

The Chief Architect

By

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INT. OPEX INDUSTRIES - DAY

Inside MR. HAYDEN'S office is a large, expansive desk in front of an equally expansive window, looking out onto a vast city.

Behind the desk is MR. HAYDEN, the CEO (30s-40s). On the other side of the desk, sitting beside one another in two comfy leather seats, are GERALD (mid-20s) and SCOTT (mid-20s).

Gerald, just by appearance alone, is the more put-together, the wealthier and the more confident - CLEAN THREE SUIT, SLICKED HAIR, and TRIMMED FACIAL HAIR.

Scott, on the other hand, has on an unmatched jacket and slacks over a wrinkled Oxford shirt.

On the desk are scattered papers, BLUEPRINTS for playground designs. Mr. Hayden is hunched over them, examining them. Scott is on the edge of his seat, but Gerald is calm.

Mr. Hayden SIGHS, then lifts his head and looks at Scott.

MR. HAYDEN

I'm going with Gerald.

Gerald smiles, but soon notices Scott's tense posture has SLUMPED. Gerald PATS Scott's shoulder.

GERALD

Sorry about that, bud.

SCOTT

It's fine.

(to Mr. Hayden)

I understand. Really, I do.

MR. HAYDEN

Scott, Scott, please. Your design is fine. Interesting, to say the least. But it's just...

SCOTT

You don't have to say it. I've been telling myself for months to go back to the drawing board - but my ego got in the way.

MR. HAYDEN

No, it's not that.

GERALD

If it's any help, I can attest to what Mr. Hayden's saying. Your stuff is good, Scott.

Gerald reaches across Mr. Hayden's desk and SWIPES Scott's BLUEPRINTS, holding them up, examining them. Scott looks down, angry, MUTTERING to himself. Mr. Hayden ROLLS HIS EYES.

GERALD (CONT'D)

Not just good. But as Hayden said, interesting. A playground based on the Fibonacci sequence could very well have been an - *experience*.

Gerald throws the blueprints back on the table. Scott looks up, upset with Gerald, but remaining QUIET.

GERALD (CONT'D)

But it's like I keep telling you: Kids want basic, simple. They want physicality, not intellectualism. They want height, not swirls.

(to Mr. Hayden)

Not to mention that I'm sure you want a bit of practicality.

MR. HAYDEN

Gerald, please don't speak for me.

(to Scott)

You've got skill. Talent. But, Scott, we've had this discussion before. My decision has nothing to do with your expertise. I wouldn't have asked for your schematics if I thought you couldn't do it. But it's just like last time...

GERALD

And the time before that.

MR. HAYDEN

Shut up.

(to Scott)

Your designs are expensive. And it's not that I don't think they'd be worth it. But...

SCOTT

Aren't these donations?

GERALD

What?

SCOTT

(ignoring Gerald)

I just mean...it's a non-profit venture. Of course, I understand your mindset going into this. And I want to make sure that your money isn't going to waste. Obviously. But I went in with the mindset that profit wasn't an issue.

MR. HAYDEN

Just because profit's not an issue doesn't mean that we ignore all financial concerns. If I'm being honest, I'd hate to offer up the funds for your fibonacci playground, only to have the thing rust over in a few years. If no one cares, there'll be no maintenance - no upkeep.

Scott nods his head in silence, after which he MUTTERS something, gets up and proceeds to walk out.

MR. HAYDEN (CONT'D)

Scott! Neither of us want to see that!

Scott looks back and smiles half-heartedly before SHUTTING the door softly.

GERALD

I'm not a betting man. But I'd put money on him heading to Wexler right now.

MR. HAYDEN

Let him go. He'll tell him the same thing I did. I meant what I said, though, about his talent.

Mr. Hayden scoops up the blueprints of Scott's designs and squares them. After which, he opens up a drawer full of Scott's previous designs, placing the current ones on top, for safekeeping.

EXT. OPEX INDUSTRIES - DAY

Scott is just walking out of the building - STORMING OUT even. He heads down the steps of this concrete monster into

the heart of the city, where vacant pedestrians wander left and right. The MUTTERING has turned to GRUNTS, which draws the unwanted attention of passersby. Scott shyly lowers his head and quiets when he notices their glances.

As he shuffles down the sidewalk determinedly, a member of the rolling crowd around him spots him. This is STU (late 20s-early 30s), dressed somewhat preppy (SWEATER VEST OVER BUTTON-UP), but kind of like that dork we all know (GLASSES, POORLY COMBED HAIR, ETC.)

