

## Introduction

Steven Moses stepped out of his Black Stallion hover jet dressed in his dress khaki slacks and cowboy boots as the hot Texas wind whipped him across the face. That South wind brings not only a sweltering marine humidity but a heat that cooks you to the core. Steven was a tall man with muscular, chiseled looks you get from years of hard work in the oil fields. He grew up as a rigger where he was well known for working hard and playing harder in his early years. His well-trimmed beard looked as good on his wildcatter rigs as it did in the boardroom in his wrangler suit and boots.

Women noticed him immediately with his thick, blondish brown hair and the way he filled out his shirts with his barrel chest and wide shoulders from years of wrestling pipe in the Texas oil patch. Most were drawn to him being the most powerful man in Texas, making him the richest man in the world. Unfortunate for those who knew, Steven has been married to his job ever since his wife succumbed to cancer seven years ago. He still wore his wedding ring to remind himself of their years and a way to deal with the pain he still felt in his chest.

The turn of the century seems like an eternity ago, he thought. We had the rise of the markets, the attack on the towers and the recession, followed by the 2016 Depression, which led to Texas seceding from the Union and declaring its sovereignty. Now Texas in six short years has grown into the most powerful country on the planet, and Moses Oil and its conglomerates proudly stood as the largest company in Texas. Sandy would never believe what had happened.

He grew up in the oil patch as a third generation wildcatter. His dad and grandfather never made much money, but they did what they loved: gambling on oil wells. Sandy Sanderson was his high school first love, and they married after he graduated from Texas Tech with honors in engineering. They were married for eight years before she found out she found the lump in her breast, which was malignant, and it slowly tore her away from him. He never loved anybody else and simply married his work and research, which is why he kept wearing his wedding ring.

His research had led him to a patent on a chemical compound that thins oil ten thousand feet underground, allowing companies like his to reclaim old dry wells. Oil wells previous to Moses additives were only able to profitably pump half of what was in the reservoir. They were then abandoned as they began to drill another reservoir and then another. After he invented the Moses additive, it was like pumping free oil buying these abandoned wells for pennies on the dollar as they once again became plentiful and easy to produce without having to drill, making

him and everyone around him very wealthy people.

When the great collapse happened, it bankrupted almost every state in the old United States and especially those with spending out of control like New York, Maryland, and California, making for hard times for their citizens and businesses. America was so desperate financially when Texas voted and offered to buy their way out of the union the rest of the states jumped at the chance. The Texas Succession Bill passed the US Congress in a couple of months and was signed by the president to form the Republic of Texas. A country built on cheap energy, and the free and unfettered energy markets was a chance Texans were willing to take.

Flying in from platform 452 was pretty uneventful; however, entering the Houston airways was always a touchy adventure. He thought it seemed like everybody in Texas owned a hover jet, and they were always coming or going from Houston even at this hour in the morning, which kept you on your stick. The Moses Tower stood out like a Lone Star sentinel in this energy capital as it was the tallest skyscraper in America standing as a monument to energy and free markets. It was shaped like the biggest oil rig in the world. The crosswinds and downdrafts were tricky at twenty-three hundred and fifty feet where his landing platform was located as he approached from the south and squared her up, crabbing in to a perfect three-point touchdown.

Flying was his favorite hobby when he wasn't working as it allowed him a chance to clear his mind from the stress of being the wealthiest man in the world. Danny the air porter gave him a friendly good morning and "God bless you, Steven" as he rolled the new beauty to the executive hanger. As he walked into the 230th floor of Moses Oil Corporation, the express elevator whisked him to his top floor suite, and he was met by his personal secretary, Debra Jenkins.

"Good morning, Steven. President Stewart has been calling you all morning to find out about our negotiations with China and how much oil do you think we can send them. Why haven't you been answering your earplug?"

"Easy, Debra, I was taking the new hover jet for a spin over the gulf and really didn't want to take my mind off my enjoyment. If you weren't married or I wasn't single, I would swear you were my wife with your constant need to know where and what I am doing."

