

Trading My Ex for His Uncle (Nyla)

Chapter 921

Before Lydia could finish, Damon interrupted, "Lydia, these sandwiches are really good. Grab two more for me from the kitchen, please." Lydia's attention was successfully diverted. She replied, "Sure, I'll get them right away."

Once she left, Nyla quickly walked over and sat across from Damon.

"If you're really not feeling well, don't push yourself," Damon said.

Nyla nodded. "I know."

After breakfast, the two headed to work.

Throughout the morning, Nyla tried to minimize her movements, staying seated as much as possible. Thankfully, it wasn't too exhausting.

Close to lunchtime, she received an unexpected call from Gabriel.

"Nyla, do you have time for lunch? I have something I'd like to discuss with you," Gabriel invited.

Nyla's tone turned cold. "What is it? Just say it over the phone. There's no need for us to meet."

A brief silence followed on the other end before Gabriel spoke again, his voice slightly somber. "Do you really dislike me this much?"

"I don't have time to entertain pointless questions. If that's all, I'll hang up now. I'm busy," Nyla replied.

For Gabriel, she could barely muster the energy to treat him like a stranger. She had no interest in further interaction.

"I wanted to talk about my mom and your father," Gabriel stated.

Hearing this, Nyla's brows furrowed tightly. "They've already divorced. There's nothing left to discuss. Tell Ms. Hackett this for me if verbal warnings don't work, I'll be forced to take legal action." With that, she ended the call, her mood sour for the rest of the day.

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Gabriel set his phone down, his expression darkening.

It was clear to him that Nyla's resistance toward him had grown even stronger than it was five years ago.

It seemed his plans would need to move faster.

Moments later, Jane burst into his office, her face lit up with excitement.

"Gabriel! Grandpa agreed to collaborate with Starlite! I'm going to sign the contract soon!" she exclaimed.

Her enthusiasm was palpable. She was already envisioning herself triumphing over Theo and solidifying

her position as the true successor to the Wilkie Group.

What could a spoiled, incompetent man like Theo do? She would teach him a lesson about overestimating himself.

Gabriel, however, was clearly

annoyed by her habit of barging in uninvited. He didn't let it show and instead maintained a neutral expression.

Jane's smile faltered slightly. "Why aren't you saying anything?"

Gabriel forced a smile. "I'm just surprised. Congratulations, Jane. You really managed to convince Grandpa."

"There's credit to you too! Without

your introduction to Mr. Tonra, I wouldn't have had this opportunity. Now do you want as a

reward?" Jane asked.

"We're husband and wife. Helping you is my responsibility. I don't need a reward," Gabriel answered.

Before Jane could respond, her phone buzzed.

Seeing that it was Shane calling, she quickly answered.

After a brief exchange, her face lit up again as she replied, "Alright, Mr. Tonra, I'll head over right now!"

Hanging up, she turned to Gabriel and said, "Mr. Tonra wants me to sign the contract right away. Afterward, let's celebrate tonight!" "Sure," Gabriel replied.

After Jane left, Gabriel's phone rang again. This time, it was Shane.

"Mr. Hackett, should we start pulling the net now?" Shane asked.

"No rush. I need more time to gather the necessary information. Wait for my signal," Gabriel answered.

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"Understood. As for Ms. Wilkie..." Shane inquired.

"Go ahead with the signing as usual," Gabriel replied. "Got it," Shane answered.

After ending the call, Gabriel's expression turned icy.

If Nyla had never returned, he might have spent the rest of his life with Jane for Wilhelm's sake. But now that Nyla was back, Jane had become nothing more than an obstacle-one that needed to be removed. As for Wilhelm, Gabriel was confident he would quickly accept Nyla as his new mother.

When Gabriel's secretary entered after a knock, he couldn't help but comment on the rare sight of Gabriel's smile, "Mr. Hackett, you seem to be in a good mood today."

Gabriel, known for his stoic demeanor and unapproachable aura, rarely displayed his emotions openly.

"Not bad," he replied casually.

"These are the quarterly financial reports for the company. Please review them when you have time," the secretary said, handing him a file.

Gabriel accepted it with a nod. "Alright. You can go."

After the secretary left, he flipped through the report.

The company's value was steadily increasing, with no issues of concern. Satisfied, he set the file aside and turned his attention to other documents requiring his signature.

Just then, his phone rang again.

The number was unfamiliar.

Few people had access to his private line, which piqued his curiosity.

Setting the papers down, he picked up. "Who's calling?"

A calm, steady voice responded. "Mr. Hackett, this is Tom Genge. Do you have time to meet? I'd like to discuss a business opportunity."

Gabriel raised an eyebrow. "Mr. Genge, as far as I know, the Genge Group doesn't operate in the gaming industry. If you're looking to collaborate with the Wilkie Group, I can provide my wife's contact information."

A quiet chuckle came from the other

end. Then, Tom asked, "Aren't you worried I might tell your wife that you still have feelings for Nyla?"

Gabriel's expression darkened instantly. After a pause, his tone grew icy. "Mr. Genge, I'd advise you not to make baseless accusations."

"Would you like me to send over

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evidence of you gathering information on the Wilkie Group to prove my point?" Tom's voice remained calm, almost amused, as though he were discussing something trivial.

Gabriel's grip on the phone tightened, his aura sharp and dangerous.

"Where?" he asked tersely.

Tom chuckled and provided an address.

An hour later....

Gabriel entered a private room at the designated location.

Inside, Tom sat alone, greeting him with a faint smile, "Mr. Hackett, you're late."