STU

Scott! Scott!

Scott tries, unsuccessfully, to blend in with the crowd. Stu catches up to him. The rest of the time they are walking, Scott is at all times trying to stay ahead of Stu.

STU

Hey, man, I was - back there.

(laughing awkwardly)

Anyway, how'd the thing go? You got the gig, I'm sure! Right?

SCOTT

They went with Gerald again.

STU

Ugh! Those bastards! You didn't need them anyway.

SCOTT

Actually, I did.

STU

Don't think like that. You didn't need them!

(shouting back at the Opex building)

He doesn't need you! You'll see!

The SHOUTING is bringing more and more attention to Scott and Stu. Scott sees it, grabs Stu and pulls him close.

SCOTT

Stu! Shut up! Stop! Christ.

Stu is unfazed, still smiling, even LAUGHING.

STU

You've lost your way is all. It's what

I always Billy. A little faith in yourself can go a long way. All's you need is a bit of confidence in yourself.

SCOTT

I'd say what you need is a lobotomy, but it looks like you've got that covered.

STU

Ha ha ha. I'm just saying, though. Once Billy started telling himself that his drawings were good, all his friends started agreeing, and so did his teachers.

SCOTT

He's in the 6th grade. Of course his teachers are gonna like his pictures. Shouldn't you be looking after Billy right now?

STU

And miss this? No way. Martha's looking after the little guy now. But I did tell him before I left that I'd be helping the man who designed our favorite park.

Scott stops in front of another building, which at the very top, holds the words: WEXLER INC.

SCOTT

We're here.

STU

Both Billy and I learned so much about the founding fathers in that park. So well designed, too. Intuitive and, I don't know - like logical or something. It's a shame they tore it down.

SCOTT

Yeah, well, that's what they do to parks no one cares about.

STU

Kids today just don't want to be educated. And the parents don't care.

SCOTT
Maybe. Could be. Listen, I'm gonna run
up there and get a follow-up from
these guys.

Scott starts to run up the stairs to Wexler Inc.

STU
Wexler?

SCOTT
(shouting back)
Of course Hayden would reject. I'm
learning: it's a numbers game.

Scott bursts through the front door while Stu looks around for a park bench to rest on. After awhile of not finding a place to sit, he tries leaning up against a thin tree. It's obvious though he isn't comfortable.

As Stu waits, Gerald comes walking by. Out of the corner of his eye, Gerald notices the struggle that Stu is having finding a comfortable position. And in that noticing, he recognizes Stu. Walking up to Stu, he says

GERALD
Hey, you're that parent that's always
hanging around Scott, right?

Stu abandons his efforts and instead stands up straight, holding out his hand for a handshake, a big smile on his face.

STU
That'd be me. Though I hope that's not
the entirety of my reputation.

GERALD
(shaking hands)
No, of course not. I often see you
with him.

STU
Do I know you?

GERALD
We've met a couple times, but never
formally introduced. It'd make sense,
though. I'm Gerald.

STU

You're the guy who takes Scott's jobs?

GERALD

(laughing)

You're asking if *I* accept that description? I wouldn't say I take his jobs, no. Scott's ambitious. Which is good, don't get me wrong. But he refuses to accept that the process doesn't end with the blueprints. There are hoops he's gotta learn to jump through.

Gerald looks at the towering building behind him.

GERALD (CONT'D)

Wexler. He's in there, isn't he.

Stu NODS.

GERALD (CONT'D)

I've worked with Wexler before. There's a reason I switched to Hayden. It's the same reason Scott went to Hayden first. Wexler's a scattershot. He'll invest in anything. But because of that method, he's overly cautious with the amount of money he'll put in.

STU

You don't know that.

GERALD

I guess not. But it's a good guess, I think. Just wait. I predict he'll get the project made - but that Wexler will ask for cuts and rearrangements and adjustments to fit within a tiny, little, minuscule budget.

A DING is heard: someone's phone.

GERALD (CONT'D)

That's yours. Not mine.

Stu reaches in his pocket and pulls out his phone. He opens up a TEXT from Scott. It reads: "GOT THE JOB" Stu SMILES.

GERALD (CONT'D)

That Scott?

STU
He got the job!

GERALD
(laughing)
Wait for it...

