

Trading My Ex for His Uncle

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Jane's cold voice came through the line. "I'm busy. What do you want?"

"The Wilkie Group might go bankrupt," Theo said bluntly. "Damon has already gathered substantial evidence of our illegal activities. Grandpa's getting old, and I can't hold the company together on my own. Can you come back and help me?"

There was a moment of silence before Jane's mocking tone cut in. "Theo, when I was at the Wilkie Group, we didn't do anything illegal. How is it that the company started falling apart the moment you took over?"

Theo forced down his rising anger and replied coldly, "Everything I've done was for the company's growth. When are you coming back?"

"I'm not coming back. Give up on the idea," Jane said sharply. "I've already sold my shares to Damon. The company has nothing to do with me anymore. You're on your own."

She wasn't a fool. Theo's reason for asking her to return wasn't to pass the company to her. He wanted her to be the scapegoat for the things he'd done in the past. She might never leave if she went back now.

Theo quickly added, "If you come back, I'll give you half of my shares."

"I don't need them," Jane replied dismissively. "Keep them. If the company goes bankrupt, your shares will be as good as scrap paper anyway."

With that, she hung up.

Theo slammed his phone onto the passenger seat, his face dark with rage. Jane, that ungrateful woman.

Letting her go abroad had clearly been a mistake. Now, getting her to come back seemed impossible.

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Time flew by, and soon it was Saturday.

In the morning, Nyla and Damon got ready, ate breakfast, and brought Mason to visit Harrison.

When Harrison saw them, his face lit up with joy, though he quickly tried to downplay it. "You're both so busy. If there's nothing urgent, you don't need to visit me so often. I have the housekeeper to take care of me."

"We haven't visited in a while, and we actually have something to tell you this time," Nyla said seriously.

Harrison's expression turned curious. "What is it?"

"We got married," she said.

Harrison frowned slightly. "When are you planning to hold the wedding?"

Nyla and Damon exchanged a glance.

Nyla answered, "We don't plan to hold the wedding for now."

Harrison's expression darkened immediately. "Whose idea was that?"

"It was a joint decision," Nyla explained. "We'll hold the wedding later. We just came today to let you know and have a family meab

Kether."

"That's ridiculous!" Harrison

snapped. "How can you get married without a wedding? I can

understand you, young people,

wn

vel

wanting to make your own

decisions, but there has to be a

proper ceremony. This is,

non-negotiable!"

"Dad, it's not that we don't want to have a wedding," Nyla said patiently. "The timing just isn't right."

"What timing isn't right? Explain it to me!" Harrison demanded.

Seeing that her father wasn't going to let this go, Nyla sighed. "Damon, can you take Buddy to another room for a while? I need to talk to

Damon nodded. "Alright."

Swy dad."

After he left with Mason, Nyla sat down beside Harrison. "Dad, my mom is coming to Saintornia next week."

Harrison froze. "What did you say?"

"You heard me. She'll be here next week, and I'm going to meet her. Damon and I rushed to get married because of this," she explained.

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"What does her return have to do with you getting married?" Harrison asked, his confusion clear.

"She wants me and Buddy to move to Meristate," Nyla said softly.

"What?!" Harrison's face darkened. "She hasn't cared about you for years. She didn't even visit once. And now she's coming back to force you to leave your husband and move abroad? Has she lost her mind?!"

After a brief hesitation, Nyla shared what she had learned from Alexander about her mother's plans.

Harrison's anger flared as he processed the full story. "That's insane! She abandoned you for years, and now she expects you to inherit some foreign family's legacy? What about your life, your happiness? This is absurd!"

"That's why Damon and I decided to register our marriage now," Nyla said calmly. "We'll handle everything else as it comes."

Harrison sighed deeply. "Alright, I understand. If you're not ready for a wedding now, we'll wait."

"Thank you, Dad," Nyla replied.

After lunch, Damon and Nyla prepared to leave with Mason.

As they were heading out, Harrison stopped her and said in a low voice, "Nyla, no matter what happens, I just want you to be happy. Nothing else matters."

"I know," she replied, smiling gently.

"Go on. Live your life. Don't worry about me. The housekeeper takes good care of everything here," Harrison reassured her.

"Okay," Nyla answered.