Ignoring the comment, Gabriel sat down coldly across from him.

"What do you want?" he asked bluntly.

Tom's smile widened. "I want Prospectus Technology, and you want Nyla. I believe we can work together."

Gabriel scoffed. "Why would I partner with you? Don't think for a second I don't have evidence of your crimes, Mr. Genge." Threats were something Gabriel wouldn't tolerate.

Yet, Tom remained unfazed, his grin

unwavering. Mutual destruction

wouldn't benefit either of us.

Besides, even if you take over the Wilkie Group, it won't be easy to take Nyla away from Damon. If we join forces, however, it'll be much

simpler. Why not take the win-win route?"

His tone was calm but calculated, as though he had already accounted for every possible outcome.

If Gabriel agreed, all the better. If not, Tom would ruin him first and then deal with Damon. Either way, Tom intended to come out on top.

Gabriel's expression hardened as he weighed the options.

After a long, tense silence, he finally said coldly, "Fine. I'm in."

Chapter 923

"Mr. Hackett, I look forward to working with you," Tom said.

After finishing their conversation, Gabriel left first.

Over half an hour passed before Tom finally stepped out of the private room.

Turning a corner, he bumped into Brandon and Valarie.

Brandon had his arm around Valarie's shoulder, and both of them were smiling.

When they saw Tom, their smiles faltered.

Valarie averted her gaze, pretending not to see him, while Brandon's expression cooled. He greeted, "Mr. Genge, fancy seeing you here. What a coincidence." "Indeed," Tom replied with a slight smile.

His gaze lingered on Valarie's indifferent profile, a mix of frustration and longing flickering in his eyes. At his sides, his hands slowly clenched into fists.

There was a time when Valarie's eyes had been filled with him, her heart wholly his.

Now, she wore that detached expression whenever she saw him. Watching her smile sweetly at another man while sparing him not even a glance felt like being pierced repeatedly by needles. Noticing Tom's gaze, Valarie frowned and stepped back deliberately, hiding behind Brandon.

"Brandon, we should go, or we'll be late," she said, her voice calm but firm.

Brandon nodded. He had plans to meet friends and had decided to formally introduce Valarie to them.

"Alright," he said gently, then turned to Tom. His tone was polite but distant. "Mr. Genge, we have plans, so we'll take our leave. Please excuse us."

If not for the collaboration between the Sumner and Genge Groups, Brandon wouldn't have bothered with pleasantries.

In fact, he had been contemplating severing ties with the Genge Group entirely. With so many companies in Saintornia, continuing this partnership seemed unnecessary. "Sure," Tom replied, his voice calm but his eyes darkening.

Tom watched as they walked away, his gaze filled with shadows and obsession.

Valarie didn't look back-not even once. It was as though she didn't care anymore, as though she didn't need him anymore.

Memories of their sweet moments together surged through his mind, each one cutting into him like a dull knife, the pain suffocating and unrelenting.

Meanwhile, Brandon led Valarie into a private room where four people were already seated-three men and one woman. They were Brandon's childhood friends. One by one, they introduced themselves.

The steady-looking man on the far

left was Yale Radford. Next to him was Jayden Gilmour, sporting a mischievous grin. Beside Jayden sat Michette Snowden, and on the far right was the aloof Nolan Lowe.

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On their way over, Brandon had already told Valarie about his closest childhood friends and their unbreakable bond.

With a warm smile, Valarie introduced herself gracefully, "Hello, everyone. I'm Valarie Weir."

"Valarie, we've heard so much about you! It's great to finally meet you. You're just as beautiful as the photos," Michelle said with enthusiasm.

Ever since Brandon had fallen head over heels for Valarie, his friends had heard plenty about her.

Initially, they had assumed his

interest would fade due to their

six-year age gap. To their surprise, he had pursued her relentlessly for years and finally succeeded

"Thank you," Valarie replied, her tone modest but sincere.

She sat beside Brandon.

When Brandon noticed her drink was chilled, his brows furrowed. Without hesitation, he called over a server to replace it with a room-temperature one.

A flicker of amusement crossed

Michelle's face as she teased,

"Brandon, you've changed! You never

used to be this considerate. I guess

having a girlfriend really makes a difference." en FindNovel

Valarie lowered her gaze, the faintest smile curving her lips.

Chapter 924

Was Michelle trying to stir the pot?

Before Valarie could respond, Brandon looked up at Michelle, his tone slightly cold. "None of you are my girlfriend, so why would I treat you the same?"

Michelle's smile froze, and an awkward silence settled over the room.

Jayden's grin faded as he said, "Brandon, Michelle was just trying to be friendly. Was it necessary to be so harsh?"

"I was simply stating facts. If she finds that harsh, perhaps the issue lies with her," Brandon replied calmly.

Jayden frowned, ready to retort, but Yale cut in before he could, "Alright, that's enough. Let's not ruin the mood. Today is about Brandon introducing his girlfriend to us-they're the main event." Jayden still looked upset but decided to hold his tongue.

Michelle, on the verge of tears, glanced at Brandon with a pitiful expression. "I'm sorry, Brandon. I didn't mean to upset you and Valarie. Maybe I should leave so I don't ruin the atmosphere." She reached for her bag and moved as if to leave.

Jayden immediately stopped her, his voice cold. "Michelle, we're all friends here. If you leave, does that mean the rest of us should leave too?"

Michelle shook her head. "No, this is my fault. I shouldn't make things awkward for Brandon and Valarie."

Valarie narrowed her eyes slightly. From the moment she'd entered, she'd felt irritated by Michelle's lingering gaze.

