

# Life at the Top Chapter 531

“I plan to persuade the boss of Hello Company to open a hotpot restaurant in our Faith County!”

Darrel’s eyes shone as he spoke.

“He has already agreed and promised to sponsor half the money. But following his requests, it’s very expensive to invest in one Hello Hotpot restaurant and I don’t have that kind of money.”

Darrel’s eyes burned into Jasper as he asked sincerely, “Jasper, I came here today to ask you for help.”

The elders must have stopped talking some time ago, for they were all listening to Jasper and Darrel’s conversation.

After Darrel had spoken, both Honey and her husband looked at Jasper pleadingly.

Jasper tapped his fingers on the pictures but did not speak.

Honestly speaking, Darrel could have just decided to open a normal hotpot restaurant or any other normal business.

In which case, Jasper would give him an amount he never expected to be repaid and that was that.

However, Darrel was interested in Hello Hotpot and even planned to open a shop here in the Southeast Province. Now that was interesting.

“How about this? I’ll give you two options to choose from.”

After a long while, Jasper spoke.

“Option one, as long as the money you require is under 200,000 dollars, I’ll lend you however much you need. You’ll have to pay me back someday but I won’t charge you for interest.

“Or option two, I’ll invest the money and you talk to the boss of Hello Company and tell him to directly do his business here in the Southeast Province. Scale-wise, my only requirement is that there be at least one in every prefecture-level city. I’ll deal with all the investment costs, and I can give you 10% of the shares.”

Darrel then fell deep in thought for a moment after Jasper listed his options.

“I’ll take option two!” Darrel looked up at Jasper with determination.

Jasper chuckled, his satisfaction with Darrel increasing.

People more concerned with immediate benefits would tend to choose the first option. After all, that was a solid 200,000 cash on hand.

However, while the second option only came with 10% of all the shares, any deeper thought would have the person realizing how much better this option was. One restaurant in every prefecture-level city in the province.

With such a large scale, 10% was much more valuable than 200,000.

Not to mention that once this project was completed, Hello Hotpot would become a large chain of catering brands in the province. It was much more sophisticated than opening a small restaurant in Faith County.

“A very wise choice.” Jasper nodded. “Take some time to talk it out with the boss of Hello Hotpot first. The only thing I’m contributing is the funding, and you’ll have to do the rest yourself. Prepare a whole proposal and send it over early next year.

“As long as I approve of it, then you’ll get the funds right away.”

Darrel flushed in excitement and nodded. “Okay! Thank you, Jasper, I’ll do my best.”

Jasper clapped Darrel’s shoulder and spoke, “You’re not doing anything for me. You’re doing it for yourself.”

Just then, Honey asked with difficulty, “How much would it cost to open so many restaurants, Jasper?”

Jasper gave it some thought and replied, “Including Nauritius City, the provincial capital, the seven prefecture-level cities in the Southeast Province... and personally, I think that there should be at least two restaurants in the provincial capital, so it’s a total of eight restaurants. Then including the construction fee and fixture expenses, I’d say no less than one million per restaurant.”

Thank goodness that this was the year 2000 when the cost for both rent and manpower was still cheap.

Had it been before he reincarnated, he would need at least five million per Hello Hotpot outlet.

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Such a vast amount shocked Honey and her family.

Even Darrel had not expected that this plan would need so much money.

“Wow! That’s more than eight million. How much money even is that? What if it all ends up in a loss?” Honey asked.

Jasper smiled. “That’s how business works, everything comes with a risk. Planning for the worst, then working to achieve the best is the only thing we can do.”

“Eight million. 10% of shareholder rights, that means I get 800,000 right off the bat?” Darrel gasped in disbelief.

Jasper replied calmly, “That’s only the beginning. Not to mention that we’re using the brand and skills from the boss of Hello Hotpot. He’ll still be the one in charge of training the employees, so his percentage of shares won’t be very low. This is something you need to talk to him about.”

Darrel scratched his head in embarrassment. “I don’t know how to do anything. What if I screw this negotiation up... This is way too much money.”

