

Life at the Top Chapter 976

Twenty years into the future.

There would be three familiar Somer billionaires.

The country's grandfather, who started with the small goal of one hundred million.

Wayne Marlon, who was disinterested in money.

Hudson Moore, who preached that the way to grow stronger was by topping up money.

The latter two were known as the country's dads, and both their surnames started with the letter M.

Among the three, the country's grandpa was a truly grandiose man.

Hudson was the most low-profile and vigorous.

While Wayne was a true miracle.

Wayne was a mere teacher who graduated from the teaching academy, yet he had managed to persuade 18 others to found a company with him.

The company was first founded in an apartment in a normal suburban district.

No one had expected that this 19-employee company with no money would one day prove Wayne's predictions right, as it changed his countrymen's lives.

Now that one thought about it, perhaps not even Wayne believed his prediction would come true.

Among all the billionaires, Wayne was certainly not the most capable person nor was he exceptional when it came to doing business. Even so, this man had a mouth that could obtain the impossible and a top-notch strategic vision that ordinary people could never hope to possess.

While Jasper was still trading mung bean futures and gathering his first bucket of cash, he had come up with a structure for his future business.

Once he was certain that he would rely on investing and holding companies instead of day-to-day trading, he established Hudson and Wayne as his main pillars of business and wealth.

Hudson fell under his influence a long while back, but he had been waiting for Wayne all this while.

Wayne and Hudson were completely different people, so Jasper had to deal with them differently.

He could take the initiative with Hudson since the man was rather introverted and passive, but Wayne was completely different. Jasper could not make the first with Wayne, so the only option was to wait for Wayne's arrival.

Otherwise, Jasper would lose the initiative, which something extremely important in a business negotiation.

Thus, Jasper waited, like a patient hunter, up until that day.

Rushing back to Nauritus City under the glimmer of countless stars, Jasper arrived home at close to two a.m.

The two seemed to have a tacit understanding, for they knew they would meet the other tonight even without any prior contact.

With that, Jasper and Wayne met at the entrance to the pitch dark office.

“My apologies for making you wait, Mr. Marlon. I was still in Brac County when I was informed of your arrival. It took some time to rush over.”

Wayne was pleased with Jasper’s politeness.

“No, it’s my fault for coming unannounced. I’m sorry to bother you so late at night, Mr. Laine.”

The two shook hands. Jasper glanced at Wayne and suddenly laughed, realizing how the term ‘average-looking’ was a compliment to the man’s appearance.

For Jasper remembered how he used to be Wayne’s website’s diamond VIP his past life, and how he had spent a lot of money on it every year buying outfits for Penelope.

This was especially true during Valentine’s day, when he and the rest of the men around the country would curse Wayne out, only to weep silently as they checked out their wife’s shopping cart.

“Are you laughing at how ugly I am, Mr. Laine?”

Wayne was a man who knew how to read people, and the room. He could tell from Jasper’s age and attitude that Jasper was not one of those stern man that did not smile. Thus, Wayne immediately cracked a joke to get close to him.

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“You kid, Mr. Marlon. Who is this?” Jasper waved him off and turned to look at the young man standing silently beside Wayne.

“Jose Salazar, Abbylon Inc.’s current CFO,” Jose introduced himself to Jasper politely, oozing with an air of intellect and strength.

Jasper smiled and shook hands with the Abbylon Group’s greatest hero and said, “It’s nice to meet you.”

If one were to mention Abbylon Inc in the future, one would immediately think of two people. Wayne Marlon, and Myles Shon.

Wayne was the founder of Abbylon, while Myles was the President of Softwin Investments who invested the first large sum to kickstart Abbylon.

This was a relationship between an investor with a keen eye and a promising entrepreneur.

However, everyone seemed to have forgotten that Jose also played an important role in developing Abbylon. Hailing from a family of lawyers in Nawait, Jose graduated from one of the top ten universities in the world and obtained a bar license in New York.