Raising an eyebrow, Valarie smiled faintly at Michelle. "Ms. Snowden, there's no need to leave. If you think you might say something inappropriate, the simplest solution is to stay quiet. No one here will mind if you don't speak."

Michelle's expression froze, her

carefully constructed pitiful act

slipping. Valarie's tone was neutral,

almost sincere, as though she were genuinely offering helpful advice.

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Jayden's gaze softened with sympathy as he watched Michelle's discomfort, and his dissatisfaction with Valarie deepened.

The once-harmonious group now felt fractured-and it was all because of her.

Jayden turned to Brandon, expecting him to step in. Yet, Brandon remained indifferent, as though the situation had nothing to do with him.

"Brandon, if Michelle can't stay, then neither can I. There's no point in us sitting here and enduring this," Jayden said, rising to leave with Michelle.

Valarie, initially inclined to smooth

things over, decided she'd had enough. If they weren't going to respect her position as Brandon's girlfriend, why should she bother?

She glanced at Jayden. "Mr. Gilmour, is Ms. Snowden your girlfriend? You seem awfully protective."

Jayden's face darkened. "Don't be ridiculous. We're just childhood friends."

Everyone knew Jayden was currently pursuing a university student.

Valarie nodded, her voice calm. "Oh, I see. It's just that when Ms. Snowden wanted to leave, and you immediately followed, it seemed like you two were a couple. I must have misunderstood."

Her gaze flicked between the two of them, her expression inscrutable.

Jayden's face flushed with anger. He snapped, "Ms. Weir, we're just friends. Don't tarnish our relationship with baseless assumptions!"

Four men and one woman claiming pure friendship? Who were they trying to fool?

From the moment Valarie met Michelle, she had pegged her as manipulative. Clearly, the others were too blind to see it.

Chapter 925

"Oh, I believe you-no need to get upset," Valarie replied.

Jayden remained silent, though his expression darkened. For some reason, her words only fueled his anger.

Michelle, realizing she had been thoroughly ignored, turned to Jayden and said, "Jayden, you don't need to leave. I'll go by myself."

She grabbed her bag and hurried out of the room. As she passed Brandon, she noticed he didn't even glance in her direction. Her face went pale, and she took a deep breath before walking quickly out of the private room.

Jayden glared at Brandon. "I never thought you'd change so much just because of a relationship. All these years of brotherhood-do they really mean less to you than a girlfriend you've barely started dating?"

Brandon had heard enough and let out a cold laugh. "Of course my girlfriend means more to me than you do. Who do you think you are? Are you going to marry me? Have kids with me?"

"My girlfriend is my priority. If you don't like her, then you don't like me. I suggest you get over yourself."

"Fine! Fine! I'll remember what you said today!" Jayden snapped before storming out and slamming the door behind him with a resounding bang.

The room fell silent.

Yale turned to Valarie with a calm smile. "Ms. Weir, please don't take what happened just now to heart. I'd like to apologize on behalf of Michelle and Jayden. They're young and sometimes act without thinking. I hope you won't hold it against them." Valarie raised an eyebrow and smiled. "You're being too polite, Mr. Radford. I wouldn't take such trivial matters seriously."

"That's good to hear," Yale replied, his tone light but courteous.

Although Michelle and Jayden left in a huff, the rest of the meal proceeded without further incident.

Yale and Nolan remained polite-not overly warm, but not cold either.

After dinner, Brandon and Valarie said their goodbyes to the group at the door before heading out.

On the drive home, Brandon glanced at Valarie apologetically. "Valarie, m sorry I'd known Michelle and Jayden would pull a stuntiat! wouldn't have invited them.

Over the years, Brandon had made a point of distancing himself from Michelle to avoid any misunderstandings with Valarie.

He hadn't even wanted to invite

Michelle that night, but Jayden had insisted. Not wanting to create

tension, Brandon had reluctantlynet

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agreed, never expecting the two of them to cause such a scene

Valarie smiled. "It's fine. Don't worry about it."

After all, they were just his friends. Even if they were family, if anyone dared to act snide with her, she wouldn't let it slide.

Seeing that Valarie genuinely didn't seem upset, Brandon finally breathed a sigh of relief.

When they reached Valarie's house, Brandon was about to step out of the car to walk her to the door when his phone rang. Seeing Jayden's name on the screen, Brandon frowned and declined the call.

Jayden was persistent, calling back almost immediately.

Brandon answered the call with a frosty expression. "What is it?" "Brandon, we're at the bar. Come join us for a drink," Jayden said.

"No. I'm taking my girlfriend home, and I have a meeting in the morning. You all enjoy yourselves," Brandon replied curtly before hanging up and putting his phone on silent

As he set the phone down, he noticed Valarie watching him with an amused smile.

"What is it? Do I have something on my face?" he asked.

Valarie shook her head. "No, I just think you don't need to let things with your friends get so strained because of me. I can separate you from them."

Chapter 926

There was a sparkle in Brandon's eyes, his gaze softening as he looked at her. "Valarie, thank you."

His intense and heartfelt gaze made Valarie feel a little self-conscious. She looked away and said, "It's getting late. You should head home."

"Alright. You get some rest. Goodnight," he replied.

"Goodnight," she answered.

After watching Brandon's car disappear down the road, Valarie turned and went inside.

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On his way back, Brandon received a call from his secretary, Charlie Jean.

"Mr. Sumner, I've been thinking about something, and I decided it's best to let you know," Charlie said.

"What is it?" Brandon asked.

