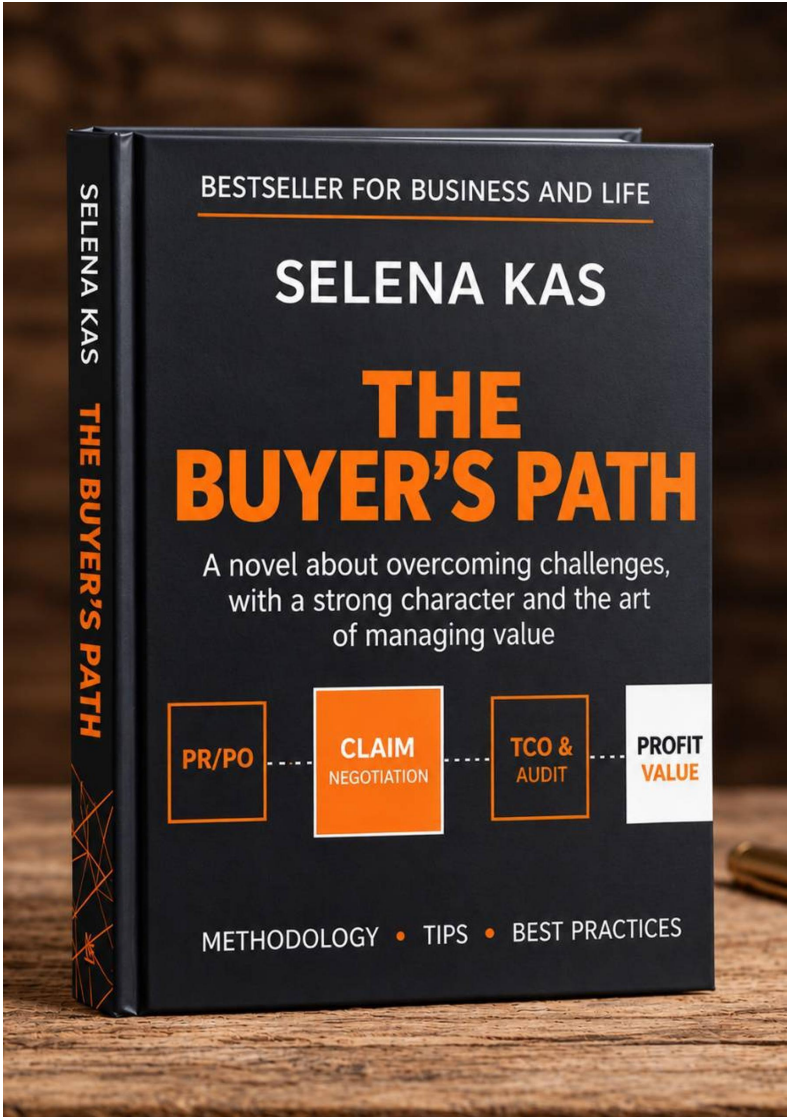
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THE BUYER'S PATH
BESTSELLER FOR BUSINESS AND LIFE
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THE BUYER'S PATH
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Селена КАС

The Buyer's Path

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Аннотация

n the business world, it is customary to admire those who stand in the spotlight. The laurels of victory traditionally go to charismatic sales directors closing multimillion-dollar deals, creative marketers whose advertising campaigns take the market by storm, and bold founders unveiling new products from the stage. Their victories are tangible, their numbers glow on the screens of quarterly reports, and they are applauded at corporate assemblies.

Yet few ever pause to consider what holds up this gleaming storefront. What happens behind the scenes when a production line must start up at eight o'clock sharp? When, at the peak of the season, the warehouse cannot afford to be short a single packaging box, a single bolt, or a single gram of raw material? Who guarantees that the cost of goods sold stays at a level that allows sales teams to sell at a profit rather than at a loss?

