach finished examining the panel. "I don't see one single
224 fracture. Every cell looks good."

225 "Great!" Troy replied.

226 "That is good news." Carlos replied, with mixed emotions. "When
227 do you plan to start testing with coolant?"

228 "That's probably another two months off. We need to retest the
229 tinting. And then Eric's reverse diode arrays need to be tested," Zach
230 paused to show respect for Eric.

231 "On the upside we can reuse these quad panels since there are no
232 fractures." Troy pointed at the grid of silicon cells.

233 "And we need to pray that we find out why the reduction in power."
234 Zach casually stated.

235 "I'll add that to my morning prayer list." Carlos replied.

236 Troy held back his personal secular beliefs. His resentment toward
237 Carlos was building. *Prayers are a misguided effort. There's no entity
238 that has control over mother earth. Most Mexicans worship a woman
239 God anyhow. This guy just playing Zach. . .*

240 Carlos pointed closely at the stacked silicon cells. "If you separated
241 out a layer or two and your panels generated twice the wattage of
242 anything on the market you'd still revolutionize the solar panel field.
243 Less is sometimes better!"

244 "Yeah, but venture capitalists always want something big. I have
245 already advertized panels that will put out four times the power."

246 "Plus, that would be stupid. More is better! We need a
247 breakthrough that will put the oil companies out of business!" Troy
248 didn't hold back his mother earth beliefs any longer.

249 After ten years of working in oil exploration Carlos was numb to all
250 the oil is evil and green deal nonsense. He ignored Troy and turned
251 toward Zach. "Your investors also want a low risk on their investment.
252 I bet if you take away a pair of cells the reliability would be higher.
253 The most powerful, along with the most reliable solar panel might
254 make for a better investment pitch."

255 Being ignored agitated Troy so he resorted to over shouting the
256 facts. "That's a stupid suggestion. Give me one example of where less
257 is better."

258 Carlos looked back at Troy. "I'd suggest you look up the word
259 efficient or study up on mechanical efficiency ratios. For my daughter,
260 fewer copies of the twenty first chromosomes would be better for her."

261 "What does your daughter have to do with more or less?" Troy
262 shouted. An intimidation tactic he learned from a professional
263 protester—his mother.

264 "Enough you two! I've been up all night and we need to stay
265 focused."

266 "Mr. Slenski." Carlos paused so to phrase his words just so. "Maybe
267 you could make a new proposal to Mr. Rubin. Maybe focus on reliability
268 and not four times the power?"

269 Zach moved away from the magnifying glass. "Troy, I want you to
270 go over the panel again. Then reassemble it and this time make sure
271 to keep an eye on the power level readings."

272 "Sure, no problem." Troy moved over to the test bench.

273 Zach started pulling off the white gloves. "Carlos let's go talk in
274 my office."

275 Back in his office Zach got right to the point. "Carlos I do
276 appreciate your coming down to Texas and all. But I don't feel good
277 about Mr. Rubin. I just don't trust him."

278 "I get that, but don't you need capital? I remember how it felt
279 when we'd spend months drilling for oil and never hit anything.
280 Realistically it could be years before your quad panels are on the
281 market and making a return on investment. You could go broke before
282 that happens."

283 "That's true." Zach rubbed at his forehead.

284 "Well then, why not do a deal with Mr. Rubin? Then you could
285 concentrate strictly on research and development."

286 "Would it be with the Arabs or Solyndra Power? Zach sat behind
287 the desk and pushed the charts to the side.

288 "I'm not sure? Getting major players to the bargaining table is Mr.
289 Rubin's expertise."

290 "You could call him right now and find out." Zach turned the desk
291 phone around and pushed it toward Carlos. Two rolled up charts fell off
292 the desk.

293 "It would be best if I talk to him in person. He's already messaged
294 about a fax I sent." Carlos paused, that fax was private and was
295 meant for agent Fletcher only.

296 "I can't afford another trip back to Chicago. Plus I'm short an
297 engineering technician. I need to stay down here."

