

Life at the Top Chapter 846

Conrad had never expected to fool Jasper with a scheme that seemed so costly and elaborate.

Thus, Conrad had from the very start abandoned the Langdon family and begun planning his scheme.

In his opinion, it would be best if Jasper was fooled by this scheme, but he knew the chances of that happening was tiny.

After dealing with him multiple times, Conrad understood exactly why Jasper was so terrifying.

Thus, he did not have a lot of hope.

He placed even more hope on the fact that he had secretly abandoned the W. Langdons and had another plan directed at Sena.

Conrad, who had done thorough research on Jasper, knew that Jasper would immediately be alerted if he took action against any of the companies the man owned.

Jasper had complete control over these companies because they had never been listed publicly. Nothing could escape his eyes.

Sena was the only one that was different.

After all, Sena had been listed publicly on the Nasdaq Composite. The company's shareholding structure would be a multi-class structure for sure.

Conrad knew Jasper would maintain a firm grip of control over Sena, but he did not care. He did not want to fight with Jasper for Sena but rather cause Sena to completely collapse once he was done making his move.

No one knew that Conrad had already begun laying out the share prices for Sena, and that was the last trick he had up his sleeve.

“Oh, Jasper. This time, it’ll be a battle of wits between the two of us. On the surface, I’m using the W. Langdons as a cover-up for what I’m about to do in the dark. I’m going to pull the rug out from under you through the Nasdaq Composite... Tell me, how are you going to win this time?”

...

Without surprise, the team of experts in the minerals industry that Jasper had gotten in contact with through Elbert Mcgee did not find anything out of the ordinary in Hill County.

After two days of field research, the report the team submitted to Jasper stated that there was indeed a large reserve of aluminum ore within the depths of Hill County. Moreover, these ores were worth billions because of their high quality.

The only downside was that Hill County was an undeveloped place with harsh conditions. A large amount of money would need to be invested before the ores could be mined...

Jasper put down the report the experts had submitted and dialed John’s number.

“John, it’s me.

“Haha, let me apologize in advance. I was in America before this and had a lot of things to take care of. That’s why I wasn’t able to keep in touch with you guys.

“You’re not wrong, I do have a favor to ask from you today.

“I was wondering if you could ask around your company and the other major banks in Southeast Province if Conrad Monty has taken any large loans that are worth millions?”

“Yes, it’s quite urgent. I wouldn’t have called you if it wasn’t.

“Alright, I’ll wait for you to get back to me.”

Within an hour of ending his call with John, Jasper received a message from him.

Conrad had requested a special financing loan of 2.9 billion dollars from Agricultural Bank.

It was a three-year loan that would be used for business development, with the collateral being the aluminum mine that had been newly discovered at Hill County.

The loan had not yet been approved because the lender had not been determined yet. Thus, it was still pending while Jasper and Conrad finalized the contract for the newly-established company and an expert from the bank did field research on the mine.

“Jasper, not only does Agricultural Bank view this loan as one of utmost importance but other banks, including mine, would like to claim it as ours too. Conrad has a lot of money under his name, and the banks are not worried that anything may happen. The amount of money he wants to loan is huge in Southeast Province. It’ll be a win for anyone who manages to secure the deal.

“Since you’re the one asking, let me add on something else. Make sure nothing happens. 2.9 billion dollars is a lot of money, and a huge fuss will be made if anything happens. No one will be able to handle it.”

John’s words swam around in Jasper’s mind as he sat in his office and thought deeply about things.

What could be confirmed now was Conrad was seemingly giving Jasper a huge opportunity to take hold of.

The minute he took it, it would clamp down on him and render him immobile. When that happened, the one gaining profits would be Conrad, while Jasper had to shoulder all the responsibility.

After a long while, Jasper called John again.

“John, help me get in touch with whoever is in charge of the Agricultural Bank’s Southeast Province branch. I want to treat them to a meal.”

After another few minutes of pondering, Jasper dialed another number.

“Old Master Hurlbutt, how has your health been lately?” Jasper asked as he smiled.

“Oh, it’s nothing. I was just wondering if you could help refer me to a few people?”

