

CHAPTER 6

Jensen Greer would have been satisfied with less. After graduating from the Colorado School of Mines, he might have settled near his home town of Boulder and worked for a local mining company as one of many geologists, perhaps eventually rising to foreman of a mine site. He might have stayed with one firm, retiring with a gold watch and a 401K.

But his wife, Barbara, had other plans. They were a team, she said. He was the brains and she was the ambition. A full year before he graduated, she was scouring the help wanted sections of the major papers across the U.S. and Canada, checking the industry's trade publications, running Internet searches, and talking with headhunters. She landed his first job, with Newmont Mining, but the stay was short before she had him moving on to the next. Four job changes in ten years, each earning a reasonable raise. He needed a break. Prospective employers were starting to question his loyalty. And like a racehorse after a hard season, he was exhausted.

Then came Summit Resources. Located in Portland, Summit was looking for a Chief Geologist and the starting salary was far into six figures. Assuming successful placement, the position would mature to VP of North American Operations.

To Barbara's shock, Greer rebelled. He was sick of the moves. So for five weeks, she cried and yelled and withheld sex until he finally caved. This was the one she had been looking for. She coached and harangued him right up to the interview, which lasted three full days. Barbara spent her hours pacing the Marriott in Portland and obsessing over all of the what-ifs, ricocheting between euphoria and fear.

Greer commenced work for Summit six weeks later as Chief Geologist, with the promise that if all went well, the VP spot would be his three years after that. And on this day (nearly three years later) with salary, bonuses, and the explosion in his stock options, Greer's income was up more than ten-fold from his pre-Summit earnings. Barbara's Bet had paid off.

Barbara's Bet awoke early Monday morning, showered, and shaved. Over a tailored white shirt, Greer put on a teal tie speckled with small silver diamonds. He slipped into a dark, gray-green, pen-striped suit before pausing at the bedroom doors. The peach comforter fell into the vague outline of her body. Bleached blond hair flowed between the pillows. Barbara wouldn't be up before ten.

He padded down a sweeping stairway, across a marble landing, down the hall, and into the kitchen. It was a professional kitchen, with deep counters and double-everything: two stainless steel ovens, matching fridges, twin sets of red porcelain sinks. Ornate cabinets of exotic hardwoods ringed the walls. At the island, under rows of copper pots and pans, a 24-year-old nanny named Bridgette was busy preparing breakfast.

An eating area much too large to be a nook grew from the kitchen. It was faced on three sides by windows and French doors that opened to a vast deck. The glass offered a full view of the valley, the cities of Beaverton and Hillsboro, and the Coast Range. Flush with the windfall of Summit stock options, Greer had purchased the property more than a year previous. The 5,000 square-foot home sprawled over two levels and, with too much alcohol, he could become lost while searching for his wife. Or Bridgette.

Past the eating area was an oversized family room where a small child sat on the carpet, cross-legged, in front of a yellow talking bird. Greer smiled at his daughter. “Hey Patty girl, how about a hug?”

“Daddy!” The six-year old girl in fuzzy pink pajamas turned from the wide screen and ran the distance to him. She didn’t have her mother’s blond hair, but his darker look. She slid across the hardwood and nearly collided with him.

He swooped her up in both hands and laughed. “Whoa! How’s my chitterbug?”

A dimpled smile and plump red cheeks answered him. “Fy-eene. Bridgette’s making French toast!”

He parked her in the oak high chair next to his as she looked up with wide, brown eyes. “Are you having some?” she asked.

“Don’t I always?”

Bridgette had set the breakfast table with milk for the girl, his coffee, and her own glass of orange juice. A student at Lewis and Clark Law School, she was attractive, with light brown hair pinned loosely back and a figure she dressed for. She smiled as she set down three plates. It was the morning ritual.

The previous fall, Greer had returned home from work on a Wednesday to find Barbara and the beige Lexus out shopping and a young, unknown female in the downstairs entertainment room, relaxing in his leather recliner and watching reruns of 90210 on his 60-inch, HD wide-screen. After a few minutes of confused intercourse, he retreated to the den with Patricia and called Barbara on the cell. “Who is this girl in the house?”

Barbara’s answer was short. “She’s our nanny.”

Shortly afterward, Barbara informed him they also needed to hire a cook. Barbara never claimed to be a cook—it was not her thing (Greer concurred)—and Bridgette was okay with French toast and Lucky Charms, but was busy with college classes in the afternoon. The maids were not cooks. The two muscular, stern-faced sisters from Estonia visited three times a week to vacuum, make beds, and do the laundry, but they refused to cook. A

professional cook, Barbara had explained, could help manage dinner parties.

So a thick, short, middle-aged woman named Isabel, from Guatemala, arrived at 5:00 each weekday afternoon with groceries. She usually had dinner ready by 7:00.