298 "I'll ask Mr. Rubin to pay your travel expenses." Carlos could barely
299 swallow, his throat was dry, and he was worried. "He is expecting you
300 for a meeting with Solyndra Power. Remember you promised?"

301 "That's right. I did say I'd meet with Solyndra Power." Zach leaned
302 back in the chair and rubbed his chin. "If the Arab's won't do another
303 meeting then I'm good with a meeting with Solyndra Power."

304 "The Solyndra meeting is tentatively set up for two weeks from
305 tomorrow."

306 "What?" Zach leaned forward in the black leather executive chair.

307 "I'll suggest to Mr. Rubin to pay your airfare and expenses for the
308 trip." Carlos got up from the chair and made a beeline for the door.

309 "Carlos!" Zach yelled from his desk. "Don't ask for my travel
310 expenses. He'll know that I'm strapped for cash and that will put him
311 in a better bargaining position."

312 Carlos halted to a stop and turned around. "No problem. I get it. I
313 got your back."

314 "Thanks!" Zach gave the thumbs up from his desk. "Carlos, I got it
315 when you told Troy that fewer copies of the twenty first chromosomes
316 would have made a difference for your daughter. I got that reference
317 about Down syndrome. But I'm sure Troy didn't get it."

318 "Well anyway, less is always better! A luminary that outputs the
319 same luminance with fewer watts is better."

320 "That's not a true statement if you are using lights to hatch
321 chickens or dry paint." Zach shot a grin toward Carlos.

322 "Fair enough. I'll change my argument to, often less is better."

323 "Hey, I'm just playing with you Carlos."

324 "I know, but oddly since having a down's child her mom and I are
325 on a rewarding and ever changing path. That's why we moved to
326 Chicago, to get her better treatment. I'd still be out in the Gulf of
327 Mexico drilling for oil if it weren't for Cecelia."

328 "Yeah, I wouldn't feel good about doing that for a career. I heard
329 they have another oil well leaking in the gulf."

330 "There's more than just one leaking." Carlos replied.

331 "That why I'm in the solar field. To make the world a better place."

332 "Maybe I should come to work for you," Carlos said half jokingly.

333 "I couldn't afford you," Zack joked back and then got serious. "The
334 Dallas Memorial Center has a campus for Down Syndrome patients. My
335 older sister has her son enrolled in a blind study there. Since the turn
336 of the century there has been a thirty per increase in Down Syndrome
337 births."

338 "I think that increase is mainly in the United States?" Carlos stated.

339 I don't know. But my sister was forty when she had Benny. The
340 guilt society lays on her for having a baby at her age is horrible.

341 In Mexico the stigma for just having a Down's child is terrible. You
342 might want to tell you sister my wife was only nineteen when Cecelia
343 was born."

344 Zach pushed away from the desk and stood. "Carlos, I hope you
345 can help put together a good deal. We're both scientists that want to
346 make the world a better place."

347 Carlos's walked back and shook Zach's hand. "Amen to that
348 brother. I'll do my best to get something good setup".

349 "I know you will. But I don't trust Mr. Rubin."

350 "I have a bunch of air miles and I can pick you up at the airport if
351 that helps," Carlos offered as he let loose of their hand shake. He
352 hurried down the hallway, Troy didn't say a word when they passed
353 each other—Troy didn't trust or like Carlos.

354 Zach sat back down and opened the desk drawer. He dug around
355 and found the eloquent black business card. **AMERCO OIL** and an
356 **800** phone number were embossed with real gold ink on the front. He
357 flipped it over. On the back, handwritten in green ink were the
358 numbers **011 966 11 555 0011** along with the words: **Call for**
359 **better offer.**

360 *I'll call Prince Amer Nasser after the meeting with Solyndra Power.*
361 *There was something about Prince Amer Nasser. I trust him more than*
362 *Mr. Rubin.*

363 "I need you to come and look at the test quad panel." Troy's
364 anxious words halted Zach's plan to outwit Mr. Rubin. He jumped up
365 and followed Troy to the lab!