

Life at the Top Chapter 1061

Sean's eyes lit up and he nodded. "Alright, it sounds grand and dignified. I like it."

"Oh, and there's one more thing I'd like you to help me do."

Jasper gave it some thought before he said, "Help me find a few formal gifts. Nothing too outlandish, so no need for jewelry. Something like tea, perhaps. I'm using them as gifts."

Sean nodded and replied, "Alright. I'll get to it immediately."

...

The following day, Hoofmorn University.

Jasper's Bentley came to a slow stop before the administrative building where a group of people was already waiting for him.

"That's Jasper?"

"I heard that he's the richest man in the Southeast Province. One of the wealthiest in the entire southern region too."

"That's not even the half of it. I think Waterhoof City's skyscraper belongs to him too. There's no youth richer than he is within the country."

"The most unbelievable thing is that he's only in his twenties. He's around the same age as our university's students, but there's no comparing against him. I heard he's an entrepreneur too. Such a capable man."

"Does anyone know what he's doing here in our school? I heard that a few important department chiefs, the university's president, and the dean's waiting for him upstairs."

“Wow. Considering the welcoming party, I almost thought that some important figure from Swallow Capital was coming over.”

“Of course. Universities around the country have to raise their own funds now. It’d be good for the school to make friends with wealthy people.”

“Stop talking, stop talking. He’s getting out of the car.”

“Holy sh*t, he’s so handsome!”

A man in his forties strode over to welcome Jasper once he saw the latter alight the car. The man extended his arm as he walked and smiled. “Welcome, Mr. Laine. Hoofmorn University is joyed to know of your arrival.”

Jasper shook the man’s hand and replied with a smile, “You are all seniors and pioneers of the education industry. I am but a mere businessman driven by benefits, there is no need for such a grand welcoming.”

The man smiled and said, “You’re too kind, Mr. Laine. Let me introduce myself, I’m Doiran Clem, the secretary of the presidential office. Mr. Marshman, the president, and a few important department chiefs are waiting for you upstairs.”

Jasper chuckled and spoke, “Then let us make our way upstairs quickly. There’s no need to make them wait any longer.”

Under the loud applause and Dorian’s lead, Jasper and Julian made their way into the administrative building.

When they arrived at the elevator, Dorian suddenly said rather embarrassedly, “Mr. Laine, the elevator’s getting old so it’s a little slow. Please forgive us for the long wait.”

Jasper asked curiously, “Hoofmorn University is the fifth-best university in the country but the administrative building looks simple and rather aged. There should be no reason for the school to struggle with funding, right?”

Dorian sighed and replied, “Swallow Capital sent a document last year, stating that all universities will have to raise and deal with their own funding. Our finances are only enough to cover staff wages and benefits, leaving us to struggle for campus construction.

“Not to mention that the university’s in dire need of funding for research projects as well. Any extra money we have is given to the professors and students for research.”

“As for our working environment, it’s as the dean said. It just has to be passable. There’s no need to furnish it too luxuriously, since this is a school and our focus should be on educating and learning.”

Jasper nodded in understanding. “Mr. Marshman is a great dean.”

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In the dean’s office in Hoofmorn University’s administrative building, Jasper saw one of the most important figures of the country’s academic field, Patrick Marshmeet.

This old man looked lively and vigorous despite being in his late sixties.

This was the second time Jasper had seen such an energetic man of such age.

The first time was with Old Master Law.

“Hello, Mr. Marshman. I’m Jasper Laine, I hope you’re doing well.”

Jasper was extremely courteous and sincere upon entering the room.

This was not just because of Patrick’s identity and status, but also because the man was a true academic senior that devoted his life to the country and its people.

Patrick took a good look at Jasper before replying cheerfully, "Hello. To see you achieve such great success at such a young age, Mr. Laine, makes old men like us embarrassed. Seeing as how we've lived our whole lives for nothing."

Jasper replied, "You're too kind, Mr. Marshman. I just happened to be born in a better era. Youths like us would never have had such a great environment to flourish in without the countless effort and hard work seniors like you have put in for the country, Mr. Marshman."

"Very good," Patrick shook Jasper's hand and praised, "Here I was worried that I'd be meeting a money-minded businessman when Tom called me before this. Looks like I was worried for nothing."

