

Trading My Ex for His Uncle

Chapter 301

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As they walked into the living room, Damon broke the silence. "Why did you accept the money instead of insisting on a public apology?"

Nyla replied, "Even if she apologized, it wouldn't be sincere. Clark managed to persuade her to apologize privately because he doesn't want this to go public. If I had kept insisting, it would have only backfired." Damon studied her. "So, your goal was always just the money?"

Nyla nodded. "Yes. If I had asked for the money myself, Clark might have accused me of extortion through his lawyers."

Damon fell silent, his gaze distant as he pondered this. When he didn't speak again, Nyla turned to head

back to her room.

After a few steps, Damon's voice, tinged with resignation, came from behind her. "Nyla, if you just wanted the money, you didn't have to scheme like that. You could have told me directly. I could have helped you." Nyla paused and looked back at him, her eyes filled with an unreadable emotion. "I'm scheming against Clark. He's your family. Don't you feel uncomfortable about that?"

She had deliberately agreed to Clark's terms before Damon to make him aware of her calculations. against Clark.

If Damon couldn't accept it, it would be better to part ways before she fell deeply in love with him.

Damon frowned, his gaze intense. "Do you think I'm someone who can't discern right from wrong?"

Nyla bit her lip. "I don't think that. It's just that, ultimately, Clark is your family..."

"You are the one I care about. Never mind that Clark was at fault. Even if it were your mistake, I would still stand by you," Damon declared.

Seeing his serious expression, Nyla blinked, her heart overwhelmed. She looked down and smiled bitterly. "But... you might one day find that I'm not worth this."

"That day will never come," Damon said as he moved closer, leaning in to look her in the eyes. "I care about you, so whatever I do for you, I won't regret it. It's not about whether it's worth it because it's what I choose to do." Nyla's hands tightened subconsciously at her sides, and she instinctively looked away, unable to meet his intense gaze.

"Nyla, why can't you be a little braver?" Damon asked.

He wasn't like Clark. Once he decided on her, he wouldn't look at another woman.

Nyla closed her eyes, feeling a pang of sorrow.

She wanted to be brave and love Damon wholeheartedly, but she had outgrown the reckless optimism of youth. She no longer believed that love could overcome all obstacles.

To her, love had become something she dared not hope for.

Despite this, Damon's words stirred a desire within her a longing to love someone fully again. Chapter 301

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Seeing her so distressed and lost, Damon didn't want to pressure her any further. He pulled her into his embrace. "It's okay if you can't now. I can wait."

Nyla wrapped her arms around him, her voice hushed and rough. "I'm sorry."

Although she no longer loved Clark, the pain from his betrayal still lingered. She was afraid to open her heart again, fearing more hurt.

"I'm not blaming you. It's not your fault. I just didn't do well enough," Damon said.

Nyla shook her head, tears almost falling. "No, you've done well."

The truth was, she was too afraid and hesitant. She feared getting hurt again and worried that Damon would discover she was no different from other women.

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Damon patted her head and said softly, "If I haven't earned your complete trust, then I still haven't done well enough."

Nyla looked up at him, about to speak, when his phone suddenly rang.

"Did you change your ringtone?" she asked, noticing that Damon's phone sounded different from usual.

Damon didn't answer. He picked up his phone and walked aside to take the call.

For some reason, Nyla felt a wave of unease wash over her, and she couldn't help but frown.

Soon, Damon ended the call and returned to her.

"I have to go out for a bit. You should go to sleep," he said.

He turned to leave, but Nyla instinctively grabbed his hand. "Is it something important? Can you stay and keep me company? I..."

She struggled to find a reason to keep him around.

Was it just her inexplicable anxiety?

The reason seemed a bit absurd even to her.

Damon's gaze softened, and he nodded. "If you're scared, I can have the driver pick up Valarie to keep you company."

Nyla opened her mouth, then slowly shook her head. "No, it's fine. Just come back as soon as you can."

Noticing something was wrong with her, Damon suddenly hugged her tightly, as if trying to her.

"Don't overthink it. Get some rest," he coaxed.

"Okay," Nyla replied.

Damon didn't linger and quickly left.

It wasn't until his figure disappeared through the door that Nyla bit her lip and looked away.

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The new ringtone had made her unaccountably uneasy. Damon's previous ringtone had been the default one from his phone, but tonight it was a piano piece. Usually, only someone important would have a special ringtone.

Nyla took a deep breath, trying to

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push her thoughts aside. She patted her face and turned on the TV,

searching for a drama toate

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time.

Nyla waited until after midnight, but Damon still hadn't returned. Eventually, she fell asleep on the sofa.

She woke up again around 6:00 a.m.

As she sat up, she noticed the blanket covering her and wondered whether Damon had come back.

As she was pondering this, a maid approached. "Ms. Jayston, you're awake?"

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Nyla nodded. "Where's Damon?"

"He didn't come back last night," the maid replied.

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Nyla's eyes flickered with disappointment. She forced a smile and asked, "So, did you put the blanket on me?"

The maid nodded. "Yes. I saw the living room light was on when I got up in the middle of the night. I saw you sleeping on the sofa and didn't want to wake you. I was worried you might catch a cold, so I covered you with a blanket." Nyla lowered her eyes, her voice a bit downcast. "I see. Thank you."

"It was no trouble," the maid said.

Nyla went upstairs to freshen up, feeling unsettled.

After a quick breakfast, she drove to the office.

Just as she arrived downstairs, she received a call from William.

Knowing she had agreed to settle, William said, "Got it. I'll handle the follow-up."

"Thank you," Nyla replied.

After hanging up, she held her phone, debating whether to call Damon.

She hesitated momentarily before dialing his number.

However, the call went unanswered and eventually ended automatically. She tried a couple more times.

without success and decided not to try further.

It wasn't until noon that Damon returned her call. "Nyla, did you call me this morning? Is something wrong?"

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Nyla looked down and said slowly, "It's nothing. I just wanted to check on how things are going since you didn't come back last night."

There was a brief pause on the other end before Damon's deep voice came through. "I'm almost done with everything. I'll be back tonight."

Nyla subconsciously tightened her grip on the phone. "Alright, then let's have dinner together tonight."

"Okay, I'll see you then," Damon replied.

After ending the call, Damon looked at the woman sitting across from him with tears in her eyes. He said coldly, "Rebecca, it's over between us. I'll book a flight for you

shortly." Rebecca paused in wiping her tears and looked up at Damon. "I don't want to leave! I wasn't planning to leave when I came back to the country."

Damon's frown deepened, and his entire demeanor turned cold. "Do as you wish, but we're done."

"If you didn't care about me, you wouldn't have come to see me last night. You still love me, don't you?" Rebecca asked, her eyes filled with love and regret as she looked at Damon.

She believed that if she hadn't insisted on going abroad, she wouldn't have separated from him and that woman wouldn't have had a chance.

Now that she had what she wanted, she intended to win Damon back.

"I came last night just to make sure you wouldn't harm yourself. We once loved each other, but the moment you said we should break up, it was over," Damon explained.

"No!" Rebecca cried as she threw herself into Damon's arms, choking on her sobs. "We never truly ended. I just wanted to become a better person, someone worthy of you. You knew that too. And when I asked you to wait, you didn't refuse, did you?" Damon pushed her away, his expression cold. "It's all in the past."

With that, he turned and walked away.

Rebecca jumped up and ran after him, wrapping her arms around his waist and crying out, "Damon, don't go!"

Damon looked down at the arms wrapped around his waist, his emotions churning.

Just as he was about to push Rebecca away, her next words stopped him in his tracks.

In the evening, Nyla returned to the villa and was surprised to find that Damon still hadn't come back. She was about to call him but hesitated, recalling that he had said he'd be back tonight.

In the end, she put her phone down.

A maid approached and said, "Ms. Jayston, dinner is ready."

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Nyla nodded. "Alright, Damon will be back tonight. We'll wait for him to have dinner."

"Understood," the maid replied.

They waited until after 8:00 p.m.

Nyla's phone suddenly vibrated, and her eyes lit up. She quickly picked it up, but her excitement faded when she saw that the caller wasn't Damon.

As soon as she answered, Valarie's

voice came through. "Nyla, I saw Damon tonight. He was having dinner at a couple's restaurant with another woman."

Nyla's heart sank. She bit her lip. "Are you sure you didn't mistake someone else for him?"

Valarie sighed. "I took a photo. I'll send it to you shortly. Once you see it, you'll know for sure if it was him."

After hanging up, Valarie quickly sent the photo.

Nyla's hands trembled as she opened it.

She recognized Damon in the picture, and her knuckles turned white from gripping the phone. She could no longer deceive herself.

The unease she had felt after he left

night

the ore had solidified into a

harsh reality. Her heart felt like t

was being squeezed, and her breathing grew heavier.

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If they hadn't been at a couple's restaurant, sitting on the same side of the table, and if Damon hadn't been serving her food, Nyla might have convinced herself that the woman was merely a business partner of Prospectus Technology. She p

put down her phone and lowered her head, her expression somber.

The moment she saw the photo, she had the urge to call Damon and confront him, but she managed to

calm herself at the last moment.

Nyla was merely using Damon. Even if he was involved with another woman, what right did she have to question him?

After all, she hadn't planned on being with him forever, had she?

Her phone buzzed again, with Valarie sending several more messages.

Valarie: [I looked into it. The woman's name is Rebecca Austen, Damon's first love. After receiving a full scholarship, she went abroad, and they lost touch.]

Valarie: [Not many people knew about their relationship back then. After she went abroad, no one dared to mention her in front of Damon. If I hadn't investigated, I wouldn't have known he had a past relationship.] Valarie: [Nyla, if Damon really did something wrong to you, what are you going to do?]

As Nyla read Valarie's messages, her face grew paler. Even after all these years, Damon had set a special ringtone for Rebecca, indicating that she was still important to him.

Nyla closed her eyes, trying to push away the troubling thoughts. It was a relief she hadn't fallen for Damon. Otherwise, this would be even more painful.

She stood up and headed back to her room.

The maid hurried over. "Ms. Jayston, since Mr. Sumner hasn't returned yet, would you like to have a bite

to eat first?"

"No, just clear away the food. He won't be coming back tonight," Nyla replied.

The maid was momentarily stunned. By the time she reacted, Nyla had already started up the stairs.

Back in her bedroom, Nyla lay on her bed, contemplating her next move. If Damon planned to rekindle his relationship with Rebecca, he would likely end things with her first. While she was lost in thought, her phone suddenly rang

Upon seeing Damon's name, her expression dimmed. It took her a moment to answer.

"Nyla, I'm sorry, I haven't finished dealing with things yet. I won't be able to come back anytime soon," Damon said.

"Okay," Nyla replied curtly.

Noticing the chill in her tone, Damon hesitated and asked, "Did something happen?"

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Nyla wanted to retort that he should know better than she did what was happening, but she held her

tongue.

"It's nothing. I'm just a bit tired. Carry on with your work. I need to rest," she said.

Without giving Damon a chance to respond, she ended the call.

Damon's expression darkened as he heard the busy tone. His grip on the phone tightened as he stood at the restaurant entrance. When Rebecca emerged from the restroom, she noticed Damon staring at his phone with a sullen look. She frowned.

Since he had come to see her the night before, she had felt he was distracted. Even when he

he seemed absent-minded

Upon recalling what Clark had said before she returned, a cold resolve flashed in her eyes. Damon was hers alone, and she wouldn't let anyone take him away!

She approached him and asked sweetly, "Damon, what are you looking at?"

Damon put away his phone and looked at her with a neutral expression. "Nothing. I'll take you back."

On the way back, Rebecca made several attempts to start a conversation, hoping to bridge the gap between them.

However, Damon's attitude remained distant, lacking the warmth and consideration he had previously shown. When they reached her hotel, she turned to him and asked, "Do you want to come up and hang out for a while?"

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Between adults, the meaning of such a statement was often implied,

Damon was indifferent. "It's too late to go up now. Get some
e rest.

Rebecca was a bit disappointed but forced a smile. "Alright. Be safe going back."

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When Damon returned to the villa, it was already past 10:00 p.m.

After changing his shoes and entering the living room, the maid approached him.

"Mr. Sumner, Ms. Jayston waited a long time for you to return for dinner. In the end, she went upstairs without eating." she reported.

"Okay, I understand. You can go rest," Damon replied.

"Alright," the maid said and left.

Damon rolled up his sleeves and went to the kitchen to prepare a plate of sandwiches, which he took upstairs.

When Nyla heard the knock on the door, she assumed it was the maid and got up to answer it. Seeing the tall, familiar figure at the door, she was momentarily stunned and almost shut the door. Damon used his foot to block the door, looking apologetic. "Nyla, I'm sorry I came back so late." Nyla looked at him and saw no sign of guilt on his face, which only made her more disappointed. Did men who had wronged their girlfriends or wives always act as if nothing had happened? She looked down and replied coldly, "It's fine. I don't mind. I need to rest,"

"I heard you didn't have dinner tonight, so I made you some sandwiches," Damon offered.

"No need, I'm not hungry," Nyla declined.

"Even if you're not hungry, you should eat a little," Damon insisted.

Nyla looked up at him, struggling to keep her composure. She couldn't resist asking, "Can+ask who were talking to on the phone last night?"

As soon as she finished speaking, she noticed Damon's eyes widen slightly.

"Why the sudden question?" he asked.

"I'm just curious," she replied.

"A business partner," he said.

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Seeing him lying with a straight face, Nyla briefly considered showing him the photo Valarie had sent and asking why a business partner would need him to spend an entire day with her at a couples' restaurant and even serve her food. "Alright, I understand. If there's nothing else, I need to rest," she said firmly.

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"Eat something first..." Damon began.

Before he could finish, Nyla interrupted, "I'm not hungry and

eat.

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Yoad a long day at work. Can

please leave me alone for a bit?"

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Noting her impatient gaze, Damon fell silent for a moment before finally conceding. "Alright. If you get hungry later, just let me know."

"Sure." Nyla gave a perfunctory nod and closed the door.

The next morning, while Damon was having breakfast, the maid informed him that Nyla had left for work early.

He frowned and asked, "When did she leave?"

"About an hour ago," the maid replied.

Damon fell silent, sensing that Nyla was deliberately avoiding him.

As he pondered this, his phone rang.

Seeing that it was Rebecca, he hesitated for a moment before answering.

"What's up?" he asked.

"Damon, I accidentally fell and now I'm at the hospital. Can you-

Damon interrupted with a frown, "Which hospital?"

"Pinnacle Hospital," Rebecca replied.

"I'll be there right away," Damon said.

By the time Damon arrived at the hospital, 30 minutes had passed.

Rebecca was sitting in the hospital corridor, looking at Damon with a mixture of grievance and pain. "It hurts so much!" she cried.

Damon glanced at her bandaged knee, his expression remaining indifferent. "I'll take you home." Seeing no sign of concern in his eyes, Rebecca instinctively tightened her

grip on his arm. "Okay," she said and reached out to Damon. "My leg hurts and I can't walk. Can you help me?"

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Damon stared at her blankly. "Rebecca, you never used to play these petty games."

Rebecca hesitated for a moment before slowly withdrawing her hand. She replied calmly, "You used to never refuse me."

"I told you, I have a girlfriend now," Damon stated firmly.

Rebecca looked up at him and asked, "Do you love her?"

Damon remained silent.

Rebecca felt a glimmer of confidence and said, "If you really loved her, you would admit it without hesitation."

Damon frowned. "Rebecca, I didn't admit it because I don't want to hurt you."

Rebecca's smile faltered. After a moment, she softly said, "It's fine if you love her. You'll fall in love with me again."

Damon wanted to tell her that he wouldn't fall for her again-that for him, they were long over. But seeing the sadness on her face, he couldn't bring himself to say it. "Let's go," he said, turning toward the hospital exit.

Rebecca caught up with him, trying to walk beside him as she used to. He stepped back slightly.

"Rebecca, while I've agreed to take care of you during this time, I hope you can keep your distance," Damon said, his tone cold.

The warmth that once filled his eyes was gone.

Rebecca looked at him with a bitter expression. "Have lost even the right to be close to you now?"

Damon didn't answer, his gaze detached.

Finally, Rebecca forced a bitter smile. "Alright, I understand."

After dropping Rebecca off at her place, Damon drove directly to the office.

As soon as he arrived on the top floor, Spencer approached him cautiously and said in a low voice, "Mr.

ner, your father is here.

He's in your office."

Damon's gaze hardened as he replied coldly, "Got it."

Upon entering the office, Damon found Richard sitting on the sofa..

Seeing Damon, Richard snorted. "Are you really planning to sever ties with us?"

Damon sat down across from him, his expression neutral. "You were the one who wanted to cut ties. I never said anything like that." 'Damn it! I said that in anger! Richard huffed.

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Damon looked at him steadily. "So, what brings you here today?"

Richard took a deep breath, his

softening slightly. Although Cyru

made some mistakes, he's still your brother. Are you really not going to help him?"

"You should know that I'm with Nyla now. I haven't helped her precisely because she's dealing with my brother," Damon replied. Richard's face darkened. "Are you really going to disregard your family just for a woman?!"

"She might be my wife in the future, and she will be my family too," Damon countered.

"Are you out of your mind?! If you really marry her, everyone in the city will laugh at the Sumners!" Richard growled.

"I don't care what others think. I won't let their opinions influence the decisions I make," Damon stated firmly.

Richard pointed at him, wanting to yell but finding himself at a loss for words. He had already exhausted all his arguments.

"You're hopeless!" he cried in frustration before storming out.

Since Damon was so unreasonable, Richard decided to approach Nyla instead.

Nyla was somewhat surprised that Richard had come to see her. After all, their last encounter at the Sumner residence had ended badly, and she had assumed he wouldn't lower himself to come to her.

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"Mr. Sumner, what brings you here?" Nyla asked.

Seeing Nyla's composed demeanor, Richard frowned, his tone condescending. "Name your price, as long as you agree to let Cyrus go."

Nyla remained calm. "And how much are you offering?"

"That depends on your demand. The incident happened so many years ago. Even if you send Cyrus to prison, I can still find a way to get him out. Stubbornness won't benefit you," Richard stated. Nyla stood up, her tone flat. "Since you've put it that way, there's no point in continuing this conversation." Richard's expression turned icy. "What do you mean by that?"

"I mean, I don't think we can come to an agreement. I have work to do, so I'll take my leave now." With that, Nyla turned and walked out.

Watching her leave, Richard felt his frustration reaching a boiling point. If she wouldn't accept his offer, he wouldn't hold back any longer.

He called one of his subordinates, gritting his teeth. "Investigate Harris Pharmaceuticals. I refuse to believe Harrison has never been involved in anything shady!" Back at the lab, Melody noticed Nyla's pale face and asked with concern, "Nyla, are you alright? Did something happen?"

