

Baby Universe in 5 Years

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BABY UNIVERSE

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Preface

My name is Igarashi and I am the representative director of Baby Universe. As of the 1st of May 2015, we are a nine-member strong software development company. We have grand goals for our company, but they are still quite vague. I decided to illustrate my goal for the company five years from today in the form of a fictional novel, in as much detail as possible. While it is impossible to predict the future, I would like to work towards making these goals a reality. Through the process of writing these stories, my understanding of our goals has become quite clear. I would like to share this with my staff, and also with all of you. I would be happy if it could contribute to our motivation to achieving the goals. I am aware that most business documents are written as documentary accounts of real achievements, but I would be very happy if you enjoyed reading these tales about this and that in your free time. Well then, let “Baby Universe in 5 years time” begin!



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Garage

The morning mist finally cleared, revealing luscious greenery that enshrouded a modern building. The building was separated into private rooms, one of which was the development room.

"Hey, hey, Mr. Kurashige! Mr. Kurashige!"

Mita, a recent graduate, was banging ruthlessly on Kurashige's office door in his usual attire of worn-out Champion trainers and a pair of Levis.

Kurashige, who was exactly one year senior to Mita, rubbed his eyes, tired from working all night.

"What? Not you again! I'm busy now. Chief Yamanaka will kill us if we don't finish this part by today!"



Even to this, Mita replied without hesitation.

"But, Mr. Kurashige, this logic that Mr. Yamanaka made last year is really awesome... I really don't get it you know. That guy's a bit crazy right?"

Kurashige's face lit up.

"You idiot! That guy's a JAVA whiz, Yamanaka is the only guy who can talk so bluntly to the manager, he has an even bigger attitude than the manager himself. And look! He hasn't even been in his office all day today...!"

"Where'd he go? I'd better get him to tell me about his aversion tricks..."

Kurashige was relaxed, confident in his prediction.

"Whenever Yamanaka isn't in his office, he is DEFINETLY there! You know, THERE! He's obviously in the garage!"

The stairway from the ground floor to the strongly air-conditioned garage was always drafty. Perhaps because it was located underground, the explosions from inside reverberated out as soft vibrations to the surface. It was a large space that, if you were to use it as an actual garage, could probably fit about five cars. There was already a regular car garage, so this one is used for racecars.

The garage walls were decorated with perfectly sorted instruments that would put an F1 pit to shame.

Throwing a wrench into an instrument box was the famous Chief Yamanaka. He didn't seem to have reached the age of thirty, but already held the title of being the best of the 43 Baby Universe development department members. His official position was 'Chief Technology Officer' (CTO). Yamanaka is competing at the Super GT3000 next week in Motegi, but the settings for the machine that he will drive are taking longer than expected. He has been working all night with the five-strong Baby Universe Racing team to get the settings right. His stern face, as he gives exact instructions to the team seems even more serious than when he is writing the JAVA programs that his is so good at.

Daycare



The warm sea breeze of Izu blowing on her face, Tomomi Sasaki (Maiden name Ito) rode her bike rhythmically. The road to her office, which is only five minutes from her home, was a bicycle-only road, shaded by leafy trees. The road was built as a means of linking company housing and offices.

Playing joyfully in the basket of the bike was her beloved daughter, Miyuko. Neither of the two had any negative feelings about going to work whatsoever, the two felt as carefree as if they were going on a picnic. Miyuko said gleefully:

"Mom, what will we have for lunch today?"

Tomomi squinted and said "I skipped making lunchboxes today, so let's have pasta at the company cafeteria - the wood fire pizza is good too! You don't have a reaction to that place, so it'll be fine!"

Yes, the Baby Universe cafeteria not only pays close attention to the taste and service, but they also use ingredients appropriate for those with allergies, so they can eat without worrying, Tomomi thought to herself.

They reached the nursery, which was linked to the offices by a connecting passage. In the nursery were children and babies of various nationalities and their mothers.

"Miyuko, Good Morning!" said the French kindergarten teacher Celina, in perfect Japanese. Her husband works in the development department.

"Hi Selina! Bonjour!"

Miyuko bounced joyfully towards Celina, which freed Tomomi, who turned towards the general affairs department offices. Tomomi had been working here for five years now, and was already a manager with five employees.

"Good morning Manager Sasaki!"

Hiroshi Kumano, who had already finished his morning cleaning and was drinking a cappuccino, greeted her.

"Hey Kuma! Morning! Did you do yesterday's homework?"

Tomomi's face had already changed from one of a mother to that of a manager, however it was not too serious.

"Yes, of course!"

Tomomi picked up her favorite drink, blood orange juice, and whispered to herself "This is the life!"

Balance

"That accessory just won't work with this jacket!"

Exclaimed 29-year-old Koichi Terada at the top of his voice. Even at his age, he was already spearheading a group of 14 creators. The area that Baby Universe is strategically focusing on is his design department. Even the manager cannot argue with him when it comes to design. The only person who can oppose him is the one suggesting the accessory, Hamasaki.

While he enjoys being alone, Hamasaki has worked hard to gain a strong position as Baby Universe's Art Director. He is in control of the administration division at 34 years of age and is uncompromising to his employees.

The design department that Terada runs has an extravagant room to itself, but Hamasaki also has a spacious studio. I digress, but here are positions on the board of Baby Universe:
CEO (Chief Executive Officer)
COO (Chief Operating Officer)
CFO (Chief Financial Officer)
CTO (Chief Technology Officer)
CCO (Chief Creative Officer)
Baby Universe operates through meetings of the board, which consist of these five people.



Mr. Ushijima is an operating officer that takes care of the software research laboratories. He is always producing new Baby Universe technology. The building that the 12 researchers are situated in is called the 'Labo'. Since the founding of Baby Universe, Mr. Ushijima has been known as a programming genius in the technology department. He is recognized by the CTO, Yamanaka, as an authority in the area. At this time, there is still no one in the seat of CCO (Chief Creative Officer). The board members are having difficulty deciding between Terada from design and Hamasaki from Art. At any rate, they should decide soon.

However, no matter where you are in Baby Universe, there are not necessarily any set title-based relationships. Anyone can tell his or her opinion to the CEO and the CEO does not necessarily have the highest income. In the creative building, where there was an air of tension until recently, there is now a sense of calm, perhaps because of the new air conditioning system.

"I'm sorry for being rude earlier. I went too far. But, something that big really wouldn't work well. I think I'll make it a bit smaller. Is that okay?"

Terada also didn't want to give in. His inferiors, who were watching worriedly, turned to a cutting edge Mac monitor and starting moving the mouse like a brush.

One of them, Tomobe, thought with a grin, "So this is the perfect Baby Universe balance!"

"Okay, Chief Terada!"

Even Hamasaki regained a friendly smile. "Okay, I'll redesign this to work better with the jacket - give me till next week!"

"Okay, Director Hamasaki!"

"Oh, Chief Terada, how about we go to my favorite Roppongi club tonight? I can get you in as a VIP!"

"Sounds great! Let's leave work until tomorrow and go straight to Atami station!"

The two got in the Baby Universe company electric car and sped off towards Atami Station for the last train.

Mental Care

The deep, deep forest made it seem as though the whole world was a green wonderland. It was late autumn, and the red foliage was accompanied by a piercing cold. It would have been difficult to survive without a North Face waterproof down jacket and Merrel GoreTex boots.

"Ah... It's getting late! I guess I'll be sleeping here tonight..."

