

# Trading My Ex for His Uncle

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Upon hearing those words, everyone's expressions turned grim, and the meeting room plunged into heavy silence.

After a moment, Damon spoke. "For now, return to your departments and prepare comprehensive reports on your projects. I'll instruct the legal team to file a lawsuit against Nyce Tech for illegally stealing Prospectus Technology's proprietary data.

"However, litigation could take a long time, and Prospectus Technology might not survive that wait."

If Nyce Tech decided to drag this out, both companies could end up in ruins, leaving room for others to reap the rewards.

The room remained silent.

Seeing no objections, Damon said firmly, "If there's nothing else, this meeting is adjourned."

With that, he stood and walked out.

Back in his office, it wasn't long before Spencer knocked and entered. "Mr. Sumner, Nyce Tech just reached out. Gabriel wants to meet with you."

Damon's face darkened.

After a moment, he replied, "Tell him to come to my office at 2:00 p.m."

At precisely 2:00 p.m., Gabriel arrived at Damon's office.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Sumner," Gabriel greeted, a mocking glint in his eyes.

Damon remained stone-faced. "Mr. Hackett, what brings you here?"

Gabriel took a seat across from him, his tone nonchalant. "I wanted to discuss the lawsuit you're planning to file against Nyce Tech."

"There's nothing to discuss. Nyce Tech stole Prospectus Technology's core data through illegal means. Our decision to sue is entirely justified," Damon replied.

"This lawsuit will only result in mutual destruction. I came here hoping we could find a middle ground," Gabriel proposed.

Damon let out a cold laugh.

After stealing everything from Prospectus Technology, Gabriel wanted to negotiate?

"Even if it's mutual destruction, I'd

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rather see it go down fighting than let it collapse quietly. Mr. Hackett, I think we're done here." Damon's tone left no room for argument.

If he had known Gabriel came to offer such shameless terms, he wouldn't have agreed to this meeting in the first place. Seeing Damon's resolute expression, Gabriel sighed. "Are you sure you don't want to consider cooperating with Nyce Tech?" Damon turned to Spencer and said coldly, "Spencer, show him out."

A flicker of anger crossed Gabriel's face as he clenched his fist. "Damon, you'll regret this."

If Damon was hell-bent on dragging Nyce Tech down, he wouldn't hold back.

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As Gabriel got into his car, his phone buzzed. It was Jennifer Dent, Henry's ex-wife.

He answered the call. "How may I help you, Ms. Dent?"

"Mr. Hackett, you promised me that nothing would happen to Henry. Now he's been taken by the police! He knows everything. Don't you think it's time to step in and get him out?" Jennifer demanded. swnovel

Gabriel chuckled, his tone indifferent. "Ms. Dent, he does know everything. So tell me, who's better at keeping secrets-a live man or a dead one?"

There was a pause on the other end of the line, followed by heavy breathing.

After a long silence, Jennifer's trembling voice came through. "Mr. Hackett, don't forget, Henry is my husband. He's the father of my child."

"And he's done enough for you and your child," Gabriel replied coldly. "Do you think I don't want to help him? Do you think Prospectus Technology will just let us walk away unscathed?"

"Sacrificing him or sacrificing all of you-consider your options carefully. Call me back when you've made up your mind."

## Trading My Ex for His Uncle

With that, Gabriel hung up.

Prospectus Technology was struggling in vain.

Soon, it would announce its bankruptcy, and Damon would revert to an average Joe. By then, Gabriel could do anything he wanted to him.

News of Prospectus Technology's imminent bankruptcy began circulating internally.

At first, few believed it. But as rumors spread and the tension became palpable, employees and business partners grew uneasy.

Prospectus Technology's partners began calling Damon, desperate for confirmation. But no matter how many times they tried, their calls went unanswered, leaving them increasingly convinced the rumors were true.

Soon, partners began terminating contracts with Prospectus Technology.

By the third day, most of the company's business agreements had been canceled.

Adding fuel to the fire, the police reported that Henry had committed suicide while in custody.

His death didn't change the facts. Damon had already handed over the evidence of Henry's collusion with Nyce Tech, and now all they could do was wait for the court proceedings.

That Friday, Damon instructed the finance department to issue final paychecks and severance packages to employees. Then, he convened a final shareholders' meeting to discuss the company's bankruptcy announcement on Monday.