“I want to meet the head of the state mining enterprise, someone reliable.”

...

JW Company and Monty Group were about to collaborate and form a brand new company. This particular company had only one task, which was to focus on the development of the mining industry.

This piece of news was a shocker that traveled like lightning through the entire upper class of Southeast Province.

Not a single soul trying to make a living in Southeast Province did not know that Jasper and Conrad were sworn enemies. They had been in so many feuds that

you could practically write a book about them. In short, the two simply hated each other.

However, they were working together now?

The industry they were collaborating in was none other than the minerals industry, which Jasper had zero experience in while it was where the Monty family thrived.

The upper class of Southeast Province was more willing to believe Jasper had killed Conrad or vice versa than they were to believe the two were working together.

It was as if a cat was working together with a mouse.

However, the news was already out now and no one had dared to spread rumors that involved both families.

It was true, then.

While the upper class society of Southeast Province was still in shock, the new company was established with fanfare.

It was located near the Southface River Project, which would be officially ready in just a few days!

The company was registered to operate on the sixth to the eighth floors of the Southface River Tower.

Both Jasper and Conrad attended the unveiling ceremony. Photos of the two of them cutting the ribbon and shaking hands as they smiled at the cameras were published by all major printing companies in Southeast Province.

It was also deemed the creepiest photo of 2001 by the upper class society of Southeast Province.

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Jasper immediately sought out John after the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

John had rushed over from work and began complaining the minute he walked into the bar where they had planned to meet. “Mr. Jasper Laine, couldn’t you have told me what you wanted to say over the phone? Must we meet here?”

“It’s not a good idea to talk about it over the phone. I’m alright, but you’re a high profile man. I don’t have the means to compensate you if anything happens to a man holding an important job like you,” Jasper said as he smiled.

As the two grew closer, John and Jasper slowly became less formal when they spoke to each other, paying no attention to titles or tone. John did not treat Jasper as a multi-billionaire, and Jasper did not treat John as the vice president of one of the largest banks in the country.

John had a startled expression on his face as he glanced suspiciously at Jasper, saying, “Just listen to what you’re saying. Why have you come looking for me? You aren’t trying to team up with me and rob the bank, right? I won’t take part in these crazy schemes, but you can go ahead.”

Jasper did not know if he should laugh or cry as he said, “Do you think I need to rob your bank? With time, I can easily earn as much money as a bank in the province has.”

John suppressed a smile as he said, “That’s the most depressing thing I’ve ever heard in my life.”

After the two sat down, Jasper beckoned for a waiter to serve them some appetizers as he said, “Frankly, this isn’t anything major. But it is quite urgent,

and after a lot of thought, the only person I could think of who would execute this efficiently without compromising quality was you.”

John said boldly, “Stop beating around the bush. Tell me, what do you need me to do?”

“Help me register a shell corporation in the Cayman Islands,” Jasper replied.

Startled, John said hesitantly, “You could just pay a corrupt intermediary to take care of matters like this for a couple of million dollars.”

“That’s why I said it wasn’t a major problem, but do you think there are intermediaries who could get it done by tomorrow morning?” Jasper asked exasperatedly as he tossed John a cigarette and lit himself one.

John’s eyes widened as he asked in disbelief, “Tomorrow morning?! Do you think I’m a god?!”

Jasper laughed and said, “No one else would be able to do it, but you won’t have a problem.”

John ran his fingers through his hair, which had grown considerably thinner ever since he got to know Jasper. He said, “Give me a minute to think about it.”

“Registering a company in the Cayman Islands isn’t hard... but a shell corporation? Do you want it to have the minimum registered capital?”

“Yes, one US dollar will be enough,” Jasper said as he smiled.

Several places in the world were tax-evading heaven for multinational companies, and the Cayman Islands was one of them. In fact, even in the year 2020, after 19 years had passed, several large corporations would still register either their branch offices or mother company in the Cayman Islands.

First of all, that place was tax-free. Second of all, foreign companies entering and investing within the domestic market was beneficial to countries like Somerland, which relied on foreign funding to develop in the year 2001.

Every place was trying to attract investors now, and being able to attract a foreign investor was considered a big plus. Thus, those who could think outside the box would seek the opportunity to register their company in other countries.