Alone in the forest, he looked tired and beaten by Mother Nature. The forest was full of danger – he may run into a bear at any time. Despite this, he had a faint smile. He was determined to find his way out alone. Despite being a 184cm tall man, he seemed small up against the forest. Overwhelmed by its' magnificence, he cried out;

"I'm so alive!"

Despite the fact that he had been in the forest for five days now and his tiredness was reaching its limit, he felt a strange sense of satisfaction. Not feeling the slightest sense of loneliness, he started to put up a GoreTex tent. His name is Yoshiyuki Takashima, a single 31-year-old man.

He is the General Manager of the Baby Universe sales department and is in charge of a team of 16 elite employees. Just eight days ago, he received financial incentives and two weeks off, as reward for clearing the season's sales goals. He spent three days preparing and then came straight here. He kept the money necessary for this trekking trip and spent the rest of his incentive on drinks for his employees.

There is no one in the office as kind as he is. His combination of tenacious endurance and kindness makes him the leader in sales at Baby Universe. However, this expectation creates a lot of stress. While this holiday was a reward for exceeding the sales goals, it was also in part recommended by the company, which worried about his stress levels. Baby Universe is a company that cares for its employees.

While placing a thick piece of ham that he roasted on an open fire in a piece of bread, Yoshiyuki pondered to himself.

"Is the company worrying about me? Or are they just really nice to their employees? Well it doesn't really matter!"

His willpower rose up again...



Hot Springs and Local Beer

Hakone Ashinoyu hot spring was shrouded in darkness. Hakone's hot springs are naturally clear and colorless, however Ashinoyu has milk-like cloudy water that is said to be wonderful for your skin. Known as Uko's springs, it has two baths each for men and women, but it was very quiet in the baths tonight.

Each bath is a high quality hot spring that is kept very clean. Soaking in the bath without moving even the slightest was a man - you couldn't quite tell how old he was. He is Baby Universe's development department's application manager, Kosuge. He was probably around 50, and had an aura of pride in his work and refined aesthetic taste.

Uko's springs were originally a luxury Japanese-style inn, but have now been brought back to life as a relaxation facility for Baby Universe employees. Anyone can stay if there is a room free. A professional chef makes home-style French cuisine in the restaurant, with fish fresh from Atami harbor. It is very popular with guests.

The springs are located about 20 minutes by car from the Atami development headquarters, and there are many young employees living in the area. After several days of hard work, Kosuge's team had met their deadline and received positive feedback from their client. The client's managing director spoke to the team directly.

"Next, we aim to redesign a large scale system, and we'd love for you to work with us on that."

They were all very tired, but of course did not have any regrets. Apart from the hot springs and food, Uko's springs is also known for its local beer. The number of bottles produced each year is limited, so it has become a beer exclusively for employees.

In fact, Kosuge himself originally created the beer. Kosuge was of course a wonderful programmer, but was always looking for new things to explore and also had an interest in making beer. After tasting the beer, you would realize his expertise that outdoes professionals. In recognition of his achievements, he was awarded a beer workshop and three staff members three years ago to keep producing the beer. You may think that he would not want to have the added burden of running a beer factory, but when he hears employee's satisfaction with the beer, the stress goes away.

The silence at Uko's springs didn't continue for long. Jack and Welch, who had come from Baby Universe USA just last month were not yet used to Japan's hot springs culture. They came splashing into the bath speaking loudly with soapsuds on their bodies and a towel. Perhaps the water seemed hot to them - they splashed around the precious hot spring water. A displeased expression came across Kosuge's face and he whispered to himself, 'It's great that we're a global company, but they should care more about Japan's traditional manners.' He then got out of the bath and headed for the beer factory for a long night of taste testing.



Smooth ride

There was little movement inside the carriage as it became apparent that the train heading towards Tokyo had reached a speed of 500 kilometers per hour. The Linear Motor Car that connects Tokyo and Osaka in just one hour has been opened. Sitting in a private room on the train, typing away at a speed that made it difficult to see his fingers, was the Baby Universe Chief Operating Officer, COO, Koyama.



After meeting an important client in Osaka, he was now heading back to the head office in Tokyo.

While the CEO is the chairman of the board, Koyama is in charge of almost all of non-development related departments, including marketing, sales, accounting, general affairs and HR.

The current president is the one who built up Baby Universe, and to ensure its quick growth, he personally took control of head hunting, which was considered very difficult, and two years ago found Koyama, who was a consultant at the time.

Coincidentally, he was the same age as the president, but had a very different personality. Looking at how far

the company's sales figures have come in the last two years would show you what a good decision selecting Koyama was.

"If there are people more skilled at something than myself, I will quickly pass control of that area to them."

This is one of Baby Universe's key ideals. Sitting next to Koyama checking documents is his secretary, Takahata.

Takahata was Koyama's right-hand man at his previous company, and had joined him in his move to Baby Universe. Koyama often said that without Takahata, he wouldn't survive at Baby Universe. He was a man of great aptitude and was tall enough to be a model. He looked as though he was in his mid 40s.

Koyama's hands stopped typing for a moment.

"We need to have an emergency board meeting the day after tomorrow. Sorry, but change my schedule to accommodate it. Of course, we should have the five board members, but also invite Mr. Ushijima, Jeff from the USA branch and Maria from the EU."

Takahata quickly searched the top-secret schedules of the important members.

"Maria is currently on a business trip in India. Mr. Ushijima is in Belgium with CTO Yamanaka to discuss technological cooperation with a client."

Koyama replied without hesitation.

"Oh, well they can participate through web conference. I'll leave the preparations up to you!"

"Yes sir!" replied Takahata in his usual fashion, his cheeks becoming stiff.

"Something will surely happen, something that will shake up Baby Universe..."

Eco and otaku

Wearing an English navy duffel coat with the hood on in an attempt to battle the strong sea breeze was the Baby Universe development image processing team leader, Fukuoka. He still enjoys visiting Akihabara, the home of 'Otaku' nerd culture. He has a particular interest in the military uniforms of various countries and is becoming well known in Akihabara as an expert on war-themed Anime.

His other claim to fame is being Baby Universe's chief of Environmental Sustainability. Baby Universe is known in Japan as an environmental leader, using only water from Atami and supplying all electricity themselves. Wastewater and garbage is all recycled onsite.

The development to daily operation of this system is all managed by Fukuoka. Baby Universe's most crucial department is the server related department, so the company cannot afford to have electricity stopped at any time. To prepare for this, there are extensive backup systems, however recently the server operations have been growing quickly, resulting in electricity being used quicker than expected. The management of this problem would definitely have an impact on the future fortunes of the company.



To tackle this problem, Fukuoka is currently at the Atami base, standing on a cliff, measuring the strength of the ocean wind. He is considering implementing wind power. He turned to his right-hand man Kashima and gave him a clear instruction.

"Determine what areas are receiving the most energy from the wind and calculate the average amount of energy that they will receive in a year."

Looking through the wind power measurement logic that Fukuoka had created, Kashima replied.

"Yes, I will, Chief Fukuoka. This amount of wind is looking very good. In just two months, it seems like it would be able to generate our yearly watt goal."

Fukuoka, who had been conducting a continuous study for a while now, said with a smile

"Really? In that case, calculate the required resources so that we can secure them at the next management meeting. The environment is very important, and so are the costs for the company, so make sure to keep the costs as low as possible. Please negotiate with the manufacturers."

"Yes, at once sir!" replied Kashima energetically, while pondering how both the natural environment and the environment of Baby Universe were both riding on chief Fukuoka's back!

"So it looks like Chief Fukuoka has already become a leader in a new field - environmental sustainability!"