The meeting room was packed, but an oppressive silence hung in the air.

They had never imagined the company would go bankrupt so suddenly, with a lifetime of work vanishing overnight.

Finally, one shareholder broke the silence, his voice tinged with desperation. "Mr. Sumner, is bankruptcy truly the only option?"

Damon met his gaze, his expression

calm but firm. "Yes. After this

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meeting, you can collect your share of the company's remaining assets from finance and prepare for the bankruptcy filing."

The shareholders looked pale, but they knew nothing could be done.

Prospectus Technology's core secrets were exposed, leaving no way forward. Even if they delayed bankruptcy, Nyce Tech would continue to suppress them, and the outcome would remain the same.

"It's all because of Henry!" One shareholder hissed, his anger barely contained. "I heard he killed himself to avoid facing justice. After what he's done, even death isn't enough to atone!"

"I used to think he was a decent guy. Turns out it was all an act to cover his betrayal!"

Another shareholder sighed, defeated. "What's the point of talking about it now? He's dead. It's not like we can dig him up and lash him."

Damon stood. "This meeting was simply to inform you all. Prepare yourselves-Prospectus Technology will officially declare bankruptcy on Monday. Dismissed."

No one lingered. The reality was bitter, but they had no choice but to accept it.

Back in his office, Damon stood by the window, gazing at the distant ocean. His face betrayed no emotion, though his thoughts churned.

A soft knock broke his reverie.

Nyla entered and walked to his side, gently taking his hand. "Don't worry. No matter what happens, I'll always stand by you."

Her words, filled with warmth and unwavering support, eased the tension in Damon's chest.

He turned to her, his voice low but steady. "As long as I have you and Buddy, nothing else matters."

## Trading My Ex for His Uncle

Nyla looked up and saw the deep sadness in Damon's eyes, which caused a sharp pang in her chest.

She reached out and hugged him, whispering, "Yes, as long as the three of us are together, we'll be okay."

The two held each other in silence, as if time had frozen in that moment.

After a while, a knock came at the door.

Damon released Nyla and called out, "Come in."

Spencer entered and reported, "Mr. Sumner, the employees' salaries and severance pay have been disbursed. They'll pack their things and leave by tonight. The shareholders have also taken their shares and left."

As he spoke, his eyes reddened. He had never imagined the company he'd worked at for so many years would one day face bankruptcy.

If it weren't for Henry leaking so much confidential data, Prospectus Technology wouldn't have ended up like this.

Damon, looking weary, pinched the bridge of his nose. "Got it. You should also collect your pay and severance and then leave."

The company was bankrupt, and he no longer needed a secretary.

Spencer shook his head. "Mr. Sumner, I don't need it. Over the years, the salary and bonuses you've given me have been more than enough for me to buy a home and live comfortably."

In fact, with a bit of frugality, he could nearly achieve financial independence.

Damon frowned. "What you're owed, you'll get every cent. Go collect your pay."

Spencer wanted to refuse again, but Nyla spoke first. "Mr. Hogg, just follow what he says."

Under her steady gaze, Spencer hesitated before nodding. "Alright, Ms. Kinsey, I understand."

"Good. Please give us a moment alone," Nyla replied.

Spencer didn't say another word. He gave Damon a long look before leaving.

When only Damon and Nyla

remained in the office, she walked to his side and said gently, "You've been working non-stop for years without a real break. Now's the

perfect time to rest. swnovel

"Once you've recovered, whether you want to start over or pursue something else, I'll be here to support you. Don't worry you still have me and Buddy."

Hearing the comfort in her words, Damon smiled. "Don't worry about me. I won't do anything reckless."

If it were just him, he might have

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considered giving up. But now, he couldn't afford to be selfish. He had Nyla and Mason to think Mason to think about. If he

left, what would happ

them?

"Mm," Nyla hummed in response.

The two of them stayed in the office for a long time.

By the time they left, the Prospectus Technology building, once bustling and brightly lit, now had only a few scattered lights on.

After getting into the car, Damon told the driver, "Take a loop around Prospectus Technology."

He wanted one last look at the company he had built from the ground up. After filing for bankruptcy, this place would no longer belong to him.

As the black Maybach circled the Prospectus Technology building, Damon's eyes turned faintly red as he gazed at it.