Without considering anything else, just the preferential policies and lifetime exemption from taxes were enough to cause the masses to rush like ducks.

“I’m not planning on having all the companies registered overseas. The first reason being that the procedure is much too complicated and time-consuming. The second reason, which is also the main reason, is that as a person of Somer descent profiting off my countrymen’s money, I must pay taxes to my country.

“That’s why I’m getting you to do this for me. I just need a shell corporation that I can get rid of once I’m done with it.”

John nodded knowingly as he listened to Jasper speak. Then, he let Jasper watch as he took his phone and made four or five phone calls in a row.

Half an hour later, John said, “Thank the Lord I still have a couple of friends who are in this business. One of them has immigrated to the Cayman Islands and often helps others with procedures like these. At least you would be doing it in a somewhat legal manner.

“Having it done by tomorrow does prove to be a challenge, but my friend has promised he’ll make it happen. It’s almost daytime where he is thanks to the six-hour time zone difference, so we should send him the information now. He’ll go get in line first thing in the morning and get a headstart on the procedures. Everything should be done, at the very latest, in the afternoon,” John said.

“Alright, give me your friend’s contact information, then. I’ll arrange for someone to get in touch with him regarding the information and relevant payments,” Jasper said.

When he heard that, John wrote down a number for Jasper.

Jasper immediately passed the number to Malcolm after receiving it.

Perhaps it was due to cultural influences, but this American was exceptionally good at unorthodox shenanigans like these.

He was also the one who had come up with this plan that would help prevent Jasper from getting into trouble with the law.

“How did your meeting with Agricultural Bank go?” John asked curiously.

“No major problems. I didn’t ask for him to do much except to keep an eye on the loan Conrad wants to take out and ensure it’s channeled into the new company’s account in its entirety. Not a single cent can find its way into his account. Isn’t this what’s usually explicitly requested when taking out loans with a bank?”

Jasper laughed as he asked.

John nodded and said, “Then that shouldn’t be too big of a problem. However, if you hadn’t popped in beforehand regarding such matters, who knows if anything had been wired to another personal account.”

“You know what things are like. No one’s going to look into it if there isn’t anyone acting as supervisor. These are all minuscule things to the president of a district branch, and his words act as rules so long as no major incidents happen.”

After a while of eating and chatting, Jasper stood to leave.

“Well, that’s all for today. I’ve still got to rush to meet a few other people,” Jasper said as he stood.

“It’s late. You still have appointments?” John asked confusedly.

Jasper smiled mysteriously as he said, “We’re signing the contract tomorrow. Of course, I’ll have to prepare all my plans beforehand. I must ensure the people in charge of those state-owned enterprises are in place before I sleep.”

John shook his head and said, “Whoever is trying to go against you will have seven years of bad luck lined up for them!”

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After saying goodbye to John, Jasper immediately traveled to Sheraton Hotel in Nauritus City.

The supervisors of two separate state-owned enterprises had long since been waiting for him.

After a mandatory round of introductions, Jasper smiled at the two blushing and grinning supervisors as he said, "Guys, we'll be going through with the normal process of signing the contracts tomorrow, but don't forget our promise to each other.

"I'll first represent the new company in signing the contract with you tomorrow, but we'll also sign a memorandum in private. It's both to help me and prevent you guys from getting tricked, which is why we must ensure nothing happens!"

"Don't worry, Mr. Laine. We would have walked right into the trap if you hadn't reminded us. Who would have thought that Monty Group, a company that's somewhat well known in the country, would do something like this?"

"We won't let him get what he wants now that we're working together!"

One of the supervisors thumped his chest as he spoke.

They would not be idiots seeing as they were able to climb up to their current positions. They were actually much smarter than they seemed.

The first time Jasper met with them, he had skipped all niceties and told them straight to their faces that Conrad's mine was a fraud. Except for the surface layer, the ground underneath was completely devoid of any minerals.

The two men immediately believed what Jasper said when he procured the relevant customs declaration forms from Harbor City.

While in shock, the two were also gritting their teeth with hatred for Conrad.

