

## **Brewster's Brood – Part 1**

A PATREON EXCLUSIVE

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### Part One

Mrs. Churchill – 3/5/2017 – Sunday – 3:02 pm

At a rented auditorium in El Cerrito, California, the world's strangest competition was nearing its beginning. The guards at the door were burly, armed, and unwilling to entertain questions from anyone. The list was inviolable and if someone showed up and wasn't on the list, they were being turned away with the strongest possible discouragement short of physical violence.

(The physical violence would follow if they didn't fuck *right* off, it was made clear.)

The auditorium had only one entrance that people were being allowed in. Perhaps 'people' was the wrong word, though. Other than the guards, everywhere the eye looked there were only women, gorgeous, unbearably beautiful women, each of whom was looking at the others with competitive, almost catty eyes. None of them knew much about why they were here, but it was clearly important, and an insane amount of money had been involved in bringing them all together. Was it a scholarship? A contest? A competition? An endless number of Uber and Lyft drivers had asked the women about it today, and all any of them had responded was, "I'm not quite sure, but they're paying quite a lot of money for quite a short amount of my time."

The women were all checked at the door, each presenting their invitation in turn. The person manning the door – the only other woman around, but completely unlike the others, much older and sterner looking – was checking to make sure each woman's test results had come back clean, and then nodded to the guard at the door, who opened the singular door to the auditorium like it was a bank vault, letting that one woman through, and her alone. She'd been doing this for almost an hour now.

Her name was Mrs. Churchill, and she was in charge of this circus, not that she minded. The job offer had involved compensation enough for her to buy a small country, and the premise, well, the premise was so earth shatteringly insane that she found herself unable to say no. It would be the story of a lifetime, when she was eventually able to tell it.

She could've let someone else man the door, but being there personally gave her a chance to see each and every woman face-to-face before she'd even entered the auditorium. Sizing them all up before hand would help her spot potential troublemakers early on. Her instincts were a large part of why she'd been offered the gig.

Mrs. Churchill turned a couple of women at the door - their test results had come back that they were carrying a venereal disease, they hadn't passed the psychological evaluation and/or they hadn't passed the IQ portion of the screener, although Mrs. Churchill didn't say those reasons aloud. She simply handed the women an envelope, although she did remove a very key piece of paper from the envelope first. Nothing was said about what was on that sheet of paper, although everyone in line was suddenly very interested in what might have been on it. Then the rejected woman was escorted to the door, where an Uber was waiting to take her back to her AirBnB. Only one of the women tried to put up a fuss, but a single withering glance from Mrs. Churchill silenced the woman almost immediately.

It was evident violence would've likely followed if the woman hadn't simply left.

Everything was being done very discretely, as Mrs. Churchill had instructed.

The people who managed the auditorium had been told it was for a talent search that they were keeping very hush hush. Mrs. Churchill's team had even brought their own technicians and security, all flown in from out of town, or in some cases, out of country. No local people allowed, other than the 'talent.' The security was from Maryland, her assistants mostly from LA and New York. The talent, though, the endless assortment of insurmountable women, they came from all over.

The women, the beautiful women all completely in the dark as to why they were there, were

impatient to find out what this was all about, but seeing as many of them had traveled quite sizable distances for this, they could afford to be patient just a little longer. Several were from the Bay Area, but those who passed the screening exams and adhered to the rather strict beauty and intelligence standards the interviewers held, had been given all expenses trips to Oakland Airport, and had an Air BnB rented for them in or near Oakland for up to two months, as well as having access to a DoorDash account that they were encouraged to use reasonably, but not sparingly.

It had been presented to the women that they should consider it like an all-expenses vacation for a few months, although the screener had made it *very* clear that if the girls wanted out after hearing the initial pitch, they could have their return flight home immediately. Almost half of the girls entering the auditorium were from at least out of state, a handful from out of country. The client had made it clear that the pool couldn't be made up of more than 10% non-US citizens, and what the client wanted, the client got. The screening teams had even helped getting passports pushed through quickly.

What the actual pitch *was* however was completely unknown to all the women. All of them had asked, pestered, threatened, cajoled and tried to flirt their way into more information, but the response was always the same – it was a paid trip for a competition that involved money, and was related to something they'd expressed an interest in at some point in the last year or so. What that thing they'd expressed interest in *was*, however, no one would tell them. They'd signed an endless number of NDAs and all of them were attributed to something called The Brand Game. Searching for that had turned up an endless number of things, but nothing useful.

Whatever was going on, it was clear the girls knew there was a *lot* of money involved. Some of them were chatting with one another while they sat in the auditorium. A couple of them guessed that maybe this was the audition process for some reality show like "The Bachelor" or "Love Island," although the level of secrecy was insane for shows of those standards. There were many microphones in the auditorium, as well as a few planted members from Mrs. Churchill's team, to make sure nothing got out of hand, and to ensure they didn't get blindsided by any surprises they hadn't personally prepared. The entire thing was batshit crazy enough without the women making more problems.

When the last girl in line was ushered into the room, Mrs. Churchill glanced down at her laptop for the check-ins. The screeners had invited 106 to the local testing process, which had been done over the last few days. Of those, 2 had failed the blood work, 1 had been found to already have a child, 2 failed the psych eval and the last one had failed the IQ test, which left the game with a nice even 100 people. Mrs. Churchill nodded to the guard, who let her into the room and then closed the door behind her, leaning his muscular back against it. None of the men on security were even allowed inside of the room. The last thing she needed was their asses getting involved. As soon as the auditorium meeting was done, most of the security would be dismissed, except for a small team to keep Mrs. Churchill and her employees safe. Those men would be let in on the secret, but there wouldn't be a need for crowd control again. After this briefing, it would be unlikely that more than a handful of these women would ever again be under the same roof at the same time.

Mrs. Churchill looked over the crowd as she walked through it, all of the girls looking back to watch her walk down the aisle and towards the stage. There were a couple of college sweatshirts and hoodies in the crowd - Stanford, UC Santa Clara, UCLA, Berkeley, etc - but there were far more interesting attires to be had as well. Business suits, OR scrubs, military fatigues. Blondes, brunettes, redheads, a few shock dye jobs. Caucasian, African-American, Asian, Hispanic, Southeast Asian, even a Native American. It was a veritable cornucopia of beauty.