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Селена КАС
The Buyer's Path

Business Novel • Practical Workshop

The Buyer's Path

A Training Novel About the Invisible Frontline, a Will of Steel, and the Art of Value Management

Selena Kas

Practical Guide and Novel of Transformation • Complete Edition

Selena Kas

THE BUYER'S PATH

A Training Novel About the Invisible Frontline, a Will of Steel, and the Art of Value Management

This edition is intended for executives, procurement professionals, entrepreneurs, and everyone striving for systemic growth and personal effectiveness.

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Introduction

INTRODUCTION. The Invisible Frontline of Business

In the business world, it is customary to admire those who stand in the spotlight. The laurels of victory traditionally go to charismatic sales directors closing multimillion-dollar deals, creative marketers whose advertising campaigns take the market by storm, and bold founders unveiling new products from the stage. Their victories are tangible, their numbers glow on the screens of quarterly reports, and they are applauded at corporate assemblies.

Yet few ever pause to consider what holds up this gleaming storefront. What happens behind the scenes when a production line must start up at eight o'clock sharp? When, at the peak of the season, the warehouse cannot afford to be short a single packaging box, a single bolt, or a single gram of raw material? Who guarantees that the cost of goods sold stays at a level that allows sales teams to sell at a profit rather than at a loss?

There, in the quiet of the operational rear, an entirely different battle is waged. A battle with no room for bustle, where the price of inattention is measured in hundreds of thousands of dollars in losses, and missing a single delivery deadline can paralyze an entire factory.

This is the world of procurement.

A profession noticed only when something goes wrong.

The paradox of the buyer's profession is simple and harsh: flawless supply chain performance is completely invisible. If components arrive on time, if quality is impeccable, if the price enables the company to post record margins-it is taken for granted, as the natural order of things. Yet the moment a container is delayed at customs due to an ocean storm, a supplier misses a shipping schedule, or a factory delivers a batch with a micro-defect, the full wrath of corporate fury comes crashing down on the procurement department.

A buyer stands at the perpetual epicenter of opposing forces. On one side are internal stakeholders within the company-production, sales, logistics, executive management-demanding "fast, top quality, and right now." On the other side is the external market: capricious suppliers, monopolists dictating their own terms, currency swings, customs barriers, and chronic raw material shortages. And right in the middle stands the buyer, duty-bound to hold the balance without giving in to panic or compromising on quality.

What Is This Book About?

Before you is neither a dry academic textbook nor a collection of abstract formulas. It is a training novel-a living chronicle of the professional and personal coming-of-age of a young woman named Selena. You will walk beside her through every step of

her arduous journey full of challenges and discoveries: from a bewildered trainee confronting a chaos of requisitions and intimidating terms like Incoterms and MOQ for the first time, to a mature executive architecting a large-scale sourcing strategy and an impregnable system of internal control.

Selena's story is a composite portrait of thousands of procurement professionals. It is a story of how to:

- Overcome the fear of tough negotiations with seasoned, manipulative suppliers;
- Distinguish a genuine factory from a middleman reseller and vet counterparties down to their deepest roots;
- Manage risks amid absolute uncertainty and global logistics crises;
- Withstand immense deadline pressure while maintaining a cool, clear head;
- Build transparent processes that shield the company from multimillion-dollar losses and misconduct.

Core Idea of the Training Novel

Procurement is the highest school of character building and business acumen. A true buyer does not merely buy goods at a lower price. A true buyer manages value, safeguards the financial

security of the business, and shapes the resilience of the entire enterprise from within. This book was written to pay tribute to that colossal effort and to arm everyone walking this path with practical strength and confidence.

Welcome to Selena's journey. Welcome to the Buyer's Path.

Chapter 1

CHAPTER 1. Baptism by Fire: The Smell of the Shop Floor, the Old Guard, and "Shop-Floor Jargon"

1.1. A Brand-New Diploma and Old Machinery: Entering "Vector-Prom"

The morning autumn air smelled of dampness, fallen leaves, and the faint tang of metal shavings. Selena stood before the gray four-story security gatehouse of the manufacturing and trading company "Vector-Prom." Inside her handbag lay a crisp blue Bachelor's diploma in International Economics and Supply Chain Management, while inside her coat pocket her cold fingers clenched nervously.

