

The Price of Fame

Azul Berenice Rodríguez*

Jackson Jones advanced across the wide and silent hall of his mansion. Several portraits were displayed on the walls, but he only focused on one. He contemplated his reflection, which would cast his mind back to when he was a nobody, and grinned.

'Well, am I not a lucky man?' he thought and prepared himself to go out.

Fifteen minutes later, he was strolling around the city. Every day he would spare some time for himself, as he came to loathe being indoors all day.

Jackson halted abruptly when turning the corner, where uniformed men and women were standing. He joined the nearest crowd, walking warily, but confidently. Any wrong move or suspicious gesture would blow his cover. Any mistake would strip him of his valuable possessions: rings, necklaces, glasses, brand outfits. Wherever he glimpsed, he would spot those greenish-blue eyes on a freckled face he had always been so fond of. His handsome face appeared on TV screens, newspapers, posters, hot-air balloons, everywhere.

For ten years, he had dreamt of becoming a popular celebrity, and he was reluctant to let it go when the opportunity came his way. He still remembered the day he rose to fame as J. J. Those initials were his free pass to owning four unaffordable cars, three luxurious mansions and two paradisiacal islands. Other perks included being gifted with fancy clothes, free parking and luscious meals. Everyone was eager to please the famous actor.

'Who on earth wouldn't want to be me?' That was the question he would ask himself.

Acting was Jackson's handy asset since he was an ordinary teenager. He would train daily to become a professional. Were it not for this talent, he would not have found a way out of the labyrinth trap he had been in three months ago. Little did he know it would turn out to be the least of his problems.

Jackson stopped to make a call in a phone box. He would not dare use his mobile. He took a panoramic glance and went in when the coast was clear. He dialed a telephone number scribbled on a piece of paper and tapped on the metal box while he waited. Those twenty-five seconds seemed ages to him.

'Yes?' answered a voice on the other side of the line.

'It's me. I need to take a flight,' urged Jackson. 'I'm afraid I've been identified.'

'Sure, boss. Where should I pick you up?'

'You know where!' The actor slammed the receiver. He hated it when his assistant asked him silly questions.

Being so caught up in his frustration, he was oblivious to where he was going. A loud horn brought him out of his reverie, but it was too late for him to react. He landed hard on the street, losing his sunglasses and cap in the crash and causing a traffic jam. The owner of the car got out of the vehicle and howled the ugliest words at Jackson. Two teenage girls and a police officer dashed immediately towards the scene of the accident.

'Are you alright?' inquired one of the teenage girls, worriedly. Unlike the police officer, who examined him carefully, she and the other girl were willing to help the injured man to his feet.

'I think I sprained my ankle, but I'll be fine,' said Jackson painfully, trying to stand up.

'Stay where you are!' ordered the police officer, taking his handcuffs out of his pocket.

'What are you doing?' asked the other girl in shock. 'J. J needs a hospital!'

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'He'll be taken to hospital and then to prison, where he belongs,' assured the police officer. The girls stared in bewilderment, but the officer was now busy cuffing the man. 'You should have covered those scars on your arms and hidden the corpse smartly.' The man looked baffled at the officer. 'Yes, we found the secret door in the cellar. Jackson Jones, you're under arrest for impersonating your twin brother, Jarred Jones. Everything you say will be used against you.'