All talking stopped when Mrs. Churchill started moving towards the front of the auditorium, because it was clear the Head Bitch In Charge was about to let them know what the hell it was they were doing here. She walked down the center aisle to dead silence, women on both sides of her looking up at her, trying to glean some bit of information, but Mrs. Churchill was inscrutable. Besides, she was about to answer all their questions anyway.

She was a matronly woman, in her late 50s, and she was taking a great deal of amusement at all

of this. She'd dressed sharp and business like, much like a high powered attorney. Suit, no skirt. Her white hair was cut mercilessly short. Her ice blue eyes swept across the people closest to the front of the room, the most eager of the women. She didn't want any of these women thinking of her as a woman first, otherwise they might try and implore her for an edge in the game, and when it came to that, Mrs. Churchill had no favorites.

People had often complimented Mrs. Churchill by saying she resembled Dame Judy Dench, and she had always taken that compliment in stride, even though she was from Chicago and not England. She'd grown up tough, and only grown tougher over the years. Mrs. Churchill wasn't, of course, her real name, but it was the only name any of these people were going to get. Most of them would never be able to afford the kind of high end services she provided. Her staff were to use pseudonyms in front of the women as well, if they needed to interact with them.

Mrs. Churchill wore flats, no need to be bothered with heels. It also made climbing the tiny wooden steps up onto the stage easier to navigate. She moved to the podium and tapped the microphone, just once, to hear a loud thump. It got the entire room's attention, and a couple of the girls in the crowd were startled by the sudden noise, as the PA system squealed just a fraction of a second longer than was comfortable.

She smiled, wicked, in control and indisputable.

“Good afternoon, ladies. Thank you for coming, and accepting our invitation. We apologize for all of the cloak and dagger, but you'll understand the secrecy in just a moment. Let me start by saying that there is an envelope for each and every one of you with twenty-five thousand US dollars waiting for you when you exit this room, whether you decide to take us up on our offer or not. Note, that's the American dollar, not pounds sterling or Euros, for those few of you who came from the other side of the pond. We've all been following your currency problems with some amusement, what with Brexit thing you're all talking about. Sounds like a dumb idea to me, but it's your fucking country, I guess.”

There was a tittering of laughter in the crowd, and Mrs. Churchill paused to let it quiet down before talking again.

“So, at this point, you're probably wondering why you're all here. Each and every one of you either told your physician that you wanted a baby... but that you didn't want a husband, or, in some cases, you answered one of the various ads we placed around the world offering to help with that, and then were rejected by our program, although you weren't *really* rejected. Some of you were considering sperm donors. Some of you were considering the more old fashioned 'get drunk and get knocked up' approach that women in my generation preferred, and might have mentioned it to a girlfriend who mentioned it to a coworker who mentioned it to us. Oh, don't look so shocked - that's why you're *all* here. All of you want a child without the drag of having some useless man in the child's life. I respect that, I truly do. And I'm here to answer that wish, assuming you're good enough and smart enough, and also willing to play the game a little bit. You see, we've been looking for beautiful, intelligent women who want to be single moms for several months now, in preparation for the event you're all here for, if you want to be.”

There was a hush of whispers before Mrs. Churchill tapped the microphone again bringing the room back to quiet again. It truly was like herding cats, keeping this many gorgeous alpha women in line. Every single one of them wanted to control the room, and the only one with any real control was Mrs. Churchill.

“Thank you. Now, shall we?”

She picked up a little clicker from the podium and pushed a button. Behind her, a giant white screen popped to life. On the screen was a picture of a slightly doughy looking man in his early 40s, long salt-n-pepper hair drawn back into a little rattish pony tail, a six o'clock black with white streaks beard shadow on his face. He was a little pudgy, but also decently muscular, with arms that looked like they spent most of their day in motion. Those arms were also completely sleeved in tattoos, swarms of Japanese koi fish, tornadoes of color and ink, covering his flesh from his wrists up to what looked like

his shoulders, although they disappeared beneath the stained and faded button up red shirt he wore. He wore large wire-rimmed oval shaped glasses in front of his brown eyes that looked like he might have been trying to emulate John Lennon a bit. He was Caucasian, but well-tanned, as if he spent a lot of time in the sun. In the photo, he was standing behind a counter of some kind, a laugh on his face, standing next to a register with a sign on it that read “Tips, phone numbers and nudes welcome for good service.” Below that, in the corner, a post-it note had been slapped on, and in smaller letters it read, “If our service sucked, you probably deserved it, you asshole. :) -staff”

“This is Maximilian 'Max' Brewster. Decent looking enough, right? He's no George Clooney, obviously, but I think most women would rate him a solid six out of ten. Don't worry that you've never heard of him. He's not someone anyone would know on a national level. Hell, he's not particularly famous even at a local level, unless you have a love for excellent food truck cuisine. That is, of course, all going to change. By this time next year, our Mr. Brewster will be incredibly well known.”

She pushed the button and the screen clicked to a new image, a man in at least his late 90s, gleefully flipping off the camera, but not in good health at all. He was decrepit, frail and withered, but the man's ego and force of will still somehow came through the picture. His eyes looked as though they had broken the backs of thousands of adversaries over the course of their lifetime. He was seated in an insanely expensive looking armchair, with a tank of oxygen just to the side of him, a plastic breathing mask resting on top of his lap, which was covered in a tartan blanket. To the right of him, there was a small end table with a preposterously expensive bottle of scotch and a single crystal Tom Collins glass. Standing behind him, partially out of frame, was a very buxom woman, dressed quite scantily in a candy stripper's outfit, although the skirt was dangerously high. The man's skin was covered in liver spots, cracked so much that the cracks had cracks of their own, and looked like if it wasn't for sheer determination, his entire body would collapse into dust at a moment's notice.