From nothing, Prospectus Technology had grown to employ tens of thousands, built through a decade of relentless effort from him and his team. After today, the company would cease to exist.

Seeing the redness in Damon's eyes,

Nyla felt a sting in her heart. She turned her head, blinking back her own tears. She knew Damon was hurting more than anyone. S

Besides staying by his side, however, there was nothing she could do to ease his pain.

For the first time, she hated her own helplessness. If only she could have done more, maybe she could have helped him.

When they returned to the villa, Damon told Nyla in a low voice, "Nyla, I want to spend some time alone in the study. Don't call me for dinner."

## Trading My Ex for His Uncle

"For how long?" Nyla asked.

Seeing the worry in her eyes, Damon stroked her head, answering in a slightly hoarse voice, "Don't worry. With you and Buddy here, I won't do anything foolish. I promise."

Nyla bit her lip, her concern evident.

"I promise," Damon said again, his tone firm. "If I left you and Buddy behind, I'd be the most selfish person alive. Trust me, okay?"

Looking into his serious gaze, Nyla hesitated before finally nodding. "Alright. I'll be in the living room. If you get hungry, just let me know."

"Okay. But don't wait up for me. I might sleep in the study tonight. Get some rest," Damon replied.

"Alright," Nyla conceded.

Damon turned and walked toward the study, his steps heavy.

Nyla's worry deepened as she watched his retreating figure. She was genuinely afraid that he might not be able to cope.

For now, all she could do was trust him. Prospectus Technology's abrupt collapse was something he needed time to process and accept.

After Damon disappeared around the corner, Lydia hurried over anxiously. "Ms. Kinsey, is it true? Has Mr. Sumner's company gone bankrupt?" Nyla looked at Lydia and nodded. "Yes."

"How could that happen?" Lydia asked, disbelief written all over her face.

Such a large company-how could it go bankrupt so suddenly?

Before Nyla could respond, her phone rang. Seeing that it was Mason's kindergarten teacher, she quickly answered.

"Ms. Kinsey, Mr. Hackett just picked up Wilhelm, and he took Mason with him. I couldn't stop him..." the teacher informed.

Nyla's expression changed. "I understand. Thank you."

After hanging up, she turned to Lydia. "I

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make it back for dinner tonight tell Damon about this-he's not in a good state right now." S

Ved to go out. I might not

Seeing Nyla's urgency, Lydia nodded. "Alright, I understand."

Leaving the villa, Nyla started her car while dialing Gabriel's number.

The call connected after just two rings, as if he had been waiting.

"Nyla, what's the matter?" Gabriel's voice was warm, but to Nyla, it was revolting.

"Gabriel, where did you take Buddy? If anything happens to him, I won't let you off!" she warned.

Gabriel chuckled. "Relax, Nyla. I just

invited Buddy to have dinner at my place. send him back after we eat. Of course, you're welcome to join us if you'd like. Should I send you the address?"

With that, he hung up.

Moments later, a text message arrived with his address.

Nyla glowered at it. She pressed the gas pedal, and her car sped off into the night.

Half an hour later, Nyla pulled up outside Gabriel's house. She got out, her face cold as she rang the doorbell.

The door opened quickly and a maid greeted, "Ms. Kinsey, Mr. Hackett has been expecting you. Please come in."

Ignoring the polite invitation, Nyla strode inside and headed straight for the living room. She found Gabriel alone, lounging on the sofa. "Gabriel, where's Buddy?" she demanded.

Gabriel's gaze softened upon seeing her. "He's upstairs playing with Wil He's perfectly safe. Don't worry. This is your first time here-let me show you around..."

Nyla didn't even glance at him. She turned and rushed upstairs.

## Trading My Ex for His Uncle

The first room-empty.

The second room-also empty.

By the time Nyla had checked every room, there was still no sign of Mason. Her patience was wearing thin, and her emotions were teetering on the edge of breaking.

Gabriel's voice broke the tense silence behind her. "Nyla, don't worry. Buddy is in a very safe place. You just need to—"

Slap!

Before he could finish, Nyla spun around and slapped him hard across the face.

The crisp sound echoed down the hallway, plunging it into silence.

A bright red handprint bloomed on Gabriel's cheek, stark and glaring. Yet, instead of anger, he let out a faint laugh. "Nyla, you still don't trust me, do you? You still think I'd hurt you, is that it?"