They would have been held responsible if they fell for his tricks and caused their enterprises to suffer major losses. If that were the case, they would have reached the end of their careers.

To senior executives at state-owned enterprises like them, ending their careers was basically ending their lives.

Jasper did not even need to say much about a grudge like this before they immediately agreed to assist him.

Thus, Jasper's plans were born.

He would agree to Conrad's request to collaborate and would use the shell corporation he had registered to join shares with Conrad and act as the legal representative for the new company.

Then, he would secure the money Conrad got from the loan using the company's bank account and forbid Conrad from taking a single cent of it.

This time, he had formed a deal with the two supervisors from the state-owned enterprises. On the surface, they were signing an acquisition agreement, but they would also secretly sign a memorandum that denied the fact that the three of them had any responsibility to withhold in this situation. When things finally went wrong, Conrad would be the one to shoulder all the responsibility.

Jasper had managed to poke holes in Conrad's elaborate scheme using these three steps, and he was confident he could let Conrad have a taste of his own medicine.

It was already past midnight when Jasper was done doing a second run-through of what would happen tomorrow with the supervisors. He then returned home.

The night passed in the blink of an eye.

The next morning, Jasper and Wendy set out to the venue where the contract would be signed.

Jasper had just gotten into the car when he received a call from Malcolm.

The procedures to set up the shell corporation had been completed.

Upon receiving that piece of news, Jasper heaved a sigh of relief and finally relaxed.

“Has it been done?” Wendy asked when she saw Jasper hang up the phone with a relaxed expression on his face.

Smiling, Jasper nodded and said, “Now all we have to do is head over there and sign the contract.”

The multipurpose hall in Sheraton Hotel had been furnished to function as a small-scale launch event today.

[Cloud Rider Mining Company has been officially established!]

[Conrad Monty has made a private investment of 3 billion dollars, while Jasper Laine has invested 2.3 billion dollars under his newly registered foreign company, Tenra Corporations!]

[The company boasts a joint registered capital of 5.3 billion Somer Dollars and will operate mainly in the mining industry.]

[Cloud Rider Mining Company has already signed a sales contract with two of the five largest mining companies in the country on the day it was established. They have promised to provide no less than 700,000 tonnes of quality raw aluminum ore every year to both companies!]

[The Monty family has discovered a brand new mine, but instead of excavating it themselves, they have chosen to collaborate with their biggest enemy, Jasper Laine!]

[Could it be that, as Monty Group had put it, they lack the necessary funds to excavate the mine or because the Monty family is also attempting to extend an olive branch to the newly emerging power in Southeast Province, Jasper Laine?]

[No matter what, this company has been destined to shine since the day it was established. It's full of secrets and seems to be determining the fate of Southeast Province.]

Piece after piece of news was spread out from the venue of the launch event, and they quickly became the topic of discussion for every single family in Southeast Province.

After Jasper stamped his seals as the legal representative of the new company, he stood and exchanged the contracts with the two supervisors from the state-owned enterprises. Lights flashed as the contract officially took on legal validity.

“Mr. Laine, we hope this will be a good collaboration.”

The two supervisors of the state-owned enterprises roared with laughter as they spoke meaningfully to Jasper.

Jasper laughed lightly and said, “That’s a must. We’ll definitely enjoy working together.”

The three exchanged looks and smiled. Then, they went along with the reporters' wishes and turned to look at the cameras, giving them more time to take pictures.

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Conrad, who was sitting on the other end of the podium, had a slight smile on his face. No one could tell what was running through his mind now.

“Be happy now, Jasper Laine. Be as happy as you want to be now. The happier you are now, the more miserable you’ll be when you realize you’re trapped!”

After taking a deep breath, Conrad was just about to walk toward Jasper and the two supervisors so that they could exchange pleasantries and answer any questions the reporters might have when Valentine hurried over.

“Mr. Monty, the money for the loan has been approved,” Valentine said solemnly to Conrad.

When Conrad heard a reporter calling out to him, he immediately turned and smiled as he waved. His great mood made him exceptionally cooperative, and the reporter was delighted as they pressed wildly on the shutter.