Nyla shook her head. "It's nothing. Just focus on your work."

That evening, Nyla received a call from Gabriel.

"Are you free tonight? Let's have dinner together," he invited.

Surprised, Nyla paused for a moment before replying, "Sure, where are you? I'll book the restaurant."

Gabriel, who hadn't returned to Saintornia for years, was unfamiliar with the area. He didn't insist on choosing a place himself and gave Nyla the name of his hotel.

After hanging up, Nyla made a reservation and pondered why Gabriel had suddenly returned to the city. Given his career prospects abroad, it seemed he would have better opportunities elsewhere. Unable to reach a clear conclusion, she decided to set the thought aside.

Later, as Nyla was about to leave work, she received a text from Damon asking her to wait for him so they could go home together.

Nyla stared at the text for a moment before replying that she had plans for dinner.

Moments later, Damon called her directly. "Who are you having dinner with?"

"A friend," she replied.

Damon frowned. He knew Nyla's close friend in the city was likely Valorie. If it were her, Nyla would have

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"Long time no see," Nyla greeted.

Gabriel approached her with a smile. "Yeah, it's been a while."

It had been five to six years since they last met, and they hadn't kept in touch much, so Nyla felt a bit awkward.

"Let's head inside," she said.

Once they were seated and had ordered their food, Nyla turned to Gabriel and asked, "What made you decide to return and

develop your career locally? Wren mentioned that your salary abroad was quite high. If you had stayed a few more years, you could probably have settled down there."

Gabriel was momentarily distracted by seeing her face up close again, but he quickly composed himself. "I've gotten used to the food here."

Nyla looked surprised and seemed skeptical. "Is it really that simple?"

"Yeah," Gabriel replied.

"Alright, so have you already found a job, or are you planning to take some time off?" she asked.

Gabriel took a sip of his water, lightly tapping the glass, and said, "Actually, I had an interview with Prospectus Technology today."

Nyla almost spat out her drink, her eyes widening with disbelief. "You're joining Prospectus Technology?" "What's wrong with that?" Gabriel asked.

Nyla quickly shook her head. "It's just that Prospectus Technology is such a large conglomerate with many industries. I thought, given your background, you'd prefer to work for a company that focuses on drug research or pharmaceuticals."

Before Harris Pharmaceuticals went bankrupt, Harrison had planned for Nyla to focus on drug research and eventually take over the company.

Gabriel, according to Wren, also had a passion for drug research, and both he and Nyla had applied to universities together.

Harrison had initially planned to allocate part of the shares to Gabriel so he could assist Nyla in the company, but Gabriel had declined. Instead, he had applied for a full scholarship to study abroad during his junior year and had returned only twice over the years. Moreover, after going abroad, he had become distant.

Nyla wondered if she had done

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something to offend him. After starting her relationship with Clark, she focused more on him and lost touch with Gabriel.

"Originally Prospectus Technology

wasn't on my radar, but since theret

invited

me for an interview, I decided

to check it out," Gabriel explained.

Nyla couldn't help but feel a bit nostalgic. "It seems that a talented person is always in demand wherever they go."

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Gabriel's gaze remained cool as he looked at her. "Enough about me. How about you? How have you been lately?"

Nyla gave a bittersweet smile. "Wren must have told you about my divorce. My life's a bit of a mess right

now."

Gabriel paused for a moment, his voice softening. "It's not your fault. As long as you follow what you believe is right, I support you." Nyla looked up at him, a mix of disbelief and gratitude in her eyes.

Since her divorce from Clark and Cyrus' arrest, the Surriners and her family had pressured her to give up, urging her to stop.

She hadn't expected Gabriel to support her.

"Aren't you worried about being dragged into my problems?" she asked.

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"What you're doing is right. Why should be worried? Besides, if the Sumners want to make a move

against me, they'll have to think

twice," Gabriel said.

Seeing his calm demeanor and lack of fear toward the Sumners, Nyla wondered if he was aware of how powerful they were in the city.

Given the Sumners' capabilities, dealing with them would be as easy as squashing an ant.

As Nyla was about to respond, her gaze suddenly froze as she looked past Gabriel toward the restaurant

entrance.

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Damon approached them with a smile, but Nyla could sense his bad mood.

Gabriel followed her gaze and noticed Damon, his eyes narrowing slightly as he perceived the hostility. Damon walked directly to Nyla and sat down beside her. With a smile, he said, "Nyla, I didn't know you were having dinner with your brother, I would've joined you if I had. Gabriel looked at Nyla, his expression questioning. 'This is?'"

Feeling the weight of both men's gazes, Nyla frowned.

Just as she was about to introduce them, Damon interjected with a smile, "Mr. Hackett, it's nice to meet you. I'm Damon Sumner, Nyla's boyfriend and the CEO of Prospectus Technology."

Gabriel's eyes flickered as he shook hands with Damon. "Hello, I'm Gabriel Hackett."

In that brief exchange, only the two men understood the underlying tension.

Nyla asked Damon, "What are you doing here?"

Damon released Gabriel's hand and turned to her. "What's wrong? Can't I join you? It seems like you didn't want me here."

Nyla replied, "I thought you might be busy."

"No matter how busy I am, I can always find time to have dinner with your family, Damon said.

Gabriel's grip on the table tightened as Damon's words reminded him of his role as Nyla's stepbrother. His gaze toward Damon began to show a hint of hostility.

He had hoped that with Nyla's divorce from Clark, he might have a chance. It now seemed that Damon had beaten him to it.

"Then have a look at what you want. We just ordered for two," Nyla said.

Damon handed her the menu with a smile. "You pick. You know what I like."

Since they hadn't been together long, Nyla wasn't sure of his preferences. She didn't want to embarrass him in front of Gabriel either, so she took the menu and ordered a few dishes. As she was ordering, the two men began talking, leaving her little chance to join in.

After finishing dinner, Damon

remained enthusiastic and said, "Mr. Hackett, it was a pleasure meeting you tonight. I enjoyed our conversation and hope we can have another dinner together soon."

Gabriel glanced at Nyla, who had her head down, and remarked, "We'll have another chance."

Damon took Nyla's hand and smiled. "Let us give you a ride back to the hotel."

"No need. My friend is coming to pick me up, and I have some things to do later," Gabriel declined. Damon nodded. "Alright. We'll head back then. See you +25 BONUS

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Gabriel looked at Nyla with a softer expression. "I'm going to visit your father tomorrow. Would you like to come along?"

"No, I'll go another time," Nyla replied.

"Okay, be safe on your way back," Gabriel said.

"You too," Nyla said.

Once they were out of Gabriel's sight, Nyla pulled her hand away from Damon and walked directly to her

car.

As she reached the vehicle, Damon stopped her. "Are you upset?"

Nyla looked up at him, her expression tinged with anger. "Shouldn't I be? Why did you suddenly show up tonight?"

Damon's smile faded slightly. "Do you not want me to meet Gabriel?"

"That's not the point," Nyla said.

"What do you mean? If you didn't

want me to come, it means you didn't want to introduce me to your family or acknowledge my status, right?" Damon insisted.

Facing his somewhat aggressive gaze, Nyla sneered. "If an ex can make you disappear for a whole day, how could I possibly introduce you to my family or acknowledge you?"

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Damon's expression momentarily froze. "When did you find out?"

Nyla's tone was icy. "When you went to a couples' restaurant with her for dinner."

The two fell into silence, and the only sound was their breathing.

After a long pause, seeing that he wasn't going to speak. Nyla turned to open the car door, ready to leave.

Suddenly, Damon grabbed her wrist. "Nyla, not telling you was my mistake. I'm sorry."

Nyla glanced back at him. His features were blurred by the dim night, making it hard to read his expression. She pulled her hand away. "If you want to get back with her, I can move out tonight."

Damon frowned. "I don't want to get back with her. I didn't tell you because I was afraid you'd misunderstand. I'm very clear that the person I care about now is you."

Nyla found his words somewhat amusing

and looked at him with anger. "Afraid of me misunderstanding, so you spent an entire day with your ex? Afraid of me misunderstanding, so you made me wait for dinner while you went to a couples' restaurant with her? I'd like to know, what woman wouldn't misunderstand t

As Nyla spoke, her eyes grew red. She had assumed she had no expectations and could walk away at any time, but now she realized she had already fallen for him.

It hurt deeply to see him entangled with his ex.

Damon's face grew pained, his eyes filled with guilt. "I'm sorry, but I can assure you, I never intended to get back with her."

Nyla looked up with tearful eyes and said slowly, "If you never intended to get back with her, can you completely cut ties with her?"

Damon's expression froze.

Nyla wasn't surprised and laughed bitterly. "If you can't, then let's end it here."

She had originally planned to use Damon to deter the Sumners from targeting her, but now she realized that doing so also meant getting hurt. She didn't want to experience the pain of hopeful anticipation turning into disappointment again.

"Nyla, I absolutely won't get back with her, but I can't cut ties with her right now, Can you give me some time?" Damon pleaded.

"Why not?" Nyla demanded.

"I can't tell you why right now. Please, give me some time," Damon insisted.

Nyla's disappointment was evident, her gaze growing cold. "You know how Clark betrayed me, and you should understand that what hate most is a man involved with another woman.

Yet now, not only are you entangled with Rebecca, but you also expect me to give you time. Do you think that's reasonable?*

Seeing Damon's hesitant expression, Nyla lowered her gaze. "Let's leave it at that. I'll take a leave

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tomorrow to move my things."

With that, she pushed past him and got into her car, driving away.

Later, Nyla checked into a hotel, planning to stay there for a few days and search for a new place over the weekend. With some money on hand, she considered finding a well secured neighborhood to avoid

any further disturbances.

The next morning, Nyla took a leave from work and went straight to Damon's villa. To her surprise, she found him sitting on the living room sofa, going through documents. Nyla frowned slightly and said, "I'm here to collect my things."

With that, she headed upstairs.

As she was packing, Damon entered the room and said softly, "Nyla, let's talk."

"We already covered the things we needed to talk about last night," Nyla replied.

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As Nyla spoke, she packed her things quickly, preparing to leave.

Damon stopped her. "Are you really leaving?"

"If I don't leave now, am I supposed to wait until you get back together with Rebecca and then get kicked out? I'm not that blind or foolish," Nyla countered. "I won't get back with her," Damon repeated.

Nyla looked up at him, her expression serious. "Do you know? Clark used to tell me he wouldn't continue to be entangled with Jordyn, and look what happened.

A trace of coldness flickered across Damon's face, and his voice grew somber. "I'm not like him."

"What's the difference? You're both involved with other women and seem to lie. I'm not going through this again," Nyla stated flatly.

Damon was at a loss for words. His actions had certainly made her feel insecure.

"Nyla, give me three months. I'll resolve this issue," he promised.

Nyla pushed him aside. "I won't wait for you."

With that, she left.

It wasn't until she was outside the villa that the tears began to fall. She wiped them away, forced herself to pull it together, and drove off after putting her suitcase in the car. After Nyla left, Damon spent the entire afternoon in his study.

When dinner time came, a nervous maid knocked on the door. "Mr. Sumner, it's time for dinner.

"I'm not hungry," Damon replied.

There was a brief silence before the maid's voice came again. "Even if you're not hungry, you should eat something. Ms. Jayston will come back once she's +25 BONUS

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thought things through."

Although the maid said this, she knew that Nyla would never return as long as Damon remained entangled with Rebecca.

When no response came from the room,

food the maid sighed. "I've left th the warmer. If you get that , you can help your get 14

As her footsteps faded away,

Damon stared at the documents in his hand for several minutes but couldn't focus on a single word. His mind was occupied by the image of Nyla leaving resolutely.

Frustrated, he tossed the documents onto the table, grabbed his car keys, and left.

At the club...

Damon downed drink after drink, his dark expression creating a frightening aura around him.

"Damon, what's wrong? Heartbroken?" Nathaniel teased.

Damon glared at him, noting his apparent delight. "Can't you keep your mouth shut?"

Realizing Damon was genuinely angry, Nathaniel quickly wiped the smirk off his face. "Did I hit the nail on the head?"

Damon didn't respond, and the atmosphere in the room grew even heavier.

Just as Nathaniel was trying to think of something to lighten the mood, Damon's phone rang.

At the sound of the ringtone, Nathaniel's expression changed. He abruptly looked up at Damon.

Damon hung up with a neutral expression, but the caller tried again. As he prepared to hang up once more, Nathaniel snatched the phone from him, his hand tightening when he saw the name on the screen.

"Rebecca... Why is she contacting you all of a sudden?" Nathaniel asked.

Since leaving the country, Rebecca had cut off all contact with them. Nathaniel

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had tried to find her but was told not to contact her again, as she hadn't wanted to see anyone related to Damon.

Damon's expression remained indifferent. "She's back in the country."

Nathaniel's eyes widened in shock. "When did this happen? Why didn't you tell me?!"

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"A few days ago," Damon replied.

Nathaniel quickly asked, "Where is she now?"

Noticing Nathaniel's agitation, Damon took his phone back, ended the call, and turned it off. With an indifferent expression, he provided the name of a hotel. Nathaniel immediately got up and left in a hurry, his steps slightly erratic.

Caleb looked at Damon, who remained expressionless. A hint of surprise flashed in his eyes. "You really don't have any feelings left for Rebecca?" Back in university, Damon had been aware that Nathaniel liked Rebecca and had always kept her close, not giving Nathaniel any chance to get near her. Could it really be that Damon had moved on so completely?

Damon took a sip of his drink and replied calmly, "The moment she left for abroad and proposed breaking up, there was no more chance for us.

Caleb couldn't help but laugh, shaking his head. "That's just like you."

He had expected Damon to be despondent when Rebecca left, but surprisingly, Damon had returned to his old self within three days, showing no signs of heartbreak.

Caleb and Nathaniel had both assumed he kept everything bottled up, but seeing him so nonchalant today, Caleb realized that Rebecca might not hold a candle to Nyla in his heart. "Are you serious about Nyla?" Caleb asked.

At the mention of Nyla, Damon paused, then downed his drink in one gulp.

Caleb, understanding the situation, raised an eyebrow. "You should know that being with her will be much harder than being with Rebecca."

Rebecca had only poor family conditions, and even then, Richard and Marie had opposed their relationship. Not to mention, Nyla not only had poor conditions but had also been married to Clark. Chapter 312

+25 BONUS

"Who I'm with is my own business. Others have no say in it," Damon stated.

Caleb was a bit startled. When Richard and Marie had made things difficult for Rebecca, Damon had defended her, but he hadn't been as resolute as he was now.

"Just make sure you're clear about what you want," Caleb advised.

Damon remained silent, his expression still grim.

Nathaniel arrived at Rebecca's hotel.

He had already discovered her room on the way, but once he

reached the lobby, he hesitated about whether to go up.

While he was contemplating, a sweet voice called out from nearby, "Nathaniel?"

Nathaniel stiffened and turned to see Rebecca standing a few steps away in a white dress. His eyes widened in disbelief. She was really back!

Seeing Nathaniel frozen in place, Rebecca walked up to him, her smile as pure and beautiful as it had been in university. "Why aren't you saying anything?" she asked.

As she approached, the subtle fragrance of her perfume enveloped him.

Nathaniel gathered his thoughts and

forced a

Sue to see you here. It's been Smile. "Rebecca, what an et

since we last met..."

Rebecca didn't comment on his

surprise. Instead, she softly said et

"Yes, after so many years abroad, it

was time to come back. There's no place like home."

Nathaniel paused before asking seriously, "Are you back because you want to get back together with Damon?"

"I originally thought about it, but since he already has a girlfriend, it seems impossible now," she replied.

Seeing the disappointment and sadness on her face, Nathaniel frowned. "With

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your two years of relationship with Damon, if you want to fight for him, it's not impossible to win him back."

"Really?" Rebecca looked at him with hopeful eyes. "Do you really think so?"

Nathaniel's heart was heavy, but he managed a smile. "Yes."

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"Will you help me then?" Rebecca asked.

Nathaniel regretted his words. He should have taken advantage of the opportunity instead of advising her to fight for Damon. Now, he was committed and had to stick to his promise. "If you need it," he replied.

Rebecca finally smiled. She was about to respond when Nathaniel's phone rang suddenly. Relieved, he quickly answered the call and stepped aside.

After finishing the call, he returned to Rebecca and said, "Rebecca, I'm sorry, but something urgent just came up. Let's exchange contact details and discuss this further next time." "Alright," Rebecca agreed.

They exchanged contact information, and Nathaniel left.

Rebecca watched him go with a smirk, her eyes narrowing slightly.

Nyla had anticipated trouble sleeping after leaving Damon's villa, but to her surprise, she fell asleep quickly once she returned to her hotel room.

She didn't dream all night and woke up early the next morning, around 6:00 a.m.

After washing up, tying her hair back, and applying light makeup, she slipped into a T-shirt and jeans and headed out for work.

Upon arriving at Prospectus Technology, she ran into Melody.

"Good morning, Nyla!" Melody greeted.

"Good morning," Nyla replied.

As they walked toward the office together, they didn't notice the black Maybach parked by the side of the road.

The rear window of the car lowered, revealing Damon's cold eyes fixed on Nyla.

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She walked toward the office with Melody chatting and smiling, looking radiant in her casual outfit. The simplicity of her T-shirt and jeans made her appear youthful as if she were a fresh college graduate.

After a night of drinking due to their breakup, Damon still had a splitting headache. Meanwhile, Nyla seemed unaffected and even looked better than she had the day before. Noticing the rising tension in the car, Spencer cautiously spoke up. "Mr. Sumner, the morning meeting is approaching."

Damon withdrew his gaze, his voice icy. "Let's go."

All day, the atmosphere in the CEO's office on the top floor of Prospectus Technology was heavy with tension.

Every secretary seemed on edge, dreading being called into Damon's office.

The product department manager walked out of Damon's office looking dejected after being reprimanded.

"Mr. Hogg, what's wrong with Mr. Sumner today? He seems to be in a terrible mood." Although he had been reprimanded before, it had never felt this oppressive. Spencer nodded. "Be prepared. Mr. Sumner might be in a bad mood for quite some time."

The product department manager was rendered speechless.

As Spencer was about to offer some words of comfort, Damon's voice came from the office. "Mr. Hogg, come in."

The manager gave Spencer a sympathetic look before quickly making his exit. He didn't want to risk being called back in for another scolding.

Spencer entered the office to find Damon going through some documents with a stern expression.

"Mr. Sumner, you wanted to see me?" he asked.

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"Yes. What's going on with the Solar Enterprise deal? Why hasn't it progressed?"

Damon demanded.

"I was planning to update you on

that at the afternoon meeting. This morning, contacted Solar

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Enterprise, and they were vague. Upon further investigation, I discovered they had already signed the contract with Mr. Clark the night before," Spencer explained.