As Stu is typing out his congratulations message, another text message comes through. We don't see what it says, but Stu's expression shifts - the SMILE FADES.

GERALD (CONT'D)
Yeah. There's more to art than art.
Art on paper's just a fantasy, and I
want Scott to grow up more than
anyone. Or I might never see his
genius in the fields. Have a good day,
Stu. Tell Scott I said congrats, okay?

Gerald walks off. Stu falls back against the tree, caught in thought.

EXT. SCOTT'S PLAYGROUND - DAY

It's just the worksite now. Construction is still being done. Scott watches over it. He GIVES ORDERS and DIRECTS, but his face reveals that his heart is just not in it. The construction, however, continues.

EXT. SCOTT'S PLAYGROUND - DAY

Construction is complete. There are three parents and their three kids (one of which is Stu and BILLY (8yrs.)) playing on the quaint playground, which is made up one SLIDE and one set of MONKEY BARS.

The DETAIL, however, is apparent: There are SWIRLS and TWISTS in the framework; the slide's construction GLIDES and TURNS and looks like a NATURALISTIC PLANT; the monkey bars are more than just a horizontal ladder, as they DRIP and FALL and move. All of this is based on the Fibonacci sequence, which is indicated and explained by a plaque at the entrance to the park.

On the bench at the edge of the park sits Scott, distraught at how small his creation has become. He looks toward the horizon and sees another park. Though it is larger, it is very "AVERAGE", with STRAIGHT LINES, CHEAP METAL, ETC.

Stu approaches and plops next to Scott on the bench.

STU

I gotta say it, Scott. This is fantastic!

(to Billy)

Go ahead, Billy! Slide down! I'll watch from here!

(to Scott)

You know what? I think the size of it is better. Brings the kids and parents closer. It feels homely here.

SCOTT

It feels that way because there's only six people here.

STU

That may be so. But I've gotten to know Richard over there and his daughter, Melissa. And, from what it looks like, Melissa, Billy, and John are all having a wonderful time. I overheard Melissa telling Billy something about multiplication. They're learning, Scott! Together! The parents have kids who have a deep interest in knowledge, and us parents want to foster that as much as possible. That's hard to do when most other kids don't find joy in simple facts. It's hard for Billy to make friends at school. But not here. Here, it's easy. Like I said to you awhile ago, most kids don't care about their education...

SCOTT

Maybe most kids don't care about your kid, Stu. And maybe I'm facilitating that.

Scott gets up from the bench and heads over to the parents.

SCOTT

(shouting to the parents and kids)

Everybody off! I'm sorry, but this park is closed. I've deemed it unsafe for kids. I'm sorry. Please, I'm going to have to ask everyone to leave.

The kids GROAN, as the two remaining parents go to pick up their kids. Stu runs over to Scott.

STU

Scott, what the hell are you doing?

SCOTT

I'm letting the park rust over by itself. I'm not letting anyone fall in love with something that'll just isolate them and myself.

(shouting to the parents and kids)

Thank you, thank you. Please, escort your kids safely off the property. There's a nice park over there.

Billy comes rushing up to Stu.

BILLY

Do we really have to go?

SCOTT

Yes, I'm sorry. But it's not safe to be here.

Stu looks at Billy, then Scott. Stu then leans down and whispers in Billy's ear

STU

Don't listen to him, Billy. He doesn't have confidence.

BILLY

(whispering back)

We need to show him why he's good. Like my drawings.

As Stu gets up, he winks at Billy.

STU (CONT'D)

Nope. I'd say that we don't have to go. In fact, I'd say the opposite: Billy, we *have* to stay.

SCOTT

No. Guys, you really need to leave. I'm telling you that this place isn't...

Billy walks up and holds Scott's HAND.

BILLY

Come on!

Scott is dragged by Billy over to the playground. It takes some COERCION, but soon they're able to get Scott on the slide.

Soon enough, they're all having fun, LAUGHING, PLAYING. Scott is seen explaining different aspects of the design to Stu and Billy.

In their happiness, they don't notice the GROWING CROWD around them. We see, far from Scott's playground, closer to the playground Scott noticed earlier, Gerald DIRECTING PARENTS AND THEIR KIDS to Scott's playground.

A group of kids sits around Scott as he explains the design and the math behind it. The kids take turns going down the slide, swinging across the monkey bars. Scott SMILES genuinely for the first time.

THE END