“Now this one I'm sure you all know. This is, or was rather, Mortimer Brand the Fourth. For those of you who don't keep up on the lifestyles of the rich and famous, Mr. Brand was 4th wealthiest man in the world, and he died about three months ago at the ripe old age of 102. He was my employer, and I am currently acting in regards to the will he left behind. You see, Max here doesn't know it, but Mr. Brand was his grandfather, and Max is the last remaining member of his bloodline. Max's parents are both dead, and he's an only child. Max is 42, never married, and hasn't been dating with any seriousness in the last six years. This presents Mr. Brand, and us, with a unique problem, one that we have come up with a rather unorthodox solution for. I'll let the late Mr. Brand tell you about it.”

Another click and the image of the horrifically wight-like Mr. Brand on the screen sprung to life, a video file that had been waiting paused for its cue.

“Good evening, ladies. Mrs. Churchill has hopefully told you who I am, and who my great-grandson is, and why he's so frustrating to me. Can you believe the Brand family lineage, which has raised empires, has toppled governments, has paid for wars, defined history for generations...” Morty broke off mid sentence, coughing sickly, anger more in his face than his voice. “Can you believe all of that could be ending because Max can't knock up some girl? Any girl? Jesus, when I was his age, I was banging every skirt I could see, but we lost so many in the wars over the years. The Brands have never been afraid to fight. And while I'm too old to fight wars, I can still fight one from the grave for the legacy of my family.”

The man broke off into another coughing fit and the video jumped suddenly, as it was clear some time had been edited out from it. Once it resumed, though, it seemed Morty had regained his composure, and he continued.

“You see, if Max doesn't spawn some children soon, the Brand bloodline could disappear overnight. That cannot fucking happen! I will not allow such a travesty to occur! So we're going to change that,” he laughed, although the sound was deathly and deeply disturbing. “Me, and all of you. I want him to be more like my father was, fucking absolutely *everything* that was pretty, willing and squirming. Most of my father's bastard offspring died in World War II. Most of mine died in Vietnam.

Max's mother, Rachel, my youngest daughter, fled from the family when she was sixteen, and died ten years later, giving birth to Max, in 1975. Max's father, John Brewster, died about ten years later, never having known anything about Rachel's real family history, so he never could've told Max about any of it. Because Rachel didn't trust John! And rightly so! He was a prick! But he's long dead now, so fuck him. The dead are only obstacles in our way if we allow them to be. Max spent the rest of his childhood in the foster care system, bouncing from home to home, never quite settling. Maybe that's what fucked him up. I don't know. We need to focus on now, though, on this, on Max, on how we're going to change his life. It's a game, perhaps the most expensive, insane game you've ever played in your life, that anyone's ever played in all of history maybe! But most of the moves pay decent prizes, and obviously, the grand prize is on the table too. Mrs. Churchill will fill in the details. Good luck! And get fucked! We're counting on it!"

Brand started to cough between laughs once more, gesturing frantically towards the screen and the video file ended. Mrs. Churchill smiled again at the crowd.

"Do we have your attention now? So here's the game - the 100 of you will have 90 days to get Max to get you pregnant. But here's the first hurdle. It can't *just* be you. In fact, it's going to have to be a whole lot of you."

Another quick whisper of noise flared up in the crowd.

"Now now, it's not all that bad. Up until a few minutes ago, most of you were adamant that you wanted a sperm donor without the father getting tangled in your life, and that's what's available to you here. Mr. Brand wants to ensure that their genetic lineage spreads wide, and he has the money to guarantee that it does. He wants Max to be a modern day Genghis Khan, spreading the family's bloodline far and wide. One or two of you getting pregnant simply isn't enough. Max is virile and all of you have been tested and confirmed to be fertile without any major health complications. If only a few of you get knocked up, none of you get any additional money. You'll have your baby, and your twenty-five grand for showing up, but that's it. The payout is structured so that the more of you that spread the Brand genetic lineage, the better it is for *all* of you. So, if ten or more of you get pregnant from Max in those ninety days, the minimum number needed for any of you to get anything, each of the pregnant women will get a thousand dollars a month, U.S., for the next twenty-five years, to take care of their child. That's over a quarter of a million dollars. That figure will grow with inflation, once a year, to match whatever a thousand dollars will buy you right now. If you're from overseas and also want to relocate to the US, we can also make sure that happens. I know a few of you want to raise your child in some country other than where you came from, and that's fine as well. But if you want to go home after you're pregnant, and get as far away from Max as you can, well, that's fine too. The money will simply be wired to you via an account in your name wherever you are."

The room was struggling to keep the murmur down to a quiet rumble, but clearly all of the women were somewhat taken aback by this, so Mrs. Churchill tapped the microphone then carried onward.

"If the number of women in this room Max impregnates is 20 by the end of the ninety days, the amount paid out to each pregnant woman doubles. If it's 30, it double again. If 50 or more of you women can get pregnant from young Mr. Brewster within the next 90 days, each of the pregnant women will get twenty-five thousand dollars each and every month. Those of you quick on math will know that ends up to seven and a half million dollars each, over the course of twenty five years, before you factor in inflation. If, in the unlikely event, all 100 of you get pregnant, there's an additional bonus, a one-time lump sum payment of one million dollars. A piece. But consider that aspirational rather than a real goal. "

The sheer amount of money being thrown around had the room in a tizzy, but they were attempting to keep quiet, because no one wanted to miss out on any details. More than a couple of women had early on gleaned the fact that if all 100 of them were pregnant, that was close to a billion dollars being paid out among all of them.

“And of course, there's the final piece of the puzzle. The grand prize of the contest, if you will. If one of you likes Mr. Brewster enough that you're willing to change your mind about raising your child alone, you can try and convince him to stay with you after the 90 days is done, but only, and I want to stress this, ONLY if he's gotten ten more more women pregnant by that point, and you must be one of the pregnant ones. Also, only after the game itself is done, and we've had time to debrief Mr. Brewster about his entire experience. You don't have to do it alone, either. If, say, two of you can convince him that you want the three of you to be a unit, one of you as wife, the other as mistress or fucktoy, well, that's between you and Mr. Brewster.”

More nervous laughter filled the room, but at this point, Mrs. Churchill was certain there were at least a dozen women trying to decide which was more important to them – their morals or the life they could live paired up with a billionaire.