As Harrison watched Nyla leave, he sighed. He had wanted to ask her to arrange a meeting between him and Emerald when she arrived.

After thinking it over, he decided it wasn't necessary, so he didn't bring it up.

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After dropping Nyla and Mason off at home, Damon went straight to his office.

As soon as he stepped out of the elevator, Spencer hurried over. "Mr. Sumner, Ms. Sumner is waiting for you in the conference room."

"Got it," Damon replied and walked into the conference room with a cold expression.

Charlotte immediately stood up and stormed toward him. "Uncle Damon, how could you terminate the contract with my company like this? It's completely unfair!"

"You've already found a better partner," Damon said flatly. "There's no need to continue working with Prospectus Technology."

A flicker of guilt crossed Charlotte's face. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"If you don't understand, take your time to think about it. When you've figured it out, come back to me. If you can't, don't bother coming back." With that, Damon turned and started to walk away.

Charlotte chased after him, blocking his path. "Uncle Damon, you can't do this to me! Don't forget, I was the one who took care of Nyla's father when no one else could!"

Damon narrowed his eyes dangerously. Let's get one thing straight. You took care of her father for less than a month, and I

rewarded you with a limited edition sports car and a major project. Feel free to ask around if I've ever shortchanged you."

Charlotte's face turned pale, but she refused to back down. "But you're my uncle! Helping me should be your responsibility!"

Her entitled tone made Damon's gaze turn ice-cold. "You're mistaken. I'm not a Sumner by blood, and I'm not your uncle. I owe you nothing.

"Most importantly, I despise people who pretend to be loyal while secretly working with my enemies."

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Charlotte stared in disbelief, her wide eyes filled with fear and guilt. Her face turned ashen.

"Uncle Damon..." she called out.

"Don't call me uncle," Damon replied icily. "I don't have a niece who betrays her own family. Since you've chosen to side with Drake, you've also chosen to stand against me and Prospectus Technology. From now on, we're business rivals, and I won't show you any mercy."

His piercing gaze felt like the chill of a winter wind. "But since we once shared a bond, let me offer you some advice-stay far away from Drake. Otherwise, you won't even know how your end comes."

With that, Damon brushed past her and left.

Charlotte stood frozen, watching his figure disappear, too shaken to pursue him further.

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Back in Damon's office, Spencer entered after a knock. "Mr. Sumner, Mr. Guinness from the Watson Group is here to see you."

"I'm not seeing him. Tell him the Watson Group's issues have nothing to do with me," Damon replied.

"Understood," Spencer answered.

In the evening, Damon had just reached the parking garage when someone suddenly stepped in front of his car, blocking his way.

Upon seeing that it was Percy Guinness, Damon's expression darkened. "Mr. Guinness, what are you doing here?"

Percy looked haggard. "Mr. Sumner, the Watson Group is in serious trouble. We need your help. If you help me out this time, I swear I'll follow your lead and never waver again."

Clearly desperate, Percy's tone pleaded for mercy.

Damon's voice remained cold. "If I recall, not long ago, my secretary reached out to buy some products from your company at a high price. You flatly refused.

"Prospectus Technology's production line has since been halted, costing us millions every day. Even if I wanted to help you now, there's nothing I can do. You should look elsewhere."

Without waiting for a response, he walked around Percy and kept going.

Percy quickly followed, forcing a smile. "Mr. Sumner, please, let's talk this through. The Watson Group can supply Prospectus Technology with the products you need at market price."

Damon raised an eyebrow, a hint of mockery in his smile. "Market price? Mr. Guinness, you don't seem to understand how business works."

When Prospectus Technology had approached the Watson Group earlier, offering above-market prices, Percy had refused.

Now, with the Watson Group in a desperate position, Percy was offering to sell at market price. Did he think Damon was a fool?

Seeing that Damon was unwilling to continue the conversation, Percy grew more panicked. "Mr. Sumner let's not give up yet. If there's

negotiate. We can still worki

anything you're unhappy about let's

something out, right?"

Damon stopped and looked at him impassively. Mr. Guinness, I don't have time for pointless chatter. Name your lowest acceptable price for the products. If it's reasonable, we'll do business. If not, there's no need for further discussion."

Silence hung between them as Percy hesitated, rubbing his hands nervously. Several numbers flashed through his mind.

