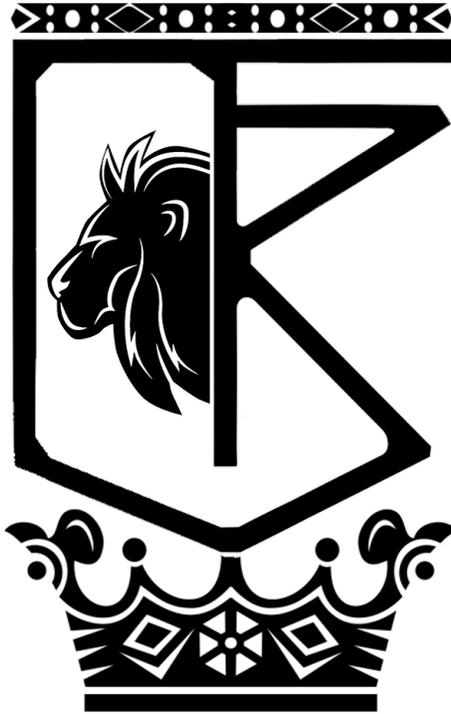


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JEREMY TOLKEN

BY

TRENT RHODES

Enter Jeremy Tolken. Hardworking financial advisor, soon to be engaged, parents still alive, twelve brothers and sisters, nice house, lots of cash and...an enormous glutton for the eats. Mr. Tolken adores food, so much that he sleeps with a bag of Lays by his side. His fiancé doesn't know this, of course, and he rotates his chip brands when his lady isn't staying with him. Besides, he thought,

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he'd never SLEPT with her. He only slept WITH her, and he made sure each time to keep a safe haven close to his dear stomach. Ah yes...the Doritos...the Honey buns...absolutely, the Honey buns....they were so squishy, soft, moist with all of that sugar and...alright, Jeremy thought. Enough was enough.

Mr. Tolken thought the story of his Life was insane. He surely was a genius, in the area of money that is. He remained in bed, knowing that if he stayed, he would be late for work. But who cares about such transgressions if he was the best financial advisor in the world? If he was fired today for being late, which would be equal to the stock market crash in the past centuries, he could easily get another job. His resume was extensive, long enough to reach the first floor of his house from the fourth. Yes, Mr. Tolken has four floors in his beautiful home.

How did he do it? "It's all in the numbers," he would always say to people. It really was all in the numbers, all in his head. He could calculate faster than any calculator, and he rarely used them. Equations were a breeze, and he refused many times to teach university students his secrets. "If I taught them 'the secrets' they wouldn't be 'the secrets' anymore. Duh."

But despite the fancy home and successful Life, Jeremy Tolken felt it was finally time to take care of his one weakness. His Achilles Heel. His touch of death. His little Ms. Temptation. His dastardly element.

Jeremy pulled the sheets off of him and looked at his belly. It was fat, round, rotund like a water balloon that had too much water poured into it. No, he said, the belly was a problem, but it wasn't the cause. The food! No...the smell of the food! No...it had more to deal with him than the sweet and delicious stuff. No, it was purely him. ONLY him! And to remind him of the weakness, he looked up at his wall of portraits and stared at...the painting of a roach.

**Four days ago, Mr. Jeremy Tolken was on his way to work. While getting out of his car at the company parking lot, he saw a roach crawling near his left front tire. He watched it for a moment and wondered how it made it so far out. He stepped on it with a smile and walked away. For fun, he decided to glance back to see the squished results. There were none. The roach survived a shoe smash and continued crawling away. That's when it hit him...a coworker's car hit him while he was in a daze. His brief checkup at the hospital was an epiphany.**

The roach, as ugly as it may have seemed to him then became a representation of endurance and resistance to Jeremy. He had to buy it at the art auction. He only purchased it for \$50. That was his first bid. None of the other bidders wanted the damn thing, so he didn't have to bid high.



"My weakness is...a lack of resistance," Mr. Tolken spoke to himself. He folded his hands behind his head, sucked his bloated stomach in as far as he could and made it roll and dance around. "This roach is my mentor, and today I'll begin a new era in my Life. Everything has to be resisted. Making the money. Those...Doritos. The Lays, all of the sweets and nasty-but-tasty foods..." He thought for a moment. His fiancé came to mind. "I must even resist her...feminine ways. She doesn't have to know what I'm doing. She might even think it's weird. Even that I might be seeing someone else. Ah well...once I'm done with this, she'll enjoy the Tolken without the belly."