Damon's eyes shifted from the documents to Spencer, intensifying the pressure on him. "So you're telling me that Clark stole

Prospectus Technology's client, and you only found out a day after the contract was signed?"

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Spencer lowered his head, hesitant to speak. The loss of the major deal was significant, and he was puzzled as to why the other party would risk offending Prospectus Technology by working with Clark's small company. Damon's eyes were filled with anger. "Go get the person in charge of this deal!"

"Understood, I'll go right away!" Spencer hurriedly left, eager not to be stopped by Damon. Search the FindNovel.net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Since breaking up with Nyla, Damon had become quite fearsome.

Near noon, Nyla and Melody went to the cafeteria for lunch.

Melody noticed something odd and couldn't help but ask, "Nyla, aren't you having lunch with Mr. Sumner?"

They had only recently gotten together, so it seemed strange that Nyla was acting as if nothing had changed. Just a few days ago, she would occasionally check her phone for messages, but today she hadn't looked at it at all. Nyla pursed her lips and replied calmly, "We've broken up."

"What?! You guys broke-" Melody quickly covered her mouth with her hand, her eyes wide with shock.

It wasn't until they had sat down with their food that she recovered from her surprise and leaned in to whisper, "How did you guys break up so suddenly? Did Mr. Sumner initiate it?"

Nyla picked up a piece of vegetable and said expressionlessly, "It doesn't matter who initiated it. Let's eat before the food gets cold."

Seeing that Nyla didn't want to elaborate, Melody suppressed her curiosity. She pretended to focus on her meal while speculating about the reason for their breakup.

Halfway through their lunch, an HR representative came into the cafeteria to find Nyla. "Nyla, this is your new colleague. He's responsible for another

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project, but his office is next to yours. Please get along well."

Nyla frowned when she saw the man standing next to HR. It was Gabriel.

"Why didn't you mention that you accepted Prospectus Technology's offer when we last had dinner?" Nyla asked.

Gabriel smiled. "I interviewed with several companies, but I felt Prospectus Technology was the best fit for me in the end."

Observing their interaction, the representative smiled and asked, "Oh, you two know each other?"

Gabriel nodded. "Yes."

"That's great. I won't introduce him

further. Nyla, I have other matters to attend to. His desk is right next to yours, so please show him to his office later," the representative requested.

"Alright," Nyla agreed.

After the representative left, Melody's inquisitive eyes darted between Nyla and Gabriel, a mischievous smile on her face. "Nyla, I didn't know you had such a handsome friend!"

Nyla glanced at her and replied without much enthusiasm, "This is my brother. Gabriel, this is Melody Sorley, my colleague."

Upon hearing Nyla introduce him as her brother, Gabriel smiled. "Ms. Sorley, nice to meet you. I'm Gabriel Hackett."

Melody quickly shook his hand and

said, "Nice to meet you too. I'm Melody. Since you're siblings, why do you have different last names? Is it because one of you takes after your father and the other after your mother?"

Gabriel's smile widened. "No. We come from a blended family."

Melody understood immediately and nodded. "Oh."

Nyla, not wanting to continue the topic, turned to Gabriel. "Have you had lunch yet?"

"Not yet. I'm not familiar with what's good here. Can you recommend

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something?" Gabriel asked.

Nyla thought for a moment and said, "I remember you don't like spicy food. There's probably something you might like upstairs." "Great," Gabriel said.

After Gabriel left, Melody whispered, "Nyla, your brother is so good-looking! If

he doesn't have a girlfriend, I'm definitely going to try to win him over!"

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Nyla turned and noticed Melody's starry-eyed expression, her surprise evident. She knew Gabriel was good-looking.

Back in high school, when people found out she was his sister, many girls had asked her to pass love letters to him.

Initially, Gabriel would just toss the letters in the trash with a scowl. Eventually, he became so fed up that he warned Nyla to stop collecting them or he would tell Harrison.

Nyla hadn't heard from Wren about any relationships he might have had while being abroad these years. Nyla shook her head. "I don't know about that. If you're curious, though, I can try to find out for you." Melody hugged Nyla excitedly. "Nyla, you're the best! If I end up with him, I'll definitely owe you one!" While they were talking, Gabriel returned with his food. He sat down next to Nyla and began eating quietly.

On the other side of the table, Melody gazed at him with starry eyes, almost drooling.

Noticing Melody's obvious infatuation, Nyla cleared her throat softly to remind her not to go overboard. Gabriel had always disliked fangirls, and she suspected he hadn't changed much. None of them noticed a tall figure walking into the dining area.

As soon as Damon entered, he spotted Nyla and Gabriel, who was beside her. His frown deepened, looking like it could crush a fly.

Spencer, following behind, felt the temperature in the room drop several degrees and shivered involuntarily.

As he wondered about the sudden chill, Damon's cold voice echoed. "Send a notice that from now on, no men and women are allowed to sit together in the dining hall."

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Spencer was taken aback. What kind of strange rule was that?

However, seeing Nyla and Gabriel chatting happy and then looking at Damon's dark face, he finally understood.

rule a wasn't just making a general

rule about men and women eating
together-he was clearly jealous!???

à was sitting with anothe
man.

"Mr. Sumner, the person next to Ms. Jayston is her stepbrother," Spencer informed.

Damon turned and shot him an icy glare. "Who she's sitting with is none of my business.
Stop talking"

Seeing Damon's stubborn

demeanor, Spencer managed to suppress a smile. He nodded and said, "Understood.
Gabriel is also a warug researcher at our

new

company, just so you know."

"Don't bother me with these small matters in the future," Damon retorted.

"Got it," Spencer replied

As Damon walked past Nyla, he ignored her completely and left quickly.

Although Nyla was smiling and talking to Gabriel, her grip on her cutlery tightened, her
knuckles turning white, as Damon passed by.

She lowered her gaze to her plate, completely losing her appetite. She

had hoped to remain indifferent?

upon seeing Damon again, but his presence stirred her emotions

Noticing her change in demeanor, Gabriel asked gently, "Why aren't you eating more?*

'T'm full," Nyla replied

"You're too thin. You should eat more," Gabriel advised.

Nyla frowned. "I'm really full."

She picked up her plate and stood up. "I need to get some fresh air. I'll wait for you outside."

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As Nyla was about to leave after clearing her plate, she suddenly found herself staring into a pair of deep, dark eyes.

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Nyla clenched her hands at her sides and looked down, pretending not to see Damon. As she walked past him, her heart raced, fearing he might do something to draw attention.

His gaze had been unsettling, after all.

It wasn't until she exited the dining hall that she felt the weight of his stare lift. With a sigh of relief, she frowned. They were no longer together, so why did he still look at her like that?

Taking a deep breath, she forced herself to stop thinking about it. They no longer had any connection, and it was best to treat future encounters as if they were strangers.

Soon, Melody and Gabriel left the dining hall and headed back to the lab building with Nyla.

Nyla showed Gabriel to his desk and briefly explained the storage of experimental drugs before retreating to her own space for a nap.

The afternoon passed quickly, and just before the end of the workday, Melody came over to Nyla and whispered, "Nyla, remember to ask your brother if he has a girlfriend! Whether I can find someone depends on you!" Nyla couldn't help but laugh and nodded. "Got it."

"Alright, I'm heading out now. Let me know if you find anything out," Melody chirped.

After Melody left, Nyla continued tidying up the lab equipment.

By the time she finished, it was already several minutes past the hour. As she turned to leave, she saw Gabriel standing by the door.

"What's up?" Nyla asked.

Gabriel smiled. "I need a favor."

Nyla looked curious. "What's the matter?"

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She had assumed Gabriel would keep a respectful distance even after returning to the country, but now he was asking her for help.

Gabriel sighed, looking a bit

frustrated. "My mother just asked

me to go on a blind date now that

I'm back. refused, but it didn't work. Could you pretend to be my

yel

turn

girlfriend tonight and help me down the person?"

Nyla was about to refuse but then considered that this might be a chance for Melody and Gabriel to interact. She said, "I have plans

tonight, so I can't help. but Monet

might be available. Let me check with her."

Gabriel's expression faltered for a moment, and he hesitated before speaking. "Is that okay? We just met today, and asking her to do this might be a bit much..."

"She's very helpful. I'll call her now," Nyla said.

Before Gabriel could object, she had already dialed Melody's number.

After hanging up, she looked at him and said, "She agreed. Did you drive today?" Gabriel nodded, "Yes."

"Great. Then you can pick her up and go to the blind date together," Nyla said.

Gabriel's gaze dimmed slightly as he replied, "Alright."

"Unless there's anything else, I'll head out now." With that, Nyla turned and left before he had a chance to respond. Watching her go, Gabriel smiled slowly. It was fine-he had plenty of time.

Not long after arriving home, Nyla received a call from Melody.

"Nyla, I feel like your brother was a bit cold to me. Does he dislike me?" Melody asked.

Nyla remembered that Gabriel had always been indifferent toward girls. "No, don't worry. It's just his personality."

Melody sighed in relief. "That's good. I was worried he might not like me."

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Hearing the anxiety in Melody's voice, Nyla couldn't help but smile. "Don't worry. If he really dislikes someone, he won't even speak to them."

Melody said, "He's my first crush, so naturally, I'm a bit anxious. I hope I didn't disturb you."

"No, don't worry. I'll try to create opportunities for you two to be alone," Nyla reassured her.

Melody was deeply touched. "Oh, Nyla, you're the best!"

After exchanging a few more comforting words, Nyla ended the call. She set her phone down and reflected on how even someone as carefree as Melody could feel insecure about matters of the heart. Upon thinking about her own recent breakup with Damon, Nyla's expression grew somber. She took a deep breath, forced herself to move on, and prepared for bed.

The next morning, as Nyla walked into the office, she felt the eyes of her colleagues on her.

Once she reached her office, Melody hurried over, her tone filled with anger." Nyla, did you break up with Mr. Sumner because of his ex?"

Nyla was taken aback. "How do you know about this?"

"I knew it!" Melody exclaimed indignantly. "Last night, someone took photos of him helping his ex into a car. Now everyone in the office is saying he dumped you!" Nyla was silent for a moment before quietly uttering, "Oh."

"You're just going to accept this? Aren't you angry about what they're saying? It's so infuriating!" Melody complained.

Seeing Melody's upset expression, Nyla found it somewhat endearing. She couldn't help but pinch her cheek, smiling. "It's alright, don't get too worked up.

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People will say what they want, and there's nothing we can do about it. Just ignore them."

"Don't you want to set the record straight?" Melody asked.

Nyla shook her head. "There's nothing to clarify. Whatever I say, they won't believe it and will only criticize me more. It's best to let it blow over." "Okay, I couldn't stay this calm. If I were you, I'd make a huge fuss," Melody

huffed.

Nyla laughed softly but chose not to comment further.

If the situation escalated, the only person who would end up embarrassed was her. People often only saw what they wanted to see, not the truth.

The atmosphere in the CEO's office

at Prospectus Technology was stifling as Damon learned that employees were gossiping about his breakup with Nyla, speculating it was because of Rebecca.

"These employees must have too much idle time!" Damon said, his voice icy.

Spencer, keeping his gaze lowered, replied cautiously, "Mr. Sumner, it's best to let this situation blow over. In a few days, people will stop talking about it."

"Make a statement. Announce that I am not getting back together with Rebecca and that Nyla ended the relationship, not the other way around. I want them to stop talking!" Damon ordered.

Spencer hesitated. "Mr. Sumner, if we issue a statement, it might just fuel more speculation."

"Let them speculate all they want. They'll only focus on how Nyla dumped me, not the other way around," Damon retorted.

He was adamant about not letting anyone speak ill of her.

Spencer couldn't help but think that if Damon cared this much, he should distance himself from Rebecca rather than appear in suggestive photographs,

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Noticing Spencer's silence, Damon frowned. "Is there something else?"

After a moment of hesitation, Spencer spoke up. "Mr. Sumner, I think you should reconsider. The rumors circulating in the company are just hearsay. You could issue a statement prohibiting discussions about your personal life, but there's no need to clarify your relationship with Ms. Austen."

If all the employees learned that Nyla had dumped Damon, it might cause an even bigger stir.

Damon was silent for a few seconds before replying in a deep voice, "Fine, we'll handle it your way."

Soon after, the CEO's office issued a statement banning employees from discussing Damon's personal life. Anyone caught doing so would be terminated. Nyla and Melody were busy with experiments all morning and didn't check their phones until lunchtime. It was then that Gabriel informed them of the situation

As Gabriel spoke, he kept a close eye on Nyla. When he saw that Nyla's expression remained calm and indifferent, he looked away, trying to appear casual. Melody was fuming "I really misjudged Mr. Sumner. I thought he was

someone reliable, but now it seems he's not. He must be getting back together with his ex. Otherwise, he wouldn't have issued a ban on discussing it instead of denying the rumors? Even Melody felt that Damon's statement was meant to protect Rebecca, let alone Nyla herself. She looked down at the documents on her desk, a hint of self-mockery in her eyes. At least she hadn't deluded herself into thinking Damon would choose her. Otherwise, she'd really be a joke now.

Upon seeing Melody's reaction, Gabriel's gaze softened. "Melody, let's not talk

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about this anymore."

Under Gabriel's gentle gaze, Melody's face flushed red. She quickly averted her eyes and stammered, "O-Okay..."

As the office fell silent, Nyla felt an unspoken tension. She took a deep breath and decided to step into the hallway for some fresh air.

As soon as she stepped out of the office, Gabriel followed her.

"Nyla, are you still having a hard time letting go?" Gabriel asked, standing beside her with concern in his eyes.

Nyla pursed her lips and shook her head, "No, it's just a bit stuffy in the office."

"Even if you're still struggling, that's alright. Feelings aren't something you can control. It takes time to overcome them," Gabriel said soothingly.

get

Nyla looked at Gabriel in surprise. "You weren't always the comforting type before."

She felt he had changed significantly since returning from abroad. The once sharp and distant young man had become much gentler and more approachable.

"People change. After not seeing each other for so many years, we might need to get to know each other again," Gabriel suggested.

Seeing his sincere expression, Nyla couldn't help but chuckle. She was about to reply when a cold voice interrupted from nearby, "I didn't hire you for idle chit-chat. Have you finished your work?"

Both of them turned to see Damon and Spencer standing a short distance away, their presence unexpected.

Damon's cold gaze lingered on them, his brow furrowed. A heavy, oppressive aura surrounded him.

Spencer, standing behind Damon, couldn't help but remind him, "Mr. Sumner, it's lunchtime..."

Damon's expression darkened, his voice growing even colder. "Do I need you to remind me?"

Spencer fell silent, regretting his words.

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Gabriel smiled. "Mr. Sumner, what brings you here unexpectedly?"

"I'm here to check on your upcoming work plans," Damon replied

Gabriel was momentarily taken aback. "Mr. Sumner, you don't need to come in person for something so minor next time. Just have Mr. Hogg give me a call, and I'll report to your office."

Spencer looked down, pretending not to hear and wondering whether Gabriel was genuinely that oblivious.

Damon had come personally to see Nyla, How could he be concerned about a researcher's work progress otherwise?

Damon's expression darkened. "So, you plan to report here?"

"Of course not. Our office is over here. Let me take you there," Gabriel said, leading Damon toward his office.

As Damon passed by Nyla, the air seemed to freeze with his icy demeanor.

Nyla pursed her lips and turned her gaze away.

Damon's footsteps halted. He turned coldly toward her. "Do you not want to see me, Ms. Jayston?"

Not wanting to stir up trouble, Nyla shook her head. "No."

"Then why don't you greet me?" Damon demanded.

Spencer, trailing behind Damon, mused that Damon had clearly come to see Nyla but was now complicating matters for her. He even wondered whether Damon's love had turned into hatred after their breakup. Nyla took a deep breath, turned to Damon, and said slowly, "Hello, Mr. Sumner. Is this acceptable?"

"Do you think I'm looking for trouble?" Damon's gaze was intense as if he would continue to make things difficult until he received a satisfactory answer.

Feeling a surge of frustration, Nyla forced a smile and replied, "You're the CEO,

+25 BONUS

so naturally, whatever you say goes."

Damon narrowed his eyes, and his aura became more menacing.

Gabriel quickly stepped in, pulling Nyla behind him. "Mr. Sumner, she didn't mean it that way. She's just having a rough time with the experiments this morning, so her attitude might not be the best. I'm sure you understand."

There seemed to be frost in Damon's eyes when he saw Gabriel grab Nyla's hand. Although others didn't notice, Spencer knew that Damon was genuinely angry.

"Does she need you to speak for her?" Damon questioned.

Gabriel's smile faltered slightly.

Just as he was about to respond, Nyla spoke up. "Gabriel, you don't need to defend me. I meant exactly what Mr. Sumner thinks I meant."

"Nyla! Stop it!" Gabriel shot her a look, signaling her to stop provoking Damon.

Nyla, however, ignored him and pushed him aside. She looked at Damon and said coldly, "I don't know what I did to upset you enough to make you come all the way from the top floor to hassle me, Mr. Sumner. But you're right about one thing-I don't want to see you."

As soon as she finished speaking, the temperature around them seemed to drop sharply.

Damon's gaze remained fixed on Nyla, his presence oppressive.

Nyla met his gaze without flinching, and the air seemed to grow heavy.

Gabriel decided not to intervene. This was exactly the scenario he had hoped for, after all.

Spencer thought that the next person who had to deliver documents to the top floor this afternoon was in for a rough time.

After a moment of hesitation,

Spencer spoke up to break the

silence.

"Mr. Sumner, weren't you here to discuss Mr. Hackett's upcoming project? There's a

meeting at 1:30 p.m. If we delay any longer, we might miss it."

Chapter 320

Chapter 320

Finally, Damon shifted his icy gaze from Nyla and turned to Gabriel. "Let's go."

Gabriel nodded and led Damon toward the office, leaving Spencer behind.

Once the two men had entered, Spencer turned to Nyla. "Ms. Jayston, don't take Mr. Sumner's words to heart. He actually--"

Before he could finish, Nyla interrupted, "Mr. Hogg, I won't take it to heart. I'm just working at Prospectus Technology, not one of its employees. Besides, aside from any mistakes in my work, Mr. Sumner has no right to dictate how I should act." Spencer was at a loss for words and could only sigh in response.

A few minutes later, Gabriel and Damon emerged from the office.

Nyla ignored them completely and walked straight to her own office.

Damon's expression darkened, but he remained silent.

After Damon left, Gabriel returned to Nyla's desk. "Nyla, I'd like to talk to you."

Without looking up, Nyla replied, "If it's about what just happened, there's no need to discuss it. I don't think I did anything wrong."

Nearby, Melody couldn't help but eavesdrop, her curiosity piqued. Her instincts told her the conversation was related to Damon.