"Last night, I was out for dinner and saw our marketing manager having a private meal with Mr. Genge. They seemed quite familiar with each other," Charlie reported. Charlie explained that he had been attending a university reunion at a private restaurant when he unexpectedly spotted Huxley Lightner.

Huxley hadn't noticed him, but Charlie had debated whether to report the encounter.

Ultimately, he decided to inform Brandon, just in case Huxley was secretly meeting with Tom. That would be troublesome.

Brandon gripped the steering wheel tightly, his voice turning icy. "Understood. Don't mention this to anyone else."

Hearing the seriousness in Brandon's tone, Charlie knew he had done the right thing. "Understood, Mr. Sumner. I won't tell anyone."

Charlie had been Brandon's secretary for years, and Brandon trusted his discretion.

"Good. That's all," Brandon said.

After hanging up, Brandon's expression turned grim.

Huxley was a relative of one of the company's shareholders. While his position had been secured through connections, he had proven capable and had delivered results over the years. en FindNovel

After a moment of thought, Brandon called Damon.

"Uncle Damon, do you have time? I need to discuss something with you," Brandon said.

Damon had been in his study with Nyla, helping Mason with homework. He stepped out to take the call. "What is it?"

"My secretary saw the Sumner Group's marketing manager, Huxley Lightner, having a private dinner with Tom last night. Just the two of them," Brandon informed.

There was a long silence on the other end of the line before Damon spoke.

"Understood. Keep an eye on Huxley for now. Make sure he and Mr. Lightner don't have access to any critical documents or contracts. I'll hook into Tom."

"Alright," Brandon replied.

"Don't make any moves until I've confirmed what's going on. We can't risk tipping them off," Damon reminded. "Understood," Brandon answered.

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After hanging up, Damon's expression darkened.

He had suspected Tom had ulterior motives ever since returning to the country. His ambitions likely extended beyond the Sumner Group, possibly even toward Prospectus Technology, the company backing the Sumner Group.

After a moment of thought, Damon called Spencer. "Look into the Genge Group's recent projects. I want a full report on my desk by tomorrow morning."

Looking out the window, Damon noticed the thin layer of snow blanketing the garden. Tomorrow would be sunny, but with the snow melting, it was bound to be bitterly cold.

The next morning, as Damon arrived at the office, Spencer brought in the report.

"Mr. Sumner, here's everything we found on the Genge Group's recent projects. They seem to be deliberately steering clear of Prospectus Technology's business," Spencer reported. Damon flipped through the report. Tossing the papers onto his desk with a scoff, he said, "Take a closer look at the companies the Genge Group is partnering with."

Spencer studied the report again and finally noticed something off.

Chapter 927

"Many of these partner companies are subsidiaries of Prospectus Technology's key collaborators!" Spencer exclaimed. Looking over the list, it became crystal clear-Tom's target wasn't just the Sumner Group. It was Prospectus Technology itself!

If Damon hadn't asked Spencer to investigate the night before, this connection might have gone completely unnoticed.

"Mr. Sumner... does this mean the Genge Group is planning to go after Prospectus Technology?" Spencer asked.

Damon's face darkened. "Tom wouldn't dare take on Prospectus Technology directly-not now. He's likely planning to target the Sumner Group first." "What should we do now?" Spencer asked.

"We'll make sure his projects fall through. Keep digging into the Genge Group's dealings," Damon instructed.

Spencer nodded. "Understood. I'll handle it right away."

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Over the next few days, Nyla noticed Damon had become even busier than usual.

Whenever she joined him for lunch at the office, he was either locked in meetings or just returning from one. Even at night, he stayed late, working overtime.

Nyla often waited for him at home but would eventually fall asleep on the couch. By the time she woke up the next morning, she'd find herself in bed, the spot beside her still warm. However, Damon would already have left for work.

She had asked him more than once if there were problems at the company, but he would always shake his head and reassure her, "Nothing to worry about. Things will settle down soon."

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This routine lasted until the end of the month-when something unexpected happened.

On a Friday afternoon, Nyla was discussing an upcoming experiment schedule with Sullivan when two police officers arrived at the lab.

"Mr. Heseltine, you are under suspicion of embezzling company funds through misuse of your position. Please come with us," one of the officers said formally.

Sullivan's face went pale, his eyes wide with disbelief. "No... there must be a mistake! I didn't do anything! Have you got the wrong person?"

"Whether there's been a mistake or not will be determined in due course. Come with us," the officer replied curtly.

After Sullivan was taken away, Nyla immediately reached out to Spencer for information but received no response. Suppressing her worry, she returned to her work for the afternoon.

Despite her attempts to remain composed, Ruby was visibly distracted.

Not wanting to push her, Nyla assigned Ruby simpler tasks.

By the end of the workday, as Ruby was leaving, Nyla called after her, "Ruby, are you planning to go to the police station?"

Nyla had understood from Ruby's

behavior that she wasn't as indifferent to Sullivan as she claimed, She could sympathize

After all, Sullivan had saved Rul

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twice. Any woman would be moved.

Ruby froze.

After a moment, she hung her head, saying, "Nyla... I just want to check on him. He's saved my life."

Nyla sighed. "Go ahead."

Ruby left in a hurry without turning back.

After Nyla cleaned up the

experiment equipment, she left as well. Recently, the driver had been taking her home first since Damon often stayed late working overtime.

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Back at the villa, Mason asked Nyla over dinner, "Mommy, what's Daddy been doing lately? I haven't seen him in so long..."

"He's been working hard," Nyla answered, placing a chicken wing on his plate.

