

## **The Original Jack and Zollo Story**

This is the original story for the book beginning that was included in the very first draft of the book. I considerably shortened it by the time I reached the final version. Hope you enjoy it.

### **The fateful meeting**

As Jack entered the luxurious hotel entrance, he was greeted by a smiling face of a well dressed front desk clerk. "Welcome to Boroga Grand. Checking in, sir?", she asked.

"Thanks. Yes, I have a reservation under the name of Jack Riccardi". He took out his passport and a Bank of America visa card to hand over to the desk clerk.

"Thanks sir, it will be only a moment", she said as she started to look at her computer screen.

The mild breeze in the hotel lobby just reflected the beautiful day outside. Jack could smell the sea as he stood there looking into the mirror behind the desk clerk that reflected the sea shore behind him.

"Hey Jack!" He heard a familiar voice and turned around to see his childhood pal Paul.

"Hi Paul, I am surprised to see you here."

"I never expected to see you here in Baroga. What brings you here?"

"I came to speak at the conference on national development in Baroga"

"That's great, it has been almost a year since we last saw each other. I am here to make a pitch for one of the railway development projects in Baroga"

"I am amazed to see this place. I had barely heard of Baroga until a month back. Looked like paradise to me from what I could observe on my way from the airport"

"I am here for the first time too. Just came in last night and will be here for the next three days".

"Do you have plans for dinner tonight. My conference starts tomorrow afternoon and I am scheduled to speak at opening keynote so I have the evening free. It would be great if we catch up over dinner"

"Sounds great. I also have my evening free. I am still a bit jet lagged from an 11 hour flight from half way across the world"

"I am not feeling jet lagged yet but am sure it will get to me by the evening. Why don't we make it an early evening. Say 6 p.m. And plan to wind up by 8.30"

"Sounds good, Jack. Let's make a reservation".

"Here are the keys, Sir", the desk clerk handed over a black leather cover with room card to Jack, as he looked at her to enquire about a restaurant. "Your room number is 2516. You can take the elevators to the right. Its the best room in the hotel with a beautiful sea view that you will love".

"Thanks a lot. Can you suggest a good restaurant for dinner tonight?".

"We have one of the best restaurant in the country right here in the hotel. Its called the Palm Grove and features our celebrity chef Rick Moonen who moved here from New York last year".

"I think we have a reservation for it tomorrow with my business partners. Can you suggest something else?", Jack said while nodding to Paul.

"Sure sir, the Charlotte's Cafe is another great restaurant and it is very close to the hotel too. It serves French Cuisine and our guests tend to love it a lot. Should I make a reservation for you?"

"Jack, it will be great to try some good French cuisine. I am in", Paul stepped forward to look at Jack.

"Wonderful. Let's make a reservation for 6 p.m. for a party of two".

"Sure sir, I will do that right away. I hope you have a pleasant stay".

"Thanks", said Jack as he walked along with Paul towards the elevators. The plush rugs under their feet felt softer and thicker than rugs they were used to. The glass and marble facade in the lobby made the hotel seem brighter and bigger than anything Jack had seen before.

"How's Boston?" Paul inquired.

"It's been great. I have a lot to tell you and will be looking forward to dinner in the evening.", Jack replied.

"Same here. I have to tell you about the new apartment I bought in London last week. I think it is best to get a little nap and get a workout before heading for dinner. See you here at 5.45".

"I think I will also get a little nap and meet you here at 6", Jack said as he entered the elevator door.

By the time Jack was back in the lobby, he had had a short nap and an invigorating swim. He hadn't looked at his slides for the keynote but he had the entire morning to look at them one more time. He saw Paul was already there and waving to him as he exited the elevator.

"Hi buddy. You look like you got a good nap", Jack said while walking towards Paul.

"Yeah, it was great and the workout was even better. I am feeling hungry already", Paul replied.

They took directions from the concierge to find their way to the restaurant and walked there. It was just a few blocks away. On their way to the restaurant, they noticed that alongside the nice beaches and luxurious hotels, there lived another Baroga. One that was dirty, underdeveloped and poor. It was not unlike most other emerging markets although Baroga was a recent entrant to the emerging markets; until a year back it was closed off to the rest of the world due to an insular government. The recent Baroga spring led to government overthrow and the first democratic elections in over 75 years.

