

# A Moral Sanction

## Chapter 1

Jack Charlton was deep in thought as he turned off Schoeneck Road into his driveway. This had been one of the best days of his life. His battery had powered an electric car for one-hundred-thousand miles without stopping to recharge. He believed the car could go much further, but the private equity firm interested in his company had set one-hundred thousand as the milestone. Jack was eager to get to his office and inform the investors.

As the headlights on his SUV swung towards the gate, he noticed three people standing in the driveway and blocking his way. What the hell? he thought. All wore dark clothing and had balaclavas concealing their faces. Jack stopped twenty yards from them and reached into his console for his Glock 17. He racked a round as he stepped out of his vehicle.

“You people are on private property, my property,” he shouted. “I demand that you leave immediately.” His right arm hung to his side with the Glock clearly visible.

One of the trespassers stepped forward a few yards. “In the name of Mother Nature, we demand that you abandon your plans to build batteries,” he announced.

“And who the hell are you to come onto my property and issue demands,” Jack shouted.

“We are the Nature Liberation Front,” the man replied. “You are raping Mother Nature, and we intend to stop you.”

Jack did not possess an imposing physical stature. He was just under six foot tall and was a little pudgy. He ate reasonably well, but he got very little exercise. He preferred spending his time at a workbench rather than doing bench presses. His brown hair exhibited speckles of gray.

Jack raised his arm and fired a shot into the air. The three intruders cautiously moved backward a few yards. “That was my first and only warning shot,” Jack said. “The next one will be aimed at someone. And trust me, I hit what I aim at. Now, here is what is going to happen. I am going to get back into my vehicle and open my gate. Then I am going to drive through. If anyone passes through the gate, I will shoot him.”

“Very well,” the leader of the group said, “but you haven’t heard the last of us.” The three turned to the north and walked along the fence into the darkness.

When Jack could no longer see the trespassers, he pushed the remote for his gate. The gate did not move. Jack tried twice more with the same results. Annoyed that the gate had picked this moment to malfunction, Jack climbed out of his SUV and walked up to the gate while activating the remote. He could see the gate straining to open. Jack could now see why: the intruders had chained the gate so that it could not open.

Jack retrieved his pistol from the passenger’s seat and returned to the gate. He placed the barrel of the gun against the chain and squeezed the trigger. The chain came apart, and Jack was able to open the gate.

Jack shook his head in bewilderment. “Assholes,” he muttered to himself. After he talked to his investors, he’d investigate the Nature Liberation Front to see what he could learn about them.

By the time Jack pulled up to the outbuilding that housed his workshop and office, he’d forgotten about his unwelcome visitors. He was thinking about the myriad tasks that needed to be completed in the coming months. Once he finalized the deal with the investors, he could begin

construction on a new manufacturing facility. It would be a state-of-the-art facility to manufacture the revolutionary battery that Jack had invented.

Jack walked into his office a few minutes before the scheduled call with his investors. The investors had originally proposed to provide a \$10 million investment for 20 percent of the company. Jack immediately refused that offer. He knew that his company was worth a lot more than \$50 million, even if it hadn't generated a single penny of revenue. He projected that the company would generate \$20 million in its first year alone, with that increasing 50 percent each year for the next five years. He anticipated a net profit margin of 48.5 percent. If his projections were accurate, the company would have a profit of nearly \$50 million in its fifth year. But for that to happen, Jack needed a significant capital infusion.

Jack powered up his computer and logged into the online meeting. The investors were waiting and greeted him warmly. "Well, Jack," the lead investor said, "do you have good news?"

Jack smiled. "Yes, I do. The car traveled one-hundred-thousand miles without ever stopping to recharge the batteries. At the end of the test, one battery was completely charged, and the other was at 60 percent. Each battery powered the car for about five-hundred miles before reaching 20 percent of its capacity. At that point, the car automatically switched to the second battery. The dynamo in the car then charged the first battery. That took on average about five hours, or three-hundred miles. All of these numbers are well within the range that I had projected."