If he priced too high, Damon would walk away. Too low, and he'd suffer a loss. Regardless, Prospectus Technology was the Watson Group's only hope.

He said honestly, "Mr. Sumner, I'll sell at cost price. That's my bottom line. Anything lower, and I'd be losing money."

Damon knew this was the best Percy could offer. He considered it for a moment and replied, "Fine. Come to my office Monday morning, and we'll sign the contract."

Percy grew anxious. "Mr. Sumner, time is of the essence. Can't we sign it today? It'll only take half an hour."

Damon raised a brow. "Relax, Mr. Guinness. If I say Monday, it means you'll still have time. Don't worry-the Watson Group won't fall apart before then."

Seeing no other choice, Percy nodded reluctantly. "Alright, Mr. Sumner. I'll wait for your update."

"Good," Damon replied.

As Damon drove away, Percy watched his car disappear into the distance before motioning for his own driver to bring the car around.

The moment Percy got in, his secretary, seated in the passenger seat, couldn't help but ask, "Mr. Guinness, we know Mr. Summer is the one behind the Watson Group's troubles. Why would you still approach him for help?"

Percy let out a bitter laugh. "Do I have any other choice? If I hadn't listened to you earlier and offended him, we wouldn't be in this mess. Now, we're forced to sell at cost just to secure a deal.

"Let me warn you don't mention Drake's name in front of me again. If you do, pack your things and leave!"

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It was Percy's secretary who had said that the Watson Group would be in crisis if they offended Drake. That was why Percy had refused to work with Prospectus

Technology.

Now? They hadn't offended Drake, but they had offended Damon. If they had to offend someone, he'd rather it be Drake.

Percy had worked with Damon for years. He knew Damon wasn't the type to push people to their breaking point. As for Drake, Percy had investigated him he was a ruthless man.

People who had worked with Drake had all suffered. Yet, no one dared retaliate because Drake was supported by the Nixons. Associating with someone like that would be dangerous.

Percy's gaze shifted to the window, his expression grim. He couldn't shake the feeling that the tides were turning in Saintornia.

In the days that followed, executives from companies that had severed ties with Prospectus Technology flooded Spencer's phone with calls, all begging for a meeting with Damon.

No matter how persistent they were, Spencer always gave the same reply- Damon wouldn't see them.

On Monday morning, Percy arrived at Damon's office bright and early with the contract in hand.

"Mr. Guinness, you're here early," Damon remarked with a trace of surprise.

Percy's smile was awkward. "Yes, Mr. Sumner. I brought the contract. If everything looks good, we can sign it now."

Damon took the contract, skimmed it for about ten minutes, then nodded. "No issues. Let's sign."

Once the paperwork was complete, Damon handed one copy back to Percy. "Mr. Guinness, here's to a successful partnership."

"Likewise, Mr. Sumner. If there's nothing else, I'll take my leave," Percy said, excusing himself.

Damon nodded. "Our procurement manager will coordinate with your team this afternoon."

"Understood," Percy replied.

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As Percy left the building, he was immediately surrounded by familiar faces other company heads who had once worked with Prospectus Technology and later turned against it due to Drake.

"Mr. Guinness, can you help us out? Put in a good word for us with Mr. Sumner?"

"That's right! We've been longtime collaborators. Please, we're desperate our businesses can't take much more of this."

"We know we were in the wrong, but doesn't this seem like overkill? Mr. Sumner is cutting off all our paths!"

Percy sighed. "It's not that I don't want to help you, but I can't. I've barely managed to resolve my own issues. You'll have to fend for yourselves."

Ignoring their pleas, Percy got into his car and drove away. Through the

rearview mirror, he saw the

once-proud business leaders left

shivering in the cold outside

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Prospectus Technology's doors.

Percy sighed. It was a good thing he'd acted early. If he'd waited any longer, he'd be standing there with them.

As Percy's car disappeared, the group outside Prospectus Technology's building descended into anxious discussion.

"What do we do now?"

"Are we really going to watch our companies go under?"

"This is insane! We only refused to work with Prospectus Technology, and now Mr. Sumner is actively buying out our partners and forcing us to come crawling back!"