"Vector-Prom" was a classic example of a solid mid-sized enterprise grappling with both ambition and an internal crisis of growth. On one hand, it had stable production lines, industrial equipment manufacturing, a network of branches, and hundreds of workers. On the other, it suffered from an archaic management system creaking under the pressure of modern market realities. Company leadership realized that the old methods of backroom deals and phone-call ordering were leading into a dead end. Margins were melting away, deadlines

were constantly missed, and costs were climbing. They needed fresh blood-a specialist of a new generation who understood international standards, analytics, and transparent processes.

During her final interview, the CEO had looked at Selena over the rims of his glasses and spoken words that still echoed in her head:

"This isn't a university laboratory, Selena. Here we deal with steel, money, and people with difficult personalities. I'm giving you a three-month probationary period. If you demonstrate a systemic approach and hold down unit costs, welcome aboard. If you buckle under pressure from the shop floor, nobody is going to keep you around."

1.2. Office No. 14: Meeting the "Old-Timers"

The Material and Technical Supply Department was located on the second floor of the administrative building. Behind a heavy wooden door bearing a plaque reading "MTSD" existed an ecosystem frozen somewhere in the late nineteen-nineties.

Gray metal cabinets lined the walls, crammed to capacity with bulging cardboard lever-arch files. Stacks of papers, delivery notes, and yellowed catalogs towered over the desks. The air was thick with the scent of strong instant coffee, cigarette smoke drifting in through a slightly ajar transom window, and the warm plastic of aging monitors.

Seated at the main desk was Pyotr Sergeyevich-the Head of Supply, who had devoted a quarter-century to the plant. He was a man with graying temples, a heavy gaze beneath bushy eyebrows, and a telephone receiver that seemed permanently grafted to his ear. At the adjacent desk, Galina Ivanovna, Senior Accounting Clerk, tapped methodically at her keyboard with the expression of someone who knew every secret of the universe and despised any form of initiative.

Selena stepped across the threshold and offered a polite greeting:

"Good morning! I'm Selena, the new procurement manager. Today is the start of my probationary period."

Pyotr Sergeyevich slowly lowered the receiver onto its cradle, took in her beige coat, neat hairstyle, and shoes, and let out a heavy sigh:

"Well, well... So HR went ahead and sent us a reformer with a diploma after all. Take that empty corner by the window; there's an old PC there. Just let me warn you right now: leave those university fairy tales about lean manufacturing and strategic sourcing outside the door. This is real production. If the assembly line stops because bolts didn't arrive, you will be held personally responsible-not your fancy textbooks."

Galina Ivanovna didn't even turn her head, muttering through clenched teeth:

"And wash your own mug. We don't have fairies with magic wands around here."

Training Module: The Psychology of Entering a Conservative Team

Do not take skepticism personally: Resistance from an established team toward a newcomer is a classic defense mechanism triggered by fear of change.

Avoid direct confrontation during the first month: Observe, take note of unwritten rules, and map out behavioral patterns.

Respect in procurement is earned not through diplomas and buzzwords, but through flawless operational precision and line items closed on time.

1.3. The First Requisition: Shock Before Production's "Shop-Floor Jargon"

Selena had barely turned on the humming desktop tower and adjusted her workspace when the door flew open with a bang. Into the office stormed a stocky man in blue coveralls, his hands stained with fuel oil and his face flushed red with irritation-Mikhalych, Foreman of the Machine Shop.

"Petrovich! My turning section grinds to a halt in seventy-two hours! Where are the milling cutters? Where are the carbide inserts? Where are the linear guides?! How long are you going to drag your feet?!"

"Ah, Mikhalych, come meet someone. This is our new star of international sourcing-Selena. Hand your requisition over to her.

Let her show us what she's made of."

Mikhalych tossed a crumpled sheet of A4 paper onto Selena's desk, scrawled by hand in crooked penmanship filled with cryptic abbreviations and smudges of machine oil:

"Here you go, rookie. Have every single item at the central warehouse by Thursday, or I'm marching straight to the CEO to file a downtime report costing half a million a day!"