"That is impressive, Jack," the lead investor said. "We think your company has great potential, and we would like to partner with you. We'd like to invest \$20 million for a 20 percent stake. We'd also like an option to invest another \$20 within two years for an additional 15 percent."

Jack frowned. "That would give you 35 percent of the company for only \$40 million. I expect the profits in year five to surpass that amount. That seems like a very, very sweet deal for you."

The investor nodded. "Yes, if your projections hold up, it would be a great deal for us. And you. Without our capital, you can't build the facility that is required to make those projections a reality. Keep in mind, if this bombs, we are the ones who are out of \$40 million, not you. This is a win-win."

Jack thought for a moment. He's right that I need capital, but I don't necessarily need their capital. However, these guys have been fair with me. They had, after all, paid for the design of the manufacturing facility out of their own pocket. I could find much worse partners. "Okay, I'll agree to 20 percent for \$20 million. And I'm willing to agree to an option for another \$20 million investment, but for only 10 percent."

The lead investor responded immediately. "It's a deal. I'll have our lawyers draw up the agreement. Can you come to New York at the end of next week to sign the papers?"

"It would be my pleasure," Jack replied. "In the meantime, I'll finalize things with my contractor and get the necessary permits."

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Jack walked to the wet bar in his office. If there was ever a time to celebrate, this was it. He placed three ice cubes in a tumbler and poured himself three fingers of bourbon. Jack took a sip of the whisky and walked to his recliner. He leaned back and felt himself relaxing. This, he thought, is the culmination of my life's work.

Jack's fascination with batteries began in his eighth-grade science class. The first day of class, the teacher announced that he did not lecture. "In this class," he said, "you work at your own pace conducting experiments and performing different tasks. I am here to answer questions and guide you. After a week, each of you will be assigned a partner to work with."

The first task was to build a battery. The instructions were simple, and Jack was the first to complete the assignment. By the end of the first week, Jack and another boy had completed eight assignments. Nobody else in the class was beyond the fourth assignment, and a few were just getting their batteries to function properly.

Most of the assignments required the use of the battery. Jack and his partner quickly grew frustrated that their battery was depleting within three or four days. They then spent most of another class cleaning and rebuilding their batteries. To them, this was wasted time. They wanted to do more assignments, not keep repeating the first day of class.

Jack decided that he was going to build a better battery. He went to the library and read everything he could find about batteries. When he got home, he started experimenting. Within two weeks, he had built a battery that operated twice as long. It wasn't ideal, but it was a significant improvement. The teacher was impressed with Jack's initiative and creativity. By the end of the school year, Jack had a battery that would operate for three weeks. Perhaps the best part was, it could be recharged overnight and didn't require cleaning and rebuilding. He no longer had to waste time with that pointless task.

Jack smiled as he thought about that class. It had been the start of a lifelong love of batteries and his passion to build better and better batteries. He continued to experiment through high school, and then went to Case Western to study chemistry. After graduation, he went to work for East Penn, the world's largest privately owned battery manufacturer. He quickly advanced, and by the time he was twenty-eight, he was leading the company's research and development department.

Jack was paid well, and by most people's standards, he lived frugally. However, he put his money to work, making several astute investments in the stock market that made him a millionaire several times over before he was thirty.

Jack also bought land in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The land was cheap, and Jack was planning for the day that he would have his own battery company. He retired from East Penn on his forty-eighth birthday and moved to Lancaster County. Over the previous three years, he had built a comfortable home and a building with a 10,000 square foot workshop and three offices.

For the next seven years he had continued his research and experimentation. His efforts paid off when he invented a battery that delivered ten times the power and was a third the size of the batteries then powering electric cars. The battery was made of readily available materials and could be made much cheaper than any existing battery. The test that had been completed earlier in the day proved the capability of the battery. The investors would help him make it a commercial success. By the time he had finished his bourbon, Jack had forgotten about the Nature Liberation Front. However, they had not forgotten about Jack Charlton.

*A Moral Sanction* is available on [Amazon](#).