As if to go against Kashima's impression, Fukuoka said with a smile; 'Brr.. Its cold! I'm off to warm up with some canned oden in Akiba!'

A magical scent

The sea breeze carried the fresh scent of the ocean to the chairman as he carefully poured hot water into his coffee.

The water was sourced from the springs at the bottom of Mount Fuji and then boiled. After making the coffee, he sat in the open cafe located next to the cafeteria in the Baby Universe development headquarters in Atami, enjoying his coffee. He had silver grey hair and an indigo apron, which hid his plump stomach.

In reality, no one knew that he was the chairman of the company, and there were even new employees that asked him for extra food. Soft jazz music that he selected from his iPod flowed out of the Bang & Olufusen stereo.

While he was enjoying this quiet time, one corner of the spacious cafe was full of energy. Billy, an engineer visiting from Baby Universe EU, was having a debate in English with Yamanaka CTO's favorite employee, Komatsu.



Billy argued, "In Paris, we are more effective at rotating staff and have excellent employees." and was immediately countered by Komatsu. "That may be true, Billy. But we also have excellent programmers here in the Atami headquarters, and the proximity to Ushijima's laboratory makes it possible to utilize the latest technological trends. It would be more beneficial if the new system was based here."

It seemed as if they were quarreling over whether to locate the development of the new automatic image processing system in Atami or Paris.

At the beginning, the chairman had decided to watch from a distance, however afterwards made two large cafe lattes with local milk and approached the battlefield. He passed the lattes to Billy and Komatsu without saying a word, and afterwards took off his apron and made off for the Tokyo headquarters.

Stopped in their conversation, the two took a sip of their coffee and chuckled. "Delicious!" "Yeah, so this must be the cafe latte that everyone's talking about..." Billy looked determined to continue the dispute, but that force had already weakened. "Okay, Komatsu. We'll make the plans in Paris, so please do the coding for us in Atami." "Roger, Billy! I'll get the approval of Yamanaka CTO right away and start thinking about the coding rotation here."

The dispute disappeared with the last drop of coffee in their mugs.

The magical scent continued to waft through.

Advice

As Baby Universe is now a global company, there are offices all over the world, and many employees believe in different religions.

If they were separated into denominations, there would be so many that it'd be difficult to count.

Because of this, religious events such as Christmas are in some sense taboo in the company. Despite this, New Years Eve is the day when a very important event for Baby Universe is held. The secretaries of each department work together to plan a New Year's event - an established custom in the company. After this event, there are 15 days of winter holidays.

This year, young business ace and business department apparel strategy chief, Misawa Haruhiko was chosen to manage the event. Misawa is devoted to making the event a success, as if the fate of the company was resting on his shoulders. Of course, the company does not allow him to stop doing his regular duties to work on the event. However, the company provides finances to cover the expenses for the event. The event allows the employees to get together and have fun, raising their motivation to work hard the next year, so it is a very effective investment.

After finishing a delivery to an apparel college in Aomori, he zipped back to the Tokyo headquarters on a plane and entered the relaxation room, where the chairman awaited him.

The chairman had an unusually serious look on his face and was holding a special Adam 'My Cue' pool cue.

The chairman had felt for Misawa, who was having to manage the upcoming event in addition to his usual jobs, and invited him to the relax room for a game of pool.

The chairman got straight into a game and swiftly began hitting the balls. Misawa was at first waiting for some kind of advice from the chairman, but soon got in on the game as well. He was in the pool appreciation club during university, so was very good.

"I'm not going to go easy on you just because you're the president!"

"Do as you wish, Misawa! I won't lose to you that easy!"

In the end, Misawa forgot about his job and event preparation and became engrossed in the game. While he was losing in the first half of the game, he regained his skills from university in the second game, leading him to a win.



"Misawa! You may have won this time, but it won't happen again!"

The president, who seemed quite disappointed with his loss, put on a J.PRESS brand blazer before leaving the relaxation room. Misawa pressed the cappuccino button on a Saeco espresso machine and thought to himself.

"Oh.. If I get involved in a game like this, I can relax and forget about everything... that must have been what the president was thinking of after all"

The president's intentions were not clear, but the next week, Misawa found a proposal on his desk. It read 'Baby Universe Worldwide Robot Competition.' It was not a regular robot contest - it required all robots to have the same specifications, the only difference being the level of control in the software. The competition would be high jump, long jump, hurdles and running! Winners would receive 10,000,000 yen and 10 days of holidays.

"This'll be fun!"

Customer Service

Despite the hustle and bustle of Tokyo station below, the Baby Universe headquarters were located high up enough on the 28th floor to escape the noise. If it were a normal day, the skilled workers of the head office development department would have been on their way home, but today many of them remained behind.

For some reason, tonight there was an oppressive atmosphere in the spacious office.

"I deeply apologize for the inconvenience! Our explanation was inadequate!"

Bowing down to the point where it seemed as though his head would knock his coffee off the table was Kinoshita. He had the best track record of all the 14 members of the development department. Bowing alongside him was manager Endo, his superior.

Sitting on a leather sofa was a client - an elderly gentleman wearing an expensive looking wool suit. He seemed gentle on first glance, but had a sharp look on his face. Next to him stood two tall, strong men in black suits - looking like soldiers at ease.

Their presence alone would have been enough for a cold sweat to form on Kinoshita's forehead. After listening to Kinoshita's explanation quietly, the man suddenly spoke.

"You said you're called Kinoshita?"

"Y.. Yes sir!"

"We had great confidence in you and entrusted you with our confidential secrets. On top of that, we wanted to work with you in the development of our new business system."

The gentleman continued slowly, adding emphasis to his words.



"After all this, you suddenly decline just before we sign the contract?!"

His gentle expression did not change, however his voice had gotten deeper.

"If I remember correctly, your company policy is to accept all development proposals within the realms of possibility. Is this not your company policy?!"

Endo decided that Kinoshita couldn't handle the situation and stood up, replying calmly while looking the elderly gentleman in the eye.

"Yes, it is correct that our company policy is to take on any development project that will benefit our customers."

This time the man strengthened his tone and turned to Endo.

"So then, why? What's with this last minute cancellation? Are you insinuating that our company goes against public order or morals?"

Still keeping his calm, Endo replied.

"No, of course not. The coupon system itself is not a problem. However the companies that will use the system are in the online slot and card game industry, and we cannot rule out the possibility that they will use it for illegal activities. We should have realized this at an earlier time and we are deeply sorry for not doing so."

Manager Endo, who is often mistaken as being younger than his son, continued looking at the elderly gentleman and saw his expression change.

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(Continued from page 13.)

"I get it. You just might be right, Endo. It's also an error on our part that we didn't foresee that."

The elderly gentlemen stood up and turned toward his strong guards before declaring 'We're going home boys!'

"Thank you for your understanding. I will see too it that something like this does not happen again."

Bending his body 90 degrees, manager Endo lowered his head once more in front of the elevators. Kinoshita, who seemed to be copying Endo's actions, was shaking slightly.

"Endo, I won't say anything about what happened today, but will you please visit our company sometime? And tell your president to come sometime too."

Without changing his bowing position, Endo raised his head and replied;

"Yes, I'd love to visit and I will let the president know right away."

For a while after the elevator doors closed, the two remained in that position.

Kinoshita kept looking over to Endo to see when to stand up. He thought to himself.

"Wow.. Baby Universe's business operations are so awesome!"

Farmware

The faint outline of a building was visible though the thick foliage and tall trees. This is Baby Universe's main software development location – known as the Atami base.

It is often mistaken as a forest from the outside - there are many different overgrown trees, well kept green lawns and ivy wrapped around the buildings.