“How much money is involved here won’t change the outcome. I’ve heard of Hello Hoptpot’s boss. He’s an ambitious man. There’s something about you that he admires, or he wouldn’t have agreed to open an outlet all the way in one of the Southeast Province’s small counties.

“The most important thing is that he already has the desire to expand Hello Hotpot, he just doesn’t have enough funds. What you’re doing now is negotiating

with him on my behalf. You have the funds he needs, so you're the one with the initiative here. Don't forget that."

Jasper did not mind guiding his cousin a little more, or Darrel would only be picked apart until nothing was left if he ran up to negotiate with someone blankly.

While the final say in the project was still in his hand, Jasper had predicted that he would be very busy after the new year. He might not have much time to spend on 'small projects' like this.

Jasper sounded very professional when he spoke, with a few words here and there that made Honey and the rest confused.

While they did not understand, they found Jasper very capable. Respect filled their eyes when they looked at him.

After everything was said and done, the two families were relieved.

Sally said that she would prepare dinner, but Honey and her family made an excuse to leave, afraid that they would be intruding.

As such, Jasper decided for everyone and brought them all to a hotel for dinner.

After booking a private room in one of Tefa City's five-star hotels, Jasper brought them over.

Both Honey and her husband were immensely grateful for Jasper the entire way while Jasper merely smiled. He taught Darrel things he had learned from his business experiences. The latter absorbed the information like a sponge.

Upon arriving at the hotel, Honey's entire family was filled with admiration for Jasper.

Midway through dinner, Jasper received a call from John.

“John? What’s up?” Jasper asked with a smile.

The situation at Waterhoof City would not have gone so smoothly had John not been there to bridge the conversation with Vita. As such, Jasper was extremely grateful to John as well.

John’s chuckles sounded through the speakers. “I’m here at Clivia Hotel and I just saw your Bentley. You didn’t tell me you were back.”

Jasper glanced at his parents and replied, “I’m having dinner with my family. Are you at the hotel too? You can come join us if you want.”

John smiled. “I don’t think I’ll bother you for dinner, but could you come over to the room I’m in for a moment after you’re done?”

Hearing the heavy tone in John’s voice, Jasper asked, “Sure, I can. Did something happen?”

John sighed and replied, “Do you still remember Kai? The president of Ascendas Investment. We met him at Royce Villa, remember?”

“Something happened to him and he’s a step away from taking his own life at this point. We’re all old friends here and I can’t bear to see him so troubled, so I’m trying to persuade him not to do anything rash right now.”

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Kai, the president of Ascendas Investment.

Jasper did find this person slightly familiar.

From what Jasper remembered, he was a kind man who always smiled when he talked.

Jasper did not ask too much, for there were some things better said in person than on the phone. As such, he directly accepted the suggestion.

After eating with his aunt's family for a moment, Jasper then got up and excused himself.

Everyone understood that he was busy, so they let him leave.

Exiting the private room, Jasper followed the directions John sent him and arrived at a small private room upstairs.

Thick smoke was seen in the air of the small private room, and John could be seen drinking with Kai.

The scent of cigarette smoke and alcohol was heavy in the air. Jasper waved his hand before his face and spoke, "Are you guys trying to ascend to heaven?"

Seeing Jasper, Kai immediately shot up before John could say anything and greeted him carefully, "Mister... Mr. Laine, it's nice to see you."

Kai and Jasper were not close. If anything, they were acquaintances who had only met once before.

Jasper had a good impression of Kai for he and John had taken the risk of offending someone and stood up for him in Royce Villa.

Had it not been for that, Jasper would not be here today.

Looking at Kai's cautious behavior, Jasper knew that John must have said something before he came over. Disagreeing, Jasper smiled to say, "Relax, we're all friends."

Jasper then walked over to the table and sat down.

Kai immediately called a waiter over.

"Give us an extra set of cutleries and bring over your best dishes. Have your manager arrange everything. I have an important guest with me, so do your best."

Jasper looked at John with a subtle smile at Kai's arrangement and spoke, "You don't have to be so polite. I already ate downstairs."

John knew that Jasper had seen through him, so he went straight to the point instead of hiding from him though he was a little embarrassed. "Basically, Kai's investment company lost a lot in the stock market last month, Jasper.