It could be said that Abbylon had it only grown to be as successful as it was because of Wayne and Jose.

This was why Wayne entrusted Jose with the position of Abbylon’s first chief financial officer, CFO. JW Capital’s own CFO was Wendy, which was a testament to how important the financial officer was to a company.

Jose was also the reason behind Abbylon adopting the framework of a more modern enterprise at the very beginning.

“I’ve heard of you, Mr. Salazar. I heard how you gave up the annual pay of 700 thousand US Dollars for Abbylon’s monthly salary of 500 Somer Dollars,” Jasper said with a smile.

Jose and Wayne were shocked that Jasper knew of such a thing.

“I’m impressed by Mr. Marlon’s charisma,” Jose nodded with a small smile.

Jasper immediately gave up on the idea of pulling an outstanding man like Jose over to his company when he saw the latter’s expression.

Some people and things were meant to be. Jose and Wayne, for example, were fated to be partners which no one could pull apart.

Not that it mattered though. With Wayne under JW Capital, Jose would technically be working for Jasper too.

“It’s the middle of the night, so let’s not stand by the doors. Come on, we’ll talk inside,” Jasper invited the two into the office.

Instead of using the company lobby, Jasper made a beeline for his own office.

There was no way any employee was still working at this hour, so Jasper made the two tea himself.

After sitting down, Jasper did not waste any time as he began to read the investment report that Wayne had handed in in advance and which Wendy had placed right in the middle of his office desk.

“You require a financing of 500 million, right, Mr. Marlon?”

Jasper raised an eyebrow and glanced at Wayne when he read the financing request on the first page. He asked this with a subtle smile.

Wayne immediately replied with confidence, "Mr. Laine, you'll earn at least ten times this amount."

"Should we do a VAM then?" Jasper asked.

Wayne was instantly embarrassed.

He had persuaded countless people before, and even Softwin's Myles Shon had ended up investing 20 million US Dollars after his sales pitch. However, Wayne had never met someone like Jasper, who acted so unexpectedly.

Everyone could tell that he was bluffing, but there was no way a founder would first trash-talk his own company when he was asking for investments.

When Jasper suggested a VAM, Wayne realized that there was nothing he could respond with despite his arsenal of speeches that he had prepared beforehand.

"Mr. Laine, I believe you can take a look at our company's situation first before we discuss further," Jose chimed in understandingly.

"With Abbylon Inc.'s current situation, we fulfill the legal conditions for a VAM."

Jasper chuckled and said, "As expected, Mr. Salazar. Being brought up in a family of lawyers makes you rather different. Going straight to legal terms, I see. Alright then, let me take a closer look."

This was a small win for Jasper in his first clash with Wayne.

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A business negotiation, especially those involving equity, was a harsh battle between decision-makers of both parties from the moment they locked gazes.

After all, any change in percentages of shares held or investment quota during follow-up negotiations would involve astronomical prices. This was not a business transaction involving a few dozen or hundred bucks, but rather tens of millions.

Especially in large mergers and acquisitions cases, in which tens of billions of US Dollars were involved.

Such affairs could not be treated carelessly.

It was a good sign if Jasper had managed to suppress Wayne's overwhelming aura right at the start.

Upon reading the entire company evaluation report, Jasper also realized that history had not changed too much. Not when it came to Wayne or Abbylon, at least.

Wayne was still catering to small and mid-sized enterprises, trying to make his dreams of a global sourcing website a reality.

"The main idea of my 8861 website is to create a platform for wholesalers on the internet. Here, suppliers from all over the world can showcase their products, and other enterprises or customers can purchase straight from the source, or sell their own goods according to their needs!

“This project will solve the issue all SMEs have with sourcing and selling goods, and this function will have the platform widely welcomed by all enterprises of all sizes.

“To tell you the truth, we already have 800 thousand members on our website and I’m sure we’ll reach 1 million by the end of the year.”

Jasper nodded as Wayne spoke.