Gabriel smiled with a hint of helplessness. "You're still as stubborn as ever. I'm not trying to lecture you. I just wanted to say that you don't have to be so strong all the time. I can protect you."

Nyla found his words a bit strange but couldn't quite pinpoint why. She frowned and looked up at him. "No need. I can handle things on my own without troubling others."

Gabriel's hands clenched involuntarily as he smiled. "I'm not just anyone. I'm your brother."

"Even so, I don't need it. I'm going to take a nap now, so you should rest too," Nyla said.
Cape To

Without waiting for Gabriel's reaction, she pulled out a pillow and lay down

Gabriel stood by her desk for a few seconds before turning and heading back to his desk

The entire afternoon passed with Gabriel unable to find an opportunity to talk to Nyla, so he eventually gave up.

As work was ending. Nyla received a text from Damon.

Damon: Come to my office. I have something to discuss with you. It's work-related

After reading it, Nyla responded with a cold, indifferent message and left the office

Damon had been waiting for her reply.

When his phone buzzed within a minute, he quickly checked it, and his expression darkened immediately

Nyla: [Mr. Sumner, it's after working hours. If it's work-related, please contact me during office hours tomorrow]

Spencer walked in with documents and couldn't help shuddering when he saw Damon's grim face

Since the breakup. Damon's mood had been as unpredictable as the weather in Saintornia

"Mr. Sumner, these are the documents that need your signature today." Spencer said. Seeing Damon's silence, Spencer carefully placed the documents on the desk and turned to leave

A moment later, Damon's cold voice came from behind. "Important documents should be sent to my

Leave the rest until tomorrow."

Chapter 220

*25 BONUS

Spencer hadn't even turned around before Damon stormed out of the office, leaving him to guess that

Damon was heading straight to t

Nyla.

While driving swiftly to the hotel where Nyla was staying, Damon called her.

After several rings, the call was

find

ad, and Nyla's voice, cold and distant cameet

Helmet

Sumner, it's after working hours."

Chapter 321

Nyla's voice was impatient, indicating she didn't want any contact with him.

Damon's gaze dimmed. "I understand. I'm here for personal matters. I'm currently downstairs at your hotel."

Nyla let out a sarcastic laugh. "If it's personal, then we have even less to discuss. I'm not coming down, so please leave."

With that, she hung up.

When Damon tried calling back, he found himself blocked, and his expression darkened. Since she wouldn't come down, he decided to find her himself.

As he was about to get out of the car, his phone suddenly rang. When he saw it was Rebecca, his grip on the phone tightened.

After a moment's hesitation, he answered.

Moments later, Damon's black Maybach pulled away from the hotel.

...

By 8:00 p.m., Nyla was watching a drama when a photo message from Melody popped up on her phone.

Nyla paused the video and opened the message. After seeing the photo, she involuntarily frowned.

Melody: [Nyla, Mr. Sumner is outrageous. Just a few days after breaking up with you, he's already out with his ex-girlfriend, and the paparazzi caught them. Everyone at the company is secretly laughing at you. It's infuriating!] The photo was taken at a famous shopping mall in Saintornia.

Damon was carrying several shopping bags—all from high-end women's brands while Rebecca walked beside him, smiling happily.

Nyla thought Damon's time management was starting to rival Clark's. Just after coming to the hotel to find her, he was already out shopping with Rebecca.

Nyla: [I'm not interested in such news, so don't send me updates like this.]

After sending the reply, Nyla resumed watching the drama, but she was distracted.

Realizing she couldn't focus, she turned off the video and got up. She went to the window, taking deep breaths to try and shake off her frustration, but it didn't work.

Damon reconciling with Rebecca and still waiting downstairs at Nyla's hotel only made Nyla more irritated. What did he want?

After

treat

bo me thought, Nyla decided to before. Any further entanglemenke

him as if he didn't exist,
only complicate matters.

...

Early the next morning, Damon was already waiting for Nyla at the hotel entrance as she headed down.

"Nyla, let's talk," he said.

Nyla's reply was cold. "I have nothing to discuss with you. Please don't harass me again."

Damon frowned, his tone serious. "As long as you stay away from Gabriel, I won't bother you for the next three months."

Nyla sneered. "He's my brother and my colleague. Why should I stay away from him? You're the one who should stay away from me."

Her indifferent gaze cut through Damon like a sharp knife, causing him pain.

"Nyla, even though he's your brother, you don't share any blood relation," he stated.

"What do you mean?" Nyla looked at him, her eyes filled with disbelief and anger. "Do you suspect something between Gabriel and me?" Gabriel was her stepbrother. How could Damon think so poorly of them?!

"I just don't want you getting too close to other men," Damon said.

Nyla found it laughable. "Damon, do I need to remind you that we have no relationship now? On what grounds and with what right do you tell me to stay away from other men

Chapter 322

Damon's gaze hardened. "Nyla, I know I have no right to ask anything of you right now. In three months, I'll tell you everything."

"There's no need. I'm not interested. I just hope you'll stop looking for me," Nyla said, then walked past him and left.

In the following days, Damon did not come looking for Nyla again, but gossip about him and Rebecca spread like wildfire throughout the company.

At first, Melody would get upset, but seeing that Nyla genuinely didn't care, she stopped bringing it up in front of her.

Nyla's life gradually returned to normal. Besides going to work, she spent her time having real estate agents show her apartments. Staying in a hotel long-term wasn't convenient.

...

After work on Friday, Nyla was about to leave when Gabriel stopped her.

"Nyla, have you been looking for a place recently?" he asked.

It wasn't surprising that Gabriel knew. Nyla often browsed through listings from real estate agents during lunch breaks and used apps to search for places on her phone. "Yeah, what about it?" she asked.

"I've been looking for a place too. Why don't we look together? If we live close by, we can look out for each other," Gabriel suggested.

Nyla frowned, about to refuse, but Gabriel continued. "I visited your dad last night. He and my mom don't want to move abroad. They'd rather stay here where we can look after them. Moving to a foreign country where they don't know anyone would be too inconvenient.

"My mom's lease is almost up, so I'm planning to rent a bigger place and have her move in with me. Then, when your dad is feeling better, he could come and stay with us for a while too.

"But if you don't want to live too close, we can find separate places. Don't worry about your dad-I'll take care of him."

Nyla pressed her lips together. "Okay, let's look together then."

Gabriel smiled. "Alright."

He knew well that Nyla wouldn't have agreed to look for a place together if he hadn't mentioned the last part.

...

Over the next two days, they continued viewing apartments.

By Sunday afternoon, they finally settled on a more upscale complex near Prospectus Technology. They rented apartments in the same building, though not on the same floor.

After signing the lease, Gabriel suggested they grab dinner together, and they chose a nearby restaurant. Midway through their meal, they ran into Clark, who had just finished a business meeting with a client.

VI.net

When Clark saw Nyla, his eyes glinted with a cold edge. After bidding farewell to his client with a smile, he turned and approached their table.

"Nyla, I heard Uncle Damon dumped you?" he asked.

Annoyance flashed in Nyla's eyes. She said nothing, clearly uninterested in engaging with him.

Clark's smile faltered, his hands clenching at his sides. How dare she ignore him, especially after Damon had discarded her?!

Taking a deep breath, Clark looked.

at

spoke slowly.

Five you to be so:

Are you still mad at m

inet

Sworn.

Nyla hadn't wanted to engage with him, but having a pesky fly buzzing around while she ate was irritating.

She looked at Clark and said, "Could you do me a favor and buzz off? You're ruining my appetite."

Clark's face darkened instantly.

After a few moments, he sneered. "Fine. I came over to offer comfort, but it seems you don't appreciate the gesture."

Nyla smiled and remarked, "The best thing you can do is stay away from me. That would be more than enough kindness." Clark was momentarily stunned by her smile, caught off guard.

Chapter 323

When Clark finally processed what Nyla had said, he scowled.

"You'll regret this!" he spat before storming off.

Nyla remained unfazed, calmly continuing to eat.

Seeing that she showed no signs of distress, Gabriel lowered his eyes with a smile. "Looks like you're really over him."

Nyla's tone was even. "He's just a scumbag. Not worth my time."

Gabriel nodded, his expression serious. "Yeah, you'll find someone better."

Nyla didn't reply.

At this point, she felt that spending time on a relationship wasn't nearly as productive as focusing on her career.

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After they finished eating, Gabriel drove Nyla back to her hotel before heading home.

As soon as he walked in, he saw Wren sitting on the sofa with an angry expression.

Surprised, he asked as he took off his shoes, "Mom, you're not going to the hospital tonight?"

"What happened at that blind date the other day? I heard you brought another woman with you," Wren questioned.

Gabriel hummed in response.

"Who was she? Was it Nyla?" Wren asked.

The girl Gabriel had gone on a blind date with was the daughter of Wren's friend.

Wren had initially thought it was simply a case of them not hitting it off, but her friend had called today and mocked her. She revealed that Gabriel had brought another woman along, infuriating her daughter. Wren had had to apologize profusely to calm her friend down.

After hanging up, Wren reflected and figured that Gabriel had just returned to the country, so he could hardly find a woman to pretend to be his girlfriend other than Nyla.

The idea that Nyla was involved made her even angrier. Nyla's own marriage was a mess-did she want Gabriel's life to turn out the same way?

Sensing the dissatisfaction in Wren's voice, Gabriel frowned and replied coldly, "No, it was a colleague."

"You just started working. Which colleague of yours is so eager to help you lie?" Wren demanded.

Gabriel's patience was wearing thin as he faced Wren's aggressive questioning. "What's the point of digging into this? I told you from the start I wasn't interested in your blind dates, but you insisted. Now that you've brought this up, let me make it clear once and for all-don't set me up on any more dates."

Wren shot up from the couch, shouting, If you could find

someone, I wouldn't have to worry! You are almost 30 and are not even thinking about settling down Do you plan on being alone forever?"

"Being alone is better than being with someone I don't love. If you arrange another date without my consent, I won't go," Gabriel declared. "You're trying to drive me to my grave, aren't you?!" Wren fumed.

Gabriel ignored her and went straight to his bedroom.

...

The next morning, Wren headed directly to Prospectus Technology. Instead of looking for Gabriel, she contacted Nyla.

They met at the café downstairs.

"Is there something you need me for?" Nyla asked.

Wren's expression was icy, her tone

dripping with sarcasm. "Nyla, you're my stepdaughter. I wouldn't

normally interfere, but your actions are affecting Gabriel, and I have to say something."

Nyla felt lost but anticipated that Wren's words wouldn't be favorable, so her expression darkened. "Wren, how have I affected him?" Wren snorted, her voice full of certainty.

"The blind date I arranged for Gabriel-you ruined it, didn't you?"

Nyla frowned. "Is that what Gabriel told you?"

Chapter 324

"Gabriel sees you as a sister, so of course, he wouldn't say it directly," Wren said with a sneer.

"But the girl he was on a date with did. She said he brought another woman along, claiming she was his girlfriend. He's just returned to the country and doesn't know many people in Saintornia. If you weren't the one he brought, who else could it be?" she demanded. Nyla looked at Wren intently. "Wren, shouldn't you consider why you're pushing him to go on dates when he's just back and hasn't even settled into his job yet?"

Wren laughed coldly, her tone sharp. "Gabriel isn't like you, already married once and willing to settle for any divorced man. I have to be concerned about his future. If you have nothing to do, you should stay away from him and not ruin his relationships!" Nyla's gaze turned icy.

Just as she was about to respond, the chair next to her was abruptly pulled out. She turned instinctively and saw Damon sitting down beside her.

He wore a smile, but his eyes were devoid of warmth, sending a chill down one's spine. "Mrs. Jayston, I didn't quite catch what you just said. Why don't you repeat it?"

Facing Damon's cold gaze, Wren lost all her earlier arrogance. She forced a smile, trying to placate him. After all, with Gabriel working at Prospectus Technology, offending Damon could spell trouble for him.

"Mr. Sumner, I was just chatting casually with Nyla," she said.

Damon looked at her icily. "What kind of casual chat makes you suggest that she should settle for any divorced man in the future? Have you forgotten that you're also divorced and even brought a son into your second marriage?" Wren's smile froze, her face paling. She hadn't expected Damon to be so blunt.

The atmosphere grew tense and awkward.

After a few seconds of silence, Wren forced another smile. "Mr. Sumner, that's not what I meant. It's just that having been through a divorce myself, I know how difficult it is for divorced women. That's why-

"So you decided to kick someone when they're down?" Damon interrupted.

Wren was rendered speechless. She glanced at Nyla, who remained indifferent, and felt embarrassed. "Nyla, please tell Mr. Sumnerche's misunderstood me."

Nyla smiled, stood up, and replied, "Wren, we both know exactly what you meant. Unless it's something e

important, please don't come looking for me. I wouldn't want to make your life any harder."

With that, she turned and walked away.

"Mr. Sumner, I" Wren began.

Damon cut her off, "Mrs. Jayston, ifl

ever see or hear about you doing

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anything to hurt Nyla again, your son

can forget about having a career in Saintornia."

His icy stare made Wren shiver, draining the color from her face and leaving her speechless.

Noting her fear, Damon lost interest in staying any longer. He rose and went after Nyla.

He caught up with her in front of the elevator and warned sternly, "From now on, keep your distance from Gabriel."

Nyla watched the floor numbers change as the elevator descended, saying nothing as if she hadn't heard him.

Damon frowned, his voice growing colder. "Did you hear me?"

His commanding tone made Nyla frown, but she remained silent.

Damon's anger morphed into a snicker. "Do you think ignoring me will make me go away?"

He grabbed Nyla's hand and pulled her into the stairwell.

"What are you doing?! Let go of me!" Nyla exclaimed angrily, her gaze filled with repulsion.

Chapter 325

"I thought you were planning to never speak to me again," Damon said, gripping Nyla's chin and forcing her to look at him.

Nyla slapped his hand away, her voice icy. "Mr. Sumner, there's nothing to discuss between us. What you're doing now is sexual harassment. If you don't want me to call the police, let me go right- Mmph!" Before she could finish, Damon kissed her.

Nyla froze for a moment, then bit him hard, the taste of blood filling her mouth.

Damon let her go, his expression darkening. "Are you part dog?"

Seeing his lower lip bleeding, Nyla sneered. "If you dare lay a hand on me again, this will just be the beginning."

Damon wiped the blood from his mouth and raised an eyebrow. "You just accused me of sexual harassment. I thought I should live up to the charge. Otherwise, what's the point?"

"Can you let me go now?" Nyla asked.

"I will, as long as you promise to stay away from Gabriel," Damon replied.

Nyla nodded. "Fine. I'll agree as long as you keep your distance from Rebecca."

Damon's smile froze, and he frowned. "Nyla, I told you, give me three months."

"And I told you, no. I won't wait for you. From the moment you lied to me, it was over between us," Nyla insisted.

"You heard how nasty your stepmother was today. If I hadn't stepped in, you-" Damon began.

Nyla cut him off, her tone indifferent, "Speaking of that, if you hadn't meddled today, I could have handled it myself. Next time something like this happens, do me a favor and pretend you didn't see it. I don't want people to think we're still entangled. I won't be 'the other woman'."

Damon scowled, his grip on Nyla's wrist tightening involuntarily.

Feeling the pain in her wrist, Nyla glared at him. "Are you trying to break my wrist?"

"Sorry, I didn't mean to," Damon apologized.

Taking advantage of the moment Damon's grip loosened, Nyla pulled her hand free and walked away.

She stepped into the elevator,

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relieved that Damon hadn't followed her. Upon looking down at her reddened wrist, her mood soured even further.

Flirting with Rebecca on one hand and asking Nyla to wait on the other-did all the Sumner men think they were so irreplaceable?

After Clark's betrayal, love no longer held the same significance for Nyla. She could weigh the pros and cons and walk away as soon as she was hurt.

QUMS

Back at the lab building, she ran into Gabriel, who was hurrying out. Seeing her, he heaved a sigh of relief. "What did my mom want with you?" Nyla's expression turned cold as she thought about Wren and her comments.

"She said that since I've been divorced, should keep my distance from you so I don't mess up your relationships as well. I think she has a point. We should cut down on unnecessary interactions," Nyla said.

Gabriel stiffened and frowned. "I didn't know she would say that. Don't take it to heart. I'll talk to her."

Nyla didn't respond and entered her office with a stony expression.

Chapter 326

In the evening, Nyla received a call from Valarie, inviting her out for dinner.

When Nyla arrived at the restaurant, Valarie hadn't yet arrived. She had just taken a seat when a familiar figure appeared at the entrance. Her gaze landed on the woman standing beside Damon.

The woman was dressed in a white strapless gown with subtle makeup and a serene smile. Her delicate features and elegant demeanor marked her as a striking beauty.

Although Nyla had never met Rebecca, the way she intimately held Damon's arm revealed her identity.

Nyla quickly looked away, pretending not to have noticed them.

What she did not realize was that Damon's gaze had also settled on her as she averted her eyes.

Rebecca sensed Damon had stopped walking and glanced up, her curiosity piqued. Noting his gaze fixed on a particular spot, she tightened her grip on his arm.

Before returning to the country, Rebecca had seen photos of Nyla.

The Nyla in the photos was already strikingly beautiful-so much so that even Rebecca, despite being a woman herself, felt drawn to her.

Her intuition had told her that if she didn't return soon, Damon might be taken by Nyla, prompting her return.

What Rebecca hadn't anticipated was that Nyla in person was even more captivating than in the photos-fair-skinned, stunningly attractive, with delicate features that commanded attention even while seated quietly. Rebecca took a deep breath, suppressing her rising jealousy, and forced a gentle smile.

"Damon, why did you stop? Nathaniel and the others are waiting for us in the private room," she said softly.

Damon withdrew his gaze and replied coolly, "Let's go."

Shortly after they walked away, Valarie hurried into the restaurant. She took a seat across from Nyla, grabbed the glass of water in front of her, and took a sip.

"The traffic was a bit heavy, so I'm late. You didn't wait too long, did you?" she asked.

Nyla shook her head. "No, I just arrived."

"Good," Valarie replied with a sigh of relief.

"So, why did you suddenly ask me out for dinner today?" Nyla asked.

Valarie put down her glass and smiled. "I have some good news to share."

A hint of curiosity flashed in Nyla's eyes. "What good news?"

"I found a new job!" Valarie gushed.

"Really? Congratulations! But don't you need more time to recover?" Nyla asked.

"No need. When I went for my last check-up, the doctor said I had almost fully recovered. Besides, staying at home all day is driving me crazy.

"My mom keeps nagging me about going on blind dates. If I don't get a job and move out soon, she might just pack me off to get married!" Valarie exclaimed. Her exaggeration made Nyla laugh.

"Alright, enough about that. Let's order. I'm starving," Valarie said.

Nyla nodded. "Okay. Dinner's on me tonight to celebrate your new job."

Valarie chuckled. "Then I won't hold back."