Nyla's gaze was icy. "I'll ask you one more time. Where is Buddy? If you don't tell me, I'll call the police."

Gabriel might use gentle words, but his actions spoke differently. From his underhanded tactics that had brought down Prospectus Technology to taking Mason without her consent, everything he did only hurt her. His so-called love was just a disguise for his selfish desires.

"I already told you, Buddy is safe. I promise, if you let me show you around the villa, I'll take you to him," Gabriel tried to reason.

Nyla didn't even spare him another glance as she brushed past him and headed quickly downstairs.

When she reached the living room, Gabriel blocked her path again. "Nyla, do you really have to treat me so heartlessly?"

His smile had vanished, replaced with a dark, threatening expression.

Upon sensing the change in his demeanor, Nyla's hands curled into fists at her sides.

That unsettling feeling-like being watched by a snake-crept over her, sending a chill down her spine.

She pressed her lips together. After

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a moment of silence, she spoke

through this villa with you, you'll let

coldly. You swear that if I way to ter

me take Buddy with me?" S

Gabriel smiled again, but it was a chilling one. "Of course. I wouldn't lie to you."

"Fine. Let's hope you keep your word," Nyla replied.

"You can trust me," Gabriel said smoothly.

As he led her through the villa, he enthusiastically pointed out the designs and features, describing in detail how he had arranged everything during the renovations. It was clear the decor reflected the styles she had once liked.

But what she liked in the past didn't mean she liked it now.

Suppressing her growing discomfort, Nyla forced herself to endure the tour until they'd seen every corner of the villa.

"We've seen the villa. Now, can I see Buddy?" she demanded.

Gabriel paused, his gaze flickering under her icy stare. "Nyla, don't rush. Why don't we sit for a bit first?"

Before she could respond, her phone buzzed with a message from Valarie. She glanced at the screen and let out a cold laugh. "No need. I already know where Buddy is."

With that, she turned on her heel and strode toward the door.

Gabriel's gaze darkened as he motioned for a maid to block her path.

"Nyla, this place is perfect. Why leave? Stay here. I'll have Buddy brought over so the three of us can live together, safe and happy. How does that sound?"

Nyla turned back, her expression blank. "I called the police on my way here. They should be arriving any minute. Save your words for them."

As soon as she finished speaking, the wail of police sirens echoed from outside the villa.

Moments later, two officers entered the living room.

Nyla stepped forward. "Officers, I'm the one who called. This man took my child from his kindergartene without my consent and refuses to tell me where he's being held."

## Trading My Ex for His Uncle

Gabriel's expression changed when he saw the police. He hadn't expected Nyla to actually follow through and call them.

One of the officers turned to him, his tone stern. "Is what Ms. Kinsey said true? Where is the child? If you don't hand him over, we'll have to treat this as a kidnapping case and take you into custody."

Gabriel forced a smile and glanced at Nyla. "Nyla, didn't you just say you already know where Buddy is? Why involve the police if you've already found him?"

Nyla scowled. "Yes, I know where he is, but the location requires your fingerprint for access. Now that the police are here, don't try any more tricks."

A flicker of surprise crossed Gabriel's face. He hadn't expected her to figure out where Mason was being kept. That location indeed required his fingerprint to enter.

When he'd taken Mason earlier, he had anticipated that Nyla would come looking for him, so he had locked the boy in his company office.

Since Nyla already knew, and with the police present, continuing to stall would only worsen his situation.

He took a deep breath and nodded. "Fine, I'll—"

Before he could finish, his phone rang.

He answered, and his secretary's anxious voice came through the line. "Mr. Hackett, there's been an issue with the company's security system. Everything's down, and the programs have crashed. You need to get here immediately!"

"What?!" Gabriel's expression darkened as he turned sharply to Nyla. "Did you do this?!"

If Nyce Tech's security system failed, all its data could be stolen at any moment.

Nyla frowned at him. "What are you talking about?"

The question sobered Gabriel slightly. He realized it couldn't have been her. She didn't have the capability to pull something like this off. If she did, Prospectus Technology wouldn't have gone bankrupt.

Regaining his composure, he spoke

coldly into "I

the phone

Have the tech team

immediately. I'll head over now.