"We have a reservation for two", Jack said as he entered the restaurant.

"Mr. Riccardi?", enquired the maître d'

"Yes, that's right", Jack said as he looked at the massive wine collection in the open glass door cellar in the center of the restaurant.

"Your table is ready, sir. Please follow me this way", he said as he picked up several burgundy leather menus.

The restaurant was slightly dark with mellow lighting. It seemed to have the most affluent locals and quite a few visitors occupying most of the tables. Most of the empty tables had a "Reserved" sign on it. The place had a conversational feel to it and the chitter chatter of the guest mostly drowned the soft jazz in the background. Jack observed the large variety of wine glasses on

the table along with a full array of cutlery that lent a formal feel to the restaurant. As they sat down and picked up their burgundy leather menus from the table, Jack began.

"Shall we get a bottle of wine?", asked Jack.

"Yeah, I think I am in a mood for a full bodied red", said Paul.

"I would have suggested a Duckhorn if we were in Boston, but lets one from the old country since we are as far from the states as is possible", said Jack.

"A Bordeaux or a Burgundy sounds good then", suggested Jack.

"This 2010 Cos D'Estournel sounds pretty good", said Paul closing the wine menu

"I trust you on this one", Jack did the same as he picked up the other menu.

"Escargot looks very tempting. I have not had snails in quite some time", said Jack without looking up from the menu.

"And I am tempted by fois gras. I am craving bread after the intense workout", replied Paul while scanning his menu.

"We will figure out the main course later, lets get started", said Jack as he looked at the waiter standing near the counter at the other end of the room.

Jack placed their orders while Paul picked up some artisan bread from the bread basket that the waiter brought to their table. The checks on the cloth over the bread basket reminded him of his trip to Annecy last year.

"Now, that we are set, tell me about the keynote you are doing tomorrow", asked Paul, excitedly.

"This is based on the book I am writing. I will be talking about how emerging market companies can use innovation as a tool to compete with competitors from developed world with superior capabilities. I think it is very well suited for the audience here who are fairly weak in their corporate capabilities due to a repressed economic environment for the last several decades. If you are free, why don't you join me tomorrow evening", Jack said as he picked the glass that the waiter poured a small quantity of wine in.

"Hmmm. This is excellent", he looked up at the waiter and smiled.

"It is indeed one of our best, sir", said the waiter as he poured more wine into their glasses.

"Tell me about the condo that you were telling me in the hotel earlier. I am curious", asked Jack as he sipped his wine.

"Oh its a great opportunity in the Square mile in London. One of the very few new developments in the square mile area. You have go to see this place when you visit London next", he said excitedly

He went on to explain the project and its potential in great details as Jack asked him clarifying question in between. Both of them had a penchant for real estate investing on the side and they often spent countless hours discussing real estate investing on phone and in person although they were separated by the pond. The waiter brought their appetizers and laid them on their table.

"In short, a great property, abysmal bond yields, and mortgage rates at their historic low make this just the perfect step to take", Paul said when Jack saw a figure standing next to him.

"Sir, as you enjoy your dinner, I wanted to let you know that the dinner is on the house", he said with a tone that had a mixed quality that Jack did not understand.

"Wow! What makes us the guest of honor for your restaurant today", Jack asked with a wink.

"Since you have been selected as the totem of Baroga this year, you and your friend have the dinner on the house. It is our tradition that we have celebrated for over 200 years", said the waiter with a lot of unease.

"I dont understand", said Jack.

"As a part of the tradition in Baroga, we select one person each year to match Zollo. Since we were closed as a country for a long time, nobody knows about this tradition outside of Baroga. You are the first foreigner to be selected as the totem of Baroga and be a part of our old tradition". He said as an authoritative looking man came and stood next to him.

"Do I have to do anything or is it just a lottery", asked jack who was clearly amused.

"You have the play the big chance with Zollo after your meal. Everybody is already gathering outside to see what you will choose?", he said becoming even more uneasy as his senior colleague put his hand on his shoulder.

"The big chance is the game of luck that Zollo will offer you. He will have a sword in one hand and a gun in the other hand. You will have to choose one. If you choose the gun, you will play Russian roulette with him. However, if you choose the sword, he will simply cut a limb of your choice and let you go. It is a major ceremony during which you will have a chance to fight back in a sword fight but given his skills, it is almost sure you will lose a limb before the fight is over", he said with a sense of finality.