She noticed the glum look in his eyes and added gently, "Once he's less busy, he'll spend more time with us again." "Okay," Mason replied quietly, nodding.

Although he understood his father was working to give them a good life, he wished more than anything to have him around.

In his young heart, he made a

promise when he grew up, he'd make enough money to let his parents live comfortably and happily.

#Chapter 928

Chapter 928

After dinner, Nyla played with Mason for a while before asking Lydia to prepare him for bed. She stayed up in the living room, engrossed in a book, waiting for Damon to return.

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Ruby went to the police station, only to be told she couldn't see Sullivan. She tried asking about the situation but couldn't gather any information.

Frustrated and helpless, she returned home.

That night, she tossed and turned, unable to find restful sleep.

The following morning, she woke up feeling heavy and groggy.

When Nyla saw her tired eyes and dark circles in the lab, she asked, "You didn't sleep well?"

"No," Ruby admitted.

"Because of Sullivan?" Nyla pressed.

Ruby hesitated before nodding. "I went to see him last night, but I couldn't. I don't even know what's going on."

After a brief pause, Nyla said, "Ruby, have you considered that you might be... a bit too concerned about him?"

"Nyla, he's saved me twice. How can I not care?" Ruby replied firmly.

"I get it. But this situation is out of your hands," Nyla said with a sigh.

She had asked Damon about it last night.

Sullivan had embezzled a significant portion of the company's drug research fund-an amount large enough to guarantee a lengthy prison sentence. Ruby's face turned pale. "I understand. I just want to do what I can."

"There's only so much you can do," Nyla said gently. "You can send him what he needs later, but there's not much else you'll be able to do." Ruby lowered her gaze and replied slowly, "Got it. Thanks, Nyla."

Following Sullivan's arrest, his team was left without a leader. Thus, the company temporarily reassigned his responsibilities to Nyla, adding to her already heavy workload.

Although she didn't arrive home later than Damon, her evenings often stretched past 8:00 p.m.

Understanding her increased burden, Damon expedited the hiring process for a new team leader for Sullivan's group.

Within three days, a replacement was appointed a no-nonsense northern woman around Nyla's age, known for her straightforward and efficient work style.

With the new leader in place, coordination between both teams improved significantly.

During lunch, Nyla couldn't hide her surprise when she learned of Damon's involvement. She had

thought of him as someone who et

strictly adhered to rules and

fairness, not one to intervene for her. At the same time, warmth filled her heart.

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That evening, Damon surprised her further by skipping overtime—a rare occurrence—and riding back home with her. Even on the drive, he worked on documents until they reached the villa.

"You've been really busy," Nyla remarked as they walked to the door. "Buddy misses you. He says it's been ages since he's seen you."

A flicker of guilt passed through Damon's eyes. He resolved to take the upcoming Sunday off to spend with her and Mason.

"Soon, things will settle down," he said reassuringly.

"Mm. I just think you've been working too hard, and I haven't been much help," Nyla replied.

Damon stopped and turned to her, his gaze soft. "You don't have to do anything. Just having you by my side is all the support I need." He would handle everything else.

Blushing under Damon's warm gaze, Nyla quickly looked away.

Amused, Damon smirked and raised a brow. "Nyla, we've been together for some time now. How are you still this easy to embarrass?" Nyla rolled her eyes and shot back, "Not everyone is as shameless as you are!"

Chapter 929

Damon pulled Nyla into his arms, his expression amused. "Thank you for the compliment."

Looking at his serious face, Nyla couldn't help but laugh.

As they walked into the living room, Mason came running toward them on his little legs. In his excitement, he stumbled just before reaching Nyla and fell forward into her arms.

She quickly caught him, helping him stand upright before gently chiding, "Buddy, slow down next time, or you'll hurt yourself."

Mason held out a piece of chocolate, his face glowing with pride. "Mommy, I got a gold star at kindergarten today. This is the chocolate my teacher gave me as a reward. I saved it for you!" He remembered how much his mother loved sweets and wanted to share it with her.

Nyla's heart softened as she looked into his expectant eyes. She took the chocolate from his hand, noticing it had melted slightly in the wrapper after being held for so long. "Thank you, Buddy. Why did your teacher reward you with a gold star today?" she asked.

Mason straightened his small shoulders, his face sparkling up with excitement. "During nap time, Christian kept pulling Holly's hair and made her cry, and I told the teacher. "The teacher scolded Christian, made him apologize to Holly, and gave me a gold star. She said I did the right thing and encouraged everyone to do the same."

Nyla smiled and praised him, "That's wonderful, Buddy. Mommy is very proud of you. As a reward, I'll buy you that Lego set you've been wanting tomorrow."

Nyla had always been fair in raising Mason-rewarding good behavior without spoiling him.

While he'd been an exceptionally

well-behaved child back in

Capitarnia, he'd become more lively

and outgoing since their move to Saintomnia. It was a welcome

change, bringing out the playful side appropriate for his age.

Mason shook his head and replied earnestly, "It's okay, Mommy. That Lego set is too expensive. Just give me a kiss instead!"

His parents worked so hard to earn money, and he didn't want to add to their burden. If he could save them even a little, maybe they wouldn't have to work so much. Surprised and touched, Nyla kissed him on the cheek and said gently, "It's not expensive, Buddy. This kiss is an extra reward."

Mason hesitated but stood firm. "Mommy, I really don't need a new Lego set."

He figured he could just take apart his old Legos and rebuild them if he wanted something new to play with.

Seeing Mason's resolve, Nyla felt puzzled.