The Baby Universe development base was a walk able distance from Atami station, located upon a hill that had great views over the sea. There were two development buildings, a design building, the laboratory known as the Labo, along with the headquarters building that housed marketing and administration.

Adjacent to this was the cafeteria and childcare center, known as the mother building. Finally there was the amusement building that housed the recreational facilities such as the hot springs and gym, and the control building that housed board meetings.



Connected to the Atami base by a road draped in greenery was the company-housing zone known as the base camp. There were dormitories for single employees and houses for families. All of the buildings were one-story homes that were enveloped in greenery. The executives of the company also live in homes in this area that are the same as those of regular employees.

The company housing is located just a 5 minute walk from the Atami base, and the road connecting the two areas is also the property of Baby Universe. The sides of the road are home to British style herb gardens and fields growing organic crops. In the herb garden, you can find Chamomile, mint and other herbs that are being carefully cultivated by professionals. The herbs are used at the cafeteria, in teas and even in the waters of the hot springs.

The cultivation of herbs and crops is directly connected to the health management of employees and also serves as a way for employees to relax. It is overall very helpful in making the software development more effective. Of course, the organic vegetables grown are incorporated into the menu at the cafeteria everyday. There are eight agriculture professionals that manage the herb garden and vegetable fields, and they are just as important as development employees.

In charge of the pro farmers is Sono, 42. His nickname comes from his leadership - he is affectionately called 'Master'.

While he is currently working hard to manage the herb garden and vegetable field, Master has been given the important mission of starting to make independent profits from the farm.

As part of that mission, production control software for a farm will need to be developed. Master, who loves a joke, thinks to himself...

"So this is farm-wear is it?" ...



Crystal clear scenery

The falling cherry blossom petals fell like rain on the slopes of Mt. Kamakura. At the top of the mountain, there was a traditional Japanese restaurant. From one of the rooms of the restaurant you could look down onto the restaurant's beautiful Japanese garden and the traditional wood block prints that sparkled in the sun.

Enjoying the scenery that was as clear as a Japanese traditional painting while resting his chopsticks for a moment, a large gentleman spoke.

"Mister Koyama! This view is very uniquely Japanese!"

"Yes, I'm so happy that you like it, Mr. Cloud."

Replying in a dignified fashion was Koyama, Baby Universe's representative managing director and COO. He was wearing a crisp suit that looked as if it was brand new, however his warm facial expression showed no signs of fighting business spirit.

Under the illusion of modernization, much of Japan had been overcome with western culture, but some places like this still remained. This is one of the most important places to Baby Universe, where the president would take certain distinguished guests.

As goes without saying, Mr. Cloud is the CEO of the world's number one printing Software Company. Their headquarters are located in Antwerp, the second city of the Kingdom of Belgium.

Overcoming its competitors quickly, the company has risen to gain a worldwide market share of over 70%.

The president built the company with his business expertise. He is a member of the Belgian aristocracy and is very gentlemanly. Koyama had just returned from getting his signature on a partnership contract with the world's number one printing software company.

Afterwards, feeling for Cloud, who would be returning to Belgium on the first flight the next morning, Koyama invited him to this banquet.

"Mr. Cloud, now we've got the contract settled, can I ask you a personal question?"

With a look of dignity in his eyes, Cloud replied.

"Now that we've become important partners, there's no need to hold back, Mr. Koyama"

"Yes. Thank you. Then I will ask you frankly. In Japan, there are many other large companies that would work well with yours, so we are very happy that you decided to choose our small company as your partner. However, we are a little curious as to why you chose us."

Cloud, who was listening intently to Koyama's question, replied.

"Of course, Mr. Koyama. I'll settle that at once. The truth is that we were planning to partner with New-Japan Film, the largest company in the industry in Japan. Until your president visited us last month, we were practically decided on it."

Koyama was surprised.

"Oh, I heard that the president visited your company, but only to meet you?"

"Yes, he definitely came to meet us, and he certainly didn't greet us in very good English. However, when he returned to Japan, he left this homemade rice cracker and this photo."

Cloud took a photo out of his suit pocket and passed it to Koyama.

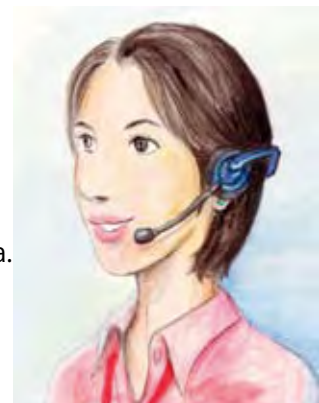
Perplexed by this unexpected development, Koyama asked:

"This? This is just our support office. It's just how it always looks..."

With a deep nod, Cloud replied.

"Yes, upon seeing this normal looking support office and the operator's smiling faces, I changed my mind."

The operator's eyes and smiling faces were as serene and beautiful as the scenery on the mountain....



Stately Elegance

As the morning haze faded away, Yokohama, one of the world's famous beautiful port towns came into view. Yokohama has one of the highest populations of any Japanese town at 3.6 million and is a huge city. There are many old buildings that create an atmosphere of a port town. Standing out as the oldest of these was the Hotel New Grand, located in front of Yamashita Park.

Opened in 1927, the building had an air of stately elegance that cannot be described just by its history. The lobby was bustling with people this morning. Professional craftsmen were constructing a twenty-meter long, deep crimson runway and surrounding seats. Just as it was coming together at around lunchtime, beautiful women started walking behind the stage into the temporary dressing rooms.

Jazz music began playing in the lobby, and the beautiful models appeared, having a final rehearsal for the fashion show with their professional director. Carefully watching them was a woman, who was whispering instructions to the woman beside her.

"That girl's shoes and belt don't work together. The belt should be a bit thinner and change it to brown. Oh, and her jacket isn't on right. Tell her to be more careful!"

Her face was very calm and relaxed, however she was giving relentless direct instructions. She is one of Japan's most famous fashion designers, Miki Sawanobori. There are fans of her 'MIKI SAWANOBORI' brand all over the world.



"Understood. I will make her belt beige."

Replied the woman, not intimidated by Sawanobori's instructions.

"I can't make clothes if they're not for Tomita."

Said Sawanobori, referring to her right hand model, Tomita.

She looked young, but is in fact not much younger than Sawanobori herself, who is over 50. Her air of class even comes from the wrinkles she cannot hide around her eyes.

The model is always the first to try a designer's creation and therefore has a great deal of power, giving them control over aspects of the design.

Tomita helps Sawanobori with the design of the master patterns, and also sometimes helps with material selection. She is a pro in the world of models and has worked with Sawanobori from the beginning to get the brand where it is today.

"Ms. Sawanobori, It seems that the president of Baby Universe will attend today's show."

"Oh... Then I can't relax... He always gives such harsh comments. And Tomita is using Baby Universe's pattern making system right?"

"Yes, she's been loving using the software for around 5 years now. She wouldn't be able to make clothes without that system. Also, without Baby Universe's web shopping tool, our sales would not have reached the level they are at today."

"He always stands at the back and tries to not get noticed - make sure to put him in the VIP seat today!"

In fact, Sawanobori and the president of Baby Universe were at one-point colleagues in the fashion apparel industry.

"Of course, Miss! Baby Universe's web services buyer, Mr. Takashima will also be in attendance, so I will prepare him a seat next to the president."

"Oh yes, he has lately been bringing in the highest sales..."

"Yes, his sales are the best and his resale rates are also the best. Perfect to be the president's right hand man I suppose..."

