

Life at the Top Chapter 506

“How could that be? We’ve been importing and exporting all this while and it’s always been through Harbor City! We’ve never had this problem before so why now?!”

“Did you contact the leaders we have there? What did they say?” Ian frowned and asked sternly.

The Hull family had already shifted their entire business focus from real estate in the Mainland to the import and export trade.

While it may not sound like a big deal that only two of their cargo ships were detained, those two ships carried hundreds of tonnes worth of goods. It was accumulated to a backlog of 600 million of the Hull family’s funds!

If something happened to this batch of goods, the Hull family would not be able to sustain such a huge loss no matter how wealthy they were. After all, there was still 500 million of the one billion Somer Dollars they had lost in the Southeast Province to account for.

“The same thing, Mr. Hull. The leaders aren’t willing to pick up our calls at all, and we don’t even have the opportunity to meet them... Excuse me for speaking excessively, Mr. Hull, but I think there’s more to what’s happening here.”

Ian’s expression darkened. He suppressed the unease and anger within him. “Tell me what you think of this.”

His confidant on the other end replied, “Ignoring our goods, Mr. Hull, there are no businessmen within the country in this industry who don’t smuggle at least some sort of goods. Ours are minuscule in comparison, and it’s an unspoken rule that both the Mainland and Harbor City’s customs are very well aware of.”

“But it’s because of this that we’ve never forgotten to tip them every month. This time, our ships are the only ones being detained and without us getting any wind of it at all. Aren’t they just targeting us here?”

Ian quickly calmed down after the initial panic. He snapped back to reality with his confidant’s reminder.

Indeed, this incident was too unexpected and there was no way it was pure coincidence.

However, Harbor City’s customs and their inspectors...

Ian came to a realization and hammered his balled fist onto his thigh. With his jaw set, he replied, “I know who did it!”

Ian had not expected Jasper to retaliate so soon, and straight at his weakness as well.

Having two ships detained when doing import and export trade came with huge losses.

Ignoring the 600 million worth of goods, all of which Ian had to shoulder, he also had to pay at least 200 million in compensation for the breach of contract in this partnership.

The most horrifying part was that once he was charged with smuggling, Ian’s name would then appear on the wanted list.

‘Jasper himself may not have the ability to influence Harbor City’s customs and customs inspectors, but what about the Law family?’

‘All the Law family need to do is put in a word for this to happen.’

At that moment, Ian realized that he was screwed.

“Alright. Make a trip to Harbor City right away... Actually, never mind. There’s nothing you can do even if you went over anyway. Instead, contact the corresponding people and see if you can try and get our men back.

“Bribe who you have to. We’ll be executed and shot the moment they have our men and everything gets confessed!”

After giving his instructions, Ian hung up the phone abruptly.

The unease and distress remained in Ian’s eyes even after he hung up the phone. After pondering for a moment, Ian decided that he would sound Jasper out. As such, he stepped on the pedal back to Waterhoof City and took the initiative to call Jasper.

The call was quickly connected.

“I hope you die in a ditch, Jasper!” Ian ground his molars and roared.

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Jasper’s calm tone echoed from the other end of the line.

“And here I thought you called to beg for mercy. I thought you’d call to ask for an easier and more painless death, but it seems like I misunderstood.”

Ian raged and growled. “Don’t think that I’d be afraid of you now just because you did something in Harbor City, Jasper. I’ve seen these tricks before. Do you think they’ll stop me?”

“Of course not.”

Jasper's tone was laced with deeper intent.

"It'd be too easy if I kill you off in one go. That'll be too painless, no? I'd much like to play with you slowly."

Ian scoffed. "So it really was you!"

"I know you're calling to sound me out, but I never had the intention to hide it from you anyway. I would've come looking for you at your house even if you didn't call me. It would only be a matter of time before you knew anyway, so you might as well just ask me straightforwardly."

Ian was stunned and he immediately caught on. He questioned Jasper coldly, "Come looking for me at my house? What do you mean?!"