He had always loved Legos, and every time they passed a Lego store, he insisted on going inside. Yet now, he was refusing something he'd been so eager for before.

After a moment's thought, she focused on his mention of Legos being expensive. She knelt to meet his gaze and asked gently, "Buddy, why do you think the Lego set is too expensive?"

Mason paused, then said hesitantly,

"Mommy, you and Daddy work so hard. I don't want you to work so hard anymore. If I spend less money, will that make it easier for you and Daddy?"

Nyla froze, surprised by his reasoning. She hadn't expected such thoughts from him.

Reflecting on how Damon had been leaving early and coming home late every day, she realized this was likely why Mason was holding back.

She stroked his hair and said softly,

"Buddy, we don't spend money recklessly, so you don't need to worry about us. We're buying this Lego set as a reward for you and we can definitely afford it."

Chapter 930

Mason nodded. "Okay."

"Good. When you receive a gift, you should feel happy, not worried. Now, go wash up for dinner," Nyla encouraged with a smile. "Okay!" Mason chirped.

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After dinner, Damon retreated to his study to work, only returning to the bedroom late at night.

Seeing that Nyla was still awake, he frowned. "Didn't I tell you not to wait up for me? Staying up late isn't good for you."

"I wasn't waiting for you tonight. I just couldn't sleep," Nyla admitted.

"Why? Did something happen?" Damon asked.

She considered telling him about Mason but decided against it.

Shaking her head, she replied, "It's nothing, really."

Damon had been working hard lately, and she didn't want to distract him with other concerns.

Damon studied her, his expression knowing. "Nyla, your face gives you away. If you don't talk about it, you're not going to fall asleep tonight, are you?"

He smiled, despite his exhaustion. He made time for Nyla because, while work was important, so were she and Mason. He didn't want his responsibilities to make them feel neglected. That wouldn't be fair to them.

After a brief hesitation, Nyla finally spoke. "We've both been so busy lately that Buddy feels a bit left out."

Damon pressed his lips into a thin line. "I've noticed that too. I've been neglecting not just Buddy, but you as well. I've decided to set aside a day this weekend for the three of us to spend together."

Nyla felt a pang of guilt. "That's thoughtful, but taking a full day off will wear you out. I was thinking that, on evenings when you don't have meetings, you could bring your work home and spend a little time playing with Buddy instead."

"I'll consider that, but I still want to make time for the two of you. Work will always be there, but my time with you is just as important," Damon said.

Meeting his serious gaze, Nyla felt a warmth spread through her.

"Just don't push yourself too hard. Work is important, but there will always be time for us later," Nyla reassured him.

Damon nodded. "Don't worry. I know my limits."

"Go take a shower. It's late," she urged with a smile.

"Okay," Damon replied.

As Damon went to shower, Nyla was about to go to bed when her phone suddenly rang.

It was Ruby.

"Nyla, do you know any good law firms in Saintornia?"

The question made Nyla realize

exactly what Ruby was planning. Her tone cooled slightly. "Ruby, hiring a lawyer for Sullivan is something his family should handle. You really don't need to-

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Before she could finish, Ruby interrupted her, "Both Sullivan and I don't have family to rely on. I know you think I'm overstepping, but if I don't help him, no one will." Nyla frowned. "Do you even know what you're getting into?"

She could understand Ruby's gratitude for Sullivan saving her twice, but taking on his problems this extent? Was Ruby planning to handle everything for him-hiring a lawyer and dealing with the fallout?

Moreover, Nyla didn't think Sullivan had saved Ruby without some ulterior motive.

After a long silence, Ruby's voice came through the line, low and raspy. "I know exactly what I'm doing."

"Fine," Nyla said coolly. "But I won't

get involved or recommend a

lawyer. Don't forget-Sullivan embezzled funds from Prospectus

Technology. And Prospectus

Technology's CEO, Damon, is my

boyfriend."

Chapter 931

Ruby's face paled as she gripped the hem of her shirt. "Nyla, I'm not trying to go against Prospectus Technology. I just want to hire a lawyer and see if there's anything I can do to help him." "That's your business," Nyla replied coldly. "You don't need to discuss it with me. It's late-let's leave it at that."

After ending the call, Nyla took a deep breath, trying to suppress her anger.

To be fair, Ruby hadn't done anything wrong. After all, Sullivan had saved her twice, so it made sense that she'd want to help him.

However, Ruby should have handled this privately, finding a lawyer on her own instead of asking Nyla for assistance.

When Damon came out of the bathroom, towel-drying his hair, he noticed the irritation on Nyla's face and raised a brow. "Who upset you?" "No one," she muttered.

After a brief hesitation, she asked, "By the way, is Sullivan really going to be locked up for life?"

Damon paused mid-motion, his tone tinged with jealousy. "Nyla, why are you so concerned about him?"

This was the second night in a row she had asked about Sullivan. Hearing her care about another man stirred waves of jealousy within him.

Maybe he should ensure that only female coworkers surrounded her in the future.

"I'm asking for Ruby," Nyla clarified. "He saved her twice, so she's naturally worried about him."

Damon's expression relaxed slightly, though his tone remained indifferent. "If he returns all the embezzled money, he might serve a year or two in prison. But he can forget about ever working in this industry again." Someone caught embezzling company funds would never be hired by any reputable corporation again. Sullivan's career was effectively over.

"Oh," Nyla said, nodding. "Have you figured out who sent that anonymous email?"

There was a flicker in Damon's gaze before he replied, "No, it was an anonymous tip. Hard to trace."

Nyla didn't pursue the matter further-she wasn't interested in it to begin with.