"In the end, Baby Universe is a crucial part of us. Unfortunately I can never separate myself from that old man!"

"Miss, what's so funny?"

Cool water and warm tears

Nairobi is the capital of the Republic of Kenya, a country that, despite being located just under the equator, is enjoyable to live in. At 1600m above sea level, Nairobi, which means 'cool water' in Masai, is relatively cool when compared to the rest of the country.



Nairobi National Park is located close to the center of the city. Despite being located here, the park covers over 117 square kilometers and seems to continue off endlessly to the horizon. The animals that call it home live peacefully in the oasis of greenery. At one corner of the national park, there is a small school. It is not a very extravagant building, but gave a peculiar impression, as it was a clean, modern building that didn't really fit in with its surroundings. This impression was not only due to the building, but also the twinkling eyes and dignified look of the students.

All electricity for the building is produced by solar panels on the roof, and the electricity also provides clean water for the students. The students are provided with clean uniforms - white shirts and black shorts for the boys and dark pleated skirts for the girls. All the students were wearing them with pride. On the pocket of the shirts, there was an embroidered logo, which contained a familiar mark. Yes, this is the Baby Universe School of Nairobi, created with company funds and the good will of Baby Universe employees.

In a developed country like Japan, it would be financially impossible for a small company like Baby Universe to run a school, however it is possible to run one in Kenya with saved funds. It is even possible for graduates of the school to get jobs with Baby Universe if they wish. The students fully enjoy the opportunity to learn at a school like Baby Universe's.

Remi Obanjo used to live in one of Nairobi's worst slums and lost her father at a young age due to environmental pollution. She would have had to give up her education and work to support her mother and seven siblings, but is about to graduate top of her class at the Baby Universe School of Nairobi.

After graduation, she has decided to work for Baby Universe and will be moving to the EU office. Baby Universe's president is now her foster parent, and has been sending her letters of encouragement since she entered the school.

Remi sent a letter to the chairman recently. This time it was not written in her usual perfect English, but in the Japanese that she remembered. It read: "My Japanese father, I am so happy. My dream is to reduce Baby Universe expenses even more and open another school in Kibera. When that happens, please support me. I will work very hard until the..."

Overcome by emotion, the president was not able to finish reading the letter...

Quantum Fisherman

The room was perfectly clean, with not a speck of dust. It was kept at exactly 18 degrees all year round. It is Baby Universe's pride and joy - the state of the art server room. For a center field software development company, the equipment in here almost seemed too extravagant. This is because Baby Universe has recently been having more success in the Internet field - so much so that you could call them an Internet company. Sitting in the room, looking at blueprints was Taka Hashizume, the man who is in control of this state of the art server room. He is the manager of the development server management department and the trusted friend of CTO Yamanaka, the development manager.

According to some, he has an IQ of over 180 and is a man with a unique talent. The reason for his sun tanned, strong body, is that prior to coming to Baby Universe, he was a fisherman at the local fishing port. The blueprint that he was inspecting was the layout of the server room. While Baby Universe is already a respectable Internet company, the board had recently passed a decision that in the future, the company would have to increase growth in the mobile and Internet sectors.

The board's directions are permanent and the employees must work together to achieve them. Hashizume had decided that it would not be possible to achieve this with the current equipment and made sure that the board was aware of this.

Usually, the server runs on one of two server machines, a main machine and a supplementary one. A machine called a load balancer manages the two servers and adjusts the load when one has an issue. In the event of a problem, it switches operation to the other device - avoiding the need to cease operations. In addition, the hard disk of the main machine is mirrored to the supplementary one, meaning that data is protected as long as both of the machines do not fail simultaneously. If you thought about how much space was required for the machine running at any one time, it wouldn't require the space for two machines that it is currently occupying. Because of this, as mobile operations start to increase in the future, the server room will face a space problem.

Hashizume was also dealing with another concern. No matter how strong the server room is, if there was a very strong earthquake, it could be destroyed in an instant. This had happened previously. Because of this, the board had instructed for a server system that would not lose data and continue running even after an earthquake to be constructed.



His response to these issues was bold; he wanted to increase the size and improve security by constructing three separate servers.

- Atami Base Server Room -> Sector A
- Baby Universe EU Head Office Server Room -> Sector B
- Baby Universe US Head Office Server Room -> Sector C

He wanted to make these three servers identical triplets and connect them as server sectors with a backbone wire. He would then have the server data and company information synchronized on all three.

This bold, but rational plan allowed him to solve the issues that they faced. It did cost an enormous amount, but by removing machines that were not running at a single point in time, he was able to save space and money as well. Building and setting up the new system wasn't too difficult as professional engineers were on hand, but synchronizing the data required skilled programmers. He selected fifteen programmers to help him and they finished the project in about six months.

However, Hashizume had recently been thinking to himself that even with a sever at this scale, the rate of expansion in the industry could see the system reach capacity in just three years.

"Even after trying so hard it'll need to be redone in three years.. I guess next I'll have to try a quantum computer with cluster construction..."

Fantasy of the Past

The dark red sun shed light on the dark brown water of the Ganges, as if it were being lit on fire. The river itself is not very beautiful, but this sunset made it look incredible. Kolkata was full of people, so she wanted to enjoy this sunset before setting off back to Japan. Bathing in the soft orange glow of the sunset was Baby Universe's Dr. Serati, one of the executive researchers.

Graduating with a doctorate from India's most prestigious science and technology course at Guwahati University, she had the brain of a genius.

She was a devoted Hindi, but was young and would eat anything except for pork. Dr. Serati graduated with a doctorate last year and soon became Baby Universe's Atami Laboratory's executive researcher.

She already had a laboratory allocated to her and was researching about creating a 3D graphics application for quantum computers under the leadership of her manager, Mr. Ushijima.



The reason that she was here in Kolkata on a business trip was not because it's near her hometown, but because there was a world conference on quantum computing being conducted here, and she was invited.

"There are some amazing people in the world!" Dr. Serati thought to herself as she entered the conference, filled with the world's best minds.

After a heated debate, the conclusion was that the OS for a quantum computer should be created open source. The next version of the OS was to include the 3D graphics processing logic that Baby Universe's executive researcher, Dr. Serati was due to complete.

Hastily, she opened her Mac's TV conferencing application to get approval from Mr. Ushijima.

"Mr. Ushijima! You won't believe it! It looks like my 3D graphics engine will be included in the next OS!"

Mr. Ushijima was always calm and relaxed, but now you could sense some excitement in his voice.

"Wow! Great job! Congratulations Dr. Serati!"

"Thank you! But Mr. Ushijima, it's an open source system. Is that okay?"

"Don't worry about it! I've confirmed with the president and it's not a problem at all!"

"Oh really? In that case, I'll start authenticating the source transfer."

"Roger that! We're counting on you! But make sure there's no oversights in the details!"

Of course, there are few business merits of participating in the open source project, but if it helped Baby Universe's technology to become the industry standard, the benefits would be incredible.

Mr. Ushijima thought to himself.

"In this day and age, successful companies are the ones that aren't worrying about past fantasies of patents and copyrights."

A warm hot spring

Just as it seemed as though the long autumn rains were going to wash away all the dirt in the world, he stopped walking. He realized that he should have brought some rain gear, but it was too late. The cool rain fell over his body and reduced his body temperature, making him question whether he could keep going. But he really had to cross this mountain pass.

With the last bits of strength he had left, he moved forward. He had already lost feeling in his toes.

"This isn't going to work. I guess there's no point doing something reckless like this..."

Just as he thought this, a bright building with a sign that he vaguely remembered came into view.

"It's the Atami base! Thank god!"