Sitting at the rooftop bar on the 14th floor of the Peninsula Hotel in Waterhoof City, Jasper stared at the calm Harpoon River beneath his feet and the bright Pearl Tower on the opposite shore of the river. He chuckled. "I don't think I need to explain what I mean for you to understand, hmm?"

"I still have guests here, Mr. Hull, so I'll have to cut our conversation short. But tell your driver to drive a little slower and steadier on your way back from Suesville, Mr. Hull. It'd be a shame if you died in a car accident and missed out on the large play I'm putting on for you."

Jasper hung up the phone and stood to walk toward the entrance of the rooftop bar, approaching the man who was entering with John.

"This is Jasper Laine, the friend I was talking to you about, Vita. The youngest millionaire entrepreneur within our country," John introduced as the middle-man.

"Jasper, this is my old colleague, Vita Layne. The office manager of ICBS Waterhoof City branch. He's in charge of the branch's asset management office."

"Hello, Mr. Layne. I've heard a lot about you."

Jasper reached out to shake Vita's hand with a smile.

Vita was a slim and highly capable man in his early 40s, and it was evident that he had heard of Jasper on the way here from John.

ICBS was the first of the country's top four major banks, and as a senior executive of the branch in a financial center like Waterhoof City, Vita had seen his fair share of wealthy businessmen. It could be said that Vita's clients were all society's elites.

Still, Vita could not help the shine in his eyes when he first saw Jasper.

After all, Jasper was too young. The wealthy businessmen whom Vita met on the daily were all in their 40s and 50s.

If one wanted to start from scratch and accumulate a wealth of billions of Somer Dollars, it would take the average person a decade or two, if lucky. Growing rich overnight was a rarity that only existed in myths and novels.

However, Jasper was different from all the other wealthy businessmen he had met. Jasper was young and gentlemanly. Instead of a businessman, Vita felt that Jasper seemed more like a university student from a scholarly family.

Vita reached out to shake Jasper's outstretched hand and replied, "What a promising youth you are, Mr. Laine. I didn't believe it when John told me such an outstanding person existed. I almost thought that he deceived just to make me come."

Jasper smiled. "You're too kind, Mr. Layne. I just realized how similar our surnames are. No wonder I felt such a sense of familiarity when I first saw you, Mr. Layne. How about we sit down to talk?"

...

At the same time on the highway back to Waterhoof City, Ian found himself in a huge internal conflict triggered by Jasper's offhand comment. Meanwhile, the man in question was happily immersed in a conversation with Vita, oblivious to the effect of his own words.

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On the highway between Suesville and Waterhoof City, Ian told his driver to stop the car just as they arrived at the southern entrance of Suesville. His expression was cloudy.

The man was wondering what Jasper meant by his last words.

"But tell your driver to drive a little slower and steadier on your way back from Suesville, Mr. Hull. It'd be a shame if you died in a car accident."

'Was Jasper warning me?'

Ian took a long drag of his cigarette and looked up at the sky above. The highway stretched onward to the horizon, curving from time to time like a large dragon. The unease in his chest grew.

It was like there was a sinister plan waiting to devour him somewhere under the dark night ahead.

"Motherf*cker, this b*stard! If he has no qualms playing dirty and hurting Benny and Hans, then there's no saying whether he'll let me go unharmed or not."

Ian abruptly tossed the cigarette onto the ground and looked up at the driver. "Send me to the airport instead. I'll fly back to Waterhoof City. You can drive over."

The driver was stunned. “Mr. Hull, it’ll only take two more hours to drive back. If you choose to fly, with security checks and everything, it’ll take you at least three hours. It’ll be much more expensive too—”

“Enough. Just do as I say. Am I the boss here or are you?”

Ian chided darkly. He knew how stupid his decision looked to others, but he did not dare take risks with his life.

Especially not when he had already gotten Gale’s support. The large support would arrive tomorrow, and he would get to start his revenge plan against Jasper by then.

He would rather act foolishly than risk his life on this highway.

If Jasper turned out to be crazy and attacked him while he was on the highway, then he would truly be screwed.

After being chided, the driver did not dare to comment further and turned the car around, heading to the airport instead.

At the same time, Jasper and Vita’s conversation had slowly arrived at its climax with John’s input.