As the waiter explained further, it dawned upon Jack that there is absolutely no way out of this arrangement. There is no way of getting any help and he did not know if there was an American consulate in place yet. He realized that he will have to make the worst decision to face him in his entire life. He also realized that there was no way of getting out. He felt helpless and paralyzed as he realized that he will soon have to make the choice between the sword and a gun. There was no option of running away either.

What would you have done if you were in place of Jack? Perhaps, like most other people you would have stayed at the restaurant for as long as possible.

## **END OF THE BOOK – CODA**

(the story ended at the very end of the book as a Coda section)

### Coda

Jack was in shock and looking around for ideas on how to get out of this difficult situation. The thought of choosing between a limb and his life was too much for him and that he rushed to the bathroom to vomit.

As he stood looking at the mirror in the restroom, his mind raced for ideas. Can he somehow slip away? Can he get help from the American consulate? Can he leave the restaurant incognito? But nothing convinced him.

He walked back to his table where Paul was sitting with a pale face buried into his hands.

"What will you do, Jack?", he asked as Jack sat down.

"I need to think about this with a calm mind", he signaled to the waiter who came to him right away

"Can I have a McCallan 18 on the rocks and a word with the hotel manager please", he told the waiter who walked to him.

"Sure sir, would you like to have a drink too", he asked Paul who signaled no.

The restaurant manager arrived soon after.

"I am sorry to hear about the situation, Sir, you wanted to have a word with me", the manager said

"Please sit down and help me answer a few questions", he told the manager and noticed that a very large crowd had begun gathering outside the restaurant.

"Isn't there a law that protects foreigners from this custom of the country?", he asked the manager

"There were no foreigners here until this year. And the law has accommodated the custom for years calling the killing a national game. There is no precedent for foreigners but I doubt you can get any legal help in time here because the crowd has gathered outside", he continued.

"But why do you have such a custom", Jack was now baffled

"Long time back Baroga was attacked from within. There was a civil war and chaos during those years. Zollo's ancestors from his Zolloville village were key to stopping the civil war with this game. They captured rebels and asked them to play this game with them - if the rebel won the Russian Roulette he would lose the arm. This tactic led to widespread fear among the rebels and the entire civil war faded quickly. More than half the village of Zollo's ancestors was killed in this process. The entire nation is indebted to them.", The manager explained.

"The elders decided that they will not let the nation forget this tragedy by making sure that the custom will be replayed each year on the day the rebels surrendered. This will make sure no rebels ever arise again and kill hundreds of thousands of people", he continued.

Jack began to form a new plan in his mind. He immediately called his friend Jeremy whom he met on the plane on his way to Baroga. Jeremy, from CNBC, was covering the conference because it was one of the biggest investment opportunities for the business world. He also called his office and

got in touch with the American consul general who promised to get there right away.

When the consul general arrived, he had with him one of the elders from the elder council, a body that was even more powerful than the parliament in Baroga. The elder explained that the custom cannot be changed because the entire nation will feel this was done due to outside pressure. The right wing fundamentalists have been agitating against the foreign influence in Baroga. Letting Jack go will also lead to the same issue. The law recognizes this national game as a game and the custom has to be followed.

Jack, along with Jeremy, explained that if the game continued the foreign investments will come to a halt and this may be the end of new progress of Baroga. Jack also explained that customs often have to change with the new era and adapting the customer to a global open Baroga is the need of the day. He came up with an idea about a mock game as a festival of Baroga. What if the game is converted into a mock game and used as a national festival where no blood is ever lost but the memory of the old carnage remains with the nation.

The elder council met and decided that converting this custom to a national holiday and getting international publicity for Baroga and its customs would allow them to achieve their goals and not be internationally isolated.

The head of the council of elders made a speech that was televised nationally to explain how the national festival and the national game will be combined from that day onwards. That every province in Baroga will play and re enact the scene of civil wars and end it with a mock national game. They explained that Jack will be the first foreigner to be a part of this new festival.

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On the way back to Boston, Jack and Jeremy were seated together.

"That was a really close call", Jeremy said

"When faced with two options that both leave you worse off, you don't have to choose option A or option B", Jack said



"You have to create option C", said Paul pulling out a copy of "The Dark Side Of Innovation" from his laptop bag.