"You will never let a girl get close enough to have a chance!" She giggled at their favorite joke. Debra was the type of girl who was just as pretty in a tailored suit and makeup as she did in blue jeans and no makeup in a very country, feminine way. She could have been a Cowboys

cheerleader with her attractive farm-girl face and wavy, shoulder-length copper red hair. She was wearing a flowery green dress suit, which hugged her curves modestly but smartly.

She grew up in Longview, Texas, on a wheat farm and was the top of her high school class then graduated A&M with honors in business management. All the boys wanted to take her out but she had a sweet spot for awkward geeky guys, and when she met Dan Jenkins at a college church retreat, she melted. He was from Houston, and while they were playing volleyball, it was obvious he wasn't very athletic. When Dan got tangled in the net and fell in a heap, she giggled, turning him five shades of red, which she found so cute, opening the door to her heart.

Dan was studying chemistry and engineering at A&M, and when he graduated summa cum laude, they married and now, seven years and three babies later, were still crazy in love. Dan worked as a head engineer at Texas Air Company, producing long-range high-speed courier drones. They were living the dream life with Debra's parents staying with them in their retirement and helping watch little Davey, Bobby, and Sandra. Debra would love to be a full-time mom, but the money at Moses Oil was great and hours flexible so she stayed in one of the best jobs in the world.

"Call it my female need to know everything. I'll get President Stewart on the line for you if you're ready. Oh, and don't forget, you have a lecture this afternoon at University of Texas up in Austin."

"Don't remind me, you know how I hate giving these boring lectures to a bunch of uninterested students on how I made lemons into lemonade. Not to mention their being journalism students and will be grilling me about everything except how this works. Give me five minutes to get the files he will need and then put him in the virtual imaging chair and send Drake in."

"Did I hear my name?" Jeff Drake walked in, who was the CFO of Moses Oil. "What does that new bird do, around six hundred and fifty knots? I saw you coming in on the roof and knew you wanted to go over the Chinese proposal while you talked with President Stewart. Listen, these Chinese, as always, are trying to drive a tight bargain into the future and demanding we supply them before the Koreans or Australians. We have to find a way to keep everybody happy while not stretching ourselves too thin on contracts. You know they would be more than happy to continue to dominate the Asian energy markets as well as put a headlock on Taiwan. Then of course, there is the triangle of them selling their bonds to us while lending to the US,

which is a bit touchy financially.”

President Stewart’s image appeared on the virtual chair with a big hello. “Help me out, Steve, tell me you can keep everybody satisfied and my neck out of the noose. Seems that becoming the world’s leading producers of NatGas and refined oil products is making us very popular. although it is starting to put us in a vice.”

“Sorry, Mr. President, but we are just getting Refinery Seventeen on line in a couple months and are buying raw crude from wherever we can get it. Our problem is with prices going up as strong as they are. We aren’t able to hit the targets necessary to fill their orders at a profit. Of course we are buying futures to offset the higher priced tankers we are buying on the cash markets we expect to receive as well as our own production. The moderate prices in the shale production from the old United States help, but we could use a hundred tankers rather than the seventy-five available on the spot markets. The good news is once these tankers are processed, we should be able to bring on some more of our production as our new gulf deep wells begin producing.”

“Are you still getting grief from DC wanting us to loan them more money?”

“Of course,” President Stewart mocked. “I told them as long as they continue as a socialist country and spend money without any fiscal considerations, they can buy our energy and fuels but don’t expect us to finance their corrupt government.”

Jeff answered, “This is going to be a balancing act with these countries as they continue to go down their spiraling financial disaster. Until they bring real fiscal responsibility to the table, they are going to continue to live hand to mouth. For the time being, we will play at these levels, but in the future, we will need to rein them in a bit. Thanks for your time, David. Drake and I have a meeting down in Austin, and I have a speech to some students at the university to give. We will see you later today.”