“As John’s old colleague, Mr. Layne, I’d say we aren’t complete strangers. I’d like to just get this out there. I’m very interested in the piece of land opposite where your branch sits.”

Jasper pointed at the right side of Pearl Tower, on the other shore of Harpoon River, as he spoke.

From the beautiful scenic pictures in his past life of the Harpoon River, the current view lacked a symbolic skyscraper—the Waterhoof City Financial Tower.

Where Jasper pointed was precisely where the tower would be built.

Vita smiled. “The land does belong to our branch now, and John has already told me of your intention, Mr. Laine. Our branch does intend to sell, but the price... It’s a little high.”

“The price, huh? We can always negotiate.” Jasper smiled.

The ICBS Waterhoof City branch had sold it at a final price of 230 million in his past life.

However, Jasper did not expect to buy the plot of land at such a price now.

After all, it only cost 230 million because the ICBS Waterhoof City branch had been searching far and wide for buyers while the plot of land was left unsold for two years. That was the reason behind the large reduction in prices when they sold it to a state-owned real estate company.

Even if the ICBS Waterhoof City branch was willing to sell the plot of land now, there was no reason for the price to be so greatly discounted.

“The branch has already evaluated the plot of land and we’ve decided that it’s worth 500 million Somer Dollars. However, since we’re doing market trade here, we also understand that we can’t just follow the evaluated cost. As such, we’ve come to the final price of 450 million Somer Dollars,” Vita spoke after a moment of thought.

Jasper turned to John to see the man nod almost indiscernibly.

It seemed that Vita was not playing any tricks on this issue and was speaking the truth.

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“Since you’re in charge of the asset management in your branch, Mr. Layne, could you give another discount on the price? After all, this is a valuable plot of land and it’s practically impossible for your branch to get rid of it so quickly,” Jasper spoke.

A business negotiation was an art of deception.

450 million Somer Dollars had not exceeded Jasper’s price, for the plot of land would easily appreciate, amounting to over tens of billions in a decade.

Yet if its price could be reduced, then he would be an absolute moron not to reduce it.

Vita was placed in a difficult situation.

In truth, the branch had been wanting to sell the plot of land a long time ago.

Its market price evaluation had long been completed before the meeting to discuss it being sold was held.

Vita was very aware that Jasper was speaking the truth.

This was a valuable plot of land, but it was difficult to sell.

In other words, those who could afford it might not be interested in the plot of land. After all, there was no guarantee about how Waterhoof City’s economic development area would turn out.

While most of those interested in the plot of land did not have the funds to buy it. They just want to make a cheap gamble at best.

Seeing Vita's inner struggle appear on his features, Jasper smiled. "I plan to move my company's headquarters to Waterhoof City in the future, Mr. Layne. Plus... for the latter half of next year, I think I'll need to borrow an emergency loan of about eight billion Somer Dollars.

"Of course, I'll have enough strength and assets as a mortgage, but I was wondering if your branch would be interested in such a business transaction?"

Vita's head shot up at the words, and he stared at Jasper in utter shock. "Do you mean it?"

When it came to working in a bank, attracting customers to make deposits had always been their most important goal.

Fixed deposits came with interest rates.

The bank needed funds from deposits for investments and financial management. This was how they earned an unfathomable amount of profits.

Among the banking businesses, the main source of profits was through commercial loans.

A commercial loan of eight billion Somer Dollars, 20 years into the future before Jasper reincarnated, was already considered a huge transaction. It was one which countless banks would pounce and steal if they caught wind of it.

It would be a great deal for Vita's future development if he managed to secure such a transaction.

"I wouldn't joke about something like this, Mr. Layne. Should you lower the price of this plot of land to its extreme, then that loan transaction belongs to you.

“I can sign a contract with your bank as well if necessary so that you can verify my assets and capital. I’ll sign the loan for eight billion Somer Dollars first, and I promise to take it before the end of next year.”

Jasper’s words quelled all of Vita’s doubts.

By stating that Jasper’s assets would first be verified before he was given the credit to the loan would destroy any risk of Jasper speaking baselessly or going back on his words.