They had previously refused to sell

their products to Damon, only for those products to accumulate in the warehouse after Damon acquired the companies that had worked closely with them. They had to stop production, incurring millions in losses.

Their complaints carried a note of despair.

Finally, someone broke the silence. "M-Maybe we should turn to Mr. Mummery?"

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The group fell silent again. After a long pause, someone finally spoke. "Right, since Damon won't let us off the hook, let's go to Mr. Mummery and see if he can help us."

Minutes later, the people who had been waiting outside Prospectus Technology turned and left.

The front desk quickly relayed this to Spencer, who reported it to Damon. "Mr. Sumner, they've been outside since 5:00 a.m. and have now suddenly left. I'm not sure if they've given up or if something else is going on."

Damon's expression remained indifferent. "Whatever their reason, it has nothing to do with us. Don't bring this up to me again in the future. You can leave now."

"Yes, sir," Spencer replied.

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After contacting Drake, the group waited in a private room at a restaurant.

Two hours later, Drake finally arrived.

As soon as he entered, Jerry Walker from Excellence stood up hurriedly. "Mr. Mummery, you're finally here. We've been waiting a long time."

Drake offered a faint smile, took a seat, and raised an eyebrow. "I already know why you've called me. It's not that I don't want to help, but your problems aren't something I can fix. Our company's business direction doesn't align with yours."

"However, I can introduce you to some clients, so you can get your production lines running again and minimize your losses."

The faces around the table fell.

Jerry's eyes turned icy as he stared at Drake. "Mr. Mummery, you promised that if we helped you deal with Prospectus Technology, you wouldn't let us suffer. You said you'd cover any losses. And now, you're backing out?"

Drake's smile disappeared. "I'm not backing out. It's just that you didn't manage to do any real damage to Prospectus Technology. I'm already doing you a favor by introducing clients. Don't be greedy."

Jerry chuckled coldly. "I see now. You used us as pawns. And now that we're no longer useful, you're tossing us aside."

Drake didn't deny it. He stood up, adjusted his suit, and said, "I don't waste time or energy on people with

no

value. I have other matters to attend to. Excuse me."

Without another glance, he headed for the door.

The others were furious, some even rising to confront him, but Jerry stopped them.

Once Drake was gone, Jerry shut the private room door and turned to the group. "We're nothing but collateral damage in this fight between Damon and Drake."

Back when Drake had threatened and sweet-talked them into cutting ties with Prospectus Technology, they had assumed they had made a safe choice.

But now, Damon had acquired the

companies they relied on for

collaboration, cutting off their supply chains entirely. At this rate, it would only take a month for their

businesses to go bankrupt

"Mr. Walker, what do we do now? Are we just going to sit back and watch our companies collapse?" someone asked, panic creeping into their voice.

They had believed Drake would support them. Now, it was clear he had only used them. Regret was too late.

Jerry sighed. "There's no other choice. We'll have to beg Damon again."

"But he won't even agree to meet us," someone objected. "How can we beg if we can't even get in the door?"

"If we can't meet him, we can meet Nyla. All we need is for her to pass a message."

Damon wouldn't meet them now likely because they had sided with Drake. If they could show genuine regret and convince Damon, he might give them another chance.

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"Actually, my daughter is friends with Valarie. I could ask her to help set up a meeting with Nyla," one person said hesitantly.

Jerry's face lit up. "Yes, let's do that."

Another person clapped him on the back. "Well done. Didn't know you still had an ace up your sleeve!"

The man shrugged. "I usually don't pay attention to who my daughter befriends. I didn't expect it to come in handy now."

"Well, it's a reminder for us all. I'm going home to tell my kid to start making more friends."

An hour later, Nyla received a call from Valarie. "Nyla, are you home? I need to talk to you about something."

"I'm home," Nyla replied, arranging a flower in a vase. "What's up? Can't you just tell me over the phone?"

"It's better in person. I'll be there in 30 minutes," Valarie replied.

Though Valarie said 30 minutes, she arrived in less than 20. As she stepped into the living room, she saw Nyla kneeling on a cushion by the sofa, carefully arranging flowers in a vase on the table.

"Nyla," she called out.

Nyla glanced at her briefly. "You're here. Sit down. I'll be done in a second."

When the last few stems were in place, she wiped her hands and turned to Valarie. "So, what's this about?"