Damon dried his hair and climbed into bed.

After chatting for a while, Nyla soon fell asleep.

Damon dimmed the light on the nightstand, his eyes bright and free of any trace of sleep.

Spencer had actually discovered that the person who had sent the email was Rebecca. It had also been revealed that she had been taken by Drake's men, her status unknown.

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Despite this, Damon had no intention of burdening Nyla with this information.

After days of effort, Ruby finally managed to hire a lawyer and arranged a meeting with Sullivan.

When Sullivan saw her, his demeanor was calm. "Why are you here?"

After several days in custody, he had come to terms with his fate.

From the moment he had taken company funds, he had been aware this day would come-though,

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had hoped he wouldn't get caught.

Ruby studied him.

In just a few days, he had aged years. His hair was disheveled, his clothes wrinkled, and his face carried an air of defeat.

Her heart clenched as she spoke. " spoke with Nyla. If you return all the stolen funds, you might only serve year or two. Once you're out, you can start over."

Sullivan chuckled, his eyes filled with mockery. "So you're here to tell me to give the money back to Prospectus Technology?"

Ruby frowned, replying, "I'm saying this for your own good, Sullivan."

Chapter 932

Sullivan snickered. "I don't need your help. Since you don't care about me, don't come here again. I don't want to see you."

He turned away without a second glance at Ruby.

Ruby was silent for a moment. Then, she said in a low voice, "If you don't want to see me, I won't come again. If you need anything, just have the lawyer pass on the message."

She added, "Sullivan, you saved me twice, and I'm grateful for that. Everything I said today was for your sake. It has nothing to do with anyone else."

Sullivan remained motionless, staring at the white wall as though it held some deep fascination.

With a sigh, Ruby turned and walked away.

It was only as her figure disappeared through the door that Sullivan glanced in her direction.

The lawyer, Paul Vernon, addressed him, "Mr. Heseltine, if you don't cooperate, there's not much I can do for you."

Sullivan looked at Paul, his tone indifferent. "I'll cooperate, but you need to do one thing for me."

Paul nodded. "As long as it's within legal bounds, I'll do my best."

...

Ruby waited for over 30 minutes before Paul emerged, carrying his briefcase.

"Ms. Jenner, I spoke with Mr. Heseltine. He's agreed to return all the stolen funds and pay the fines. With his cooperation, the case should proceed more smoothly, and I can work on negotiating a lighter sentence for him," he informed. Ruby exhaled a sigh of relief. "Good. As long as he's cooperating. I have to work, so I can't come here often. Please handle everything, and let me know if you need anything from me."

"Of course, Ms. Jenner," Paul replied.

In the following days, Ruby no longer visited the police station, instead asking Paul about the case daily.

At Drake's estate abroad...

Drake's patience was wearing thin. He had been waiting for half a month with no progress from Tom.

"Tom, what exactly are you doing? Forget Prospectus Technology. Don't tell me you can't even deal with the Sumner Group. Are you sure you've actually done anything?" Drake questioned angrily.

"Mr. Mummery, do you think Prospectus Technology or the Sumner Group is some fragile glass that I can shatter with one strike? These things take time. If you're in such a rush, why don't you go deal with Damon yourself?" Tom retorted.

Drake's face darkened. "I hope the next time I call, you'll have something to show for it instead of more excuses." With that, he hung up.

...

Back at the Genge residence, Tom tossed his phone onto the table with a scoff.

Over the past weeks, he had been working to undermine the Sumner Group and Prospectus Technology.

He had even tried poaching subsidiaries from Prospectus Technology's key partners, but Damon had caught wind of his actions. Most of his attempts had

been unsuccessful.

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Prospectus Technology had been entrenched in Saintornia for years. Taking it down wouldn't be easy, and Tom wasn't about to risk the Genge Group in the process.

He was already back in the country anyway, so Drake couldn't do much to him. Still, appearances needed to be kept up.

With that thought, Tom called Gabriel and asked, "What's the status on your end?"

"It'll take another two weeks," Gabriel answered.

Tom frowned. "That long? Can't you speed it up?"

"Mr. Genge, we're mere partners. Don't presume to tell me how to handle my end of the deal. Next time, keep your advice to yourself," Gabriel retorted.

Chapter 933

Gabriel hung up without hesitation.

Tom glared at the phone. If he didn't still need Gabriel, he wouldn't tolerate this kind of attitude from anyone!

Suppressing his frustration with a deep breath, he immediately instructed his assistant to arrange a meeting with the Sumner Group's largest supplier.

Over the past two weeks, all his attempts to schedule a meeting had been flatly rejected. His patience was wearing thin.

As expected, it didn't take long for his assistant to call back with an update. "Mr. Genge, Mr. Basham still refuses to meet with you."

Tom smirked. "Since he's so determined to ignore my generosity, it seems he'd rather swallow the bitter pill. Send him those photos-him and his mistress, all wrapped up nicely." The assistant hesitated. "Mr. Genge, if we take this route, it will completely ruin your relationship with Mr. Basham."

"I gave him a chance, and he chose to throw it away. If he wants war, we'll give him war," Tom replied.

"Understood, I'll take care of it," his assistant said.

Hours later, after the photos were sent...

Karter Basham stormed into Tom's office, his face livid. He slammed a stack of printed photos onto Tom's desk, demanding, "What's the meaning of this? Are you trying to blackmail me?" Tom gave his assistant a subtle look, signaling him to leave and close the door behind him.

Once alone, Tom stood up with a smile. "Mr. Basham, there's no need to be so upset. I simply wanted to meet with you, and, well, desperate times call for desperate measures."