Jasper smiled and turned around to take a long box from Julian's hands. Then, he turned back to tell Patrick, "I come bearing gifts this time, Mr. Marshman."

Patrick frowned at Jasper's actions and words. The man answered unhappily, "What for? I never accept gifts, so please put it away."

At this moment, Patrick's previously good impression of Jasper from earlier also turned sour.

Dorian began to feel nervous as he watched the scene play out by the side. He felt that Jasper was still rather young and untamed, as he incorporated the societal practice of gifting over here.

Mr. Marshman was one of the top leading figures in the academic field. He did not accept gifts.

Jasper smiled in the face of Mr. Marshman's displeasure and replied, "Don't be in such a rush to reject me, Mr. Marshman. I'm sure you'll like this gift."

"Not to mention that I'm not only gifting it to you, Mr. Marshman. This gift is for everyone in Hoofmorn University; staff, faculty, and student body."

“Oh?” Patrick was intrigued now. “Now I’ve got to see what grand gift you’ve gotten us.

“Let it be known that if this is any secular gift, I will still reject it. After all, this is a campus, and the harmony of the atmosphere is important.”

Jasper chuckled. He did not rush to explain as he opened the box instead.

Within the long box was a carefully packaged scroll. The scroll itself was around a meter and a half in length and seemed rather aged. There was a layer of wax over the exterior of the scroll to prevent it from oxidizing.”

“If you could lend me a hand, Mr. Clem.”

Dorian immediately agreed and walked over. Standing opposite Jasper, they carefully took out the scroll and unfurled it.

Mr. Marshman stared at the slowly unfurled scroll as he instinctively pulled out his reading glasses to put them on. He could tell that this scroll was a valuable antique.

At the same time, the other department chiefs and president that had come to accompany the dean also walked over. Everyone looked at the scroll with curiosity.

After the scroll was opened, a single sentence caused gasps of disbelief to ripple through the crowd.

“This... this is Mr. Hines’ calligraphed Exchange of Ancient Somer Scholars!”

With that, the crowd was immediately in an uproar.

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Most people within the country did not know who Mr. Hines was.

However, it would be a crime for anyone within Hoofmorn University to not know the man.

Mr. Hines was Hoofmorn University's founder and its first dean. He was the most highly-ranked figure in Somerland's cultural field during his time.

All his students were people who were involved in, or even led, the massive spurt of development in Somerland's early modern history.

Everyone was excited once they heard this, especially Mr. Marshman.

Jasper looked up at the man who spoke and smiled. "You've got a great eye for things, Mr...?"

"Professor McDaniel is the department chief of Hoofmorn University's Early Modern History. He's one of the top three figures in the field of Early Modern History."

Patrick introduced the man before he looked at the open scroll again and asked, "Is this the real thing?"

Jasper smiled, "I wouldn't dare mess with you gentlemen by offering you a counterfeit. This is indeed the genuine article."

Jasper then praised Sean internally after replying.

Sean, who was thinking of how he could make up for his mistakes, had immediately found this treasure once he learned that Jasper was preparing gifts for Hoofmorn University.

Jasper could only get his hands on this item because Sean's family was friends with the scroll's previous owner. Even then, it had cost Jasper an eight-figure sum to buy Mr. Hines' calligraphed work.

It was an expensive piece, costing tens of millions.

Ten of millions was a suffocating sum in such a setting. However, as far as Jasper was concerned, this gift was a perfect one for Hoofmorn University.

“Mr. Hines is a publicly recognized scholar within the country. While he has already passed, his achievements continue to stand the test of time. Hoofmorn University remains to be a sacred academy that benefits thousands of people.

“It occurred to me how much of a shame it would be to Hoofmorn University if Mr. Hines’ calligraphed work were to disappear in the outside world, so I thought I’d take the responsibility to gift it to Hoofmorn University instead. I hope Hoofmorn University will honor Mr. Hines’ passing wish and continue to produce and nurture scholars and talents for the country and its people.”

If there was anyone good with his words.

It would be Jasper Laine.

Everyone in the room smiled joyfully at Jasper’s words as these titans of their respective academic fields looked at Jasper with great affection.

Even Mr. Marshman peered at Jasper with extreme gentleness.

“Jasper, allow me to refer you by your given name as your elder. On behalf of Hoofmorn University’s staff and student body, I thank you for your present.