Valarie pressed her lips together, then sighed. "A friend asked me to set up a meeting with you."

"A meeting? Who? And why?" Nyla asked, puzzled.

"She's not exactly a friend," Valarie admitted, "She helped me out once. I wasn't going to agree, but she played the 'you owe me' card so here I am."

Seeing Valarie's troubled expression, Nyla sat across from her. "What's this about? You're making me nervous."

Valarie hesitated, then said, "It's about Prospectus Technology."

At that, Nyla's brows furrowed. "Valarie, I don't get involved in Damon's work."

"I know." Valarie nodded. "I'm just here to deliver the message. If you're not willing, I'll tell them no."

If the other party hadn't brought up how she had saved Valarie before, she wouldn't have come to Nyla to put her in a dilemma.

"Alright, go ahead," Nyla replied.

Valarie explained how several companies had sided with Drake only to have Damon retaliate by cutting them off. Now they were on the verge of collapse and were desperate to make amends.

As Nyla listened, her initial worry eased when she realized Damon had already handled the situation thoroughly.

"They want to ask you to speak to Damon," Valarie said. "See if he'll consider working with them again."

Nyla shook her head firmly. "Valarie, I can't help with this. They chose to go against Damon, and if I step in now, I'll be going against him too."

Valarie sighed. "I get it. But it's not

that simple. Sure, Damon can crush them, but their bankruptcy won't benefit him. And acquiring so many companies must've drained a lot of resources. If Damon works with them, they can help him fight Drake. Otherwise, he's fighting alone."

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Nyla pursed her lips, remaining silent.

Seeing her hesitation, Valarie added, "Nyla, just think about my suggestion. I believe it makes sense to cooperate with them for now. Once we deal with Drake, we can address their past actions. What do you think?"

Nyla looked at her. "I understand. I'll think about it. You should head back now."

With that, she stood and left.

Valarie's argument had some merit, but Nyla could tell she wasn't only considering things from her and Damon's perspective. Valarie likely wanted Damon to go easy on the companies that had previously turned on Prospectus Technology.

Back in her bedroom, Nyla sat in a lounge chair on the balcony, thinking for a long while before dialing Damon's number.

The call was answered quickly.

"Nyla, what is it?" Damon asked.

"Valarie came to see me just now. She asked me to intercede for the companies that turned on Prospectus Technology and to convince you to give them another chance," she replied.

There was silence on the other end of the line.

After a moment, Damon asked, "What do you think?"

"At first, I didn't want to help her, but she said something that made sense. Right now, you're fighting Drake alone, and it's exhausting. If those companies can help you, restarting a partnership with them might not be a bad idea. But if you do, you have to stay vigilant and never give them the chance to betray you again," she reminded him.

She paused, lowering her gaze. "That's just my opinion. Ultimately, the decision is yours. I don't understand the business world."

Damon chuckled. "I understand. I'll think about it carefully. You just focus on taking care of Buddy and enjoy your days. If you want to return to work, you're always welcome back. I'll handle the rest."

"Alright. I won't disturb you anymore," Nyla replied.

"Okay, I'll be home for dinner tonight," Damon said.

"Mm," she hummed in response.

After hanging up, Damon's expression turned cold. He immediately called Brandon. "How are you handling your girlfriend? I won't mind stepping in if you can't manage her."

Brandon, caught off guard during a meeting, was confused. "Uncle Damon, what's going on? What did Valarie do?"

"You should ask her yourself. I'm warning you keep her from bothering Nyla. I

don't want her dragging Nyla into business matters," Damon warned.

Before Brandon could respond, the call abruptly ended.

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Standing up, Brandon said coldly, "The meeting will resume in 15 minutes."

Leaving the conference room, he returned to his office and called Valarie. The phone rang for a while without an answer. They'd had a fight recently, and he had been too busy to talk to her. He'd planned to visit her tonight, but now she was bringing up an issue.

On the third call, Valarie finally picked up, her tone impatient. "What is it?"

Brandon took a deep breath. "Valarie, what did you say to Aunt Nyla today?"

"How do you know I went to see her? Were you spying on me?!" Valarie's voice rose with anger. They had argued about this before, and she hadn't expected him to break his promise.