Conrad, who was heir to one of the richest families in Southeast Province, would rarely treat such insignificant reporters so well.

“That’s a good thing. Why do you seem so panicked?” Conrad’s smile widened as he parted his lips to whisper to Valentine.

It was only then Valentine said, “But the bank didn’t do what we previously agreed on. They transferred it right into Cloud Rider’s account.”

Conrad frowned slightly as he said, “Didn’t we agree to have the money transferred into the personal account I provided? How could they have made such a mistake? Have you clarified things with them?”

“Yes, I have.”

Valentine lowered his voice and said, “The bank explained that headquarters has been tightening security measures lately, so it’s difficult for them to go around the rules.

“Moreover, they needed to report back to the headquarters because of how large the loan is, which means the higher-ups were paying even more attention to where the money was going. Thus, the only thing they could do was transfer the money into the company’s account. After all, we applied for the loan using the company’s name.”

Conrad narrowed his eyes. With his keen senses, he had managed to detect something deeper going on through this seemingly insignificant detail.

His gaze turned instinctively to Jasper who was being surrounded by a crowd.

He watched Jasper, who was surrounded by a crowd of clamoring people and flashing lights, who had a familiar smile on his face as he calmly spoke to everyone who came forth to speak to him.

He was not overly humble, nor was he domineering. The adjectives ‘gentle’ and ‘elegant’ could be used to best describe Jasper Laine.

However, Conrad only thought that Jasper was most dangerous and horrifying when he seemed unable to harm anybody.

It was as though there was a bloody gaping mouth behind his smiling face that was ready to pounce and swallow Conrad whole.

“Find a way to have the money transferred out immediately,” Conrad said determinedly.

“That money must not be left in the company’s account. It doesn’t matter if it’s a scheme to do with Jasper or not. The minute he knows we’ve transferred the money into the company’s account, he won’t let us have it transferred out easily.”

Conrad had fast reflexes and came to a decision within a minute of receiving the news.

However, no matter how fast he was, he would never be faster than Jasper who had begun making plans and arrangements a few days ago.

“I’m worried we won’t make it.”

Valentine smiled bitterly and said, “The people from Agricultural Bank just told me that when Cloud Rider was established half a minute ago, someone had already made a copy of the account’s documentation in the bank’s system.

“The company’s legal representative must sign off any transactions above one million dollars!”

Crash!

The sound of a chair being flipped caused many people who were present to look toward where the sound had come from. They were surprised to see that it was Conrad who caused that loud crash.

At that very moment, Conrad had an ugly expression on his face!

Conrad, who had caused the chair to flip over when he abruptly stood in shock and anger, did not seem to notice that people were staring at him. He glared intently at Jasper.

Jasper just happened to turn around.

Their gazes met and collided in mid-air.

Taking a deep breath, Conrad forced himself to suppress the chaotic and complicated emotions rushing through him. He knew that both the timing and venue did not allow him to lose control of himself no matter the situation.

“Let’s go!” Conrad said before he turned and walked off.

“Hey... Mr. Monty? We haven’t finished taking pictures!” the reporter yelled in panic at Conrad’s retreating figure.

However, Conrad had no time or patience for them. He did not even bother turning around as he walked off.

The reporter sighed, mumbling to themselves about how temperamental and hard to please these public figures were.

As he mumbled and lowered his head to look at the photos he took, he realized he had managed to take clear shots of how Conrad’s expression changed from one of happiness to confusion, and finally, to suppressed rage.

“Hello. Do you mind selling those photos to me?” A voice rang out by the reporter’s ears.

Startled, the reporter jumped and whirled around to find Jasper standing beside him.

“Mister... Mr. Laine!” The reporter’s voice trembled with excitement. He never dreamed that Jasper Laine would talk to him one day!

“Can you?” Jasper asked with a smile. “Those photos are very meaningful and will become sentimental items to me, which is why I’m interested in buying them. Name any price you want.”

“Of... Of course! I can give them to you right now if you need them, Mr. Laine. I don’t need money, but will you agree to do an interview with me?”

The young reporter had graduated barely two years ago and knew to hold on to opportunities that came his way.