"You know how it is with investments. Most companies tend to take the clients' money and put them in riskier shares. If they earn, fine. But if they lose, then the clients riot.

"Kai lost more than six million, four million of which are his clients' money. It should've been fine, but a large client suddenly wants to take their money back. They promised to put the money there for a year but the client now wants it back next week. This puts Kai in a lot of trouble."

Kai looked remorseful and regretful as John described his situation. He sighed, saying, "It's all my fault for being so greedy. I was making profits in the beginning,

but I thought that I could earn another five points, so I wasn't willing to take them out.

"Who would've thought that a few of them started dropping to limit downs in the end? I couldn't even pull out if I wanted to, and by the time I sold all my stocks, I'd already lost my capital's worth as well."

Jasper frowned. "That's just how investing in stock markets works. A slight mistake and you end up sucked dry.

"The problem isn't that you're greedy. You wouldn't have dared to invest in high-risk stocks if you were greedy, would you? You wouldn't make a loss if you had invested in something else.

"The problem here lies in the mind and the pattern of the stocks. You should know when to pull out and when to invest. If you get to the predetermined point, you should know to cash out and leave regardless of whether you earned a profit or a loss."

Jasper's nickname as the stock god back then was still a myth spread at the provincial capital. The man had now grown to be so much more and surpassed the person he used to be.

From John, Kai had found out that Jasper's net worth was now in the billions. He was of a much more sophisticated level than the two of them.

Therefore, Kai did not feel upset by Jasper's words and merely sighed again.

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“It’s too late to think about what we should’ve done now. But Jasper, we were thinking if you could lend a helping hand? It’d be fine if it was just Kai, but his family shouldn’t have to suffer because of it as well,” John spoke hesitantly.

Jasper smiled subtly at John and replied, “You’re too good of a friend, John.”

John waved him off. “Kai and I have been friends for more than a decade. There’s no way I can just stand aside and watch him kill himself.”

Jasper asked, “Then how do you want me to help?”

Kai and John’s eyes shone at Jasper’s question. Especially Kai, for he did not expect Jasper to be willing to help. Kai quickly replied, “I need an extra 3.5 million in funds, and I was wondering if you could lend me that amount? I promise I’ll pay you back once this whole incident is over, Mr. Laine.

“Honestly, 3.5 million isn’t a lot at all,” Jasper replied. Seeing the elation on Kai’s expression, Jasper quickly continued, “But I have a series of investments after New Year’s, so I don’t plan on lending the money.”

At that, both Kai and John’s expressions changed.

John quickly spoke, “But Jasper…”

“John,” Kai interrupted him, smiling bitterly as he spoke, “Mr. Laine has his own difficulties and reasons. I wouldn’t lend someone money if they asked for 3.5 million out of the blue either. Don’t make it difficult for Mr. Laine.”

John’s words were on the tip of his tongue when he sighed and swallowed them back, opting to say something else. “I went too far.”

Then, John raised a wine glass to Jasper. "Don't say anything, Jasper. I'm sorry, I shouldn't have forced this on you. I'll down a glass as punishment."

John then tipped his head back and finished it.

Jasper could not even stop him in time and smiled bitterly. "Calm down, let me finish talking first."

His words instantly sparked hope in the two other despondent men who both immediately looked at Jasper.

Jasper turned to speak to Kai, "How many liquid funds do you have at hand now?"

Kai did not hide at all and replied, "I still have 800,000, but that's all the funds I have. The client wants to take four million out next week, so I've only got the 800,000 until next Monday."

Jasper gave it some thought and replied, "It's only Wednesday today. Two business days until then, that should be enough."

John quickly replied, "What do you have in mind, Jasper? Tell us, we're really curious."

Jasper smiled. "I think I can help Kai, but it's a huge risk. A short-swing trade in the futures market."

"If we're lucky, we'll manage to fill that four million gap you need. But of course, there's also no absolute guarantee that the investment will work and you could potentially lose that 800,000 dollars you have as well. It's up to you to decide."

At that, John immediately stopped talking and turned to Kai.

This was an option of life and death. No matter how close they were, John was in no position to make the decision for Kai.