Frustrated, Brandon replied coldly, "Do you think I have time for that? Uncle Damon called to warn me-stop bothering Aunt Nyla with business matters."

"Brandon, what do you mean by 'bother'? This concerns her too. Do you really think she can stay out of it?" Valarie shot back.

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Drake's ultimate target was Nyla. If Prospectus Technology fell, no one could protect her or Mason.

The companies that had sided with Drake acted out of self-interest, but they now regretted their decisions. Damon could gain significant strength by reestablishing cooperation with them.

Of course, Valarie had her own motives. She wanted to repay Summer Coates for saving her life and hoped to restore their collaboration.

"Whether or not she can stay out of it, talking to her won't help. Stop dragging her into this," Brandon said.

"Brandon, who are you to order me around?" Valarie retorted.

Pinching the bridge of his nose in frustration, Brandon replied, "Can you stop being unreasonable? I'm not threatening you. I'm reminding you. Don't forget-the Weir Group avoided bankruptcy only because of my uncle."

Valarie laughed coldly. "You're right. He did save the Weir Group, and I'm grateful. But that doesn't mean he can interfere in everything I do."

Without giving him a chance to respond, she hung up.

When Brandon tried calling again, he found she had blocked him.

Taking a deep breath, he set his phone aside and headed back to the meeting.

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Still angry, Valarie blocked Brandon on every platform. Just as she prepared to start her car, her phone rang again.

Seeing it was Summer, she suppressed her irritation and answered.

"Valarie, how did it go? Did Ms. Kinsey agree to help?" Summer asked.

Valarie was silent for a moment before replying softly, "Summer, I'm sorry. I don't think I can help you anymore."

Damon already knew she had approached Nyla. Judging by his reaction, he wasn't likely to reconsider working with those companies.

There was a pause before Summer's disappointed voice came through "It's okay. I'm already grateful you tried. I ask my dad to figure something else out. Let's meet for dinner soon."

"Dinner can wait. I didn't really help you. Focus on your family's issues for now," Valarie replied.

"Alright. Once things settle down, I'll treat you to a meal," Summer said.

"Deal." After hanging up, Valarie sighed and drove off.

That evening, Damon returned home.

During dinner, Nyla hesitated before asking what he thought about her earlier suggestion.

Damon raised an eyebrow. "Nyla, no work talk during meals."

"As your wife, I'm asking out of concern for your work. It's not just business," Nyla countered.

Hearing that, Damon couldn't help but laugh. "Alright, then. Let me report to my wife. I've decided.

follow your advice and work

them again."

Nyla frowned. "Damon, I hope you've carefully thought this through and made the

best decision for the company, not just to appease me."

"I understand. My decision is based on the company's interests. Even if you hadn't called me, I would've chosen to work with them again," he answered.

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Hearing Damon's response, Nyla finally felt relieved. "That's good to hear."

"Let's eat," Damon said.

"Okay." Nyla picked up her utensils, ready to grab some food when her phone suddenly rang.

Seeing Alexander's name on the screen, her expression shifted slightly. She set her utensils down and answered.

As soon as the call connected, Alexander's voice came through. "Nyla, your mom's flight lands in two hours. I'm heading to the airport to pick her up. Do you want to come along?"

Nyla clutched her phone, her breathing growing heavier. It took her a few seconds to respond. "No, I'm busy tonight. Anything else?"

"How about tomorrow? Can we meet somewhere? She really wants to see you," Alexander asked.

"We'll see," she said hurriedly, then ended the call.

Noticing her pale expression, Damon took her hand and said softly, "If you don't want to see her, then don't. You don't have to force yourself."

Taking a deep breath, Nyla shook her head. "No, I want to see her. I just... I'm not ready yet."

Drake was already enough of a threat for Damon to handle. If the Nixons got involved, things would only become harder for him.

She needed to meet them and figure out their intentions.

"No matter what you decide, I'll support you," Damon reassured her.

After dinner, Damon went to his study to work. Nyla stayed behind to play with Mason, but her mind kept drifting back to the phone call.

Several times, Mason had to call her repeatedly before she noticed.

Finally, Mason said with a hint of exasperation, "Mommy, if you're tired, you should rest. I can play by myself."