He hung up and exhaled deeply. "Nyla, I'll take you to Buddy now."

Without responding, Nyla followed him out of the villa. The two officers trailed closely behind.

When they arrived at Nyce Tech, Nyla got out of the car and rushed to the elevator.

As they stood beside her, Gabriel said, "Nyla, you don't need to worry. Buddy is perfectly safe."

Nyla frowned in disgust but said nothing.

The elevator arrived, and they rode silently to the top floor.

As the doors opened, a small figure out

darted

few

and flung itself into Nyla's

The force knocked her back a steps, nearly making ho

fall.

At the last moment, Gabriel caught her by the waist, steadying her.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

"Don't touch me!" she snapped.

She slapped his hand away and looked down, her eyes widening in disbelief as she saw it was Mason.

She crouched down and exclaimed, "Buddy!"

Mason's lip's quivered as he threw

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his arms around her neck and began Mommy, why did it take you

to cry so long to come? I was locked up for

so long, and I was so scared..."

## Trading My Ex for His Uncle

Nyla quickly comforted Mason. "I'm sorry, sweetheart. Mommy's late."

She hugged and consoled him for a long while before he finally calmed down, though his little body still trembled with occasional sobs, his cheeks streaked with tears.

Nyla gently wiped his tears away, her voice soft. "No more crying now, okay? Mommy's taking you home."

Mason sniffled. "Okay."

When Nyla stood up, she noticed Gabriel still lingering nearby and frowned. "Why are you still here?"

Gabriel ignored her question. He crouched down and looked directly at Mason. "Buddy, tell me how did you get out of the office?"

The security systems at Nyce Tech had always been flawless, yet right after locking Mason in his office, everything had gone haywire.

It seemed impossible, but Gabriel couldn't shake the suspicion that somehow Mason was involved. Mason's eyes mirrored his mother's disdain. "Why should I tell you? You're a bad man! I hate you!" If it hadn't been for this man, he would have been home, enjoying dinner and playing with his blocks. Gabriel frowned, his expression darkening.

Nyla pulled Mason behind her protectively and glared at Gabriel. "Gabriel, I'm letting it go this time because Buddy's unharmed. But if there's a next time, I won't let you off the hook!"

Her words didn't faze Gabriel. "Nyla, Prospectus Technology has gone bankrupt. Staying with Damon will only lead to hardship for you and Buddy. Come with me instead-I promise to treat Buddy as my own."

"I'd rather endure hardship with Damon than stay with someone like you-someone so twisted, who uses such despicable tactics to get his way!" Nyla retorted.

Her revulsion was unmistakable, her gaze one of utter contempt, as though looking at something vile.

A pang shot through Gabriel's chest, his hands balling into fists at his sides.

"Nyla, you'll willingly come to me one day," he said through gritted teeth.

"In your dreams! That day will never come!" Nyla retorted.

Gabriel took a deep breath, said nothing more, and turned to leave the elevator.

Nyla quickly pressed the button for

the first

Nyla floor. As the elevator descended smoothly, she turned

Mason. "Buddy, are you

to

Mason nodded. "I'm okay, Mommy. Just a little hungry."

"Alright, we'll eat dinner as soon as we're home," Nyla replied.

"Okay!" Mason agreed.

The elevator soon reached the first floor.

Nyla and Mason got into the car and quickly drove away.

Gabriel stood in his office on the top floor, surveying the wreckage as his expression darkened.

Behind him, his secretary hesitantly broke the silence. "Mr. Hackett... this was all caused by Ms. Kinsey's son..."

"Shut up!" Gabriel snapped.

Did he really need to be told? He already knew exactly who was responsible.

"Clean this place up within half an hour. Also, notify everyone in the IT department-mandatory meeting now!" he ordered.

Ten minutes later, Gabriel sat in the conference room, his fury palpable.

"It's been over 30 minutes since I was notified of the system crash Yet none of you have figured out what caused it. Why am I paying you so much every month? To sit around uselessly?" he demanded.

The IT department manager

swallowed hard before speaking and

cautiously. "Mr. Hackett, we're still investigating. We're confident we'll identify the issue soon."

Gabriel let out a cold laugh. "Soon? How soon? Half a day? A week? A month? Do you even have the faintest lead?"

## Trading My Ex for His Uncle

No one dared to answer. In truth, they had made no progress-neither fixing the bug nor stabilizing the system.