After ordering, the two of them began chatting about the latest gossip.

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Meanwhile, when Damon walked into the private room with Rebecca, everyone inside started teasing them.

"Rebecca, impressive! Who would've thought that after all these years abroad you'd get back together with Damon as soon as you returned? The allure of first love is truly irresistible."

"Tell me about it. Everyone knows went to the airport to

how from leaving and then

stop

waited all these years. He's finally getting what he wished for

"Seeing you two makes me believe in love again."

Most of the people in the room were from Damon and Nathaniel's circle.

Back when they were dating, Damon had brought Rebecca to a few gatherings. Over time, she had become familiar with them.

Damon frowned, about to say something, but Rebecca spoke softly. "Damon, they're just teasing Don't take it to heart. Anyway, three months from now, you can go back to Ms: Jayston. Just bear with it for these three months, okay?"

Chapter 327

Damon's gaze instantly darkened, but he remained silent. Instead, he withdrew his arm from Rebecca's grasp and pulled out the chair closest to her. "Have a seat." Afterward, he avoided looking at Rebecca and sat in the chair beside her.

Rebecca's smile faltered momentarily, but she quickly regained her composure and sat next to him as if nothing had happened.

Most people probably didn't notice, but Nathaniel could sense Damon's indifference toward Rebecca.

Their behavior suggested that they had not reconciled, yet if they hadn't, Damon likely wouldn't have brought her along like this.

Pushing aside the strange feeling in his heart, Nathaniel smiled and said, "Alright, it's Rebecca's welcome-back party tonight. I'm glad everyone could make time to come."

The room buzzed with conversation, with most attention focused on Rebecca.

For a moment, she felt as if she were back when she was with Damon-being the center of attention.

She was well aware that if Damon hadn't come with her tonight, these people wouldn't be so enthusiastic.

That didn't matter, though. Her ultimate goal in returning to the country was to marry Damon and become Mrs. Sumner.

Amidst all the praise, a sarcastic voice suddenly cut through the chatter. "If I'm not mistaken, Mr. Sumner was recently seen with Nyla Jayston. How is it that, in less than two weeks, he's back with Ms. Austen? Could it be that Ms. Austen is the other woman?" The room fell silent instantly, and Rebecca's smile froze.

All eyes turned to Erin, many silently admiring her boldness. After all, hardly anyone in Saintornia dared to cross Damon, let alone accuse his partner of being a homewrecker to his face.

Rebecca looked at Erin, feigning confusion. "What are you talking about? I don't understand."

Erin sneered. "Are you really that clueless, or are you just pretending?"

Sensing the awkward tension in the room, the girl next to Erin gently nudged her. "Erin, stop it."

If Erin offended Damon, she would likely face repercussions as well.

Originally, Nathaniel hadn't invited Erin to the gathering. When she heard about the event while shopping with Erin and mentioned it to her, Erin insisted on coming along. After checking with Nathaniel, Erin was included.

Nathaniel's expression turned icy. "Erin, if you don't have anything nice to say, keep your mouth shut. This gathering is to welcome Rebecca back, not for you to stir up trouble."

Erin smiled and turned to Nathaniel.

"There's no need to be angry, Mr Preston, I'm simply stating the truth. If the truth is so hard to hear, maybe you shouldn't be engaging in actions that are shameful in the first place."

Rebecca turned pale, her eyes welling up with tears as she looked at Erin. "Ms. Hulle, we just met tonight. Why are you being so hostile toward me?"

A man nearby raised his eyebrows and said in a teasing tone, "Rebecca, since you've just returned, you might not know."

"Erin went on a blind date with

Damon before, but he wasn't interested. She kept pursuing him, but he rejected her each time. She's probably just bitter, which is why she's targeting you."

Erin's eyes flashed with anger, and she gritted her teeth. "Connor, be quiet!"

Chapter 328

Mockery flashed in Connor Bambra's eyes. "Why is it that you can dish it out, but you can't take it?"

Erin stood up, sneering. "You think standing up for Rebecca will get you a partnership with Prospectus Technology? Idiot!"

Although Connor had been thinking along those lines, being called out by Erin before everyone made his face darken with anger.

"I think you're just bitter because you can't get the man you want, and now you're lashing out at everyone," he taunted.

"You-" Erin was livid. She shot to her feet and said coldly, "You'll regret this!"

With that, she spun around and stormed out of the room.

Throughout the ordeal, Damon watched the scene unfold with an indifferent expression, not a hint of emotion on his face.

The room quickly returned to its lively atmosphere, as if nothing had happened.

Despite the apparent calm, Rebecca couldn't shake her unease.

In the past, even if someone spoke ill of her behind her back, Damon would never have let it slide if he found out. Yet just now, Erin had called her a homewrecker to her face, and Damon hadn't even reacted.

It seemed he truly didn't love her anymore. If it weren't for the favor of saving his life, which she used to blackmail him, he probably wouldn't even let her near him. The thought made her chest tighten. Rebecca stood up and told everyone with a forced smile, "You all keep chatting. I need to use the restroom."

After stepping out of the room, she took a deep breath, hoping to release her frustration with the exhale, but it didn't help.

She walked to the window at the end of the hallway, pulled out a cigarette, and lit it. Her expression was full of irritation. Whether Damon loved her or not, she had to marry him.

...

Meanwhile, the enraged Erin was about to leave after storming out of the room when she spotted Nyla. Her eyes narrowed as she changed course and headed straight for her.

Nyla was talking with Valarie when a voice interrupted them. She turned her head and saw Erin, her expression immediately turning cold.

There was no point in pretending to be friendly-they had already fallen out.

Erin didn't care about Nyla's frosty demeanor. Smirking, she said slowly, "Ms. Nyla, I really admire how calm you are."

Nyla remained impassive. "Ms. Hulle, haven't you learned that it's rude to interrupt people when they're eating?"

Erin's tone was dripping with

sarcasm, her gaze full of disdain "Is it because Damon kicked you to the curb without hesitation as soon as Rebecca returned that you're in such a bad mood, Ms. Jayston?"

She had assumed Damon was truly into Nyla, but apparently not. Otherwise, he wouldn't have gotten back together with Rebecca. Nyla frowned, about to respond, but Valarie couldn't hold back any longer. "Erin, are you insane? You came over here just to ruin our meal?"

"Even if Nyla and Damon broke up, at least they were together. You've been trying everything to get with Damon, and he doesn't even give you a second glance, does he?"

That hit a sore spot.

Erin sneered. "So what if they were together? He dumped her in no time. To Damon, she was just a distraction while Rebecca was away!" Valarie slammed her cutlery onto the table, glaring at Erin. "Keep spewing your nonsense, and I'll tear your mouth off!"

Erin scoffed. "I'm just telling the

truth. Oh, by the way, Damon is hosting a welcome-back party for Rebeeee in Room 1. If you don't want to embarrass yourselves, I suggest you finish eating and leave."

With that, she walked away with a smile and her chin held high.

Valarie, shaking with anger, stood up and started toward Room 1.

Nyla quickly got up and grabbed her arm. "Valarie, don't go."

"Let me go! I'm going to crash that party! Rebecca just got back, and Damon's already broken up with you. This is too much!" Valarie hissed.

"I was the one who ended things, and I don't want anything more to do with them," Nyla said.

Read Chapter 329

Chapter 329

"Even if you were the one who ended things, he wronged you first! Are you just going to take it lying down?" Valarie looked at Nyla, her expression a mix of anger and sympathy.

"What else can I do? He doesn't like me anymore. Am I supposed to hold a knife to his throat and force him to change his mind?" Nyla's voice was calm as if discussing something unrelated to her life. Her naivety had led her to believe Damon genuinely liked her, that he wouldn't hurt her as Clark had done.

Valarie glanced down at Nyla's hands, clenched so tightly that her knuckles had turned white. With a sigh, she said, "Let me go. I'm not going to cause a scene."

"Really?" Nyla asked, unsure.

Valarie nodded. "Yeah."

People always kicked those who were down. Even if they confronted them now, the others would laugh at Nyla's expense.

Nyla released Valarie and said softly, "Don't dwell on this. I've made peace with it."

Sometimes, she still felt sad when she thought about him.

"Okay, let's not talk about it anymore. Let's find something happier to chat about," Valarie suggested, trying to comfort her.

They changed the subject. Although Nyla continued to respond to Valarie, her mind was elsewhere.

So, Damon had brought Rebecca here tonight to throw her a welcome-back party. It seemed he truly did love her. Otherwise, he wouldn't have kept thinking about her all these years, seizing the chance to be with her the moment she returned. In a way, this was good. Rebecca was a better match for him than she ever was.

Valarie noticed Nyla's distraction but chose not to mention it, feeling only pity for her.

After spacing out for the third time and missing what Valarie had said, Nyla took a deep breath and stood up. "Valarie, I'm going to the restroom."

Nyla turned and walked quickly to the restroom.

Splashing her face with cold water, she finally felt a bit more clear-headed.

Just as she straightened up and began wiping her face, the restroom stall's door opened, and Rebecca walked out.

A glint appeared in Rebecca's eyes when she saw Nyla. She moved to the sink and turned on the faucet to wash her hands.

Nyla tossed the damp paper towel into the trash and was about to leave when Rebecca suddenly spoke up. "Hello, Ms. Jayston. I'm Rebecca Austen. You've probably heard my name."

"Is there something you need?" Nyla asked, her expression cold as she looked at Rebecca.

Rebecca shut off the faucet, lightly shook the water from her hands, and smiled.

"Not much. I just heard you were seeing Damon, so I was curious. But now that I'm back, I hope you can

keep your distance from him t

After

all, I don't like other women hanging around Damon. If I get angry, the consequences could be severe," she warned.

Nyla huffed an annoyed laugh. "Save your breath for Damon. Unlike you, I have no interest in stealing other people's boyfriends."

Initially, Nyla didn't have much of an

opinion about Rebecca. If Damon hadn't given Rebecca the chance, it wouldn't have affected Nyla's relationship with Damon, no matter what Rebecca did.

to

However, the way Rebecca spoke just now sparked a strong sense of dislike in Nyla. She could tell Rebecca had known about her from the start and had purposely timed her return.

Rebecca's expression changed

briefly before she burst into laughter.

"Ms. Jayston, Damon and I have

known each other for ten years. You

didn't even exist to him back then. We're just picking up where we left off. There's no stealing involved."

"You could know him for a hundred years, but when you came back, he and I were still dating," Nyla retorted.

Rebecca raised an eyebrow, her confidence unwavering. "You were just a stepping stone in our relationship. You'd better know your place, or you'll only get hurt."

"And what if I refuse to know my place?" Nyla challenged.

"If you don't... This is the consequence!" Rebecca's expression turned icy, and she suddenly grabbed Nyla, slamming herself hard against the wall.

"Nyla, what do you think you're doing?!" The sound of a head hitting the wall was accompanied by an angry voice behind Nyla.

Before Nyla could react, someone yanked her away.

Chapter 330

Nyla wasn't prepared for what happened next. Her lower back slammed against the edge of the marble sink, sending a sharp pain shooting through her body. Her face turned pale. Nathaniel quickly rushed over to support a swaying Rebecca, his expression anxious. "Rebecca, are you alright?"

A bruise was already forming on Rebecca's forehead, but she managed a weak smile. "Nathaniel, I'm fine. Ms. Jayston didn't do it on purpose... Besides, I just got back, and Damon broke up with her. It's only natural for her to be angry with me..."

Nathaniel's expression darkened as he glared at Nyla. "Rebecca and Damon were together before. They're just getting back together now. No matter how unhappy you are, there's nothing you can do about it. If I see you lay a hand on Rebecca again, I won't let you off easy!" Nyla had been caught off guard by Rebecca's little stunt, and her back still throbbed from when Nathaniel had shoved her into the sink.

Already irritated, she couldn't help but sneer at his words. "Mr. Preston, by your logic, since Rebecca and Damon are a couple, it should be Damon saying this to me, not you. Anyone who doesn't know better would think you were her boyfriend."

Nathaniel's expression darkened further, his eyes cold. "Considering you were with Damon before, I'll let this slide if you apologize now. Otherwise, when Damon shows up, you won't be able to handle the consequences!"

Before he could finish speaking, a cold voice came from the side. "Apologize for what?"

Nathaniel turned to see Damon and said coldly, "Damon, you're just in time. Ms. Jayston pushed Rebecca on purpose. Who knows what could have happened if I hadn't stepped in?"

He pushed Rebecca toward Damon, his anger still evident.

Damon looked down and saw the bruise on Rebecca's forehead, his gaze hardening.

Tears of grievance welled up in Rebecca's eyes as she looked pitifully at Damon. Even so, she tugged at his arm, pleading on Nyla's behalf, "Damon, Ms. Jayston didn't do it on purpose. And... I did take you away from her right after I got back, so, understandably, she'd resent me...'

Damon pulled his arm away and looked at Nyla. "Did you push her?"

Nyla's expression remained impassive. "What do you think, Mr. Sumner?"

Nathaniel's anger deepened as he saw Nyla's attitude. "Nyla, even Rebecca is pleading for you. Don't push it. This won't end with just a simple apology if you keep this up!"

Damon frowned slightly as he looked at Nathaniel. "So, how do you propose we resolve this?"

Nathaniel was about to respond but hesitated under Damon's cold gaze. Suddenly, he remembered how Damon hadn't defended Rebecca when Erin insulted her earlier. Could it be...

The thought that crossed his mind made him uneasy.

Pushing aside those unsettling thoughts, he spoke in a low voice. "Damon, you saw Rebecca's injury. All I'm asking is for Nyla to apologize. Is that unreasonable? Are you really going to protect her in front of Rebecca?"

Rebecca suddenly panicked and looked at Nathaniel with teary eyes. "Nathaniel, please stop. Let's just pretend none of this happened.

today Ms. Jayston pushed me

and

now we're even. I don't owe her anything anymore."

After saying that, she reached out to take Damon's hand, intending to leave.

Before she could touch him, though, he walked straight past her, heading toward Nyla.

Rebecca froze. By the time she realized what was happening and tried to stop him, it was too late.

Chapter 331

As Damon approached, Nyla frowned and instinctively stepped back, a wary look in her eyes. Was he planning to confront her because of Rebecca?

When they were just a few steps apart, Nyla watched as he suddenly raised his hand toward her.

Gritting her teeth, she warned, "Damon, if you dare lay a hand on me, I—"

Before she could finish, Damon pulled her close and asked, "Are you hurt?"

Nyla's eyes widened in surprise, but she quickly masked it with a cold reply, "No, let go of me!"

Even if she was injured, it was none of his business.

As she tried to push him away, he gently pressed a hand on her lower back where she had collided with the sink.

"Ow..." Nyla gasped in pain, glaring at Damon. "What are you doing? Let go-"

Before she could finish, he scooped her up. Startled, she wrapped her arms around his neck, her face paling even more.

Once the shock wore off, her anger flared. "Damon, what on earth are you doing? We've broken up! Put me down!"

Damon's expression remained impassive as if he hadn't heard her. He simply carried her and turned to leave.

Nathaniel, who had been watching in shock, quickly became angry. He stepped forward to block Damon. "Damon, are you out of your mind? What do you think you're doing? And what about Rebecca?" Damon looked at him coldly. "She's just my ex. What do you want me to think of her?"

"Aren't you two back together?" Nathaniel pressed.

Damon's gaze turned icy. "You should ask her if we're back together."

With that, he ignored the stunned Nathaniel and walked away.

Nathaniel turned to Rebecca, who had her head down. His eyes were filled with confusion. "Rebecca, what's going on with you and Damon?"

Meanwhile, Valarie, who had been

sipping her soup, glanced up and saw Damon carrying Nyla toward the restaurant door. She nearly spat out her soup in shock.

Her eyes widened as she quickly swallowed the soup and got up to follow them.

By the time she reached the door, Damon had already driven away.

Valarie hurriedly called Nyla, but the call went unanswered, heightening her concern.

In the car...

Nyla had calmed down, staring at Damon with a blank expression. "Where are you taking me?"

"To the hospital." Damon's voice was cold, his jaw clenched tightly, eyes fixed straight ahead. He seemed to be in a bad mood.

Nyla frowned. "I'm fine. I'll be okay in a few days. And we've broken up, so my well-being is none of your concern."

The atmosphere in the car grew even colder as she spoke.

Nyla's impatience grew with Damon's silence and his lack of intention to stop the car. "Are you even listening to me?"

Since he had chosen Rebecca, he shouldn't be giving her any false hope. She had finally managed to regain some peace in her life and didn't want to be entangled with him again.

When the car stopped at a red light, Damon finally turned to look at her. "Go to the hospital for an examination. If everything's fine, I'll take you back and won't bother you again."

Nyla felt as if they were talking past each other. "Don't you realize that what you're doing now is precisely the kind of interference I'm trying to avoid?" "Go to the hospital to get checked, or I can call a doctor to your home. It's your choice," Damon stated.

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"I don't want to choose either. Just stop the car now. I want to get out," Nyla said. Damon calmly resumed driving. "Since you don't want to choose, I'll do it for you."

Nyla was so frustrated she almost laughed. She knew that no matter what she said, Damon wouldn't let her out of the car. Resigned, she turned her gaze coldly toward the window. In less than half an hour, they arrived at the hospital.

Damon carried Nyla inside. Resisting was pointless, so she remained silent and expressionless.

...

After the examination, the doctor assured them there were no major issues and prescribed some medication for internal and external use.

As they were leaving the hospital, Damon tried to carry Nyla again, but she stepped back to avoid him.

"Thanks for tonight, but I'll take a taxi home," she said coldly.

With that, she picked up her medication and turned to leave the hospital.

Damon followed her silently. As they approached his car, he stopped her and said, "I'll take you home."

Nyla looked up at him, feeling a bit helpless. "We've broken up, so what you're doing now is pointless. I won't reconsider and don't want to be involved in your relationship with Rebecca." "I'm not back with her, and I won't be," Damon clarified.

Nyla nodded. "Okay, got it."

She tried to move past him, but he grabbed her hand. His expression was tense, his eyes dark and serious.

"Don't you believe me?" he asked.

"I do, but whether you're with her or not doesn't concern me. I'm not interested. It's late, and I've had a long night. Can you let me go now?" Nyla asked.

Damon looked at her, trying to detect any hint of deceit in her eyes, but saw none. She seemed to have truly given up on him.

"Nyla, whether you believe it or not, you're the only one on my mind right now," he confessed.

Nyla pulled her hand away, dismissing his words.

The screeching of brakes nearby made them both turn.

A red Lamborghini came to a halt a meter away from them.

Valarie stepped out of the car and quickly positioned herself between Nyla and Damon.

"Mr. Sumner, since you're no longer together, please stop harassing together, please

Nyla. Unlike you, she doesn't have an

ex who might return at any time. Valarie's tone was scornful, and she spoke without concern for offending

him.