Jasper chuckled and said, “No problem, but I might be busy lately. Why don’t you give me your card and I’ll have someone get in touch with you in a bit?”

“Thank you so much, Mr. Laine!”

The reporter did not seem to worry that a public figure like Jasper would lie to him as he excitedly took his name card and passed it to Jasper with both hands.

Jasper took the card and glanced at it. His name was Kennard Fraley and he was a reporter for the Southern Financial Times.

Jasper put the card in his pocket after reading it.

It was a seemingly insignificant gesture, but Kennard felt as if he was being respected by the other party. His heart bloomed with gratitude as he hurriedly fiddled with his camera and gave the roll of film to Jasper.

He swore that Jasper Laine was the only tycoon who could make others feel this charmed throughout his career as a journalist.

Kennard was feeling charmed, but Conrad felt as if he had fallen into an ice cave!

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“No can do, Mr. Monty. I’ve already spoken to the finance team over at the company and they’ve all given me the same answers. After reporting to the bank, no outsider is allowed to withdraw a single cent without the legal representative’s signature.”

Valentine had a vexed expression on his face as he hung up the phone and spoke to Conrad who was pacing around the room.

Conrad took a sharp breath and said, “Which means the 2.5 billion dollars we went to such great lengths to obtain has now genuinely become equity capital in Jasper’s hands.”

Valentine hurriedly said comfortingly, “Don’t be so pessimistic. At least the money is in the company’s account and not Jasper’s bank account.”

Ignoring Valentine’s comforting words, Conrad muttered to himself, “Now the most troublesome part is that we don’t know if Jasper did it on purpose or if it was a coincidence... What did our people in the bank say?”

“I’ve checked with them. It’s not just Agricultural Bank, but the remaining four major banks have also been doubling down on security lately.

“This is related to the recent spike in non-performing loans due to banks’ reckless lending to companies. The notice to enhance overall risk control was distributed by Central Bank to the headquarters of the four major banks at the end of last month.”

When Conrad heard that, he sat on the couch and closed his eyes without speaking.

After a moment's thought, Valentine said softly to Conrad, "Mr. Monty, if that's the case, this might have perhaps been a coincidence."

"Coincidence?"

Conrad opened his eyes and said quietly, "I've never believed in coincidences, nor am I willing to attribute everything to mere coincidences. I would rather believe this was one of Jasper's schemes."

Valentine said awkwardly, "So what should we do next?"

"We can't do anything..."

"It'll be a mistake to do or even say anything more since we'll be at risk of exposing ourselves completely. Let's see what Jasper does first."

Conrad's eyes glinted as he spoke.

"After all, this money was obtained through a loan using Cloud Rider. I didn't fund the money myself.

"At the very most, we'll have it remain in the company's account and have it go to whoever it belongs to when the scheme is exposed in the future. The bank can file a lawsuit against the two state-owned enterprises for that. My ultimate goal is still to trap Jasper's funds..."

...

The ICBS branch in Nauritus City.

In the president's office.

Raymond Lovell knew he had only become president of the best-performing branch in the province, the city center branch, because of John, who was one of

the most influential people in the Southeast Province branch. He had always been looking for a way to repay John and the chance finally arrived for him to do so.

Raymond had just hung up the phone when someone knocked on his door.

“Come in.”

Raymond spoke calmly. Ever since becoming president of the city center branch, he felt as though he could finally become the dignified man he had been waiting a long time to become.

The person who entered was the manager of the bank’s Risk Management Department.

“President Lovell, we’ve discovered a major problem in the account that Cloud Rider Mining Company opened at our bank during our inspections today,” the manager said in a panic.

Raymond calmly took a sip of his coffee and smiled as he said, “Don’t panic, Wesley. Tell me calmly what’s going on. The sky isn’t falling on us is it?”

Mr. Wesley smiled bitterly as he said, “It’s a major problem, and the sky might as well fall on us if this is made public!”

“The company registered its equity at 5.3 billion dollars, but when we checked the account today, we saw that the account has only transferred the 2.5 billion dollars it obtained from a loan with the Agricultural Bank’s branch in Southeast Province. Not another cent has been transferred into the account. How can I be calm when 2.8 billion dollars is missing?”