He'd finally come back. It was Maruta, the man who suddenly quit when Baby Universe was just a small company of 10 employees. No one knows for sure, but there was a rumor that he rode the winds to Australia, got married to a local woman and was living a happy life.

4 days ago, he made a sudden Skype call to the president. In this day and age, Skype is incredibly crisp, clear and smooth.

"Mr. president.. Ah... Umm... Long time no see!"

He had a look of determination on his face and it became stronger.

"Oh! Maruta! How have you been? By the way, what have you been doing for the last six years?"

The president's eyes showed a kindness as if he was speaking to his son.

"I was doing IT consulting for a firm in Perth, Australia!"

"You 'were'? So you quit?"

"Yes, its quite embarrassing, but I did."

"I heard that you have an Australian wife?"

"Yes, we're getting by."

Suddenly, the president's eyes twinkled.

"Wait a minute will you?"

The president paused the Skype call and called the Tokyo head office.

"Yes Mr. President. This is Koyama."

"Koyama, I want you to confirm something for me quickly. I want to hire a skilled marketing specialist, is that okay? You'll understand when you meet him. I promise you'll be happy with him."

Koyama, who was always calm and relaxed, answered softly;

"Of course, if you are that sure, then I don't mind. How about he becomes the 'Marketing Manager'? I happen to just have been thinking about improving our marketing strategy."

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Despite having completely different personalities, the two were often on the same wavelength.

"Thanks. I'll have him over there by next week. I promise he'll be a great staff member for you."

He put the phone down and resumed the Skype call.

"Sorry for keeping you! Hey Maruta, how about coming back to Baby Universe?"

"How did you know? I was actually calling to ask you if it would be possible..."

"Well then it's decided! I'll have you at the Tokyo head office, but before that I want you to come to the Atami base once."

He hung up the call. This was four days ago.

Maruta had got on a Shinkansen to visit, but for some reason had gotten off one station early and was walking towards the Atami base on a beaten track.

He felt that he shouldn't get there easily... Maybe he was still regretting leaving so suddenly.

"If I can get there, I can go in the hot spring! Just a little further..."

His legs, which had lost all strength a little earlier, started to move again.

What he wanted most was to warm up - not only his body, but also his heart and mind...

An Amazing Copy

An astonishing melody filled the hall, outfitted with the latest in audio equipment. The hall was quite small and would be full with about 50 people. The melody was definitely not original, but it was being copied with a unique chord variation that even Jimi Page would have been amazed by. It was no easy task to achieve such a guitar technique. It was being played so fast that you couldn't see the player's fingers, no, not even their hands properly. The vocalist, base and drums players all were amazing as well, but this guitarist was extraordinary.

Even though it was an old rock classic, the audience in the hall was on their feet and dancing around. Good music never gets old. Holding the Les Paul guitar low as she played was Baby Universe's intern, Kayo Fukunishi. She is due to graduate from a design college next year. She is quite tall and didn't use make up, so there were quite a few members of the audience who thought that she was a man.

It's rare to find a woman who can play the guitar so well. At Baby Universe, they accept interns with strong ambition, regardless of their specialty. It's difficult, but there are some interns who eventually become company employees. In fact, Fukunishi was hoping to start working full time for Baby Universe from next year. If decided, she would become Baby Universe's 15th creator, working in the Design Studio under the direction of Chief Terada.

In fact, this performance is a Baby Universe tradition - a test for those hoping to work in the design studio. From three years ago, they have been deciding who gets jobs in the studio through presentation ability. On the other hand, each person gets to decide what kind of performance he or she wants to do. It's okay if there is no direct connection to design, but it needs to be very expressive. For the performance, music-loving employees had come from the Tokyo head office and the Atami Base. Chief Terada was of course present, and so was Masami Sugawara, the HR manager, along with the CEO and even the president.

Also in attendance as an observer was Director Hamasaki. Hamasaki was such a music fan that it was said that he'd heard all the music in the world.

"Chief Terada, what do you think of her?"

"Yeah! The level of her music is incredible!"

"The 'level'? What do you mean by that?"

"What do you mean Director Hamasaki?"

"In terms of presentation ability, she can't be beat. Her guitar technique is amazing too. But..."

"But?"

Everyone was looking down as if something was caught in their teeth.

"She has great presentation ability, but something's missing."

Suddenly, the president blurted out:

"There's no individuality!"

With a surprised look on his face, Chief Terada replied.

"Y.. Yes Mr. President! She's close, but Baby Universe creators need to have incredible originality."

"She's great, but a copy is a copy... It's unfortunate..."



The Ban is Lifted

The new Haneda International Airport looked like a city of the future with its efficient, modern and sleek design. It can't be beaten in the world as a domestic and international hub. The domestic terminal still has just two runways, but thanks to land reclamation, there are now three runways for the international terminal. The further away Narita Airport is still operating, but it has become more of a logistics hub.

While there was no Starbucks in the domestic departures lobby, there were two at the international terminal. The Business Headquarters International OEM Manager, Shibahashi, was here, enjoying his usual Grande size Cafe Latte.

Depending on the client's country, international projects are usually handled in cooperation with Baby Universe's EU or US branches, but this client was in Asia, so the head office was managing the client alone.

Shibahashi was heading for Dalian, one of China's largest industrial cities. China, which was known in the past for being the world's factory with its cheap labor, has lost that reputation to Asian countries like Vietnam. Now, even Chinese cities like Dalian are moving from production to the service industry. One of the world's largest packaging companies, located here, had requested information about automatic 3D packaging systems and Shibahashi had carefully organized a meeting in response.

He did it carefully because Baby Universe has a general rule that dealings with Chinese companies are done especially securely. 6 years ago, when Baby Universe was just a small company, the company investigated Chinese development and decided that the use of software in the country did not satisfy moral concerns. Because of this, there was a period when the company did not work with Chinese companies.

As China has changed and moral standards have improved, the board decided that this project should be a test run to see if the limits on Chinese companies should be lifted. In other words, both the goals of making the contract successfully and lifting the ban on Chinese companies were resting on Shibahashi's shoulders. It was a big ask, but if successful, could become one of the largest OEM development projects for Baby Universe.

Shibahashi had to be particularly careful to avoid copying and plagiarism, and so he used his time prior to departure to make plans about how he would tackle the task.

After arriving in Dalian, he got to his hotel and went straight to sleep. The next day, he had a coffee before getting into battle mode and going into the meeting room where the client was waiting.

Starting with polite greetings, they soon got down to business. Shibahashi took a deep breath before starting to explain his plans.

"We will use Baby Universe's latest 3D technology for this project, so I'm sure that it will be of assistance to your company, but I must make you aware of something first."

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He started talking with a different tactic, but soon went head on.

"We can't have any plagiarism or unauthorized use, so we cannot provide the source code. Also, we will need to add security features to stop unauthorized reproduction. Is this okay?"

Feeling the tension in the room, Shibahashi realized that he was sweating. Just as he thought that it was over, the factory manager, one of the key men, suddenly spoke out.

"Unfortunately, adding those features will take time and reduce efficiency. The fact that you feel you have to add them reflects that you don't trust us. Could we think of the security features in another way, such as a method to reduce mistakes?"

Suddenly the environment had calmed down. Another man spoke.

"Thank you for speaking to us truthfully. In China, we trust people more than technologies or companies. And we have chosen to work with you, Mr. Shibahashi."



Boiled Tofu

The piercing cold created goose bumps on his young skin. Around the mountain, there were an endless number of modern factory buildings. They seemed to continue off forever into the distance. This is north Kyoto's huge factory.