‘Indeed. According to history, 8861 will gain 1 million members a little later in the year.

‘But so what?’

‘History will also prove that 8861 is at an innate disadvantage.’

“So, you’re telling me that since large enterprises have their own branding and specific sales channels, they won’t share this issue that SMEs are actually suffering from. Therefore, you want to create an information platform whereby everyone can share their data and people can simply take what they need.”

Wayne replied excitedly, “Yes, exactly. You’re as smart as I thought, Mr. Laine. You immediately understood what I meant.”

Giving a short laugh, Jasper put down the document and sipped his tea before he spoke, “Let’s not talk about the problems your website has yet, Mr. Marlon. Let me ask you instead, do you know that I own the country’s largest internet companies, Sena and Terizone?”

Wayne nodded. “I do. You’re the most capable man when it comes to the country’s dot-com enterprise, Mr. Laine. That’s why we came to look for you.”

“You’re too kind, Mr. Marlon, but the country is filled with promising talents, and I wouldn’t dare call myself this so-called ‘most capable man’.”

Jasper smiled and continued, “What I’m trying to say, Mr. Marlon, is if I have either Sena or Terizone create a similar website tomorrow, how long do you think it’ll take before 8861 starts losing money?”

When they heard that, both Wayne and Jose’s expressions changed dramatically.

Sena had full market control of the country’s online games and web portal, while Terizone had millions of email subscribers and tens of millions of subscribers.

Even Wayne and Jose were subscribers to Terizone’s KK.

If those two companies were to replicate 8861’s business model, then 8861 would certainly fall in less than three months.

After all, there was just too big a difference between them. 8861 could not even hope to compete.

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“Mr. Laine, 8861 caters to SMEs. When it comes to Sena or Terizone, their users are ordinary netizens. They are simply not the same target audience,” Wayne spoke.

Jasper chuckled and targeted Wayne’s straw man without hesitation.

“If your members know of 8861 and have gone online to use your website for business, Mr. Wayne, then who’s to say that these enterprise owners or senior executives are not also Terizone’s email subscribers, KK users, or Sena’s gamers?”

Wayne’s expression turned stern and he gestured as he spoke, “8861 is advantageous because it is irreplaceable.

“That is merely the result of being early movers in a market in which you are still gathering users. In reality, these so-called advantages are merely a facade.”

Jasper leaned back against his chair and looked at Wayne. “I heard that you’re a fan of fairytales, and that you like referring to each other as sirs and knights within the company.”

“Therefore, I’m sure that you’re no stranger to the battles between knights and dragons. It’s only a battle of skills when its a fight between people of similar strengths. Am I wrong?”

“Mr. Laine,” Jose cut Wayne off and spoke, looking at Jasper seriously. “You also said that there’s problem with 8861. Could I ask what this might be, other than the fact that it’s easily replaceable?”

“Its business model,” Jasper replied straightforwardly.

“Enterprise to enterprise, or the b2b model in e-commerce terms. This model isn’t horrible, but there’s an innate problem with it. This model makes your website a platform instead of a channel, in which there’s no clear boundaries for the suppliers and their customers.

“Say, for example, that my enterprise is focused on selling lathes, and I paid your company’s membership fee so that I can partner with a machining company. Two years later, that company and I will already have experience partnering together, yes? So pray tell, why I would want to continue paying for my membership?

“At the moment, your only source of income comes for membership fees. But after paying you once, your members will be able to find their own groups of suppliers or customers. Your members won’t need your website anymore once they’ve used it to source their own channels.”

Wayne smiled wryly.

He did not expect a script that took him only 15 minutes to persuade Myles crumble completely in front of Jasper.

Wayne thought about how he had dragged Jose to wait with him at the entrance for five to six hours just for this opportunity. They had waited for Jasper until the early morning only to come out empty-handed. Because of this, Wayne suddenly felt the urge to leave.

“I take it that you’re not willing to invest then, Mr. Laine?” Wayne asked in disappointment.