The door slammed shut. Selena was left alone with the sheet of paper. Her heart pounded traitorously in her temples. To her, the text of the requisition looked like encrypted cuneiform:

"1. Inserts WNMG080408-PM 4225 200 pcs.

2. Profiled linear guideways THK HSR25LR1SS 12 m (cut into 3m lengths)

3. Face mill D63 z=5 for APKT1604 - 2 pcs.

4. Round bar 40Kh Ø90 GOST 2590-2006 - 3.5 tons.

Deadline: YESTERDAY! Quality: OEM original or verified equivalent-no soft junk!"

"What is WNMG? Why does the guideway have to be HSR25LR specifically? What is 40Kh steel, and where do you even get this round bar?" A wave of panic washed over Selena for a brief moment. At the university, they had taught her how to build multivariable regression demand models and draw logistics decision trees, yet no one had ever explained how to decipher a shop foreman's chicken scratch or where to source rare rolled steel and metal-cutting tooling in three days.

Training Module: Decoding a Technical Requisition

Anatomy of a Purchase Requisition (PR):

- Technical specification (grade, GOST/DIN standard, drawing, hardness, tolerances);
- Volume and unit of measure (pieces, meters, tons, linear meters);
- Required Delivery Date (RDD);
- Delivery destination (warehouse, workshop, site);
- Justification of need (work order number, scheduled maintenance, emergency breakdown).

Golden Rule: If a requisition lacks an exact Technical Specification (TS), the buyer is obligated to qualify the requirement with the originator rather than guessing at tea leaves!

1.4. Overcoming Paralysis: First Step onto the Shop Floor

Selena took a deep breath, drank a sip of water, and realized one thing: sitting around waiting for Pyotr Sergeyevich to rescue her was pointless. This was a test of resilience. Either she would fold and admit helplessness, or she would take command of the

situation.

She pulled out her work notebook, transcribed every line item into a structured table, and resolved to do what desk-bound buyers fear most-walk down to the shop floor in person to reach the root source of the problem.

Stepping onto the shop floor, Selena entered a deafening world of industrial rhythm: the steady hum of CNC machines, showers of sparks from angle grinders, the clanking of an overhead bridge crane, and the pungent odor of cutting fluid coolant. Finding Mikhalych beside a lathe, she offered no excuses and calmly asked direct questions:

"Mikhail Ivanovich, let's walk through the specification. On the WNMG inserts: who is the baseline OEM manufacturer? Are high-grade Asian equivalents acceptable provided the chipbreaker geometry and steel-grade carbide match? On the 40Kh round bar: do you require a primary mill test certificate from the producing steelworks with ultrasonic testing (UT)?"

Mikhalych looked at the young woman in surprise. In his eyes, dismissal gave way to a flicker of respect:

"Whoa... You know about chipbreakers? Alright, listen up. The OEM original for the inserts is Sandvik or Iscar, but they're pricey right now and have a two-month lead time. If you find genuine factory-grade Chinese or Korean Korloy with coating for hardened steel, I'll sign off on it. Just no garage regrinds! As for the metal-40Kh round bar strictly with a mill certificate. We're turning gearbox shafts out of it; if there's an internal cavity or

crack, scrap losses will run into the millions."

1.5. Cold Calls, Reseller Traps, and the Realization: "I Need a Mentor"

Back at her desk, Selena plunged into sourcing. An exhausting search marathon began. Her very first call from an online listing turned out to be a textbook trap:

"Yes, we have WNMG inserts in stock! Price is 1,200 rubles per piece. Payment to a personal bank card or wire transfer without VAT. Delivery in a week."

Selena immediately engaged her analytical filter. Buying without VAT for a manufacturing enterprise meant forfeiting a 20% input tax deduction. Delivery in a week meant blowing Mikhalych's deadline. And upon closer benchmarking, the 1,200-ruble price turned out to be inflated two-and-a-half times above the average wholesale importer rate.