The silence in the conference room was suffocating.

Heads lowered, each person desperate to avoid eye contact with Gabriel.

Their collective silence only fueled his anger. He slammed the files on the table. "Get back to work! If this isn't resolved today, don't expect to leave!" Relieved to escape his presence, the team scrambled out of the room.

Left alone, Gabriel pulled out his phone and reviewed the security footage from his office. He rewound to the moment right after he had locked Mason inside.

At first, Mason tried the door but quickly realized it was locked. Then he began wreaking havoc-knocking over a teapot, pulling a painting off the wall, scattering important documents across the floor, and gleefully stomping on them.

Gabriel's jaw tightened as he watched the destruction unfold, veins bulging in his temple.

He continued to watch. Mason hopped onto Gabriel's chair, fiddling with the computer as if attempting to guess the password.

After a while, he gave up, climbed down, and sprawled on the sofa.

Shortly after, the security feed went dark.

That must have been when the secretary called him about the system crash.

Gabriel put away his phone, his suspicions waning. He couldn't believe he had seriously considered the possibility of a 5-year-old sabotaging the company's system. Clearly, his exhaustion had gotten the better of him.

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It was past 7:00 p.m. when Nyla and Mason returned home.

As they stepped into the living room, Lydia rushed over to greet them. "Ms. Kinsey, Mr. Mason, you're finally home!"

"Lydia, please prepare dinner for us," Nyla said. "By the way, has Damon come out of the study while we were gone?"

Lydia shook her head, concern

evident on her face. "No, he's been in

there the entire time. I didn't dare disturb him... Ms. Kinsey, I'm really worried. Maybe you should check on him?"

Nyla nodded. "Sure, I'll go."

She sent Mason to wash up for dinner before heading to the study.

Standing outside the door for a moment, she finally mustered the courage to knock.  
"Damon, do you want to join us for dinner?"

There was silence.

She bit her lower lip, her eyes clouded with worry.

She had been on edge all day, knowing Damon had locked himself in the study. She feared he might do something drastic.

Yet, apart from trusting him and

giving him time and space to come to terms with Prospectus  
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Technology's bankruptcy, there wasn't much she could do. S

As Nyla debated whether to push

the door open, Damon's hoarse

voice came from within. "I'm nl

hungry. You two eat without me."

## Trading My Ex for His Uncle

Hearing that, Nyla instinctively bit her lip and lingered at the door momentarily. In the end, she sighed quietly and walked away without saying anything more.

When she returned to the living room, Lydia immediately approached her. "Ms. Kinsey, how is Mr. Sumner?"

Nyla shook her head. "He's fine, don't worry. But he still doesn't want to come out to eat. Just keep the food warm for him tonight and take it to him whenever he feels like eating."

Lydia nodded quickly. "Got it. Ms. Kinsey, you should go have dinner."

"Okay," Nyla said, though she didn't have much of an appetite.

Between Prospectus Technology's bankruptcy and Mason being forcibly taken by Gabriel earlier in the day, she was utterly exhausted, both mentally and physically.

Despite that, she had to force herself to eat for Damon and Mason's sake. They both needed her to stay strong.

She sat down at the dining table, and Mason frowned slightly upon noticing it was just the two of them.

"Mommy, isn't Daddy coming to eat?" he asked.

Nyla mustered a small smile. "No, Daddy doesn't want to eat right now. Let's eat first."

Mason pouted. "Okay, then."

The meal passed in silence.

After dinner, Nyla comforted Mason for a while before saying, "Buddy, your dad's been really tired lately. Don't tell him about what happened with Wilhelm's father today, okay? I don't want him to worry about you."

Mason nodded obediently. "Okay, Mommy. I won't say anything."

Pleased with his response, Nyla kissed his cheek. "You're such a good boy, Buddy!"

After spending some time playing with him, she asked Lydia to help him take a bath and get ready for bed.

Once Mason was asleep, Lydia returned downstairs to find Nyla sitting on the couch with a book in hand.

She hesitated before stepping forward. "Ms. Kinsey, it's already past nine. Why don't you go upstairs and rest? I'll keep an eye on Mr. Sumner."

"There's no need," Nyla replied. "I wouldn't be able to sleep anyway. You should go rest. I'll stay here and wait for him."