Damon's gaze darkened as he looked at Valarie. "Ms. Weir, I haven't broken up with her. We're just having an argument."

Valarie sneered. "Mr. Sumner, you and Nyla are broken up, not divorced. You don't need to give your approval."

Damon narrowed his eyes, clearly deep in thought.

Nyla tugged at Valarie's sleeve. "Valarie, let's go. I'm tired."

"Okay," Valarie agreed.

Seeing they were about to leave, Damon didn't stop them. "Thanks for taking her home tonight, Ms. Weir."

Valarie rolled her eyes. "Mr. Sumner, Nyla is

to take her home,

for me good friend. It's no hassle your place to ask me to and it's not

Damon said nothing more. He watched them get into the car and drive away before heading back to his vehicle.

On the way home, Valarie couldn't

help

brecomment, "Even after gup, Damon is still clingine

to you. He's just as bad as Clark!"

Nyla lowered her gaze, her expression indifferent. "Don't mention him. Did you get my phone from the restaurant?"

"I did. It's in the bag in the back," Valarie replied.

Nyla retrieved her phone and unlocked it, receiving a message from Gabriel as she did.

Gabriel: [I came by to bring you some food earlier, but no one answered the door. Are you not back yet?]

Chapter 333

Nyla pressed her lips together and called him. "I'm still out. There's no need to bring me anything next time."

After a few seconds of silence on the other end, Gabriel's gentle voice came through. "Alright. It's already past 10:00 p.m. Do you need me to pick you up?"

Because of what Wren had said, Nyla wasn't eager to have too much contact with Gabriel. She declined, "No, my friend is giving me a ride. If there's nothing else, that's it." She hung up, and Valarie looked at her with curiosity. "Who were you talking to?"

"My stepbrother," Nyla answered.

Valarie's eyes widened in surprise. "He's back? When did that happen?"

Since Valarie used to visit Nyla's home often, she had met Gabriel several times.

"Just a few days ago," Nyla replied.

"Oh, he seems to be quite concerned about you now. I remember when I used to visit you. He was pretty aloof," Valarie remarked.

"Yeah. By the way... I said I'd cover the bill tonight, but you ended up doing it. Send me the bill, and I'll reimburse you," Nyla said.

Valarie glared at her. "Keeping tabs like that? Just cover it next time. By the way, how did you end up at the hospital with Damon tonight? Were you injured?"

Nyla briefly explained what had happened in the restroom, and by the end of it, Valarie was fuming.

"I knew she was a scheming little bitch! Are you just going to let this go?" Valarie demanded.

The thought of Nathaniel making Nyla apologize to Rebecca made Valarie want to confront him.

"There were no cameras in the restroom, and only Nathaniel saw what happened. He won't back me up," Nyla said.

"Nathaniel is completely under Rebecca's spell, so he'll definitely side with her." The more Valarie spoke, the angrier she became.

It felt like having a fly stuck in her throat-nauseating to swallow but impossible to spit out.

It was no wonder Rebecca had managed to make Damon and Nyla break up as soon as she returned to the country. Most people wouldn't have the heart to harm themselves to get what they wanted. "Consider today a lesson learned. I'll keep my distance from her in the future," Nyla said.

Valarie snorted. "I'm just worried that you might want to keep your distance, but she won't let you."

Nyla frowned, her expression growing cold. "I won't give her a chance to scheme against me a second time."

"I see Damon seems quite

concerned about you. If you really

wanted

compete with Rebecca,

you might not necessarily lose,"

Valarie remarked.

Nyla smiled wryly. "If a relationship requires constant scheming and et with another en fig off without it." (

She might like Damon but wouldn't sacrifice her dignity for him.

"True, there are plenty of men out there. If this one doesn't work out, just move on to the next," Valarie remarked.

Nyla was a bit surprised. "You didn't use to think that way."

"It just means I was too naive before. If men can fall for someone new so easily, why can't I?" Valarie countered. Nyla was somewhat speechless. "Alright..."

There might be some truth to that.

Anyway, she wasn't interested in relationships right now. She just wanted to focus on work and earn more money. Valarie dropped Nyla off downstairs and then left.

As Nyla took the elevator to her floor and stepped out, she saw Gabriel standing at her door.

When he saw her, he quickly approached and handed her a bag. "I thought you wouldn't be back so soon."

The bag contained some packed meals.

Nyla didn't take it.

"I made this myself. I noticed you've

been ordering takeout every night

and it's not good for your health," Gabriel explained.

Chapter 334

"Thanks, but there's no need. In the future, let's try to keep our interactions to a minimum. I don't want to be insulted anymore," Nyla requested coldly. She was about to walk past Gabriel when he stopped her.

"Nyla, I apologize on behalf of my mother for what she said. I've spoken to her, and she promises not to contact you again. Please don't be angry, okay?" Gabriel asked.

"If she truly believes she was wrong, then you wouldn't be the one showing up here tonight," Nyla replied.

Gabriel frowned and asked softly, "If she came to apologize in person, would you forgive her?"

Nyla's displeasure was evident. She didn't understand why Gabriel was so insistent that she forgive Wren.

Wren was just her stepmother-their interactions had been minimal, and there was no need to force a reconciliation.

"I won't forget what she said to me, and I can't forgive her. If there's nothing else, don't come looking for me again," she said.

Without giving Gabriel a chance to respond, Nyla opened the door and went inside.

Gabriel stood at the door for a moment before leaving. When he got home, he encountered Wren returning for clothes.

Seeing the bag in his hand, Wren frowned. "Where did you go just now?"

Gabriel replied calmly, "I went to deliver some food to Nyla."

Wren's expression darkened, and her tone became sharp. "Didn't I tell you to keep your distance from her?"

"I didn't agree to that, and she's my sister," Gabriel answered.

"Sister?" Wren scoffed. "You have no blood relation to her. Continuing to associate with her will only drag you down. You've just returned to the country. Offending the Sumners won't be good for you. I'm doing this for your own good!" "I said, I don't care," Gabriel insisted.

"You don't care?" Wren angrily threw the clothes she was holding onto the sofa and stood up, gritting her teeth. "Even if you don't care, can't you think about me? I raised you with great difficulty, sent you abroad to study, and now that there's finally some hope, you're about to ruin your future over someone irrelevant!"

Gabriel's expression turned icy.

"Mom, don't forget that I was able to

go abroad because of Harrison. Otherwise, I might not have been able to afford university."

"He did provide financial support, but I've been by his side, taking care of him while he was sick all these years. You don't owe the Jaystons anything," Wren argued.

"Do you think your care over these years is worth so much money?" Gabriel questioned.

Wren was at a loss for words.

After a long silence, she said coldly, "Regardless, if you continue to associate with her, I will create a scene at Prospectus Technology until you—"

Before she could finish, Gabriel

interrupted her sharply, "If you make

a scen

I'll resign and go abroad

immediately, and we won't see each

other again."

Wren staggered and took a few steps back to steady herself.

"Gabriel, in your heart, is someone with no blood relation to you more important than me?" she asked.

"Mom, you're forcing me. I'm an adult now. I hope you can let me make my own decisions about my life," Gabriel retorted.

The living room fell silent.

After what seemed like an eternity, Wren finally spoke dejectedly. "You're right. You're grown up now, and I can't control you anymore. Do as you wish." She then picked up her clothes and left.

Watching Wren's slightly stooped figure, Gabriel felt a pang in his heart.

Despite this, he knew that if he didn't resolve things with Wren, there would never be a chance for him and Nyla to be together.

...

When Damon returned to his villa, he saw Nathaniel's car parked at the entrance. His expression darkened as he parked next to it.

Hearing the car door open, Nathaniel looked up at Damon with red eyes.

"When did you find out that Rebecca was sick?" Nathaniel asked.

Chapter 335

Damon's expression remained indifferent. "The day she returned to the country and contacted me."

Nathaniel's body trembled slightly. He took a deep breath and said slowly, "Is it because Rebecca only has three months left that you broke up with Nyla and got back together with her?" Damon frowned. "I haven't reconciled with her."

He had only promised to spend these three months with Rebecca, but he had no intention of resuming their relationship.

"So, you don't have feelings for her anymore?" Nathaniel asked.

"From the moment she chose to go abroad, there was no chance for us anymore," Damon replied.

Nathaniel's hands clenched at his sides, and his expression grew intense. "But she still loves you. That hasn't changed. And she only has three months left to live. Can't you at least give her some false hope?" "No. That wouldn't be fair to Nyla," Damon said.

He had asked Nyla to wait for three months and had promised not to reconcile with Rebecca. Even if Nyla didn't believe him, he wouldn't break his promise.

"What's unfair about it? Rebecca only needs three months. After that, you could get back together with Nyla. This is Rebecca's last wish. Even if you don't love her anymore, can you really bear to see her leave with regrets?" Nathaniel demanded.

Thinking about Rebecca crying earlier and saying she had only three months left, Nathaniel felt as though his heart were being squeezed tightly, making it hard to breathe.

"She was the one who initiated the breakup. If it weren't for the fact that she once saved me, I wouldn't have agreed to keep her company even if she had only three days left," Damon stated.

"She broke up with you because the pressure was too much and she wanted to prove herself, which is why she went abroad," Nathaniel explained.

Impatience flashed across Damon's eyes. "Regardless, it's all in the past. The person I care about now is Nyla. I won't betray her."

With that, he bypassed Nathaniel and left.

"Wait." Nathaniel stopped him, his expression hardening as if he had made up his mind.

"There's something Rebecca asked me to keep from you, but I think you should know," he said.

Damon sat motionless on the sofa as if he were a statue. Nathaniel's words echoed in his mind, and his expression grew darker.

The villa was pitch black in the dead of night.

vel.net

When a maid got up to use the bathroom and passed the living room, she was startled by the shadow on the sofa and quickly

turned on the light.

Seeing it was Damon, she sighed with relief and patted her chest. "Mr. Sumner, why aren't you asleep yet?"

The sudden light was a bit harsh, causing Damon to squint uncomfortably, his gaze inscrutable.

"It's nothing. I'm just thinking about some things," he answered.

"It's already past 2:00 a.m. You should think about it tomorrow," the maid advised.

"I understand. You should go back to bed," Damon said dismissively.

Noticing Damon's unusual mood, the maid didn't press further.

After using the bathroom, she returned to her room, unaware of when Damon finally went to bed. By the next morning, he had already left.

Seeing the crystal ashtray on the coffee table filled with cigarette butts, the maid sighed.

It seemed that the issue Damon was dealing with was quite troublesome.

Even during the early days of his business, when the company was on the verge of bankruptcy, she had never seen him smoke so many cigarettes in one night.

Nyla was on her way to work around 8:00 a.m. when she received a call from Valarie.

"Nyla, I have something to tell you," Valarie said.

"What?" Nyla asked.

Valarie delivered the news. "Damon and Rebecca have officially announced their reconciliation."

Nyla's phone slipped from her hand. She couldn't hear what Valarie said next. Her world seemed to blur behind a veil of tears.

Chapter 336

The blaring car horns from the back snapped Nyla back to reality. She quickly pulled over to the side of the road.

Her hands were shaking as she picked up her phone.

The call was still connected, and Valarie's anxious voice came through. "Nyla, what happened? Are you okay? Are you on your way to work? I shouldn't have told you this now!" Nyla wiped her misty eyes and replied quietly, "I'm fine. My phone just fell."

"I'm glad you're okay... I really shouldn't have called you now..." Valarie's voice was filled with regret.

In her anger upon seeing the news, she had called Nyla impulsively. She deeply regretted it now, fearing she would never forgive herself if something happened to Nyla. "Yeah, I need to get back to driving. Talk to you later." With that, Nyla ended the call.

Taking a deep breath, she opened a web browser to search for news about Damon and Rebecca. Every link was about their official reconciliation.

[Prospectus Technology's CEO Damon Sumner Finally Gets His Happy Ending After Waiting Five Years for His Ex!]

[The Reason Damon Sumner Stayed Single for Years Revealed: He Was Waiting for His Ex Who Studied Abroad!]

[Damon Sumner and His Ex Are Back Together-They Were Seen in Matching Outfits at a Hotel!]

Each headline was like a stab to Nyla's heart, and she felt a suffocating pain.

Indeed, all men were the same.

Just last night, Damon had promised her at the hospital that he wouldn't get back together with Rebecca and asked her to wait for three months. Thankfully, she hadn't waited, or she would have been a laughingstock now.

Nyla put her phone away, her eyes downcast, and started the car.

...

The news of Damon and Rebecca's reconciliation led to even more gossip among Prospectus

Technology's employees. They used to talk behind Nyla's back-now they mocked her openly.

"It's laughable. She was dumped by Mr. Sumner after only a few days. I don't understand how a divorced woman has the nerve to pursue him!"

"Haha, I told you, Mr. Sumner was just playing around. None of you believed me!"

"I wonder if she can still make Mr. Sumner look at her after this, especially in front of his true love!"

Nyla stood in front of the elevator, ignoring the comments around her.

Seeing her unresponsive, the gossipers grew bolder, and their remarks became increasingly harsh.

Soon, the elevator doors opened.

Vol.net

As Nyla was about to step in, someone shoved her roughly. Unprepared for the forceful push, she lost her balance and fell hard onto the floor.

The impact with the floor was followed by a sharp, intense pain. She grimaced, and her face turned pale.

Around her, mocking laughter erupted.

Some people even took out their phones to film her humiliation, ready to post it online.

Nyla bit her lower lip and slowly got up. She looked coldly at the person who had pushed her, her eyes blazing with anger.

The woman was momentarily

startled by Nyla's icy gaze.

Regaining her composure, she net

sneered and said without remorse, "Sorry, I didn't do it on purpose."

Before she could say more, Nyla slapped her across the face.

The sharp sound of the slap silenced the entire elevator area.

The woman quickly reacted, her face flushing with anger. She raised her hand to strike Nyla back.

Before her hand could come down, it was intercepted mid-air.

Gabriel stood in front of Nyla, his voice was icy as he said, "I don't hit women, but if you dare touch her, you'll be the first."

Chapter 337

"Who are you to stand up for her?" the woman demanded, struggling to free her arm from Gabriel's grip but failing.

"I don't need to explain my relationship with her to you," Gabriel replied coldly. "What you did to her was caught on surveillance. I'll take her to get checked out, and then the lawyer will discuss medical and emotional compensation with you." "Oh, she hit me too! I can get checked out too. It's no big deal!" the woman retorted defiantly.

Gabriel's eyes grew colder. He leaned in close, his voice a threatening whisper meant only for her ears. "You'd better pray she's okay. If she's hurt, I'll make sure you regret this."

The woman shivered at the genuine menace in his tone, sensing he wasn't merely making empty threats.

Frozen in fear, she watched as Gabriel released her and swiftly picked up Nyla in a bridal carry, heading toward the door.

Nyla was surprised by Gabriel's assistance, especially after their conversation the previous night.

As they reached the door, she protested, "You can put me down. I can walk on my own, and there's no need for a hospital check."

Despite the hard fall, she didn't believe she had any serious injuries. A few days of rest should be sufficient.

"No, we're going to get you checked out," Gabriel insisted.

Nyla frowned. The fall might not even qualify as a minor injury.

As she was about to argue, she noticed a cold gaze fixed on her. Looking up, she saw Damon standing not far away, his entire demeanor radiating icy anger.

Seeing Damon approach, Nyla tightened her grip slightly and murmured, "Aren't we going to the hospital? Let's go."

Gabriel glanced down and smiled almost imperceptibly when he saw her pale face.

"Alright," he replied, turning toward the parking lot and acting as though Damon's murderous glare didn't exist.

Gabriel owed Damon a debt of

gratitude. Had Damon not

reconciled with Rebecca, the

employees at Prospectus Technology wouldn't have

mistreated Nyla, and Gabriel would never have had the opportunity to become a hero at that crucial moment.

Damon had personally sent Nyla to Gabriel's side.

Damon's anger was palpable, his eyes fixed on Gabriel with an intense glare.

As he moved to confront him, Spencer intervened, "Mr. Sumner, now that you've reconciled with Ms. Austen, it's best not to involve yourself with Ms. Jayston any further. Your actions will only

worsen her situation."

Damon's steps faltered. After a few seconds of wrestling with his swirling jealousy and anger, he turned and walked back into the building with a stony expression.

Once on the top floor, Spencer opened his computer and was briefed by another secretary on the morning's events. "Mr. Hogg, should we inform Mr. Sumner about what happened?" Spencer frowned. "Just go back to work for now."

After dismissing the secretary, Spencer searched the FindNovel.net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

Spencer contemplated whether to inform Damon about the targeting of Nyla. With Damon already reconciled with Rebecca, intervening could only exacerbate the situation.

As he hesitated, the internal phone rang. Damon wanted him to come in.

Upon entering Damon's office, Damon coldly instructed, "Find out why Gabriel was carrying Nyla out of the company."

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Soon, Spencer returned with a report. "Mr. Sumner, this morning Ms. Jayston had a confrontation with one of Prospectus Technology's employees at the elevator. She was pushed and fell. Gabriel took her to the hospital." Damon frowned. "What happened? Why was there a confrontation?"

Spencer hesitated before cautiously replying, "It seems related to your reconciliation with Ms. Austen... Here is the surveillance footage. You can take a look."

Damon took the tablet and watched the video. His face darkened with anger.

"Fire the employee who caused the trouble," he ordered.

"Mr. Sumner, wouldn't that be too harsh? After all, Ms. Jayston also slapped the employee," Spencer pointed out.

Damon's expression remained icy. "If I recall correctly, I issued a statement previously prohibiting discussions of my private life."

Seeing the fury in Damon's eyes, Spencer quickly agreed, "Understood. I'll take care of it immediately."

News of the employee's termination soon spread throughout the company, accompanied by a statement:

"Attention all Prospectus Technology employees: Anyone who discusses the CEO's personal life or causes any disturbance related to it will be terminated immediately!"

The remaining employees, previously engaged in gossip, fell silent. No one dared to discuss the matter openly anymore.

However, some were disgruntled, questioning why Nyla didn't face any punishment despite hitting the employee, while only that employee was fired.

When Spencer learned of these sentiments, he informed Damon.

"Post the surveillance footage on the company's internal forum," Damon instructed.

Once the video was shared, almost no one discussed the incident anymore.

Although some employees remained dissatisfied, they knew Damon clearly supported Nyla and avoided further public discussion.

...

Meanwhile, Gabriel, respecting Nyla's insistence, finally ceased pressing her to go to the hospital.

"Are you sure you're alright?" he asked.

Meeting Gabriel's concerned gaze, Nyla nodded. "Yes, I'm fine. It's almost time for work. Thanks for your help earlier."

"Now that I'm back, I won't let anyone bully you," Gabriel assured.