“Polyamory's not so uncommon here in the Bay area, so people wouldn't bat much of an eyelash. Hell, all 100 of you could decide you want to stay with him if you want, although I imagine that might get kind of crowded. With the kind of money he stands to inherit, though, maybe not. You'd be amazed how far that much money goes. I've seen the Brand family estate's local home here, and let me tell you, it could fit quite a lot of you bitches. And Max Brewster stands to inherit about forty such homes, mostly here in the states, but about a dozen abroad. In downtown London, he's going to own an entire two floor luxury penthouse, and when I say two floor, I don't mean it's got an upstairs and a downstairs, I mean it takes up the entire top two fucking floors of the building. Think that's enough of an empire that you could stand sharing some of it instead of losing all of it?”

She glanced around the room, noticing how many of the women were sizing each other up now, looking for enemies or allies or partners. At this point, they were all realizing they were in this together, but that they weren't likely to stay that way the entire time.

“Now, you might be asking why that's such a prize to have, if Mr. Brewster isn't famous or well known. The answer's pretty clear, but in case you need it spelled out for you, let me erase all ambiguity. When Mr. Brewster has impregnated at least 10 women, and ensured that the Brand bloodline doesn't disappear from the earth, he will inherit his grandfather's entire fortune, currently valued at around \$146.9 billion, give or take. That's billion with a big fat B, ladies, not to mention all of the companies and corporations that come with it. You've probably heard of a few of them - Big Brand Department Stores, Brand TelCom, Big Brand Real Estate, Brand Media Conglomerate, Brand Brothers Energy, Brand Manufacturing... the list goes on and on. Getting to be his wife, hell even his girlfriend or mistress, is quite a catch, and one of you could be living the life of luxury for the rest of your days. The term 'whore' is thrown around a lot, but if I was cuddling up to a hundred billion dollars every night, he could call me whatever the fuck he wanted - slut, bitch, cunt, fucktoy, whatever - and I'd say thank you and more please.”

There was a ripple of laughter through the crowd, but it was tinged with that hint of excitement, hunger and an undercurrent of lust. Money did strange things to people, and this was more money than any of these women had ever dared to dream of.

“At this point, you're all wondering what the *big* catch is. There are two. Let me tell you them now, because they are doozies, and I want to stress how important this is. First, you cannot tell Mr. Brewster, or anyone else outside of this room, about any aspect of the game. Max does not get to know about the contest his grandfather put forth for him or his inheritance until after the 90 days is done, otherwise you and everyone else in this room get nothing. In addition to that, we will rain down hell upon whoever breaks the silence. You can only imagine how many horrors a few million dollars dedicated to completely ruining someone's life can generate. And I assure you, we will find out. His house is bugged, his car is bugged, and he himself is bugged, in addition to being surveilled. It is part of the terms of the will that Mr. Brewster does not know or understand why he is being overwhelmed and assaulted with women trying to get him to fuck them and knock them up. Our Mr. Brand took Max's lack of children rather personally, so this is a sort of punishment for him.”

There was another round of nervous laughter, but Mrs. Churchill could see at least a few of the women thinking that if this was the kind of punishment the man had planned for his own grandson, what could he possibly do to women who interfered with his game?

“Yes yes, I know, it doesn't seem like much of a punishment for him right now, but think how exhausted our Mr. Brewster is going to be at the end of these 90 days, not understanding why it feels like his entire life is consumed with sex. He'll be pretty much fucked out by the end of it, which is exactly how Mr. Brand wants him to be. I know you're all smart enough to have read the confidentiality agreement you've already signed thoroughly, and there are a few of you out there with legal degrees who understand just how badly fucked you are if you break it. I'm sure they'll be happy to share with the rest of you. Don't do it. If you break it, we will own your life, your house, your car, your job and your goddamn pet, and you'll likely spend the rest of your lifetime in jail, hearing stories about how we ruined the lives of everyone you ever called a friend. Mr. Brand hired me because I am a ruthless, brutal cunt who you do not fuck around with. If you don't want to play, that's fine, just walk away with your twenty-five grand, and keep your fucking mouth shut. Don't you dare fuck it up for the rest of the girls in this room, some of whom desperately need this more than you think.”

There was another rush of whispers, which Mrs. Churchill let go for half a minute before she cleared her throat into the microphone.

“The second big thing is this. You will have an audience if you decide you want to do this. Not a large one, only about a hundred people or so, but they will be watching you much of the time you are with Max. There are cameras and microphones in Max's apartment, in his food truck, in his office and also in all your AirBnBs. None of the footage will ever get out to the general public or be seen more than once, and if it does, you stand to earn one hundred million dollars.”

Many of the girls began to gossip, so Mrs. Churchill thumped the mic again to quiet them down.

“You see, there are a number of *very* wealthy individuals who wanted to watch their own version of 'Big Brother.' Friends and colleagues of the late Mr. Brand. The ultra-ultra-ULTRA rich. They will be getting, or rather, buying streams they can watch at any time, but all of those streams are individually watermarked. The streams are secure and self deleting, so even if someone tries something low tech to try and record it, the watermarking will tell us exactly who it is, and they will be fined a two hundred million dollar fine, half of which is yours. You might be asking how we can ensure they pay up. The truth is, they already did. The streams are costing these people a hundred mil each, and we charged them the two hundred mil up front before they even saw a frame. Six months after the game is concluded, assuming they haven't broken our trust, the remaining hundred mil is refunded to them. Oh, and we likely have blackmail against these people that would also come out should they try and violate your privacy, so you needn't worry, but you should know there are eyes on you, even right now.”

Mrs. Churchill pointed to a number of cameras that were set up around the room, something none of the women had given any consideration to until right now, and yet, instead of shirking away, most chose to ignore them, and a few even preened for their audience.

“We control the feeds, and the only time the cameras will be broadcasting to your small audience, other than this, is when you are actually with Max. Talking to him, seducing him, fucking him, the minute you're in Max's orbit, assume you're on camera. These rich fucking perverts,” she said, giving a playful wave to one of the cameras, “are helping fund this little endeavor, so try and put on a good show for them when you're getting Max to knock you up. They want to watch our poor Max try and keep up with you crazy bitches, as every single one of you tries to fuck that hapless man, who won't see it coming. They've even organized their own betting pools around some of you, but I wouldn't let yourself think about that too much.”