Patricia sat now on her knees in the chair and began to giggle. Greer cut and fed a bite from his plate to his daughter. With her chubby hands around the fork, she jabbed a square of French toast from her plate and pushed it up at Greer. He tried to catch it in his mouth, but instead she poked him squarely in the chin. It was a game Patricia never tired of.

Greer's face became mock serious. "Oww!"

The child let out a squeal.



The drive began just fine. Descending out of the West Hills in a light rain, Greer took Highway 26 into the city. But by the time he exited the Vista Ridge Tunnel and got within four blocks of the building, they were visible. A few had recently picketed the security gates around his community, but they favored the glass-and-stone Wells Fargo high-rise. To them, it symbolized the greed they so despised. Plus, the CNN cameras were downtown. Traffic, police, and protestors clogged the streets. Greer inched his way along and watched the Accords and Camrys creep through, unchallenged. Young men and women were looking for the "Gang of Six." They were looking for a red Humvee, or a yellow Porsche, or today's black Suburban with its tinted windows and oversized tires, and the second Greer turned onto Adams Street, they spotted him. Five of them converged on the vehicle menacingly and tried to see inside. Greer crouched down as traffic ground to a halt. Smoked glass hid his face, but they knew his license plates. "GLDIGR." It had been a moment of gross egotistical stupidity at the DMV, or perhaps he had been thinking of Barbara. He soon regretted it.

THE MINE

The SUV inched forward and they began banging on the hood with their signs and fists and swearing profanities. Like flies to a corpse, others noticed and swarmed on the truck. The chanting erupted. “Ban the poison! Kill Justene!” The swarm grew. The screams melted into chaos and the pummeling of fists on the truck became deafening. Faces crammed against the glass. Young men in black trench coats, a teenage girl with cropped yellow hair, they screamed and spit profanities. “You sonofabitch!! You goddamned pig! Kill Justene! Kill Justene!”

The torrent pushed Greer down into his seat. Tight hands gripped the wheel. He fought to keep his wits and not punch the gas pedal or throw it into reverse. Either choice would pin protestors between cars, break legs, maybe kill! It had never been this bad! Just a slip of the foot! A simple accident! They were lucky he was rational!

Police with batons finally arrived and dragged them off. Mercifully, the garage entrance appeared on the right and officers directed him in. One protestor ducked to follow, but was pulled back. Greer parked in a reserved spot on the second level. He opened his collar and loosened the tie. His body shook. His head fell into his hands. He wanted to scream in the hollowness of the garage, but nothing came. He finally pulled himself from the Suburban, pressed the remote alarm, and headed for the elevator.



The lobby at Summit Resources occupied two levels. A white marble floor glistened in the light from the two-story windows. Cherry-paneled walls extended up to an ornate ceiling of deep white soffits. On the left, the hostess sat behind a long onyx counter. Clarie was 28 and of Asian descent, seen in her dark brown eyes, brilliant red lips, and jet black hair. The wall behind Clarie glistened in black marble. High on it, six characters made of clear lead crystal were mounted. Each was three-inches thick and two-feet tall. Gold leaf had been applied to the

backside of each piece and the shimmering gold characters together read SUMMIT.

At the far wall in front of a row of windows, men and women were lined up at the coffee bar. From Summit's Legal Department, they chatted and gazed out at the city. The commotion of protestors below was audible, but they didn't seem to notice.

Greer exited the elevator, passed through the main doors, and shuffled across the lobby. He usually nodded and lingered on Clarie, but not today. He began heading for the coffee bar, but a man stepped forward and grabbed his arm. His whisper was urgent. "Greer, where have you been?!"

"Battling the animals!"

"Come with me." The heavy, sweating man grabbed Greer's elbow and steered him through more glass doors, down a hall, and into an office.

Greer's voice rasped. "Where's the fire?"

Rodney Warren, the company's Chief Financial Officer, closed the door behind them and walked across the room to his massive executive chair. It squeaked in protest as he landed. "Sarinov's in a conference call with analysts. He wants you in on today's dog and pony."

Greer was surprised. "What?"

"The analysts, the brokerage houses. He wants you to give them an appraisal on the Justene mine. The expansion, expected yield in 12 months."

"Why me?"

"You're our Chief Geologist. It'll sound real coming from you." Warren shoved the papers into Greer's face while checking his watch. "You've got 20 minutes. I'm picking up at 9:15, then at 9:30 it'll be your turn. Just give a quick overview of Justene, use these numbers. Then a short Q-and-A."

Greer was suspicious. "What kind of questions?"

"Mostly bullshit. They don't know anything."

“Why the hell does he want me talking to analysts?”

“Because of your position, Jenny. You’re our fair-haired boy making a miracle of Justene.”