She methodically built a competitive bid comparison sheet, logging seven potential suppliers and dividing them into three tiers: authorized distributors, direct stockist traders, and dubious middlemen. By the end of the workday, she had secured a formal commercial proposal from an authorized distributor with stock on hand and readiness to dispatch the tooling via express courier first thing the next morning.

Yet when the initial surge of adrenaline subsided, Selena looked around at the mountains of folders, the chilly indifference

of her colleagues, and the endless stream of unfamiliar challenges ahead. She realized with crystal clarity: intuition and fragments of academic knowledge were not enough. To survive in this profession, avoid breaking mentally, and grow into a formidable strategist, she needed a Mentor-someone who could reveal the deeper laws of the procurement game, teach her how to read the hidden motives of counterparties, and shield her from fatal mistakes.

Selena's Insight: Why a Buyer Needs a Mentor

The loneliness of the buyer: At the start, you always stand alone against market chaos and internal team pressure.

Mentorship is a growth catalyst: Finding a mentor saves years of trial and error and millions of rubles in prevented losses.

Learn how to learn: Every stressful case must be converted into a structured algorithm and recorded in your professional knowledge base.

1.6. Early Results and Looking Ahead: The Birth of Digital Ally "Gem"

At 6:30 PM, the office emptied out. Pyotr Sergeyevich put on his coat and, passing by Selena's desk, glanced briefly at her monitor. Displayed on the screen was a structured summary table calculating total landed batch cost, courier arrival times, and negotiated volume discounts.

The Head of Supply gave a low grunt, paused for a couple of seconds, and spoke quietly:

"Enter Mikhalych's requisition into 1C before you leave. And put the invoice on my desk for signature. We'll prioritize payment first thing tomorrow morning."

Once the door closed behind him, Selena remained in the quiet office. That evening at home, over a cup of hot tea, she opened her laptop and created her first personal project. She realized she wanted to build her own digital assistant-a project she named "Gem."

At the outset, it was a modest script and a collection of databases into which Selena began methodically entering every GOST standard, steel grade, price conversion formula, Incoterms rule, and vetted factory contact. She did not yet know that after months of relentless work-training her "Gem-bot" in complex sourcing algorithms, risk vetting, and cost-structure modeling-she would cultivate a powerful intellectual partner alongside whom she would transform the company's entire procurement system and rise to the level of international contracts.

Her journey had only just begun.

Chapter 2

CHAPTER 2. Anatomy of P2P: First Missed Deadlines, Midnight Calls, and the Battle for Payments

2.1. The Morning Ledger and the Purchase-to-Pay Labyrinth

Her second month at "Vector-Prom" dispelled any lingering illusions that procurement could flow down a calm stream. Selena quickly learned a fundamental truth: issuing a Purchase Order (PO) is only ten percent of the job. The real struggle begins the moment the wheel of the P2P (Purchase-to-Pay) process starts turning through the enterprise's bureaucratic gears.

Every morning for Selena began with a ritual no university had ever taught her: reconciling the payment register with Treasury, calling freight forwarders, and endlessly matching primary accounting documents. By this point, her knowledge base "Gem" had been enriched with its first algorithmic workflows.

Training Module: Architecture of the End-to-End P2P Process

Classic P2P Cycle in a Manufacturing Enterprise:

PR (Purchase Requisition) - electronic request with clear

Technical Specifications and justification.

PO (Purchase Order) - formal order locking in prices, delivery dates, and Incoterms basis.

Expediting - proactive tracking of manufacturing progress and freight transit.

GR (Goods Receipt) - physical receiving at the warehouse and incoming Quality Control (QC) inspection.

Invoice Processing - registration of the tax invoice / universal transfer document.

3-Way Matching - automated or manual reconciliation of PO = GR = Invoice.

Payment - authorization and execution of the bank wire transaction.

2.2. The Alarming Call: When a Critical Lead Time Breaks Down

Wednesday, 11:40 AM. At the plant, preparations were in full swing for assembling an export batch of pumping stations. Suddenly, the phone on Selena's desk shattered the silence with a sharp ring. The caller ID displayed the number of a freight forwarder from a major logistics carrier.