The murmurs among the crowd made it clear that while all of this was uncomfortable, it was by no means a dealbreaker for anyone. That was part of what the psychological screenings had been for – to make sure the women involved would be game, and also capable of keeping their mouths shut. They'd gone through some five thousand people to whittle it down to this 100 person cast. Mrs.

Churchill decided to wrap it up.

“Alright ladies, if you're not interested, you can take the twenty-five grand, and enjoy as much of your vacation here in the Bay Area as you like for the next 90 days on us, or even just fly home tonight if you really want out. The rest of you, inside the envelope with your check for twenty-five grand you get for just showing up, you will find a sheet of paper with a phone number and a URL, as well as your login and password for that web page. That web page is a tracker, where we'll keep an updated tally of the number of women who are pregnant. It's a nice, simple page, which reads 0% now. Each percentage point is another person pregnant. If you want to be tested for pregnancy, you simply need to call the number on the sheet of paper, and we will send an Uber to drive you from your location to our testing lab, where we will verify that. Our tests are generally good enough to detect pregnancy about a week or so after conception. The child will also be given a blood test shortly after birth to confirm it's Max's kid, so if you were thinking about trying to do a run around, think twice. It's also a violation of your NDA, under the section 'Attempting to skirt the rules of the game,' so don't think we didn't plan ahead for you crafty cunts. If it's not Max's kid and you claim it is, you know what happens.”

She clicked the device in her hand and an image of another man sprung onto the screen, an Asian American man with a rounded face, thick framed glasses and bulging cheeks, wearing a Hawaiian shirt that seemed like it was vomiting all the colors of the rainbow at once.. He was laughing in the image, his arm around Max, the two sitting at a bar of some kind.

“This is Max's best friend, Francis Yen, better known as Frankie. He's also Max's business partner. Frankie is the one and only person outside of this room who you *can* talk to about this. Let me repeat that, to be perfectly clear about this. He is in on the game, and is meant to be your inside man. Our on staff psychologist suggested that all of this might be significantly easier if we had someone Max already trusted in our corner, so Frankie has been convinced to help us in all of this. He will help you when he can, but you need to rely on him very sparingly. There are a hundred of you, and if you all inundate Frankie at once with endless questions, he won't be able to help any of you. Frankie is being paid very handsomely for this, though, so be sure to use his assistance at opportune moments, if you need to. Frankie's also single, but keep in mind, that's likely a double-edged sword. The last thing you want is Frankie's kid and not Max's. Still, throwing Frankie some attention might be enough to bump you to the top of the line. Your call to make. I pass no judgment on you either way.”

Mrs. Churchill pushed the clicker again and the picture of Max popped up again.

“Also on that sheet of paper is a link to another web page, behind the same password firewall, that contains everything you will need to know about Mr. Brewster here to get started. When and where he works, where he lives, his hobbies, what regular appointments he has, places you can find him, friends of his and people you may need to watch out for. We've also pieced together as much of his sexual tastes as we can, but it's pretty sparse on the ground there. Frankie has helped fill in the blanks where he can, but Max can be somewhat private. He hasn't had so much as a second date in six years, so who knows if his tastes of changed, but what we have, you have. It's as much information as we can get with six months worth of detective work, as per Mr. Brand's dying wishes. Max isn't a bad looking guy, and each and every one of you said you wanted to have a baby with the father out of the picture, but that you wanted financial help for it. Kids are expensive. Believe me, I know. I've got four of my own, and they cost me a fucking fortune.”

That seemed to put the women a bit more at ease about it, and they laughed once more. She pushed the button and a picture of Max building houses with Habitat For Humanity appeared on the screen.

“All the money aside, ladies, Max Brewster is a good man. I mean, he's a bit too passive and soft for my liking, but he gives his time and money to charities regularly, even though he can barely afford it, he's well-educated, he's resourceful, he's a feminist, and for the last five Christmases, he's turned his food truck into a mobile soup kitchen, cooking meals for the homeless of Oakland. But the



man has endured some truly shitty relationships in his life, and has been more than a little burned by that. The exes he's still on good terms with all used the exact same phrase to describe him. They say he's a 'nice guy.' I'm sure a lifetime of hearing that over and over again has probably gotten on his nerves. You might be able to use that to your advantage. My instincts tell me that once some of you get the ball rolling, much of the time he's going to be too caught up in the rush of it to try and slow it down, but do not underestimate how hard this man may be to get to make emotionally vulnerable. You don't have to just bring your A-game to picking this guy up; you're gonna have to make yourselves simply irresistible. And you cannot go it alone. Again, if he doesn't get at least ten of you knocked up, then everything's for naught. You won't even be able to try and hook up with him afterwards. We'll see to that. So make sure that at least ten of you get this done.”

There wasn't a consistent look or type to the women in the audience, other than they were all stunningly beautiful, but each in very different ways. Max's dating history, while sparse, had been completely all over the map. He'd had seven major relationships between the ages of 15 and 35, and the only common thread between all of them was they were all smart. He'd dated the spectrum in terms of looks, from a skinny redheaded girl to a hefty and chesty Latina to an athletic black girl to plump Korean girl to a very heavily tattooed and pierced biker chick to French model to his last girlfriend, the most prototypical blonde surfer girl Mrs. Churchill had ever met. In building out the profile, it was almost as though Max had gone to a dating website and said “Give me one of everything” and then suddenly stopped, for no rhyme or reason. Most of the big train wrecks in his dating history seemed to have come early. The last relationship had simply run out of gas, and the two had remained friends, but apparently felt no sexual chemistry for one another since. Mrs. Churchill looked back to the screen and continued once more.

“At the end of all of this, I'll personally tell Max all about the game, as well as his inheritance, and any women who want to remain in contact with him from that point onward will be able to, and any women who want to disappear from Max's radar, well, we can ensure that as well. The conditions of Max's inheritance is that he has to respect the wishes of all the women who were involved in this game, or he gets nothing. If you want to have his kid and disappear into the night, he's going to respect that, eventually. We expect him to be angry, but not so angry that over a hundred billion dollars can't make him see reason. He's not a violent or a jealous man. He's just... some average guy, you know?”