Nyla pressed her lips together, her expression serious. "I appreciate your help, but we should keep our distance from now on. Also, I'm sorry for taking advantage of you just now."

Without giving Gabriel a chance to respond, she opened the car door and got out.

Gabriel narrowed his eyes while watching her retreating figure, his expression growing cold and menacing.

...

Back in the office, Nyla showed little reaction to the news of the employee's firing.

Melody, who had hesitated, finally spoke up. "Nyla, I heard Mr. Sumner decided to fire that employee. You two..."

Nyla's expression remained neutral

as she looked at Melody. "Let's not discuss this. I have no relationship with him anymore. Others might misunderstand if they overhear us. I'd prefer to focus on my work."

Melody was taken aback. Before she could respond, Nyla had already picked up her lab notebook and changed into her lab coat to head to the lab.

As lunchtime approached, Nyla was about to head out for lunch when she received a message from a senior she hadn't been in touch with for a long time.

...

Caroline Lovell: [Nyla, I'm in

Saintornia for a conference. If I remember correctly, you're based here Would you be free for dinner? It's been a while since we last met.]

Nyla and Caroline had a good relationship back in university, and it was Caroline who initially guided her when she joined the lab.

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After graduating from university, Caroline went to Northornia for further studies, while Nyla returned to Saintornia. It had been over four years since they last met. Nyla responded warmly and asked for the hotel's location before finding a nearby restaurant known for its specialty dishes.

When Nyla entered the restaurant around 6:00 p.m., she spotted a short-haired woman with a youthful face waving at her from a window seat. "Nyla, over here!" Seeing Caroline's smile, Nyla felt as if she had been transported back to her university days and couldn't help but smile in return.

Caroline had been a top student who continued her studies directly after earning her master's degree. She had come to Saintornia with her advisor for a conference. After Nyla took her seat, Caroline smiled and said, "Nyla, you haven't changed much since university."

"It's you who haven't changed. Seeing you reminds me of the days you used to help me with experiments," Nyla replied.

"Don't mention it. You were the one helping me after that. By the way, where's your husband? Why didn't he come with you?" Caroline asked.

Nyla lowered her gaze and replied indifferently, "We're divorced."

Caroline looked surprised, and a hint of guilt flashed in her eyes. "I'm sorry, I didn't know."

In university, Nyla would often work late in the lab. No matter how late it was, Clark would come to pick her up and sometimes bring food for everyone in the lab. The two of them, one handsome and the other beautiful, were considered the golden couple of the university.

When Nyla got married after graduation, Caroline had regretted not being able to attend their wedding. She never expected that the two would end up divorced. Nyla shook her head. "It's fine. It's all in the past."

"Alright, let's not dwell on it." Caroline changed the subject, expressing some regret that Nyla hadn't worked in the pharmaceutical industry.

Given Nyla's talent and hard work in the lab during university, Caroline felt that if Nyla hadn't given up on continuing her studies and returned to Saintornia, her future would have been promising.

Nyla didn't feel particularly regretful. This was the path she had chosen, and she didn't need to romanticize the path she hadn't taken.

As dinner was ending, Caroline pulled an invitation from her bag and handed it to Nyla.

"Nyla, part of the conference is about the research I'm currently working on. If you're free, I'd love for you to come and listen," she said. Nyla took the invitation. "Sure. Thank you, Caroline."

Caroline sighed and continued.

"Nyla, there's something I wasn't going to say, but now that you're

divorced think you should

reconsider your future. You're

still

young and could look into further

studies, such as pursuing a master's or a Ph.D.

"The environment at companies can be quite complex, and I believe focusing on research at an institute would be the best choice for you."

Seeing Caroline's serious expression, Nyla nodded. "Okay, I'll think about it." Search the FindNovel.net website to access chapters of novels early and in the highest quality.

After settling the bill and heading toward the door, Nyla ran into Clark and Jordyn, who were coming out of the restaurant next door.

Upon seeing Nyla, Jordyn subconsciously tightened her grip on Clark's arm and looked at her warily.

Caroline noticed the situation and quickly understood what was happening.

Nyla didn't want to acknowledge them. She looked away and continued toward the parking lot with Caroline.

However, Clark felt a surge of frustration seeing her ignore them.

He stepped forward and blocked their path "Nyla, even though we're divorced, you don't have to act like you're avoiding a plague whenever you see me."

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Impatience flickered in Nyla's eyes. "I don't have anything to say to you, and I don't see you as a plague. To me, you're just a stranger."

Clark looked somewhat helpless. "Why be so stubborn? We used to love each other. Even though we're apart now, I still want the best for you. It's just that my uncle isn't right for you." Nyla frowned and said coldly, "I don't want to hear your nonsense. Move aside!"

Her good mood, which had brightened after meeting Caroline, was completely ruined by her encounter with Clark.

Jordyn sneered. "Clark, stop talking. If she wants to be the third wheel, let her. It's not like you'll be the one embarrassed in the end."

Nyla had initially tried to ignore them, but couldn't help glancing at Jordyn upon hearing this.

"Speaking of being a third wheel, Ms. Cheatham, you must have a lot of experience since you moved up from being a third wheel yourself, right?" she retorted.

Jordyn's face turned ugly. "Nyla, what are you babbling about? Clark and I are legally married now. I'm the legitimate Mrs. Sumner. Unlike you, who was just a temporary fling for Damon. Now that his ex is back, he's eager to get rid of you. It's really laughable!"

Nyla's expression remained indifferent. "Just because you have a marriage certificate doesn't mean you didn't start as a third wheel. Do you want me to post those disgusting videos of you and Clark online so people can see what kind of people you are?" Jordyn's anger flared, and she was about to retort when Caroline, who had been watching, couldn't hold back any longer.

"Clark, I saw you and Nyla together back in university. You were so good to her then. I never thought you'd turn out like this," she said.

Clark just noticed Caroline, recognizing her as Nyla's senior from university. They had dined together a few times.

Suddenly, the fond memories he had tried to forget resurfaced.

Back in university, he had been very good to Nyla. At that time, he was entirely devoted to her and couldn't bear to see her cry. Whenever her eyes reddened, he would feel as if the world were ending and would clumsily try to comfort her

Eight years was a long time, and he had forgotten when he had gradually stopped caring as much. Perhaps he had assumed she would never leave him, so he had begun to hurt her recklessly.

Seeing Clark lost in thought, Jordyn clutched her stomach and cried out, "Oh, Clark... My stomach hurts..."

Jordyn's distress broke through Clark's thoughts. He turned to her. "What's wrong?"

"I don't know. It just suddenly hurts..." Jordyn cried.

Jordyn's brows were furrowed, her face pale and genuinely distressed.

Clark ignored Nyla and Caroline, quickly helping Jordyn away.

As their figures disappeared, Caroline finally turned to Nyla with concern. "Nyla... Are you okay?"

Nyla smiled. "I'm fine. I'm no longer upset. I'll take you back to your hotel."

On the way back to the hotel, Caroline seemed hesitant, wanting to say something but struggling to find the right moment.

Caroline stopped at the hotel

When the car

stopped at the entrance, she finally gathered the courage to speak. "Nyla, I hope you seriously consider what I mentioned earlier's only been four years and you still have many years ahead of you."

Nyla nodded, her gaze soft. "I know, Caroline."

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Caroline didn't say anything more, merely reminding Nyla to be careful on her way back before heading into the hotel.

...

Nyla got home and sat on the sofa. She was about to rest when she noticed a corner of the invitation peeking out of her bag. She pulled it out and opened it. As she read through the conference details, her grip on the invitation tightened.

Maybe Caroline was right. She should reconsider her future plans. She couldn't have children, and even without Rebecca's interference, she and Damon wouldn't have lasted.

Besides, having already been burned once by Clark, she shouldn't make the same mistake again.

With that thought, a determined glint appeared in her eyes.

...

The next morning, as soon as Nyla arrived at Prospectus Technology, she ran into Rebecca.

To be precise, Rebecca was deliberately waiting for her.

"Ms. Jayston, good morning! I came to deliver breakfast to Damon. He has a sensitive stomach and doesn't like eating breakfast made by others, so I made it myself," Rebecca said.

Nyla frowned and replied coldly, "Ms. Austen, if you enjoy showing off so much, you might as well bring along a couple of photographers next time to capture you delivering breakfast and send the photos to some entertainment news outlets. Let everyone see how 'virtuous and considerate' you are."

Rebecca smirked and brushed her hair back. "There's no need for that. As long as Damon understands my intentions, that's enough."

"Then don't flaunt it in front of me. I'm not interested." With that, Nyla walked past her and left.

Rebecca watched her retreating figure, her smile widening. She hoped Nyla had really given up on Damon. Otherwise, she would ensure Nyla couldn't stay in Saintornia.

...

Once on the top floor, Rebecca walked straight into Damon's office.

"Damon, I heard you didn't have

breakfast before coming to work et

brought you breakfast. I made it myself. Please have it before you start working," she said.

Damon remained impassive, his eyes still on the documents. "leave it on the desk. You're pl There's no need for you to cook or bring food in person."

Rebecca bit her lip, disappointment flashing in her eyes. "But you have a sensitive stomach because you skipped breakfast at university. You should-"

Before she could finish, the office door swung open, and Spencer rushed in.

Seeing Rebecca, he paused before saying, "Mr. Sumner, I have an important report."

Damon finally looked up at Rebecca. "You can go now. I need to get back to work."

"But the breakfast-" Rebecca began.

Damon didn't respond, his impatience evident.

Reluctantly, Rebecca set the thermos down. "Remember to eat it later."

She left, glancing back several times.

"What's the matter?" Damon asked Spencer.

"Mr. Clark has stolen another partnership from us," Spencer reported.

Damon tossed the document onto the desk, his expression tightening and growing colder. "It seems he's determined to go head-to-head with Prospectus Technology."

Spencer kept his head down, hesitant to speak. After all, Clark was Damon's nephew—one of their own.

"Find out which companies he's been working with recently. If he wants to play games, I'll play along!" Damon huffed. "Yes, sir!" Spencer replied.

Once Spencer left, Damon picked up the documents again, ignoring the breakfast on his desk.

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Before long, Spencer discovered that Clark was secretly meeting with a representative from the company Prospectus Technology intended to partner with next month.

He quickly reported, "Mr. Sumner, Mr. Clark is meeting with Mr. Maddock at Pineer for lunch today."

Damon's gaze turned icy. "Book a table."

"Understood," Spencer replied.

At noon...

When Clark arrived at Pineer, he ran into Damon, and his expression shifted slightly.

"Uncle Damon, what are you doing here?" he asked.

Damon raised an eyebrow and replied with a faint smile, "What's the matter? Just because you're here, does that mean I can't be?"

Clark's gaze hardened slightly, but he managed a smile. "It's just unexpected to run into you while having lunch."

"Quite a coincidence," Damon said, playing along.

They walked into the restaurant together.

As Clark watched Damon head toward Room 8, which he had reserved, his expression darkened. Just as Damon was about to reach the door, Clark stepped in front of him. "Uncle Damon, what's the meaning of this?" he asked.

Noting the flicker of unease in Clark's eyes, Damon remained indifferent. "What's the problem?"

Clark gnashed his teeth. "I have a meeting with a client. It's not ideal for you to follow me. If you want to join me for lunch, we can reschedule."

"Are you overthinking this? I don't plan to have lunch with you," Damon clarified.

"Then why are you heading toward the room I reserved?" Clark questioned.

His suspicion and wariness were evident, clearly not believing Damon's words.

"Is Room 9 your reservation?" Damon asked.

Clark was taken aback and instinctively shook his head. "No... Y-You reserved Room 9?"

"Otherwise? Are you hiding

something you shouldn't?" Damon's cold, penetrating gaze made Clark uncomfortable, prompting him to touch his nose subconsciously.

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"No, I just overthink things since my reserved room is next to yours. Please don't take it the wrong way," Clark explained. Damon didn't look at him again and walked past him into Room 9.

Clark breathed a sigh of relief but couldn't shake the feeling that something was off.

What a coincidence! He was meeting Peter Maddock there, and Damon happened to be dining in the next room.

Whether it was a coincidence or Damon's intention, Clark was determined to secure the deal with Peter today.

He called Michael and said quietly, "Uncle Damon is in Room 9 right now. Keep a close watch and let me know when he leaves."

After hanging up, Clark entered Room 8 and spent an hour discussing matters with Peter.

By the end of their meeting, he still hadn't heard from Michael about Damon leaving, and his anxiety grew.

After all, the deal might fall through if he encountered Damon while escorting Peter out.

Despite his anxiety, he maintained a calm facade and continued discussing the partnership with Peter.

Peter was about to leave, but Clark kept talking, so Peter patiently continued the discussion for a while longer.

After about ten more minutes, Peter

finally spoke up. "Mr. Sumner, I have

a flight at 4:00 p.m. It's getting late,

so let's wrap up for today. My secretary will follow up on the details of the partnership."

"What about signing the contract..." Clark began.

"I'm heading to Meristate for a business trip today, so there won't be time to sign the contract. Please make any necessary changes and send the revised contract to my secretary's email. If everything looks good, I'll sign it online. I really need to go now. Otherwise, I'll miss my flight," Peter said.

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"Mr. Maddock, my secretary has already revised the contract and should be arriving in about five minutes," Clark replied.

Peter's frown deepened, and he looked visibly displeased. "Mr. Sumner, we've already agreed on the partnership. Why the rush? Do you think I'm going to back out?" Noticing Peter's displeasure, Clark quickly attempted to explain, "No, Mr. Maddock, that's not what I meant."

"Then what do you mean? I've told you I need to catch a flight, yet you're holding me up. Mr. Sumner, I have other options too!" With that, Peter stood up and left.

As he opened the door, Damon emerged from the adjacent Room 9.

Clark hurried after Peter. "Mr. Maddock... I can arrange a car to take you..."

Before he could finish, he noticed Damon standing by the door, and his expression soured.

Peter also noticed Damon and was taken aback. He quickly approached Damon. "Mr. Damon, what are you doing here? Mr. Clark said you were too busy to handle the negotiations, which is why he's doing it with me."

Damon raised an eyebrow, finally understanding how Clark had managed to secure some deals from Prospectus Technology. He looked at Clark with a cold smile.

"I didn't realize I was too busy to meet with clients," Damon remarked.

Clark froze.

After a few seconds, he said, "Uncle Damon, I've already settled the partnership with Mr. Maddock, and he needs to catch a flight. I need to take him to the airport." Damon maintained his smile but said nothing.

Peter, not easily fooled, quickly grasped that Clark had tried to deceive him and glared at him. "You dared to lie to me! I wondered why you were so eager for your secretary to bring the revised contract. It turns out you were afraid of being exposed!" Clark turned pale. "Mr. Maddock, please let me explain-"

Peter sneered. "Explain what? I'm busy catching a flight and don't want to waste more time with you, but this isn't over!"

With that, Peter ignored Clark and

turned to Damon. "Mr. Damon, I

need to get to the airport.net

discuss the partnership in person when I return."

Damon replied indifferently, "Mr. Maddock, I'll take you to the airport."

Peter paused to consider, then nodded. "Thank you, Mr. Damon."

As Damon and Peter left, Clark's face turned ashen; he didn't dare to stop them.

...

On the way to the airport, Damon and Peter discussed the broad terms of their cooperation.

Peter assured Damon that he would come to Saintornia to sign the contract once his business trip was over.

After seeing Peter off, Damon returned to Prospectus Technology.

As he reached the top floor, Spencer hurried over. "Mr. Damon, Mr. Clark has arrived and is waiting for you in the reception room."

Damon's gaze turned cold. "Understood."

In the reception room, Clark sat on the sofa, lost in thought. When he heard footsteps, he looked up, his expression nervous.

"Uncle Damon, I'm really sorry about

this. I hope you can forgive me.

promise it won't happen againne

apologized hastily.

Damon sat down opposite him, his gaze icy.

It felt like sharp needles piercing Clark, making him squirm in his seat as his face turned pale.

"Uncle Damon-" he began.

Damon cut him off, "Did you use the same method to snatch those Prospectus Technology deals before?"

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Avoiding eye contact with Damon, Clark lowered his head. "Uncle Damon, I realize I was wrong..."

Damon's anger morphed into a chuckle. "Realize you were wrong? Do you understand that what you did is a crime? You used Prospectus Technology's name to deceive other

companies into signing contracts with yours. If this gets out, you could be taken to court!" He was astonished by Clark's audacity.

Clark, now genuinely terrified, looked up at Damon with fear. "Uncle Damon, I understand my mistake. When my dad handed over the company to me, the funds were nearly depleted. If I didn't secure partnerships with some major companies, the company would soon go bankrupt. "Please, just give me one chance. I promise I won't make the same mistake again!"

Upon seeing Clark's frightened and guilty demeanor, Damon's anger intensified. "Realizing your mistake doesn't excuse the fact that you committed it in the first place." The room fell into silence.

After a long pause, Clark finally looked up at Damon. "Uncle Damon, what do you want me to do to make this right? Do you really want me to beg?"

Before Damon could respond, his phone on the table rang. Seeing it was Rebecca, he moved aside to answer the call. "What is it?"

Noticing the coldness in his tone, Rebecca was disappointed. "Damon, I wanted to ask if you'll be coming home for dinner tonight. I'm making your favorite fish. Would you like that?"

Damon rubbed his temples and replied quietly, "I'm not sure yet. Just take care of yourself. You don't need to cook. Let the service staff handle it."

"But... I don't know how many more meals I'll get to make for you. I don't want you to remember me only as someone frail. I want you to have some good memories of me," Rebecca said. Damon's patience was wearing thin, but he remembered her illness and softened his tone. "Don't overexert yourself."

After hanging up, Damon turned back to Clark with a cold voice. "I'll inform your grandfather about this. You need to resolve the issues with the companies you deceived on your own. I won't help you." Relief flashed in Clark's eyes. As long as Damon didn't pursue it further, there was still a chance to fix things. "Thank you, Uncle Damon!"

"No need to thank me. My decision not to pursue it doesn't mean those companies won't," Damon warned.

Clark's smile faltered, and he replied awkwardly, "I understand."

Noticing Clark still seated on the sofa, Damon said sternly, "Aren't you leaving?"

"I'm leaving now..." Clark replied.

It wasn't until Clark left Prospectus Technology that his expression darkened considerably.

Even though Clark was Damon's nephew and Damon had ended up with Nyla, Damon still refused to help Clark in this situation. The more Clark thought about it, the more he loathed Damon. en

Suddenly, his phone buzzed.

Seeing it was Richard, Clark tightened his grip on the phone and took a moment before answering.

An angry voice came through the line.

Clark apologized submissively and, after ending the call, drove back to the Summer residence.

As the workday wound down that evening, Nyla took out the invitation to the Conference that Caroline had give her, hesitating about whether to attend.