“I’m willing.”

Jasper caught them off guard and reignited Wayne and Jose’s embers of hope.

Jasper smiled at how his words controlled the duo’s emotions. “Instead of investing in 8861, I’d like to invest in Abbylon Inc.”

Jose frowned at Jasper's request.

While Wayne stared intently at Jasper, as if he wanted to pierce through the latter and stare straight into his soul.

"I don't understand, Mr. Laine. 8861 website is the only business Abbylon Inc. has right now," Jose spoke curiously.

"Change your business model. Make it B2C instead of B2B so it's direct-to-consumers. This will significantly change the way people carry out lifestyle shopping in this country, and even the entire world." Jasper stood up and spoke excitedly.

Wayne looked at Jasper as if the latter was a ghost.

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Strictly speaking, Wayne's road to success was not a smooth-sailing one.

He had tried his hand at entrepreneurship thrice before Abbylon Inc., making the latest company his fourth try at being an entrepreneur.

While the previous three tries were not complete failures, he had not made much money either.

Even his fourth enterprise, Abbylon Inc, had first gone through a failed project—8861. Only after this did they dabble in online shopping for individuals.

From this came the renowned TH website.

In truth, Wayne had also spotted the problems Jasper had brought up beforehand thanks to his strategic vision.

However, 8861 was the only mature and operating platform Abbylon Inc had at that moment. If he wanted to get rid of that to focus on a shopping platform for individuals, the market might not be ready to accept his idea, and all the hard work and effort his company's employees had put in thus far would all be for naught.

Not to mention, this shopping platform for individuals was still a muddled concept in Wayne's head. He had yet to perfect its structure or refine the details.

Hence, when Jasper spoke about it, Wayne was overcome with excitement, as if he had met his other half.

'So I'm not crazy. He also thought of it.

‘At the very least, I’m not the only crazy person here.’

“You really think that’ll work?” Wayne asked excitedly.

Jasper nodded and replied with certainty, “It will!”

“I’ve thought of it before, but the costs to shift to this business model are too high,” Wayne frowned as he spoke.

“Mr. Marlon, success doesn’t come without good reason. You’re going to have to pay the price if you want to succeed in this world,” Jasper spoke calmly.

“Perhaps you’re right.” Wayne looked deep in thought.

Jose looked at the other two in disbelief and rasped out, “Have the both of you gone mad? We were just talking about investments. How’d we even get to the topic of changing the entire company’s operational strategy? Mr. Marlon, Softwin will never agree to this.”

Wayne immediately frowned.

Softwin currently held more than 40% of Abbylon Inc’s shares. Without their approval, Abbylon could not execute their ideas.

“On that topic, there’s something else I’d like to talk to the both of you about,” Jasper began with a subtle smile.

The main reason Abbylon would fall prey to criticism in the future was the fact that Softwin, a Sunriser investment bank, was a major stakeholder. This angered their countrymen, as they felt that a Sunriser’s involvement made Abbylon less of a Somer enterprise.

However, Jasper was well aware that this was normal financing In the business world. It was not as big a deal as certain people made it out to be.

Still, now that the opportunity had presented itself, Jasper refused to yield such a huge source of income to a Sunriser.

Abbylon would end up larger than Terizone in the future. More importantly, Abbylon's business would be directly linked to the daily lives of civilians and completely integrated with how society's day-to-day functioning.

Terizone was just a social networking and gaming company. It was incomparable to Abbylon in terms of their importance to society.

Softwin's investment in Abbylon was the primary reason why they had been able to survive the future financial crisis, which ended up making Abbylon Inc a company that investors all around the world desired.

Because of this, Jasper had to kick Softwin out of the picture no matter what.

"I can invest as much as you wish, without limit. But my only request is that you remove Softwin from your list of shareholders."

Jasper's words had Jose immediately wondering if the man was crazy.

Meanwhile, Wayne's brows were tightly knitted.