All of the faces around the room had started distracted, but were all extremely focused on Mrs. Churchill now. Whatever lingering doubts and reservations they'd had about this had melted away by some combination of the money or just the very bloodsport nature of it all.

“Lastly, you'll also see you've been given a start date and time, with you all being divided into ten groups. That is when you can first go and meet up with Max. You don't have to do it right when your time starts, but you can't do it before. We can't simply throw a hundred beautiful women at Max all at once right up front. The poor boy's head would explode, and it would certainly give the game away. And the game is everything.”

The room was filled with a big burst of laughter.

“The event actually runs a hundred days in total, with ten of you getting access to Max starting tomorrow, ten the day after that, and so on. Do not try and get in early. It's a violation of your NDA, and we're back to the life of misery and lawsuits. Being first is not necessarily the advantage you think it is. The first batch of you girls have to convince Max that it's *okay* that he's having unprotected sex with dozens and dozens of women he barely knows. That's going to be a hell of a challenge. And each of you women is guaranteed a 90 day window. At the end of your 90 days, you'll be sequestered away from Max, to let the rest of the game play out. But don't worry – we'll let you all watch the streams during your 100 days, so you can see what he's up to during the remaining time, or during time when he isn't with you. Studying what other women do right or wrong may give you a hell of an edge. After the hundred days is over, there will be a two week period where none of you will be allowed to talk to Max at all. Don't worry – we have a plan for handling it so that it won't be a problem for any of you.

You can all go home at that point, if you want, or continue to hang around the Bay on our dime, while our Mr. Brewster will be isolation. At the end of that two weeks, the whole thing will be revealed to him. The game, the inheritance, all of it. The day after that, we'll give you information on how to contact Max again, if you so choose."

It was a lot of information to keep track of, so the web page also had a link to a reminder of the rules, in case anyone forgot, and every single section of the website had the link prominently displayed.

"You will also find that the web page with all the information on Max has three chat rooms in it – one for your subgroup, one for the entire lot of you, and one where you can submit a question for us to answer. All questions and answers will be posted to that public channel, so everyone's on the same level. We will have an answer for you within ten minutes, day or night, but don't overload us with questions if you don't have to, alright ladies?"

The women were looking around at each other, but it was clear to all of them there was no way they could remember all of the faces sharing the room with them.

"You can and should collaborate with one another, at least to some extent. The web page with info on Max also includes a headshot and name for each and every one of you, as well as a link so that you can private message or videocall each other through the website, although keep in mind, the audience has the ability to see those messages and calls, both the ones in the chat rooms and the ones you're privately sending to each other. So do we. That's mostly for the safety of the game, but our subscribers like to feel like they can get as much insight into what's coming as they can."

A couple of girls in the audience were holding hands, like they were trying to form some kind of bond before the whole thing started, and Mrs. Churchill noted it with amusement. The game was going to bring out both the very best and the very worst in these women.

"You can lie as little or as much to Max as you want, just as long as you don't tell him about the game, or that you're trying to get him to knock you up. You can completely be yourself, or you can be someone entirely different than who you really are. You can pretend to be related or long time friends with your fellow contestants. You can pretend to be tourists here. Or you can tell Max nothing but the complete and total truth about yourself and your life, other than how it relates to the game. Whatever you want. We don't give a shit what you do with or say to Max, as long as it doesn't reveal what's going on here."

Many of the women had been taking notes throughout Mrs. Churchill's speech, and the older woman had her eyes on a few of the contestants in particular. Much like any reality show, she was already casting some people for roles in her head. Innocent. Villain. Loose Cannon. Gold Digger. Idealist. But no one right away screamed Protagonist to her. Exactly as she wanted it to be. One of the members of her team, Sharon, had been a producer on shows like *The Bachelor* and *Bachelor In Paradise*, and her insight in planning all of this had been invaluable.

"That's the game. I'm managing the process, and I have a couple of assistants, but none of us are in the running or trying to bang Max, so you needn't worry about us playing favorites. If you start to feel like you're seeing the same four or five women around you all the time who aren't anywhere on the website, no, you're not being paranoid. That's probably just some of my staff. If they approach you to talk to you about the game, they will tell you a personal piece of information that you normally keep secret about yourself first, so you can identify them as one of my crew. As long as Mr. Brewster impregnates at least ten women by the end of the game, myself and all of my team will be compensated more than fairly, so it's in our best interests for you to succeed. If you fail, we don't get paid either, and that means my team and I will have to make a second go at this with another bunch of women, which means we'd be working twice as long for the same amount of pay. We're on your side, ladies. We promise. Alright?"

She leaned forward and smiled at them, looking over the sea of beautiful faces.

"Happy hunting, ladies. May the best women get knocked up, may that be lots of you and may the most ruthless bitch win."

\* \* \* \*

Max Brewster – 3/6/2017 – Monday – 5:15 am

Just because his phone's alarm was set to play “You're The Best Around” didn't mean he liked the song any – it was just something designed to make Max get his ass out of bed. Mondays were, essentially, his Fridays. While there was a constant demand for food trucks in the Bay Area, Max had found he did the best business on the weekend for people out for the afternoon, about to head out on their night of adventure, or post bar crawl, so he always made sure he was manning the truck on those days. There were decent crowds most of the rest of the week, but Tuesdays and Wednesdays always seemed to be the slowest, so on those days, he let his employees Carlos and Joey man the truck. But Monday mornings and lunch shifts always seemed to have high demand, as if people needed his food to get through their first day back into the work grind.

While there were some people clamoring for food even earlier than he started, Max had found his particular sweet spot was to be available just before six until about eight for breakfast, and then back again for lunch from eleven until two. Then he had two blessed days off, when his second stringers would tend to his business, and while they hadn't fucked it up yet, they also hadn't done much to impress him either. They were, for lack of a better word, merely *adequate*.

As he hopped into the shower in the bathroom of his tiny studio apartment, Max remembered, not for the first or last time, how it had come to this. He'd been a very popular chef for a number of Bay Area restaurants, but in 2012, he'd decided to open his own restaurant, a place he called Plan B.

The name hadn't been one of his better ideas.