Melody, who noticed the invitation, looked surprised. "Nyla, how did you get an invitation to this conference?"

The invitation was for the "Next-Generation Cancer Drug Research and Application" conference, which would be held in the city center.

The event would bring together top medical experts and pharmaceutical researchers from around the world to discuss the latest advancements in cancer drug development and share clinical trial results.

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Many researchers were eager to attend the conference, but the entry requirements were stringent, and invitations were difficult to obtain. "My senior gave it to me. This conference aligns perfectly with her research focus," Nyla explained.

"Wow, your senior sounds amazing! Nyla... I'm really interested in this conference. Could you take me with you?" Melody asked eagerly. Nyla hesitated but then said, "I'll ask my senior if I can bring an extra person."

"Great!" Melody exclaimed.

Nyla sent a message to Caroline and soon received a reply that it was okay.

When she learned she could attend the conference with Nyla, Melody's face lit up with excitement. "Nyla, thank you so much! I'm really grateful!"

"Alright. Let's clean up the lab and get ready to leave for the day," Nyla suggested.

With that, she got up and headed toward the lab, with Melody quickly following.

After they left, Gabriel glanced at the invitation Nyla had left on the desk, his eyes flickering with unspoken thoughts.

...

Meanwhile, Damon was dealing with documents when he suddenly received a call from Nathaniel.

"Damon, there's a 'Next-Generation Cancer Drug Research and Application' conference here in Saintornia. One of the researchers is working on a project related to Rebecca's condition. Should we take Rebecca to the conference?" Nathaniel asked. Damon was silent for a few seconds before replying, "Just arrange a meeting with the researcher instead."

"If it were that easy, I would have done it already. The researcher is very busy and hasn't been available lately. Besides, she's flying out of the country right after the conference to attend another seminar. The only way to meet her is by attending the conference," Nathaniel explained.

"Understood. Send me the time and location," Damon replied.

After hanging up, Damon put his phone down and resumed working.

It wasn't long before his phone buzzed with messages from Rebecca. Without even opening them, he knew they were likely about checking if he was tired or

reminding him to come home for dinner.

He had no desire to read the messages or return to the villa. His reconciliation with Rebecca had been driven by guilt. The thought of pretending for another three months left him feeling drained.

When Spencer entered the office, he placed a stack of documents on the desk. "Mr. Sumner, you can sign these tomorrow."

"Okay, you can leave for the day," Damon replied dismissively.

After Spencer left, Damon glanced at the documents but was unable to focus. He set them aside and picked up his phone, opening his chat with Nyla.

He wanted to send her a message to explain, but he wasn't sure what to say. He had broken his promises numerous times. She must be thoroughly disappointed in him by now. After hesitating for a long time, he put his phone away and got up to leave.

...

Damon had intended to return to the villa but found himself, almost subconsciously, outside Nyla's building.

He had been keeping track of her

and knew she had moved into the same building as Gabriel. He wanted her to stay away from Gabriel, but what right did he have to make such demands now?

Damon's black Maybach remained parked downstairs for a long time as he watched the entrance to her building. Finally, a familiar figure appeared.

Nyla came downstairs to take out the trash.

When she saw Damon's car parked nearby, she was surprised. Quickly regaining her composure, she turned her gaze away, tossed the trash into the bin, and headed back inside.

Damon watched her retreating figure, hesitating for a long time. Just as she was about to enter the building, he opened the car door and walked toward Nyla.

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As soon as Damon stepped out of the car, someone else appeared at the entrance of the apartment building.

Damon's stride faltered, and his expression immediately hardened.

Gabriel positioned himself in front of Nyla.

Nyla's face, though free of makeup, remained strikingly beautiful, causing Gabriel's heart to stir as he gazed at her.

"Do you need something?" she asked, her tone frosty.

Sensing her coldness, Gabriel looked somewhat disappointed but managed a forced smile. "Nyla, I just returned from visiting your dad. He misses you. If you're free tomorrow night, let's go see him together." Nyla pressed her lips together. "Okay. If I'm free, I'll go."

Eager to avoid further interaction with Gabriel, she turned to leave.

Just as Gabriel was about to call after her, he felt a cold stare. Turning, he saw Damon approaching, his face stormy.

Nyla noticed Damon too. Her gaze flickered with confusion. He had publicly reconciled with Rebecca-why was he there?

With that thought in mind, she walked to the elevator and pressed the up button, pretending not to see Damon.

Gabriel smirked. "Mr. Sumner, what brings you here?"

"I'm here to see her. It has nothing to do with you," Damon replied.

"Of course it does. I'm Nyla's brother, and you're a man with a girlfriend. It's inappropriate for you to be seeking her out privately, don't you think?" Gabriel countered.

Damon's gaze grew colder. "This is between her and me. It's not your place to interfere."

"But it seems Nyla doesn't want to see you," Gabriel retorted.

The chill in Damon's eyes deepened, his cold aura almost palpable.

Gabriel, however, maintained a faint smile, showing no fear as he met Damon's gaze.

While they were locked in their standoff, the elevator doors opened.

Nyla, exhausted from dealing with the two of them, walked straight into the elevator.

Just as the doors were about to close, a hand suddenly blocked the gap, causing the doors to open once more.

Nyla looked at Damon standing outside the elevator with cold eyes. "Mr. Sumner, do you need something?" "We need to talk," Damon replied.

Meeting his cool gaze, Nyla paused for a moment. She acknowledged that some matters needed to be resolved.

"Alright," she said, stepping out of the elevator to follow Damon.

"Nyla..." Gabriel called after her in a low voice. "I'll wait here. If anything happens, just call me."

"Nothing's going to happen. Go home," Nyla said.

For a moment, Gabriel's smile wavered, and his hands clenched tightly at his sides.

Soon, Nyla and Damon found a quiet spot outside the apartment building. Her expression remained frosty as she looked at him.

"What do you want to talk about?" she asked.

"Nyla, about me getting back together with Rebecca-" Damon began.

Nyla cut him off, "I'm not interested in that. You don't need to explain. I agreed to talk with you to clear things up once and for all.

"Since you've reconciled with her, there is no possibility for us. I hope you'll keep your distance from now on. Don't come to my building again. I don't want people to misunderstand and think I'm a homewrecker."

Damon frowned, and his demeanor grew even colder. "I know you won't believe anything I say right now, but

I'll explain everything in throw, but

months."

"That's not necessary. It doesn't matter anymore," Nyla shot back.

Damon's gaze hardened due to Nyla's indifference. "Nyla, the one I love is you."

Nyla looked up at him. He was still as handsome as ever, stirring her heart, but she had had enough of the emotional turmoil.

She had thought she could endure it,

but now she realized that truly loving someone meant she couldn't tolerate any other woman being in his life.

Chapter 347

"Clark said he loved me, but that didn't stop him from cheating with Jordyn. You say you love me, but that doesn't stop you from getting back together with Rebecca. I guess, in your minds, your feelings are worth a lot. Just because you like me, I'm supposed to be grateful

and accept whatever you do," Nyla said.

Damon frowned. "That's not what I mean..."

Nyla smiled. "It doesn't matter what you mean. Since you chose Rebecca over me, there's no chance for us. It's that simple."

The calmness in her gaze stirred a sense of panic in Damon. He felt like he was really losing her.

"Nyla..." he started.

"We've already said everything that needs to be said. There's no point in dragging this out. Let's end it here," Nyla concluded.

Their love had always been unequal, never truly balanced. She'd rather not have such love at all.

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Back home, Nyla had just sat on the couch when her phone rang. It was a call from William.

"Ms. Jayston, your assets with Mr. Sumner have been divided. Your share amounts to 786,398 dollars. Also, we've made some progress on Cyrus' case. Are you available tomorrow? We can meet and go over the details," William proposed. "Sure, I'm free after work tomorrow evening," Nyla replied.

After setting a time and place, Nyla hung up and went to grab some clothes for a shower, pondering what to do about Cyrus.

Now that she had broken up with Damon, the Sumners wouldn't hesitate to come after her. Continuing to oppose them wouldn't benefit her.

Despite this, she wasn't ready to give up. It had been so hard to get Cyrus into jail. If she let him get away this time, it would be even harder to catch him in the future.

After thinking it over for a while without reaching a conclusion, she decided to stop worrying and wait until she met with William the next day.

The next evening arrived quickly.

William came with the asset division agreement.

"Ms. Jayston, Mr. Sumner has already signed. If everything looks good, please sign here," he said.

Nyla reviewed the agreement, confirming there were no issues, and then signed her name.

With that signature, she and Clark were finished. They had no more ties to each other.

Nyla handed the agreement back to William and inquired about Cyrus' case.

William's expression grew serious. "Ms. Jayston, the Sumners are already intervening. There's a strong possibility that Cyrus won't be sentenced. You should be prepared for that."

Nyla lowered her gaze, remaining silent. She was aware of the Sumners considerable influence in Saintornia. She had only managed to secure Cyrus's police custody because she had caught them off guard.

"I understand. We'll do our best and leave the rest to fate," she replied.

William nodded. "Yes, I'll do everything I can with this case, but the outcome might="

Nyla cut him off, "I understand. Even if things don't turn out well, I won't blame you."

They discussed the case a bit more before William left to return to his firm.

Back home, Nyla's ordered books had arrived-two thick stacks, all study materials for her graduate exam.

She carried the books inside, organized them, and noted that it was still early. Deciding to study for an hour, that night, she made the most of every minute, knowing there were less than two months until the exam registration. She hoped to pass on her first attempt

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In the following days, Nyla devoted every spare moment to studying.

Soon, it was Saturday.

Early in the morning, she received a call from Melody, who said she was already downstairs.

Chapter 348

Nyla checked the time-it was only 7:00 a.m., and the conference didn't start until 9:00 a.m.

"Isn't it a little early for you to be here?" she asked groggily, still not fully awake.

Melody's voice was filled with excitement. "I couldn't sleep, so I got up early. I brought breakfast for you, but don't worry. I'll just walk around outside until you're ready."

Nyla sighed, feeling a bit helpless. She told Melody which floor she lived on so she could come up and wait inside.

By the time Nyla finished getting ready, it was just past 8:00 a.m. The two of them arrived at the conference venue before 8:30 a.m.

As they approached the entrance, a black Maybach and a Rolls-Royce pulled up beside them.

The doors of the Maybach opened, and Rebecca and Damon stepped out. From the Rolls-Royce behind them emerged Nathaniel.

As soon as they exited their cars, conference staff members enthusiastically greeted them. "Mr. Sumner, Mr. Preston, Ms. Austen, welcome to the conference. Please allow me to show you to the VIP entrance."

Rebecca wore a white dress today, her long hair flowing down to her waist. With light makeup, she looked delicate and sweet. As she stayed close to Damon's side, she exuded an air of vulnerability that invited protectiveness from those around her. Damon's indifferent gaze briefly lingered on Nyla before he looked away as if he hadn't seen her at all.

Nyla lowered her eyes, forcing herself to ignore the disappointment that swelled in her heart. Damon treating her like a stranger was far better than dragging out their unresolved feelings.

The group quickly followed the staff through the VIP entrance, causing Melody to watch enviously.

However, remembering that Nyla and Damon had broken up because of Rebecca, she quickly suppressed her envy.

"Nyla, let's go in too," she said.

Meanwhile, Nathaniel glanced at Damon teasingly as they settled into a private room.

"Damon, if I'm not mistaken, I just saw Nyla outside. Why didn't you say hi?" Nathaniel asked.

Damon's expression was icy, and he remained silent.

Next to him, Rebecca's expression changed slightly. Although Damon hadn't spoken to Nyla earlier, Rebecca knew his eyes had been on Nyla the entire time.

"Nathaniel stop teasing Damon. He

and Ms. Jayston are the real couple.

I'll find a chance to explain everything to her. In three months, I'll give Damon back to her," Rebecca

said.

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Nathaniel's face fell. "Rebecca, there will be a way to treat your illness. Don't speak like that again."

Rebecca smiled sorrowfully and did not say anything more.

Seeing her like this made Nathaniel uncomfortable. He stood up and walked over to the window, looking down.

The conference hall was arranged

with rows of seats in the center and

private rooms on both sides for

those of higher status. Each room had a large one-way mirror, allowing those to see out, while those

could only see darkness.

Noticing Nyla and Melody sitting toward the back in the middle, Nathaniel smirked mockingly. Without Damon, Nyla was insignificant.

Nyla was unaware of Nathaniel's thoughts. Even if she knew, she wouldn't care. She was there to listen to the conference and determine a direction for her future career. The conference soon began.

Under the spotlight of the tech conference, Dr. Brendan Oakley, a leading figure in drug research, slowly stood up. He cleared his throat and began his opening remarks.

"Good day, everyone. In the path of

drug development, we constantly

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strive for breakthroughs and innovation. Today, I am honored share with you a significant advancement in cancer drugo research."

Brendan's voice was firm, each word reflecting his passion and respect for science.

Chapter 349

"In the past year, our team has worked tirelessly, delving deep into the mechanisms of cancer and exploring new treatment strategies. Today, I am proud to announce that we've developed a 'Long-acting Drug'," Brendan said, his voice brimming with pride. "This 'Long-acting Drug' not only exhibits a high level of specificity, precisely targeting cancer cells, but it also maintains therapeutic effects in the body for an extended period. This means cancer patients can expect longer survival times and an improved quality of life." Brendan's announcement was met with enthusiastic applause and cheers from the audience.

As Brendan finished his speech, other researchers began presenting their findings.

Caroline was the fifth speaker. Dressed in a simple white lab coat with her hair neatly tied back, she projected a professional and capable image.

She started by displaying a series of detailed experimental data charts.

Pointing to the data on the screen, she explained, "These are the results of the in vitro and in vivo experiments we've conducted over the past few months on the 'Long-acting Drug'.

"From this data, we can see that the 'Long-acting Drug' demonstrates significant effectiveness in inhibiting the growth and spread of cancer cells."

Caroline then presented photos and videos of the lab animals.

"After treatment with the 'Long-acting Drug', the tumors in these animals have significantly reduced in size, and no major side effects have been observed. This further confirms the drug's safety and efficacy. However, it will still be some time before this drug can be brought to market," she concluded.

Caroline's presentation generated great interest among the audience, with many people eager to learn more about the "Long-acting Drug".

She patiently answered each question.

As the conference progressed, discussions about the "Long-acting Drug" became increasingly intense. Even after the conference concluded, the audience seemed eager for more information.

The conference was not solely

focused on drug research

advancements. High-profile figures

from Saintòrnia were also in attendance. Drug development required significant funding, and potential sponsors could greatly alleviate the financial burden of research.

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After the conference ended, Caroline walked over to Nyla with a smile and asked, "Nyla, how did I do? Did I seem too nervous?"

Nyla shook her head and answered seriously, "Not at all, Caroline. You did great."

A brief flash of regret appeared in Nyla's eyes. If she hadn't abandoned her recommendation to stay in academia and returned to Saintornia, she might have been among them now. However, she quickly dismissed that thought-starting over was still possible.

Caroline smiled, about to speak, when a gentle female voice called from behind her, "Caroline, come over here. I want to introduce you to a few people."

They all turned to see who had spoken and saw Damon and the others standing next to Caroline's mentor.

Nyla's expression remained calm.

Melody, standing beside her,
couldn't help but whisper as Caroline
walked away, "Nyla, do you think Mr.

Sumner is doing this on purpose? He knew you'd be here, so he brought Rebecca to
rub it in your face!"

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Nyla glanced at Melody's indignant expression and managed a small smile before
dismissing the idea. "You're overthinking it. I'm not that important. One of the purposes
of this conference is to attract funding for research. Mr. Sumner was probably invited for
that reason."

Chapter 350

"Oh, okay," Melody replied.

Nyla looked away, her expression calm. "Let's go."

Even after they left the venue, Melody remained visibly excited. "Nyla, thank you so
much for today! After listening to the conference, I'm even more determined to pursue a
career in drug research."

Seeing Melody's flushed cheeks and bright, sparkling eyes, Nyla couldn't help but smile.
"What made you suddenly think of this?"

Previously, when their experiments kept failing, Melody had been noticeably down for a
few days, feeling frustrated. Nyla had feared she might give up, but Melody persisted
and now seemed even more committed to this path.

"I heard Caroline say that their experiments failed over a thousand times, but they still
kept going. I think that's amazing. I want to be like them-standing up there someday,
sharing my experiences," Melody gushed.

She looked a little embarrassed at this point. "I've never really stuck with anything
before. Now I want to commit to drug research."

Nyla nodded. "As long as you've thought it through."

"Nyla, let me treat you to lunch later as a thank-you for bringing me to the conference," Melody offered.

"No need. I have another appointment," Nyla declined.

"Okay, then," Melody conceded.

After Melody left, Nyla went straight to the parking lot to wait for Caroline in her car.

It took more than half an hour for Caroline and Damon's group to finish their conversation at the venue.

As Caroline walked to the parking lot, texting Nyla, she unexpectedly ran into Damon's group again at the elevator.

Rebecca spoke gently with a smile. "Ms. Lovell, we're heading out for lunch. If you're free, would you like to join us?"

After reading Nyla's message, Caroline put away her phone and looked at Rebecca. "Thanks for the invitation, Ms. Austen, but I already have plans for lunch."

A flash of disappointment crossed

Rebecca's face, as if she regretted missing out. "Oh, that's too bad.

was hoping to chat with you more. I feel like we get along and would like

to be friends."

Caroline didn't believe Rebecca genuinely wanted to be friends. Her real motive was likely that Caroline's drug research might help with her

illness. y

"I'm usually busy with experiments, but if you need anything, you can always message me. I'll reply when I can," Caroline said.

"I will, as long as I'm not bothering you," Rebecca replied.

"Not at all," Caroline assured her.

As they spoke, the elevator arrived. They all stepped inside, and Caroline pressed the button for the basement level.

Rebecca continued chatting with Caroline about drug development.

Soon, the elevator doors opened again.

Rebecca's smile froze when she saw the person standing outside.

Nyla hadn't expected Caroline to be with Damon and the others, and surprise flashed in her eyes. However, she quickly regained her composure.

Damon, who had been wearing an indifferent expression, was about to say something when Caroline walked over to Nyla.

"Nyla, have you been waiting long?" Caroline asked.

Nyla smiled and shook her head. "Not at all. Shall we go?"

"Sure," Caroline said, turning back to Damon and his group. "Mr. Sumner, Mr. Preston, Ms. Austen, I'll be going now. Maybe we can have lunch together some other time.

Before Damon could respond, Rebecca spoke slowly. "Ms. Lovell, I didn't know you knew Ms. Jayston."

Caroline paused for a moment. "Nyla is my junior from university. We're pretty close. Why? Do you know each other?"

Rebecca's smile was slightly forced, her gaze holding a hint of something unreadable. "Well... not really."