"Factory manager Mr. Yasukawa, this is different from what's written in the contract!"

Speaking out was Kumagai, Baby Universe's engineer in charge of automatic graphics systems, as he stood in front of the security guard's office. He was a young 26 year old that had little experience as an SE, but had already been given projects as big as this one just three years after joining the company.

With a concerned expression on his face and acting as though the factory was his child, was the manager's top man, Yasukawa. He had a powerful presence - he is called the factory manager here, but at headquarters he's called the managing director.

"Yes, I know it's a different payment method to what we had discussed. However this doesn't mean that we won't pay. Please understand that it is difficult for us to pay such a large amount with cash..."

"At the very least, we did not ask for a promissory note with payment in 150 days. As much as you are an important client for us, we cannot accept that. That would give up food and beds for three skilled development staff for over five months. Mr. Yasukawa, I'm very sorry, but please reconsider."

In an even deeper throaty voice, Yasukawa replied strongly:

"Mr. Kumagai, unfortunately we always pay large sums like this with promissory notes and not cash. As much as we are thankful for your good work, it's a company rule. We are a debt free company - please trust us."

Kumagai could no longer hide his disappointment.

"I have no doubt that you are a wonderful company, however, I can't go back to my company with that response."

Just as he finished speaking, a black Toyota Century drove in from the shadows behind the guard's office.



For a moment it continued past them, but then stopped. Without delay, a driver wearing a black blazer got out and carefully opened the back door with both hands.

"What is it Yasukawa?"

A grey haired gentleman slowly got out of the car, resting on his black lacquer walking stick. He had a mild smile on his face, but a sharp glance.

"Mr. President! I'm sorry!"

Yasukawa bowed and greeted the man. This gentleman was not just anyone.

"And he is?"

The grey haired gentleman cast his sharp glance to Kumagai, and so Yasukawa hastily replied.

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"This is Leader Kumagai, Baby Universe's SE."

Yasukawa briefly told Kumagai that the grey haired gentleman was the owner and president of the company. After being introduced, Kumagai spoke, his voice quivering with nerves.

"I... I'm sorry, I'm Kumagai from Baby Universe. We are always thankful for your business."

The president then was told the whole story from Yasukawa. He responded swiftly.

"Right. This time, pay him in cash. I'll talk to headquarters about it."

"Sorry Mr. Kumagai, please forgive us. It's true that our company rule is that we don't pay upfront in cash. This is not uncommon in Kyoto. However, we are indebted to Baby Universe, as you developed our CAD system five years ago. Since then the efficiency of our factory has increased dramatically. At the time, your current president was the manager and he listened to many of our concerns and was very helpful to us. Please ask him to come and have traditional Kyoto tofu with us sometime, Mr. Kumagai."

After saying this, he turned around and disappeared.

Kumagai and Yasukawa finished bowing at the same time and felt a new sense of connection regardless of the fact that they were aged very far apart.

"Mr. Kumagai, we were cold to each other. How about we go have some tofu together now?"

Meditation

The huge cedar trees swayed back and forth in the piercing wind, the snow on their leaves dropping to the white surface below. The snowy landscape was dotted with temples, many of which were national treasures. Each of the temples was connected by a long corridor, which from above looked almost like a maze.



"There is no need for cruelty or heartlessness in this world. I know it for sure."

The priest declared, his high-class gold stole glittering in the winter sun.

This is the meditation hall of the head temple of the Soto School of Buddhism, Eiheiji.

Meditating cross-legged in near freezing temperatures is Baby Universe's president. It seemed as though he would be in pain, not even wearing socks, but he had a gentle expression on his face as though the priest's

words had cleared his mind of doubt.

"Thank you. I have gleaned much insight from your words. The world is never stopped, always moving."

After the priest left swiftly, the president followed him down the passage to the exit. It isn't obvious what revelation the president had, but the way he carried himself when leaving was very different to how he did when he arrived.

He walked to the car park near the entrance to the temple and got into his Audi Quattro before speeding off towards Komatsu Airport. In the car, he put on his Bluetooth headset and pressed zero on the speed-dial.

"Hi it's me. I'll arrive at the office by 3pm, so tell Koyama to organize an emergency board meeting. I understand if it's impossible, but this is time-critical so please try."

There was no snow in Tokyo when he arrived.

It was rush hour, so he decided to use the monorail to get downtown. In the meeting room on the 24th floor of the headquarters building, CEO Koyama and CFO Inomata were waiting for his arrival. The other members would be participating via video conferencing.

Suddenly, the chairman burst into the room and started speaking as soon as he sat down.

"Sorry but there's no time for an introduction. I'll get straight to business. The plan to expand operations in Oceania that we cancelled last time, withdraw the decision and give the go-ahead to the purchase of land assets."

"We cannot lose that beautiful piece of land in Brisbane to another company."

Surprised by this sudden change of heart, Koyama spoke up.

"But Mr. President, we had your full support when we made this decision yesterday. Why on earth did your opinion change so suddenly? The main reason that we did not go ahead with the plan was because we didn't have anyone appropriate to be in charge of the operation..."

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He replied without delay:

"Yes, you're right. But I see it clearly now, the wave of economic development is going south of Asia and towards Oceania. It can't be stopped. We at Baby Universe should welcome in this new development. And to achieve that, we can't let that piece of land get away."

Inomata, the CFO and senior managing director that had had an important role in the company from the beginning, also was shocked at this development.

"But what will we do about the lack of personnel?"

The president replied as if he was waiting for the question to be asked.

"Of course I had that decided when I called for this meeting. The one who will be in charge of the fourth Baby Universe area, Baby Universe AU will be..."

The board members froze upon hearing his answer.

The Tearoom

The bamboo drooped and swayed like a sobbing child. The usually pleasant wind felt much stronger today. It made it difficult to cross the stepping-stones from the cafeteria at the Baby Universe Atami base. Moving slowly through the garden, an awfully small building came into sight. The entrance was even smaller, leading Sugawara, who was taller than most women, to kneel down in order to enter.

Masami Sugawara was Baby Universe's Human Resources manager and managed all employee related issues. She was one of the most important people in the company after Koyama. The room was a traditional tearoom that was large enough for about eight tatami mats. Sitting in the room was a kind looking young man, stretching his muscles and sitting with his legs crossed.

He bowed slightly as Masami entered, giving a dignified impression.

"Sorry to have kept you waiting. You're Yuta Mizushima right?"

The young man replied in a cold voice, breaking the silence of the tearoom.

"Yes. That's me."



Mizushima had passed Baby Universe's infamous regular employee hiring exam with flying colors and had finished his final interview last week.

Despite there still being time before he was due to get his result, he had been suddenly called to the Atami base. After taking a breath, Sugawara started speaking.

"The reason I kept you waiting was because I was just in a very important board meeting. In fact the reason for the meeting was to discuss your application."

"What? You had a board meeting to look at my application?"

He acted as if it was a surprise to him, but looked a little agitated.

"This is a complete surprise to you? You are Baby Universe's president's son, are you not?"

Up until now Mizushima had spoken very directly, but suddenly his tone changed.

"Yes, I am the president's son."

"Your name was different so I didn't realize myself at first, but I discovered it during the background checks. I've confirmed with the president."

"So, Mr. Mizushima. You are aware that it is a company policy that relatives of employees cannot join the company, aren't you?"

Mizushima seemed unfazed by this.

"Yes, I am aware of that. However, My mother is the president's ex-wife, so while we are connected by blood, we are completely unrelated if you look at our family register. I thought that it would not be a problem, and so I applied."