While he'd gotten a decent amount of clientele, the rent on the location in downtown Berkeley was astronomical, and there wasn't enough room for him to seat enough people to keep the business afloat. He struggled for a while, but one night the place next door had an electrical conduit fail, and it burned out the inside of Plan B. Through an annoying loophole, the insurance hadn't paid out, and the building owner hadn't been liable. It had been written off as “an act of God,” and Max had just shown up one morning in 2013 to see a half a million dollar investment burnt to ashes.

Max had spent the next few months struggling to figure out how to pick up the pieces when his friend Frankie came to him with a suggestion – Max should just open a food truck. It would let him build an audience, save up some money, control his own hours, and several food trucks in the Bay had eventually done so well that they'd graduated to having permanent locations in addition to the food truck. This, Frankie told him, could be what he needed to get back on his feet.

That had been four years ago, and the truck had been doing good business since then, but the debts he'd been in from Plan B had been deeper than expected, so he was keeping his head above water, but saving enough to open a new location didn't seem likely again any time soon.

Max had done everything he could to keep his overhead costs down, which was why he was living where he was, in the loft apartment above the garage of his best friend Frankie Yen's house. Frankie, his brother Charlie, Charlie's girlfriend Laura, Laura's friend Thuy and Thuy's brother Will shared the partially run down Oakland home. When Frankie had invited Max to live with him to save money, originally he thought he'd be moving into one of the bedrooms in the house, but despite the terrible insulation and awful water pressure, living above the house's garage had mostly worked out okay, and the driveway was long enough that he could keep the food truck close at hand nearly at all times. He had his lifeblood invested in the truck.

The name of his food truck was Constant Rotation. It wasn't just a play on words on the fact that it was a truck; it was the concept for the entire truck itself. While the truck was always guaranteed to have five key items available – currently a basic bacon cheeseburger, a carne asada burrito, a cheesesteak sandwich and jambalaya as well as Max's signature Max Chili – the rest of the time, each

week brought with it a dozen new items that would only be available for that week. Once a season, he'd let subscribers to the food truck's email newsletter vote on one item to be removed from the key items list and one item to be added to the list in its place. The carne asada burrito had replaced his chili dog, the cheesesteak had replaced his salad wrap and the jambalaya has replaced his lobster roll.

As he hopped out of the shower, he could hear Frankie downstairs stocking up the truck from the freezer they kept in the garage. Frankie really didn't *have* to work for a living – he owned the house, and charging rent to everyone who stayed there brought in more than enough money for him to live off of, but he liked working with Max, and found that manning the register of the food truck kept him from sitting on his ass around the house all day. It also gave Max someone to talk to while he worked, which was the most important part.

In the beginning, Max had run the truck entirely by himself, and he'd been struggling to keep up with both taking orders and filling them, so when one day, Frankie had come by to get lunch, Max had offered Frankie a job just tending to the register, and a partnership was born.

Max tugged on his clothes and was in the process of tying his hair back when Frankie softly knocked on the door to his apartment. “C'mon, Max, did you oversleep again? We don't want to miss the breakfast rush!”

After grabbing his cell phone, he opened the door to see Frankie's smiling face waiting for him. “I was literally seconds away from opening the door, Frankie.”

“Then you're dragging your ass this morning! Let's go!” Frankie was an impossibly positive human being, unflappable and optimistic under any circumstances. “I tossed yesterday's batch of chili into the reheating pot so you can use it this morning.”

“Good. Those Huevos Maximos breakfast burritos seem to be a very big hit this week.”

“Who'd have thought chili and eggs breakfast burritos would've been the week's top seller?” Frankie said, as Max relocked his apartment, before the two men headed down the rickety wooden stairs along the side of the garage.

“I mean, people love the chili, so I've been trying to think of other ways to use it. I wouldn't mind if the breakfast burrito wins the spring bracket and gets added to The Hit List,” Max said, as he hopped into the back of the truck. In addition to manning the register, Frankie also drove the truck to and from their stops, and set it up and broke it down, so Max could spend almost all of his time cooking.

For lunch and dinner, Constant Rotation was normally part of the Off The Grid food truck collective, but for breakfast, they were entirely on their own, and Frankie had found a great spot just off to the side of the subway entrance near 12<sup>th</sup> St. They were able to make food for people heading into the subway as well as those coming off it. Technically, people weren't supposed to be eating on BART, but lots of people tended to eat quickly on the platform, snarfing down his food as quickly as possible.

Constant Rotation wasn't a large truck, but Max had found ways to make every inch of the inside count, between having multiple grills, two separate fry baskets, a prep area, three slow cookers, not to mention the coolers they used to keep meat and veg, so they weren't constantly having to run out for resupplies. The truck itself was crimson and black, with a small section of fidget spinners nailed into a board just below the window for people to order. Despite the fact that profit margins on sodas and other beverage were excellent, Max had long ago decided not to sell any, because it ate into the space in which he could keep supplies. Telling people they were sold out of something was a sure fire way to irk a customer, so Max constantly struggled to make sure they did so as little as possible.

The breakfast rush went by in a blur, with Max constantly whipping out food for people, as the money kept rolling in. By 9 am, though, virtually no one was coming back, and the two packed it in, although while Frankie was closing the truck up, Max was brewing up yet another batch of Max Chili. Then they were rolling across the Bay Bridge to head into San Francisco, to put in a lunch shift at the Off the Grid stop on 9<sup>th</sup> Street downtown.

Off the Grid had about thirty different food trucks in their network, and each day, they sent

different trucks to different locations, so Max and Frankie never really knew where they were heading in a given week until a couple of days before. Berkeley, San Francisco, Oakland, Cupertino, Sunnyvale, Fremont, Sunnyvale, Mountain View – the list of possible locations went on and on and on, and each area, people had different demands.

For the lunch rush on this particular day, the Cuban Submarine Sandwich (ham, pulled pork, bacon, mustard and pickles on a hoagie) seemed to be extremely popular, so much so that they had to write “OUT” next to it for the last hour or so before they packed it in for the day. That one surprised even Max, who'd seen good numbers on the sandwich for the previous days, but nothing like the demand it had shown today. He made a mental note to warn Carlos and Joey.

