

A New Hope

A long time ago, in a galaxy very, very near, a tired man reached for the newspaper with dread. Every media pundit ranging from pop radio hosts to reputable network anchors bemoaned the ravaged forests, gaping ozone holes, governmental corruption, smog-choked cities, and global warming around the planet. He slumped a little, feeling powerless. His business attire hung loosely, betraying the atrophied muscles underneath. It seemed that neither his past self, the superhero "Matt-Attack," nor his present self, just ordinary Matt, could solve these problems. His former career of saving men one at a time paled in comparison to his dreams of ridding his planet of the plagues he read about every morning. But alas, he knew his superhero days had come to a close. He could no longer scale the steely heights of skyscrapers and descend victorious into cheering crowds one dramatic fight later. His days of channeling surging lightning through his hands into the bodies of foes had passed too. He could no longer burst shirt seams with a simple flex. The mysterious power he used to summon at will was now more of a lethargic, congealed puddle inside him rather than the seething lake it used to be. However, he maintained his sense of goodwill and hope in his troubled world. As headline after headline streamed though his consciousness, a common theme occurred to him: the economic implications of power generation and management were to blame for many of his planet's problems!

Max realized that one villain, the dastardly Dr. Petro, embodied these problems. While he and his henchmen gouged holes in the protective atmosphere, threatening to boil the world below, effective resistance had yet to emerge. Because no cheap, reliable alternative to oil existed, industry had little solid financial incentive to lessen its environmental impact (Earthwatch). Max had tried to persuade businesspeople otherwise many times before. A selling phrase he always returned to came to mind: "The positive PR that comes from environmentally

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friendly business practices could be economically advantageous.” However, as decision-makers realized, environmental concern often fails to compensate for the extra costs incurred with increased profits. And that warm feeling of a good deed done or a duty upheld tends to pale to the sensation wealth induces. Ethical issues abound: Should the developing world be held to the same standards as its first world counterpart? Is it just to force one country, like China, to develop under rules that did not exist when others, like the United States, were industrializing? Or, is the developing world the ideal arena for using capitalism to inspire more creativity and urgency on the environmental front? Progress against Dr. Petro was stagnating; only a clearly cheaper, cleaner and reliable alternative to fossil fuel would topple Dr. Petro’s dictatorship. Matt’s mission was clear: make it economically sound to conduct business conscientiously, at once! Matt’s mind, motivated by his mighty mission, formulated a solution at superhuman speeds.

The sheer urgency of his self-designated operation sparked his reincarnation. A billow of air lifted him off the ground. His unremarkable sport jacket transformed into a gleaming lab coat with “Matt, PhD.” monogrammed on the pocket. Magic crackled just below his skin, ready to engage the enemy. Hours of heroic concentration led him to discover how to conduct controlled nuclear fusion. Mission accomplished! But, as the world converted to nuclear fusion power, Max could not personally meet the demand. So, he invested his remaining power into a machine that would perpetuate his work for posterity. The Matterator, a self-sufficient reactor/generator, would evolve and adapt on its own, sustaining the world after its creator passed. The construction of the Matterator left Matt a man without magic, but completely fulfilled.

His deeds would go on to reap many wide-reaching benefits, from helping the world’s poor to easing environmental damage, and even combating terrorism and corruption. Oil and

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coal contribute to global warming by producing CO₂. On the other hand, nuclear fusion's only byproduct is inert, harmless helium (Post). Many countries that won the geological lottery to possess large quantities of "black gold" experienced its curse as well. Usually, a small group of people would become wealthier than Midas and leave most of the population destitute. These oil riches often fueled widespread government corruption and funded extremist groups. In fact, "petroleum politics" was one of the reasons the oil-poor Sunnis fought so determinedly in Iraq. Moreover, nuclear politics changed. With nuclear fusion replacing nuclear fission, countries could no longer maliciously develop fission reactors to manufacture dangerous plutonium under the guise of searching for a source of nuclear energy. Matt effectively removed energy politics as a source of violence and tension in international affairs. Similarly, with the oil demon tamed, previously preoccupied governments could focus on creating a multi-faceted economy to benefit the majority of the population. And Max's fusion did not just bring Dr. Petro down. Falling alongside him into the depths of history texts was Colonel Coal. His mining operations, which became unnecessary after the introduction of nuclear fusion, no longer ravaged landscapes around the world. Likewise, countries could stop using wood for fuel, essentially turning their homelands into wastelands, because cheap power available. Finally, inexpensive electricity accelerated the replacement of gasoline cars with clean electric cars. In Matt's eyes, the world finally came rushing back in full color, freed from the smog that had blackened it before.

Matt won the respect of all for his contributions. The media dubbed him "Mattlas," for he, like Atlas, supported the weight of the world. Everything from children's comics to documentaries immortalized Matt-Attack. History textbooks and the Nobel committee paid homage using his real name, Matthew Archibald. No matter his name, Matt felt gratitude from all. Rarely does a job receive such fulfilling compensation.

References

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