After Prospectus Technology's bankruptcy, her research project was halted. Like Damon, she no longer had work to attend to.

Lydia tried again. "Ms. Kinsey-"

Before she could continue, Nyla's phone began ringing, interrupting her.

Seeing it was a call from Caroline, Nyla swiped to answer.

As soon as the call connected, Caroline's familiar voice came through. "Nyla, I just returned from my business trip and heard from Prof. Kington that Prospectus Technology's R&D project has been suspended?"

"Yeah," Nyla said softly. "Prospectus Technology will be filing for

bankruptcy on Monday. The project can't move forward without funding. Over the next few days, I'll be wrapping things up with Leon and arranging for him to return to

Capitarnia."

There was a brief silence on the other end before Caroline spoke again. "What about you? Are you coming back to Capitarnia?"

"No," Nyla said firmly. "Caroline, I've resolved all the misunderstandings between Damon and me, and we're back together now. I'm staying here with him. Once the lab handover is done, I'll start looking for work here in Saintornia."

"Did you tell the professor about this?" Caroline asked.

"I mentioned it to him during a phone call. He agreed," Nyla replied.

"If you've already made up your mind, I doubt can change it," Caroline said, a hint of resignation in her voice 'But I want to remind you of something. No matter what happens, don't give up your career for a man. Betting everything on love rarely ends well."

With Damon's situation now, he'd certainly appreciate Nyla's support.

## Trading My Ex for His Uncle

However, things might change once Damon regained his footing.

Hearing Caroline's unspoken caution, Nyla lowered her gaze and said earnestly, "I know you're saying this for my own good, but Damon is worth it.

"He spent five years alone without knowing if I was even alive, and he never let another woman into his life. I trust him. Even if I lose this bet, I won't regret it."

"Alright," Caroline relented. "As long as you've thought it through. I'll support you no matter what. But if you stay in Saintornia, it'll be hard for us to see each other again."

Caroline had decided to remain in Capitarnia while still studying there. Over the years, she had saved enough to buy a place for herself. Even before Nyla's return, Caroline was already searching for a property.

"That's okay. As long as we keep each other in our hearts, no distance is too far. Besides, our little family of three might move to Capitarnia someday. We'll have chances to meet," Nyla replied.

Caroline chuckled. "Alright. I need to get back to the lab soon. Let's talk again later."

"Okay. Take care," Nyla said.

After the call ended, Nyla turned to Lydia. "You don't need to worry about me. Even if I go upstairs, I won't be able to sleep. I need to stay here and get through this with him. You should go rest."

Seeing the determination in Nyla's eyes, Lydia sighed. She knew there was no changing her mind. Though kind-hearted, Nyla was as stubborn as Damon when it came to her decisions.

"Alright. If you need anything, just call me," Lydia said.

"Got it. Go get some rest," Nyla urged.

After Lydia left, silence enveloped the living room.

Nyla glanced toward the study, her worry etched into her features, but she resolved to give Damon more time.

The sudden collapse of his company

was a devastating blow, but she

ne

believed in him. He would bounce

back

ger than ever once he

came to terms with it. S

Damon spent the entire night in the study.

Nyla stayed up in the living room, keeping vigil until she finally fell asleep at dawn.

Around 7:00 a.m. the next day, the study door opened.

After a sleepless night, Damon's eyes were bloodshot. His shirt was wrinkled, his stubble unkempt, and he looked utterly worn down.

As he stepped into the living room and saw Nyla asleep on the couch, he paused. He walked over and stood by the couch, gazing down at her.

Even in sleep, her brows were furrowed, and dark circles shadowed her eyes. Clearly, she'd had a rough night as well.

After a moment, Damon bent down and gently picked her up.

As he turned toward the stairs, Lydia's voice called softly from behind him, "Mr. Sumner..."

Damon turned and whispered, "Keep your voice down. Don't wake her."

It was only then that Lydia noticed Nyla in his arms. She swallowed the words she'd been about to say and

nodded, heading quietly by and

to the kitchen.

Damon carried Nyla to the bedroom, tucked her in, and quietly left the room.

When he returned downstairs, Lydia approached him. "Mr. Sumner, Ms. Kinsey stayed up all night in the

living room, worried about you

tried to get her to rest, but she wouldn't listen. She's very concerned about you."