The alarm rang for the third time, and the new Roach Resistance Jeremy Tolken decided to go to work after all.

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Jeremy Tolken entered his high-powered financial building that he has been working for the past ten years. He is the youngest member of the Diamond Save Financial Corporation family. You would think that he is much older than he seems since he had accomplished so much in his Life thus far. Mr. Tolken is only twenty-nine years old. Yes, only thirty-four. The president and his cabinet at the company are very jealous of his smarts while being grossed out about Tolken's appearance. They thought on how can a person who took time and effort in their Life to become very successful would not do the same for their own well-being. The president and the cabinet were very confused about it.

There have been several attempts where they would invite Jeremy to sports club to play and exercise. Jeremy had always turned down the invitation saying that he had more important things to do. He made up excuses saying that he would have to work late, family wanted his help, or going to classical concerts and meeting friends. Jeremy sounded very convincing that they would believe him. However, they still have some doubts.

The other financial advisors were jealous of Jeremy. When I say jealous, I mean jealous. The other advisors would scheme together every so often after work on how to thwart Jeremy from success. The six of them would carry out their plans of sabotage in such obvious manners, their secretaries would place bids on whose idea would do the job to make Jeremy look bad. The secretaries know well what their bosses are doing is wrong and sometimes feel sorry for Jeremy, but they could not help themselves. They are thinking to stop their pools because none of them profit. Jeremy being oblivious to what is happening always somehow manages to thwart their schemes. His own secretary is very amazed by her half absent minded boss and very happy about it. She is the only one that profited from the pools because she knows her boss more than he knows himself.



Mr. High and Mighty Tolken in his own right stepped out of the elevator to the thirty-eighth floor with his briefcase in hand. He waddled to his secretary's desk right outside of his grand office with a spectacular view of the city skyline. All the other financial advisors are jealous that he got that office. That was another reason why they were trying the best they could to get him fired.

"Good Morning Marybeth, how are you this morning?" Tolken took his messages from his secretary.

"Good Morning. I am doing great." She responded cheerfully. "What flavor do you have in your briefcase today?" she knows about his donuts hidden in briefcase every morning.

"It is Boston Cream this time. I have two actually. You always surprise me that you can tell when I have something in briefcase."

"Good intuition I guess."

"You certainly are amazing."

"Thank you." She said blushing. "Your paperwork on prepared on your desk for the day."

"Thank you very much."

Jeremy made his way to his office and settled his briefcase on his glass desk. He turned around to look out the window at the spectacular view of the window. He thought about the cockroach and how it made him feel. He then opened briefcase, took out the donuts, and proceeded out of the door.

"Is there anything I can help you with Mr. Tolken?" Marybeth asked him in concern.

Jeremy had a peculiar expression on his face that Marybeth has never seen before. It was as though he was sad.

"Have these donuts Marybeth. I will not take your refusals. I am going to change my habits from today." Tolken smiled a refreshing smile.

Marybeth took the donuts, "Thank you."



"I know that I just came in, but I am going to leave for the rest of the day. I am going to the gym to work out. If anyone asks you what happened to me, please just tell them that something important had come up. If my superior's ask of me..."

"I know what to tell them Sir. It is all right. I just want to say that I am proud of you. No matter how hard the other advisors try to make you fall with their stupid schemes, you always seem to never loose ground." She said with a smile as she got out of her chair.

"What!" Tolken said with shock. "You mean the other advisors where plotting to make me fail and get me fired?"

"Yup, but I always betted on you with other secretaries because I knew you will always preserver." She became a giddy school girl.

"I don't think I like what I am hearing. Why didn't you say anything to me?" He sounded desperately confused.

"It is because I knew you would end up on top always. Plus, the extra money was not too bad either." Marybeth giggled.

"How much money did you win in total so far?" Tolken sounded calmer.

"About two thousand dollars." She smiled.

"How long have this been going on?" He questioned.

"About four months." She pulled her calendar with markings on them.

"I did not even notice a thing..."

"I have noticed, but I knew if you knew then it will mess you up from your flow."

"Well Marybeth, for one thing I am not mad."

"Thank goodness." She sighed in relief.

"I know for sure that if something was bound to happen, you would do something to stop it. You are a very resourceful person. I am happy that you have my secretary."

Marybeth blushed.



One year later, Jeremy Tolken opened his own successful financial firm. He got Marybeth to work for him. She is very happy and getting paid almost three times than what she was earning at the previous job. Last but not least, Jeremy Tolken lost sixty pounds. The financial success man and his woman got married.