"Selena, good afternoon. We have a force majeure. Your shipment of high-precision bearings from the Czech Republic is stuck at a transshipment terminal in Poland. The driver broke down, the T1 transit declarations expired, and Polish customs

pulled the truck for physical inspection. Minimum delay is ten days."

Cold sweat broke out instantly across her back. A ten-day delay meant a guaranteed shutdown of the assembly line on Monday. The liquidated damages penalty under the foreign trade export contract stood at 20,000 euros per day.

Selena opened the purchase order card. Under delivery terms, the contract specified FCA (Free Carrier). Legally, transit delay risks rested with the buyer, yet production cared nothing for legal nuances-to the CEO and Mikhalych, the buyer automatically became the culprit.

At that very moment, Pyotr Sergeyevich walked into the office. Seeing Selena's pale face, he narrowed his eyes:

"What, the bearings stalled out? Well, welcome to your first real crisis. The standard rookie reaction is to sit down and cry or fire off angry emails that the Poles will answer next week. You have exactly two hours to find a solution, otherwise after lunch on the carpet in the CEO's office, no diploma is going to save you."

2.3. First Lessons from Gem: Finding Alternative Supply Legs

Left alone at her screen, Selena opened her "Gem" project. Her digital notebook already contained structured risk matrices and action scripts for supply chain disruptions.

"Do not panic. Break the crisis down into components," she whispered under her breath. She formulated a task for Gem: split the shipment into two parts. First-an emergency bridge volume (20% of the order) required to keep the factory running for ten days until the main semi-trailer arrived. Second-rescuing the stranded freight.

Within forty minutes, Selena called regional distributors within a 500-kilometer radius. Locating fifty of the required bearings at a warehouse in a neighboring region at a 15% price premium, she arranged express delivery via a dedicated light commercial vehicle by Friday morning.

Simultaneously, she contacted a customs broker in Warsaw, reissued the electronic transit document, and secured priority border clearance for the truck.

Buyer's Toolkit: Emergency Disruption Containment Protocol

Buyer's Algorithm During a Logistics Crisis:

Risk segmentation: How long can the plant survive on existing inventory without halting production lines?

Plan "B" (Air/Express Sourcing): Immediate sourcing of the minimum emergency batch on the local spot market, even at a price premium.

Logistics escalation: Direct engagement of senior-level brokers and carriers, bypassing low-level dispatchers.

Transparency: Never hide the problem from production; come

forward with a ready-made solution and an exact timeline.

2.4. The Battle for Payment: Confrontation with Accounting

To dispatch the express van carrying the emergency batch, the invoice had to be paid immediately. And here Selena collided with the second great fortress of every enterprise-the finance department.

The Chief Accountant, Antonina Pavlovna, ruled the budget with an iron fist. According to the payment schedule, "disbursement day for tooling and hardware suppliers" fell only on Tuesday of the following week.

Selena walked into the accounting office carrying the invoice and an internal memo:

"Dear, I have a cash-flow gap and a strict schedule. Your invoice wasn't budgeted for today. We'll approve it Tuesday, and the wire goes out Wednesday."

"Antonina Pavlovna, if we do not pay this 180,000 rubles before 2:00 PM, the plant shuts down on Monday. The penalty on the export contract is 2 million rubles for the very first day of downtime. Here is an official memo detailing the financial impact calculation, countersigned by the Technical Director. Paying now saves us two million."

The Chief Accountant examined the numbers closely, noted the clearly quantified financial exposure, and signed the payment

order without a word:

"You're learning to speak the language of numbers rather than emotions. That's commendable. The payment will go out in the first banking batch."

2.5. Evening Dialogue: Pyotr Sergeyevich's First Step Toward Mentorship

On Friday at 9:15 AM, a white GAZelle van carrying the emergency batch of bearings rolled through the unloading terminal gates of "Vector-Prom." The assembly line was saved. Assembly of the pumping stations began right on schedule.

At the end of the day, Pyotr Sergeyevich walked over to Selena's desk, set down a cup of freshly brewed tea in front of her, and sat across from her.