“We know that this was an expensive gift, but Hoofmorn University values what the gift symbolizes even more. So, to be frank with you, we cannot nor are we willing to decline the gift. Thank you, we’ll treasure it.”

Patrick suddenly moved to give Jasper a grateful bow.

Jasper could not accept such an action, so he immediately reached out to stop Patrick. Jasper replied awkwardly, “Mr. Marshman, I’m going to have to shamefully leave if you keep being so overly courteous to me.”

Laughter filled the room after Jasper said this, and Patrick no longer insisted. The latter had someone put away the valuable calligraphed treasure before it got sent to Hoofmorn University's large hall and framed so staff and students could pay their respect.

Jasper smiled softly at the unexpected effect his gift had brought. He was thinking about how he could mention the reason for his visit before Mr. Marshman took the initiative to bring it up.

"Jasper, I know that you came to visit us for the stepper, yes? I've already called the relevant academic professors over. How else would you like Hoofmorn University to help you?"

Jasper exhaled softly. 'This is the difference between bearing and not bearing gifts!'

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Even if Jasper had not gifted Hoofmorn University such an unrefusable present, Mr. Marshman would still have welcomed Jasper grandly on behalf of Old Master Law's introduction and Jasper's strengths.

However, such a grand greeting would only be out of common respect.

After all, Old Master Law had put in a word, and Jasper was no longer the nobody he once was.

As the owner of JW Capital and its subsidiaries, Jasper was quite a formidable man.

However, Jasper did not want a courteous greeting for the sake of respect.

Jasper hoped to establish an even deeper relationship with Hoofmorn University so that it could become a place that nurtured JW's future talents.

“Mr. Marshman, Department Chiefs, since we’ve already brought up the matter, then allow me to go straight to the point.”

In the small meeting room in Hoofmorn University’s administrative building, Jasper cleared his throat in front of a group of professors and cleared his thoughts before he started slowly.

“You are all experts in your academic fields, so I won’t make a fool out of myself by introducing what the stepper does and how important it is. I trust that all of you know it better than I do.

“Its importance is the reason why the West has imposed a major blockade on this technical project, preventing it from reaching our shores for the past few decades.

“But does this mean we’ll have to sit and wait for the West to overpower us just because they’ve sealed off the technology?

“No!

“Coincidentally, my JW company has business in just such a field.

“Therefore, my idea is to build my own team and try to achieve a breakthrough on the stepper’s manufacturing technology. This will need more than an astronomical amount of funds, but also the technical support from the best research team in the country.

“This is why I came to Hoofmorn University today.

“Hoofmorn University had received a stepper a few years ago, and had also published the most research findings on the stepper. This is why Hoofmorn University will be the best partner for me.”

While everyone in the room had already expected the contents of Jasper’s speech, they still found themselves excited by the man’s words.

“You’re right, Mr. Laine. If it’s possible, then we are very willing to provide you the support you need.

“But the issue is that such a large research project will require funding of at least tens of billions. Moreover, there’s no certainty that we will produce results either.

“All the time, money, and effort will be for naught if we fail. This isn’t something ordinary people can afford.”

The one who said this was a professor of Hoofmorn University’s digital information field. He had voiced out what almost everyone was thinking.

While it would be great news if someone was willing to fund their research, the issue was with just how large the research project would be. Not only was this a huge project that would cost a lot of money, but its chance of failure were extremely high too.

“I understand. Research isn’t easy and it’s filled with obstacles, after all. To be honest with you, I’ already prepared myself for failure before I made this decision.”

Jasper’s firm gaze swept over everyone in the meeting room before he continued decisively, “I’ll invest at least 20 billion within one year. In return, I want a team of the best technicians in the country who will research and domestically develop a stepper without fear of repercussions!”

20 billion!

The meeting room was in an uproar after they heard the figure.

While everyone seated in the room was an academic expert, they were still financially normal people who lived on a monthly salary. They might have made more money than other families, but their hearts still shook in excitement when faced with the prospect of 20 billion.

“20 billion. That’s enough to fill this meeting room, isn’t it?” Someone whispered.

While opinions flew about, Patrick turned to look at Jasper and asked, “Jasper, are you coming up with this funding yourself, or are there other financiers?”

Jasper replied, “JW will shoulder the full burden of the project. There will not be any other sources of funding, so I will be the only one in charge of the project.