Greer scowled. ‘Jenny?’ The hated name was spreading. He grabbed the papers and thumbed through the five pages. They listed the current and projected gold yields from Justene. More tables listed dates of completion of the expansion in phases over the next 18 months and the increasing total output as new leach mounds were brought online. Final numbers showed the expected, total output over the mine’s 20-year life.

Greer shook his head. “Whose numbers are these?”

“Sarinov’s.”

“But these numbers are off, they’re high by at least 50 percent. He wants me telling analysts this, this...” Greer didn’t use the word he wanted.

Warren’s eyes rolled upward. “These aren’t financial statements, you’re not under oath! It’s just the damned yield out of one mine! For chrissake—”

“I could see five or ten percent, but this?”

Warren glared. His forehead was perpetually bathed in sweat and the sparse hair was assiduously plastered to his head in charcoal-black lines. “Greer, by the time the expansion goes through, yield will be up! Between now and then, we can’t have Justene killing our stock.”

Greer held the script up between them. “Is this legal?”

Warren’s puffy face glowed. His eyes darted to the phone. “I’ve got eight accountants and another five corporate attorneys keeping us legal! These aren’t binding statements. This is simple PR!”

The phone rang.

Warren snarled. “Dammit!” Another ring. He shook his finger and arm so violently that the jowls of his face shook. “Drop this boy scout crap! Get ready to pick up!”

Warren grabbed the phone.



Greer kicked open his office door. It was only 9:00 and he needed a scotch.

“Miranda!” he yelled over his shoulder.

“Yes, Mr. Greer?”

“Get me a double Americano from the lobby bar!”

Greer dropped his briefcase. He tossed the “script” on the desk and sat. He massaged his temples. Construction diagrams for the Haystack mine buried his desk and an adjoining table. He had meetings with Reynolds and Strout Engineering to prepare for, and meetings with his own engineers to finalize plans for Haystack. There was the Miner’s Creek survey to complete. But right now, his CEO wanted him lying to analysts, who would promptly repeat everything he said to the market!

But there had been other moments like this. Like the company-paid trip to Whistler. The lodge was overrun with company execs, pension fund managers, state people, even a senator. They acted like frat boys, choking down lobster and Corona, and disappearing into the lodge with their paid “escorts”. And someone had actually taken pictures! Christ, they were so drunk and preoccupied with nude lap dancers, no one noticed the camera. And then there was the Christmas trip to Aruba, with the wives and the people from Kennedy and Sorensen, the house that handled Summit’s IPO. Plus a small throng of DC congressmen. Constituents in Utah and Colorado would have been proud. On the flight home from Aruba, he had decided to pass on any more trips. They didn’t need him and common sense screamed liability. Barbara differed, of course. She called it “making connections.”

But this conference call, this time it would be his words. He would be the source on record.

Greer's thumbs gouged his temples. The phone's ring jolted him. He stared at it. A second ring. Miranda opened the door, coffee in hand. She quickly left the cup on his desk and vanished. On the fourth relentless ring, he picked up.

"Jensen, are you ready?" Sarinov's voice was serene. He could have been on the beach in Cozumel.

"Why am I talking to these people?" asked Greer.

"They're looking forward to hearing from our future VP of North American Operations. The position has some public exposure, we've talked about this. You've got the numbers?"

"Jacob, these numbers are quite a stretch. And the expansion permits haven't been approved yet. How can I do this?"

The phone was quiet.

"Jacob?"

Sarinov exhaled a long sigh. "Jensen, have a little faith here. First, the expansion is about to be approved. I know because we have friends that keep us up to date on these things. But more than anything, you need to learn how this game is played. These aren't government filings, this is simply an insider's look at our firm. Look. The market is a finicky bitch. If we released actuals on Justene now, we'd take a hit that would suck half a billion out of our valuation. For you personally, you would lose what? Three, four million? Do you really want that?"

The numbers. Always the numbers. Greer scratched his forehead.

"Do you remember the day I hired you?" Sarinov asked.

Greer remembered. It was in Sarinov's previous office in Lake Oswego, in a brick building overlooking the river. A late summer day. Sarinov's red Ferrari was parked outside. A large framed photograph hung on Sarinov's ego wall of a man hanging in space from under a tiny granite cornice. He was wearing Speedos and sunglasses. The picture was taken half a mile up, on the face of Half Dome in Yosemite. An unbelievable shot. Unbelievable. And the damned tagline at the bottom?

Success Takes All of You! Encouragement? Or a warning? And the man in the picture was, of course, Sarinov.

Greer's voice was resigned. "Yes. I remember."

"The market is everything to us, Jensen. Everything. Are you ready?"

"Yeah."

"Atta' boy. Five minutes."