Snapping out of it, Nyla looked at Mason apologetically. "I'm sorry, Buddy. I'll play with you tomorrow, okay?"

"Okay. Go rest, Mommy," Mason replied.

Back in her room, Nyla showered and got ready for bed, but sleep wouldn't come. She sat up, grabbed her phone, and started reading a book to pass the time.

After a while, a message from Alexander popped up.

When she opened it, she saw a

picture of Emerald at the airport. She was wearing a fur coat over a

vel

V-neck dress, her skin fair and radiant. A pair of oversized sunglasses hid most of her face. Stylish and elegant, she looked like she was in her early 30s.

This wasn't the warm, humble mother Nyla remembered.

Alexander followed up with a voice message: "Nyla, I picked up your mom. She's upset you didn't come. She wants to see you tomorrow. Let me know what time works for you."

Gripping her phone tightly, Nyla took a long time to reply.

Nyla: [I understand. I'm busy tomorrow morning. Let's plan for the afternoon. You pick the place.]

Although she hadn't seen her

mother in years, she felt no excitement, only distance. After all, the woman who had once loved her and given her everything wasn't the same anymore.

In Alexander's car, Emerald was already complaining. "You've been in Saintornia for so long, and you still haven't brought her back. How are you handling this?"

Alexander glanced at her and muttered, "Aunt Emerald, she's a person, not an object. I can't just take her away without asking if she's willing."

"It doesn't matter what she wants. What matters is that I need her in Meristate," Emerald stated.

Her tone was commanding, accustomed to control. How others felt had never been a concern for her.

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"If you force her, she'll resist even more. And don't forget, she has unresolved feelings about the past," Alexander reminded her.

Emerald's face darkened. "What does she have to resent? If it weren't for what happened back then, she wouldn't even exist. She should be grateful I brought her into this world!"

Alexander frowned. "If you want her to follow you to Meristate, you'll need to tone it down. She's not like Brian and Delia, who grew up with you."

"Fine. I'll meet her tomorrow and see," Emerald replied.

After divorcing Harrison and moving abroad, Emerald had initially thought about Nyla often. But over time, as her business grew and she had Brian and Delia, her thoughts of her eldest daughter faded.

Now, she only cared about Nyla because the Nixons needed her as a successor. Otherwise, she might never have thought about her again.

Emerald knew she had wronged Nyla, but she had gone through so much over the years. Besides, she had a son and a daughter who listened. She no longer had any affection or feelings toward Nyla.

To her, Nyla was nothing more than a mistake from her youth.

Staring out at the night sky, Emerald murmured, "I never thought I'd be back here."

Alexander said nothing.

When they arrived at the hotel, Alexander finally spoke. "Aunt Emerald, I'm warning you- Nyla's attitude toward you is... complicated. Tomorrow's meeting might not go well. Be prepared."

Emerald waved dismissively. "I know. Just make sure to pick me up tomorrow. I'm busy, so keep it close to the hotel."

With that, she strode into the hotel without a second glance.

Watching her go, Alexander sighed and drove away.

The next morning, as Nyla dropped Mason off at preschool, Alexander called. "Nyla, do you have time now?"

I'd like to meet with you

Switching the phone to her left hand, Nyla waved goodbye to Mason with the other. "If it's not urgent, let's just meet this afternoon."

"Okay, but just so you know, your mom's personality might be a bit overbearing. If she says something upsetting, try not to take it to heart," Alexander cautioned.

Nyla chuckled. He was already cautioning her. "Got it. Don't worry."

"Alright, see you at 2:00 p.m.," Alexander said.

"See you." After hanging up, Nyla got in her car and headed back to the villa.

At Prospectus Technology's underground garage...

Damon had just gotten out of his car when several men surrounded him.

"Mr. Sumner, please, give us another chance. We know we were wrong."

"Yes, Mr. Sumner. We've known each other for years. Surely, you wouldn't let our companies go bankrupt like this?"

"We'll do anything if you're willing to forgive us!"

Damon's expression was cold and

unreadable When Prospectus Technology was struggling, I came to you for help, and none of you lifted @finger. Now you want me to believe you won't betray me again?"

The men exchanged glances, sensing a glimmer of hope.

"Mr. Sumner, just tell us what you want. If saving my company means giving you my life, I'll do it!"