Kai struggled outwardly for a moment before clenching his jaw to reply, "That client is someone with an exceptional background. I'll be screwed if I can't pay him back anyway, so I might as well take a gamble with this 800,000 dollars then! I trust you, Mr. Laine!

"But I have to call someone to inform them first, Mr. Laine," Kai suddenly said.

Jasper furrowed his brows slightly. "Oh? Go ahead, then."

Kai took a look at Jasper's displeasure and quickly explained himself, "Don't misunderstand me, Mr. Laine. I trust you, I do, but we also didn't think you'd help us. That's why I contacted Mr. Ray, the best investor in the province, and asked him for help.

"Now that I've chosen to accept help from you, then it's only right I turn Mr. Ray down."

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'Mr. Ray?'

Jasper looked at John with confusion.

John quickly explained, "Samuel Ray. Remember Hugh? That man had some beef with you before. Hugh was crushed in the end, remember? So it was Samuel Ray who ended up taking his place in the end.

“I don’t think you know him, considering how he happened to be outstation when we went to Royce Villa that one time. His power was just slightly less that of Hugh’s, so he’s the top dog now that Hugh has fallen.”

John’s displeased tone told Jasper that this Mr. Ray was hardly an easy person to deal with.

At the same time, Kai’s call with Samuel was connected.

Kai first relayed his stand, which was met with Samuel’s chiding from the other end of the line. Samuel was so loud that both Jasper and John could hear him clearly.

“Look, Jones, logically speaking, this is your money. Whether you want to die with it or not is not my problem. But we’ve already come to an agreement, and I also counted your funds into this. We’re entering the market tomorrow and you’re telling me that you want out now?”

“Why, huh? Are you looking down on me or something? What, do you think I’m going to run away with your money?”

Kai looked angry, but under the pressure, he could only reply politely, “I, uh, Mr. Ray, it’s my fault for not thinking this whole thing through. But I’ve found another friend and we’ve also decided everything, so I won’t be giving you my money to invest.”

“How about this, I’ll treat you to an apology meal?”

Samuel scoffed. “Apology meal your f\*cking ass. Do I look like I need a meal from you?”

“I’ve already planned everything and you’re just going to take that 800,000 dollars out of the equation at the last minute? Who the hell am I supposed to ask for compensation? Are you offering to pay?”

Kai harrumphed silently. There was always a limit to a person's temper no matter how good it was. Kai replied grimly, "All I did was discuss the possibility with you. Nothing had been set in stone yet. Not to mention that I was never told of whatever this plan of yours is. How could you ask me to compensate for your loss? Why are you putting the blame on me?"

"F\*ck you, Kai! That loss last month should've f\*cking killed you. Just go kill yourself, you stupid c\*nt.

"And who's the f\*cker who's helping you, huh? Tell me who he is. I'll f\*cking kill that b\*stard!"

Kai's expression darkened as he replied coldly, "I'm only calling to inform you, not to ask you for your opinion. I don't care whether you agree or not."

Kai then ignored Samuel's rage on the other end and hung up on the man.

Exhaling, Kai then turned to Jasper bitterly. "My apologies, Mr. Laine. I've made a fool of myself."

Jasper shook his head and stood. "Since we've already decided, then John and I will take a trip to your company at 8:00 a.m. tomorrow. We'll trade there."

Kai replied in excitement, "Okay! We'll follow your plan!"

Jasper smiled and shook Kai's hand before he turned to leave.

Kai's smile fell as the room to the private door closed. He sighed deeply and faced John, saying "I pray that you haven't found someone to brush me off, John. Here's hoping that Jasper's a capable man.

"Forget losing a fortune, I've even offended Samuel. I'm really going to be screwed if this goes wrong."

John clapped Kai's shoulders and replied, "Don't worry. As long as he's willing to do it, I've never seen the man lose."

Kai nodded. "I hope you're right."

By the time Jasper returned to his private room, dinner was almost over. The sky was dark, and it was also time for everyone to go home.

Darrel's family insisted on returning home for the night, so Jasper did not force them to stay. After giving a few extra words on what to do next, Jasper hailed them a taxi and sent them straight to Faith County.

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