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"I understand that you are unrelated on paper, but you are definitely the president's son. That was argued at the board meeting. And the board members decided that there would be no exception to the company policy."

Mizushima responded to this as if was an interview question, but if you looked closely you could see his eyes getting cloudy.

"I did not take that test as the president's son and I have no intention of trying to benefit from my relationship with him. I just wanted to work for Baby Universe."

Chief Koyama, who had slipped into the room during the conversation, spoke up.

"Mr. Mizushima, I was looking forward to working with you, but we can't bend the rules. Please forgive us."

"However, if the president quits, there will be no problem."

Mizushima sighed.

"What? Oh Dad..."

A mother's love

At the Atami base, where the heat of summer still lingered, the buckwheat had started to bloom white flowers.

At the Baby Universe Farm, organic buckwheat is being grown. If all goes well, by October there will be delicious home made soba on the menu in the Baby Universe cafeteria. The farm's home grown organic soba is exceptional, but Inomata thought that she couldn't eat any more this year. Inomata is both the CFO and a senior managing director of the company. She was almost like Baby Universe's minister of finance. She had absolute control over financial matters and even the president and CEO acknowledged her financial prowess.

Inomata also happened to be the chairman's wife. In order to reduce suspicions of a conflict of interest, she had been using with her maiden name since entering the company. After the founding of the company, she had worked with the chairman to bring Baby Universe to where it is today. You could say that the chairman was the father of the company, and she was its mother.

Wearing a straw hat to protect her from the summer sun, she worked quietly in the Baby Universe farm. She was very particular when working in the garden - so much so that she would often talk to the plants as she worked. She had always liked nature, and working in the farm was a way for her to relax.

As the sun began to set, she walked towards the design building and addressed Chief Terada as if he were her son.

"Oh Terada, your desk is far too untidy. How can you do good design with such a dirty desk?"

Even Chief Terada, who had 14 creators under his belt, was defenseless against Inomata. It was embarrassing in front of his employees, but he was always obedient to Inomata's requests.

"Y... Yes! I'll clean it up right away. But is there anything wrong? You don't usually come here at this time..."

"I thought that you were being messy again, so I came to have a look!"

As she said this, her expression almost seemed to show loneliness.

It was dark outside now, and she now went into the development building. With an executive security card, she could basically go anywhere she wanted.

"Chief Yamanaka! Why is that drawer being left open? Close it! And don't leave things on the floor!"

CTO Yamanaka was also no match for Inomata.



"Oh, Sorry! Sure CFO! But what's wrong? I don't usually see you here this late?"

"I was just worried that you weren't being careful again. Keep this room clean from now on please! Be thankful that you get to work in such a beautiful space!"

"Yes!"

He got the impression that she was a bit down.

"Next I'm going to the sales manager, Takashima's room! I'm sure it'll be dirty too!"

She darted out of the room, prompting Yamanaka to think...

"I wonder what happened.. Oh No!"

Renewal



It was still comparatively warm in Atami, but the leaves were already dyed a bright red. It's as if they're covered in the blood of the soldiers who historically fought in the area. Amongst this was the Atami base, looking as green as always.

Suddenly, a piercing ringing began emanating from Takashima, the sales department manager's computer. It's an emergency call from 3D Skype. Takashima had a bad feeling about the call and stopped anyone from answering it. After a while, the president's usual calm face appeared on the screen.

In this day and age, the quality of Skype is so good that it is like looking into a window.

Upon seeing the president's face, Takashima realized that he hadn't seen the chairman at Atami for a while now. It seemed that he had only been visiting headquarters and Baby Universe's international offices. Just at that time, the president began to speak.

"How is everyone? It's the president. I know it's rather abrupt, but I have news. It'll only take a minute, so please listen closely."

"It has been almost 30 years since I established Baby Universe. The company wouldn't have been able to get where it is today without the hard work of all of you. Thank you very much.

"Baby Universe cannot stop moving forward. In order to achieve this, I believe that old blood needs to be replaced with new, clean blood. It is for this reason that I am resigning from my post, effective immediately."

In every building of the Atami Base, it was as if time was standing still as everyone stood, shocked at this revelation.

"Thank you for putting up with me for so long. I am so happy to have had the opportunity to work with you all."

Next, the CFO appeared on screen holding a bouquet of flowers and wiping away tears with a handkerchief.

"It's CFO Inomata here. I will be leaving as well. You won't have to worry about me getting angry with you anymore, so you'll have to look after yourselves now! Good luck all of you, work hard under new CEO Koyama. Thank you all so much."

Inomata then moved off the screen and Koyama appeared. His eyes were red as well.

"This is Koyama. I have just been appointed as CEO by the board. I tried to decline the offer, but the president was very insistent. I decided there was nothing I could do but see him off with a smile and work hard for the future of the company."

His sad face showed no signs of a smile.

"The president and CFO will leave Baby Universe, however will spend some time assisting with the establishment of Baby Universe Australia in Brisbane. They will then retire to the suburbs of Auckland, New Zealand. This has all happened very quickly, but they will be leaving tomorrow night from Haneda. Would you like to say a few words, Mr. President?"

The president and CFO stood holding the flowers, with tears rolling down their faces. They hugged and smiled.



Afterword

So, how was it? I hope you enjoyed reading the stories as a way of passing the time. By the way, I have an interesting thing to tell you all. One of the reasons that I decided to write this series was because I was told by the chief of the Koyama Accounting Firm that I respect very much, that I didn't know anything about marketing if I hadn't read Kanda Masanori's book. I then bought his book and started to read it.

Overall, I found it incredibly useful. One of the things that left a big impression was how he says that you must always imagine achieving your goals. It seems that if you think hard about achieving your goals, you are more likely to achieve them.

So, why is this?

- The human brain moves the body towards imagined directions/goals.
- By imagining, you use a part of your brain that is not often activated.

As a result, the brain becomes under the illusion that the imagined goal is a reality and starts working to deal with the new situation. The book says that this is the secret to success.

In his book, Masanori writes that it is important to express the imagined scenario in writing. I have never liked writing much, so I decided to write a series of short stories in a blog-like format and began writing at once.

Since I was a child, I had not been a fan of writing; so writing these stories was quite a difficult task. However, after starting I started to enjoy writing them very much and was able to finish writing the 24 passages in 40 days.

Of course, I used time late at night after work to write, so some passages are a bit vague and may have strange sentences or mistakes. Please forgive me for this.

After starting to write, I experienced a strange phenomenon. My brain started to experience illusions. I started to get mixed up between the fiction in my stories and the real life situations at Baby Universe. This allowed me to understand how the scenarios in the stories that I was writing were becoming very clear to me, almost like memories.

I realized that my brain was thinking differently to when I had just thought about my future image for the company. I asked illustrator Toshihiro Maruyama, a former employee of mine, to create illustrations of the stories.

Thanks to his detailed hand drawn illustrations, I was able to achieve a greater level of clarity. As the images became clearer, it seemed to me that the goals were more and more possible to achieve.

I could clearly picture our future office building, so my mind was obviously under illusions created by the stories. It's difficult to put it into words, but do you know what it's like to see your goal? I only have 5 years left, but I really want to work hard to achieve these goals.

No one can predict the future. But the reality is that I will work hard for whatever is waiting in five years time. I'd like to ask my staff to work with me to achieve this. Let's do it!

Finally, I'd be happy if you would like to share any comments or feelings you have about the stories. Don't hesitate to send me a message to the address below.

To: "To the person in charge of Baby Universe in 5 Years"

info_eng@baby-universe.co.jp

Thank you.