"You did well, Selena. You didn't run off complaining, didn't blame the Poles-you calculated the risk exposure and broke through accounting. Do you know why so many buyers stay stuck on pennies for years and burn out? Because they think their job is clicking buttons in software. In reality, our job is managing uncertainty."

"Pyotr Sergeyevich, I lack experience. I want to learn how to foresee risks in advance instead of putting out fires after the fact. Will you help me?"

The veteran Head of Supply smiled for the first time-openly and warmly:

"I will. Provided you're ready to work your tail off and learn to think like a strategist rather than a clerk. Starting next week, we'll break down supplier segmentation matrices and hardball negotiations."

2.6. An Island of Balance: The Telegram Channel "Clean Eating & Personal Growth"

Every workday drained a tremendous amount of energy. Relentless deadline pressure, clashes with the shop floor, supply disruption threats, and tough negotiations demanded not only iron self-control, but also deep internal reserves. Selena understood: living solely at the rhythm of urgent requisitions and stress would trigger burnout within months.

She needed a sanctuary-a space to restore equilibrium, organize her thoughts, and recharge with pure creative energy. Thus was born her Telegram channel titled "Clean Eating & Personal Growth."

In the evenings, switching her phone out of business-call mode, Selena sat down to write notes. She wrote about how mindful nutrition, daily routines, and simple healthy habits give the body the stamina to withstand a frantic workday pace. She shared insights on mental discipline, overcoming anxiety and imposter syndrome, emotional resilience practices, and books on self-development.

Yet the driving motive behind the channel became a sincere

desire to help others. Selena saw how many people around her broke under the weight of routine, lost faith in themselves, and stepped on the same rakes year after year for lack of guidance. She wrote candidly, free of any condescending tone, dissecting her own mistakes and articulating rules of inner strength. The channel became a mirror for her: by teaching and supporting her growing audience-helping subscribers navigate their own personal transformation faster and with fewer losses-Selena continuously grew, strengthened, and evolved herself.

Selena's Insight: Energy, Mindfulness, and Personal Growth

The Secret to a Buyer's Career Longevity:

Energetic foundation: Physical condition and healthy habits (clean eating, sleep, exercise) directly govern cognitive resilience during crises.

By teaching, you learn: When you package your life and professional experience into meaningful lessons for others, your own growth accelerates exponentially.

Identity balance: You are more than your job title. Maintaining an inspiring personal project outside work protects against emotional exhaustion.

Chapter 3

CHAPTER 3. Duel at the Negotiating Table: Monopolist Manipulation, Line-Item Digitization, and Gem's Combat Debut

3.1. The Ultimatum from "SeverStal-Trade"

Selena's third month on the job coincided with the end of her probationary period. Yet instead of a quiet performance review, an official notice landed on the procurement department's desk from their key supplier of heavy steel plate-the holding company "SeverStal-Trade." Nearly 60% of "Vector-Prom's" flagship output depended on that specific steel grade.

The letter, signed by the supplier's Commercial Director Eduard Vadimovich Kovalev, left no room for illusions:

"We hereby notify you of an 18.5% increase in ex-works prices for hot-rolled plate 09G2S effective the 1st of next month due to shifts in global market conditions, rising tariffs of natural monopolies, and increased logistics expenses. Should you decline the revised terms, shipments under active orders will be suspended."

Pyotr Sergeyevich walked up to Selena's desk and placed the letter in front of her:

"There it is-textbook commercial blackmail. Kovalev knows we're locked into their mill certificates and warehouse lead times. If we accept the hike, the margin on our export contract drops to zero. If we refuse, the plate-cutting shop shuts down in two weeks. Tomorrow at 2:00 PM, Kovalev is coming here for face-to-face negotiations. You're leading them."

"Me? He's a shark with twenty years of experience-he'll crush me with sheer authority..."

"Authority only crushes people who lack hard numbers. Remember the first rule of a procurement negotiator: the party best prepared with data dictates the terms, even when buying from a monopolist. Open up your Gem, switch on your brain, and build your negotiation dossier. I'll be right beside you, staying silent as long as you hold your ground."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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