All in all, it had been a pretty good week, as Max counted the money while Frankie drove them back across the Bay Bridge to Oakland just an hour or two before the three hour “rush hour” traffic would clog up the major roadways. After the lunch run on Tuesday, Max and Frankie handed the truck over to two brothers, Carlos and Joey, who stuck strictly to the recipes that Max left for them, although a couple of Yelp reviews had pointed out that Carlos wasn't as good a cook as Max was, though those complaints came less and less in recent days.

Frankie pulled the truck up in front of the brothers' parents house, and Joey was already on the porch, vaping, as he often did. It was one of the few things Max had been forced to scold them about a number of times, that Joey wasn't allowed to vape inside of the truck. The vape juices that Joey used tended to have overpoweringly strong scents that lingered for days after they were gone. Max had threatened not to let the brothers man the truck any more, and since then, Joey had always made sure to go outside of the truck when he needed to scratch his itch.

Joey was a scrawny Hispanic man in early 20s, his brother Carlos four years his elder. The two brothers had worked for him at Plan B, and when he'd started up the food truck, he'd asked if they wanted to man it two days a week, and while Joey had been a little hesitant, Carlos had insisted they were all in, simply because the older brother had been learning so much about cooking from Max that he wanted to continue studying, any way they could. The two brothers were also planning on opening their own restaurant at some point, and had never moved out of their parents' place, so as to save as much money as possible. It was a common story in the Bay area.

“Anything super crazy on this week's menu, boss?” Joey asked Max, as he and Frankie locked up the truck before heading towards the porch. Max opened a locker on the side of the truck to get his leather jacket out before closing it back up again. The menu, with all the week's recipes, was waiting for Carlos on the little iPad mini they kept inside of the food truck, which doubled as their register.

“Not really, although make sure Carlos keeps more chili prepped than normal, especially for the breakfast shifts. The Huevos Maximos breakfast burrito's been crazy popular, so we're going through the Max Chili pretty fast, faster than normal. Also, maybe double up on supplies for the Cuban Submarine Sandwich,” he said, as Frankie tossed Joey the keys. “No idea why the sudden rush today, but we actually had to put up a sign saying we were out of them today, and you know how I fucking hate to do that. Other than that, you two know the rules: No vaping in the truck, no banging in the truck, no drinking in the truck.”

Joey nodded. “Yeah yeah, got it, boss. See you Wednesday night?”

“Yep yep yep,” he said. “As per usual.”

The week's menu was decided by Max on Wednesday afternoon, started on Thursday and ended after Wednesday evening, so the brothers were making things based on the recipes he'd had a chance to refine over the course of five days. People who came to the truck on Thursdays knew they were beta testers, and that the dishes were a little wild'n'wooly, and weren't shy about offering suggestions on ways they thought things could be better. A lot of times Max would simply write it off, but his regulars mostly knew how to offer valid and constructive feedback, so that definitely affected how the menu looked going into the weekend. Hell, a handful of his regulars had even made requests for things they'd like to see him try from time to time, and Max wasn't above a challenge. But he certainly didn't want to

let the brothers experiment around with his cooking – they weren't ready yet.

As Joey headed back inside to get his brother, Max and Frankie headed over to Max's motorcycle, which they always made a point to leave over at the brothers' house on Sunday nights, so they could ride back to Frankie's house, where both Frankie and Max kept their cars. For a while, Frankie had bitched about having to ride on the back of the bike, so last year for Christmas, Frankie had given Max a sidecar for the Yamaha bike, which was fine. Any night Max wanted to take the motorcycle out by himself, he could just detach it, but mostly he used the bike just to ferry him and Frankie back and forth from dropping off the food truck.

“Back to the house, get showered, then out to Cato's for trivia and beers, as per the usual?” Frankie asked him.

Max groaned a little. “Shit, man, I dunno. I'm fucking tired. We were busy today. I know it's a tradition and all, but...” He suspected Frankie was going to try and talk him into going out, but really, Max just wanted to crawl back into his studio apartment and throw on Netflix while he passed out on his shitty couch.

“You're fuckin' A right it's a tradition, motherfucker, and as soon as you get in the shower, you'll feel all your energy come back and we can have a great night out drinking and relaxing,” Frankie said, getting his helmet out of the locker on the back of the sidecar. “Ever since Cato made trivia night also ladies night, they've been getting more and more hot chicks in there.”

“You've already got **three** girlfriends, Frankie,” Max said, shaking his head, putting on his own helmet, before flicking on the internal radio's power. “What the hell do you need more for?”

Max had never met anyone who actually had a polyamorous relationship before meeting Frankie, and he still wasn't entirely sure how to wrap his head around it. But Frankie, pretty much at all times, had between three and five girlfriends, all of whom knew about each other, and were okay sharing his time (and, on rare occasions, each other). Frankie had once joked around that one day a week was about as much as any woman could tolerate him, and seemed a touch hurt that Max hadn't disagreed with the joke. Max didn't bother to learn most of the girls' names, but two of them, Caroline and Abigail, had stuck around long enough that Max could recognize them on sight.

“Not for me, man,” Frankie said, as Max climbed onto the bike and Frankie climbed into the sidecar, slapping Max on the shoulder. “For you! We need to get you laid again, man. That way you won't be jealous of me and all my special lady friends.”

“You know that if they hear you referring to them as your 'special lady friends,' they're all gonna dump your ass so fast it'll make your head spin, right?”

“That's why I don't let'em *hear* me call'em that, big dude.”

Max shook his head and started up the bike. “Fine, but as soon as trivia's done, I'm probably coming back to the house. You wanna stay longer, you can Uber home.”

“Will you stay if I get a hot chick for you to join us for a few more drinks?”

Max rolled his eyes as the motorcycle pulled out of the driveway and onto the dirty Oakland street. “Tell you what. We'll take our usual corner table, and if you can get more women at our table than *any* other table in the bar before trivia's over, I'll stay until at least ten o'clock.”

“Hot damn, late night drinkin' on a Monday!” Frankie cheered, rolling his fist in the air. “Imma make it happ'n, Cap'n!”

“I'll believe it when I see it, Frankie.”

“My dude, you have no fucking clue what you're in for tonight... There is no way you could be prepared for the chaos we're going to get up to starting tonight.”

Not only was Frankie right, he was underselling the case.

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