“300 million! That’s the lowest I can go and the lowest price the branch is willing to offer. But it has to be paid fully and in cash. If you’re willing to accept it, Mr. Laine, then I shall persuade the bank tomorrow and try to sign that contract with you as fast as possible!” Vita spoke with his jaw tight.

Jasper’s eyes shone at the words.

He had not expected a discount of 150 million at all. This way, he would manage to save the interest for the eight billion Somer Dollar loan he would be taking to host the International Capital Carnival Feast next year.

Jasper smiled and stood, reaching out an arm toward Vita. He spoke, “It’s a pleasure doing business with you.”

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After a friendly negotiation with Vita, the trio’s conversation then shifted from business-oriented into something more laidback to better acquaint themselves with each other.

While they were talking about issues of faraway lands, Jasper was very willing to put a bit of hard work into what looked like nonsensical chatter.

Within the country, business was always a game of favors.

People like Vita were not eye-catching characters, and he would be considered as someone from the lower classes among those whom Jasper dealt with on a daily basis.

However, Vita held a very important position.

Even if Jasper had called for a meeting with the chief of ICBS' Waterhoof City branch, there was no guarantee that he could haggle the price to 300 million Somer Dollars.

Yet with Vita, he could.

While the chief of the branch would certainly hold more authority than Vita, the chief had much more things to think about. Vita was only in charge of this singular aspect, so mediation became much easier.

That was why, in some ways, the lackeys held more power than the boss.

With John here helping the process, Jasper hoping to get Vita on his side, and Vita hoping to have a millionaire like Jasper supporting him, the trio had a very joyful conversation.

The night deepened, and Vita bade them farewell first. John had a study meeting to attend the next day, so he left Waterhoof City for the Southeast Province overnight as well.

Jasper did not say much about it, considering his friendship with John ran much deeper than his friendship with Vita. The two shared tacit understanding, so there was no need for unnecessary pleasantries.

“Isn't he just the office manager of a branch? Why'd you spend five whole hours entertaining him...”

Henry immediately began to complain once Jasper returned, having lost his patience due to staying in the room for a long time.

“Characters like him don’t even have the right to talk to me in Harbor City!”

Jasper hung his jacket on the clothes rack and huffed a reply. “This infinitesimal character that you look down on just saved me 150 million tonight. You still think the five hours was a waste?”

“30 million in an hour?!”

Henry’s eyes widened, and he looked at Jasper suspiciously. “What kind of profitable business did you do? You’re not conspiring to commit crimes, are you?”

Jasper smiled. “We definitely are. Want in on it?”

Henry immediately shook his head vigorously. “Forget it. My dad’s going to beat me to death if he finds out.”

“Alright, enough joking around. How did the thing I asked you to do go?” Jasper asked.

Henry grinned and replied, “Don’t worry about it. I might not be able to do much else, but there’s no one better than me when it comes to playing dirty tricks. I’ve already found everything.”

Henry then tossed over a freshly printed research document and replied, “Everything you need is here.”

Jasper took the document. His tone was pleased when he replied, “Not bad. I’ll remember your hard work when this is over.”

Flipping through the document, there was an introduction to a character right at the start.

“Derick Mallin, 48 years old. He’s the general manager of the Hull family’s G.S. Trading Export Limited Company. He’s the aforementioned company’s second-in-command with a longstanding friendship with Ian, the company’s president. He’s the only confidante there is.

“Derick’s the one who deals with all of G.S. Trading Export Limited Company’s business transactions, so if you want to know whether the company’s doing anything fishy or problematic, Derick would be the one with the most blackmail material.”

“Think you can deal with him?” Jasper asked.

Henry pursed his lips and replied, “From what I got on Harbor City’s end, the man has migrated to Harbor City permanently with his entire family. He has embezzled quite a bit from the company over the past few years and all his family’s businesses are based in Harbor City. I can deal with him with my eyes closed.”

Jasper smiled. “He shot his own foot. I’ll leave this to you, then.”

Henry snickered. “What do I get in return?”

Jasper gave it some thought and replied, “I’ll let you join me in taking over a large fortune next year.”

“Deal!”