“The research team will hold the highest priority within the entire company. All resources and funding will be prioritized for them and they are not to be interfered with by any administrative offices.”

Patrick arched his brow at what Jasper said. “Jasper, you have to think carefully. This is 20 billion. If the research fails...”

“If it fails, then JW will face the risk of going bankrupt,” Jasper finished Patrick’s sentence.

“Let me be frank with all of you. JW’s currently has a very tight cash flow, and while it won’t affect day-to-day operations of the business, suddenly taking up such an important research project will surely place the company in a severe financial crisis.”

Jasper pondered over his next words for a moment before he continued, “But as far as I’m concerned, companies are like men, and there are some things we should and should not do. No matter how difficult, if it’s something that should be done, then I’ll get it done as soon as possible. The current predicament JW is facing is an experience it has to undergo in order to grow.

“Mr. Laine, have you considered funding research after some time, perhaps once your company’s financial situation is stable and you have the funds comfortably available?” A macroeconomics professor asked

Jasper chuckled and replied, “Following the basic rules of economics, that would be the smart thing to do. But how long am I supposed to wait?”

“Time is of the essence, and we’ve already spent too long waiting about. There’s not much time left, so someone has to rush up there and seize the opportunity by the horns!

“If no one else is going to do it, then I will! JW will!”

There was still something Jasper had not said. If possible, he really did not want to tackle this project with the risk of JW going bankrupt and shutting down.

However, this was already the 2000s, and the age of smartphones was on the horizon. Apple’s first-generation smartphone was already in development.

If Jasper wanted a piece of the smartphone market pie in the future, then he had to hold on tight to its core technology and not let go.

More importantly, the stepper would lead to more than just the breakthrough of mobile phones. The stepper was a key component for cutting-edge production in the integrated circuit manufacturing field.

Any device relating to electronics, like computers, mobile phones, and high-end appliances, relied on the operation of an advanced integrated circuit. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that this circuit was of national importance.

This was also a major piece of technology in Jasper’s plan for his JW business empire. Hence, he could not afford to wait.

The longer he waited, the larger the gap between technology in and outside the country would grow. This would make it even more difficult to narrow the gap, much less surpass them.

However, these were not things he could say out loud.

Even so, Jasper was met with a thundering round of applause that resounded throughout the meeting room once he had finished speaking.

Regardless of his innermost thoughts, the experts and professors in the room had been impressed by Jasper's strong will and courage.

"Mr. Laine... you are indeed a promising man. Bold and patriotic!"

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Jasper's negotiation before the forming of the partnership was a success.

The experts and professors then introduced themselves and exchanged name cards with him. Every single one of them, even those that had nothing to do with the project, was filled with confidence as they shook Jasper's hand.

After the meeting was over, Jasper returned to the dean's office alongside Patrick.

"Dorian, could you make us some tea?" Patrick was in a great mood. After instructing Dorian to make them tea, Patrick turned to tell Jasper kindly, "We'd be elated if there were more courageous and responsible youths like you in the country, Jasper."

Jasper waved his hand and smiled. "It's nothing much. I'm just doing what I think is right."

Patrick sighed and said, "These things that you consider as nothing much are almost impossible feats to many others."

"Please don't be too kind, Mr. Marshman, otherwise I won't know to bring up my small request." Jasper smiled.

Patrick had a great impression of Jasper by now, and he laughed and said, “Do tell. As long as it’s within my powers, then it won’t be an issue.”

Jasper replied, “What a coincidence, then. A word from you would actually solve this little issue of mine, Mr. Marshman.

“So basically, I have a distantly related sister. She...”

Jasper proceeded to tell him about Tiffany’s situation.

“She’s very hardworking and she loves to study. She’s talented as well, but her family conditions have been too harsh, and she has to take full responsibility for her brother’s expenses.

“What she lacks is an opportunity, which I was hoping Hoofmorn University could give to her.”

Patrick frowned slightly after he heard Jasper.

As a morally conscious individual, Patrick would never agree to anyone trying to enroll in his school through private connections. However, he could not help but consider this deeply since Jasper was the one who was requesting it.

“I don’t see why not. Compile her documents and send them to the admissions office. I still have two special offers on hand, and I can give one of them to her.”

After a short moment of thought, Patrick replied with a smile.

Jasper sighed in relief as well after he heard Patrick agree.

While Jasper did have other methods to achieve his goal, and he could always have just sent Tiffany to another university, resorting to those methods would only fracture his relationship with Patrick.

Patrick was a reasonable and suave man, so he did not put Jasper in an awkward position by declining.

After a dozen more minutes or so, Jasper received a phone call and got up to bid farewell.

Patrick shook Jasper's hand again after walking him to the office doors.

"Then I shall await your good news, Jasper," Patrick said seriously.

"Rest assured, Mr. Marshman. I'll send someone here tomorrow to sign the official framework agreement of our partnership.

"Of course, for confidentiality's sake, I do hope that Hoofmorn University will keep the specifics of our research project a secret from the outside world.

"Otherwise, the situation could potentially end badly. We might have to face a lot of unnecessary trouble if other countries got wind of this."

Patrick nodded and replied, "Don't worry. I'll make the necessary preparations on my end. That Tiffany girl you spoke of, perhaps you could bring her over in a few days. It would be difficult to arrange her for admission once the timeframe passes."

"Alright. Thank you for your trouble then, Mr. Marshman," Jasper thanked him sincerely.

With a chuckle, Patrick patted Jasper's shoulder affectionately and said, "Don't let me delay you from your work any longer, then. I'll see you off here."

After walking out of the administrative building, Jasper turned to tell Julian, "Jul, I'll have to trouble you to go back to Nauritus City and bring Tiffany over... She's never been out the city before, and I worry that she'll get lost the moment she leaves the house if I have her come on her own."

Julian replied with a smile, “Sure, Jasper. Then I’ll get going... Should I send you back to the hotel first?”

“No need. Go back immediately. The sooner you go, the sooner you get back. I can return to the hotel myself since it’s not too far—less than a twenty-minute ride if I hail a taxi.”

Jasper was in no rush to return after Julian left. Instead, he took the nearest subway to the beach.

Jasper strolled along the beach and stared out at the expansive view before him, filled with tourists.

Hiding in a sea of tourists, Jasper let himself be engulfed by all sorts of dialects as they expressed excitement and yearning for the bustling city life.

Jasper felt that it had been ages since he had lived the life of a normal person. He soon found a random stone platform and sat down on it before pulling his phone out to dial a number.

“I was dealing with something at Hoofmorn University just now, and so I couldn’t talk too much with you. Is something up?”

Henry’s voice then sounded from the other end of the line.

“You’re at Waterhoof City too?”

“What’s with this ‘too’ of yours? I thought you were pursuing love over at Swallow Capital?” Jasper joked.

“Don’t remind me. Jill’s not interested in me at all. I spent a few days there and watched her practice at her training center every day. Her coach and teammates don’t like me since I was there for so long, so I came back first.”

Henry replied despondently.

“You’ve got to take these things slow. Jill isn’t the kind of girl you can win over with money, and I doubt you’d cherish her if she was that easy,” Jasper consoled.

Henry snickered and replied, “You’re right about that. The more she ignores me, the more interested in her I become.”

“You know, there’s an adjective that describes you perfectly right now,” Jasper claimed.

“What is it?” Henry asked curiously, “Infatuation? Or maybe handsome? Something like a rare man?”

“Cheap.”

“...”

Half an hour later, Henry found Jasper on the beach drinking a cup of bubble tea.

“You drink things like this?” Henry exclaimed in shock, as if this was the first time he was meeting Jasper.

“This is called living life. It’s not something sordid trust-fund children like you can understand. Anyway, what was so important that you had to rush over and tell me in person?” Jasper asked lazily.

Henry snickered before he answered, “Nothing much. I was meeting an old friend here in Waterhoof City, so I thought I’d share some intel when I found out you were here too.”

“Fabian’s been going to lots of places to cause you trouble lately. The sinister little sh*t wouldn’t challenge you directly, so he’s been silently contacting your enemies. It seems like he’s already found quite a few.

“My sources are definitely reliable, and I had to use my dad’s channels to understand exactly what he’s doing. You’ve got to be careful, or he’ll find everyone you’ve offended in the past to seek revenge against you at the same time. After all, you aren’t an easy opponent.”

Jasper frowned slightly and narrowed his eyes. “I remember receiving news before that Conrad’s left the country to relax.”

“You think Conrad and Fabian are in contact?” Henry asked.

“It’s hard to say,” Jasper replied heavily.