He added with a light tone, though his words were sharp, "And you shouldn't be tossing those photos around. Don't forget who's keeping them out of your wife's hands." Karter had built his business on his wife's support.

Like many men, he began to look down on her and had affairs after finding success. His indiscretions were no secret.

This wasn't his first affair-every time his wife discovered one, he would end it with the mistress and beg for forgiveness.

This time, however, was different. The mistress was pregnant, and Karter had grown attached. Otherwise, Tom wouldn't have used it as blackmail.

"You really think you can intimidate me with this?" Karter asked, his voice icy.

Tom remained calm. "Mr. Basham, I hear your mistress is expecting. If your wife were to find out-"

"Shut up!" Karter snapped, cutting him off. He sank into a chair, glaring at Tom. "What do you want?" Tom smiled and sat down across from him. "I thought I'd made that clear. I just need a small favor."

Karter's scowl deepened. He had already heard rumors about Tom's intentions to target the Sumner Group, which was why he had refused to meet in the first place. He didn't want to get caught in a conflict he couldn't win.

"I'm not going to help you go against the Sumner Group," he said firmly.

Tom's expression didn't change. "Mr. Basham, I heard the Sumner Group recently ordered a large batch of construction materials from you. All I need is for you to switch those materials for something else. That's all.

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"Do you take me for a fool? If I tamper with their order, the Sumner Group will come after me first when things fall through!" Karter exclaimed.

Though he had feelings for his

mistress and wanted her to have

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their child, he prioritized his own safety. He could always have more mistresses and children in the future. But he couldn't afford to offend the Sumner Group. After all, it was backed by Prospectus

Technology.

Tom leaned forward, his voice lowering. "Mr. Basham, I don't just have photos of you and your mistress. I also have proof of your little schemes to siphon off company shares. "Given Mrs. Basham's personality, she probably won't forgive you after you've transferred shared marital assets, will she?"

Chapter 934

Karter glowered, not expecting Tom to have discovered that. He took a deep breath before asking coldly, "What's your problem with the Sumner Group?"

Tom simply replied, "Because I'm tired of always being in someone else's shadow."

Karter remained silent, scowling.

Tom smiled. "You wouldn't want your wife to keep controlling you, would you? Help me, and I can help you seize control."

Although Karter was the CEO of the Basham Group, his wife held the shares. That was why he had gotten rid of his mistresses and begged her for forgiveness all these years after she found out about his affairs.

Now that his current mistress was pregnant and he intended for her to keep the child, it was clear that he was planning to seize the shares.

Tom watched Karter as if weighing his options, showing no rush for a response.

Karter was silent for a long moment.

Finally, he said, "Fine. I'll do it. But if you cross me, I'll make sure you regret it."

"Pleasure doing business with you, Mr. Basham," Tom replied.

The moment Karter left the office, he immediately pulled out his phone and called Damon.

"Mr. Sumner, Tom approached me today."

"I know," Damon replied, his tone as calm as ever.

"He wants me to swap the materials for your upcoming project. It seems like he's planning to sabotage it somehow," Karter informed him. "Understood. Do as he says," Damon replied, his gaze cold.

"Got it, Mr. Sumner," Karter answered.

The call ended, and he wiped the sweat from his brow.

He had been tempted by Tom's offer of help to secure more power within his company, but he knew better.

Compared to Tom, Damon was a far more dangerous adversary. Even his so-called "mistress" was part of Damon's plan.

...

Having persuaded Karter, Tom felt particularly victorious and went out drinking with friends that evening.

Upon arriving at the club, he spotted Brandon and Valarie in the midst of a heated argument in the hallway.

and asked, "Mr. Sumner, Valarie, what's going on? You two seem

an eyebrow, he strolled over

y worked up." Congs

Both turned to look at him.

"None of your business," Brandon said coldly.

Valarie glanced at him briefly before looking back at Brandon.

"I'm done arguing," she muttered, turning on her heel.

Brandon reached out to grab her arm, but she shook him off with force.

"Brandon, I need space! Stop hovering!" Her voice echoed down the hallway, leaving an awkward silence in its wake. Brandon's face darkened as he explained, "Valarie, it's not what you think. Nothing happened between me and her." Valarie nodded. "Sure. Whatever you say. I must've imagined what I saw. Happy now?"

Had she not passed by

coincidentally, she wouldn't have seen Brandon's friends egging him on to kiss Michelle. The recollection of the scene made her blood boil.

"Valarie, it was just a stupid game! Even if you hadn't shown up, I would've refused. I care about you, only you. If there were anything between me and her, do you think I'd still be with you now?"

"They crossed a line tonight, and I swear it won't happen again. Please, don't let this ruin us," Brandon pleaded.

Chapter 935

It was Jayden's birthday tonight, and Brandon had only planned to drop off a gift and leave.

However, as soon as he had entered the private room, Jayden had pulled Michelle along to apologize to him.

After much persuasion, Brandon had reluctantly agreed to stay for the celebration. The group had drunk quite a bit, and someone had suggested they play a game.

After losing a round, Brandon had chosen "Dare". The group had urged him to kiss Michelle through a tissue. He had been about to refuse when Valarie stormed in, her face dark with displeasure.

Valarie's gaze was cold and filled with disappointment. "Brandon, I told you before that I wouldn't interfere with your friendships, but clearly, you've completely betrayed my trust."

If Brandon truly cared about her, he wouldn't keep hanging around Michelle with such unclear boundaries. His so-called friends wouldn't dare make such bold jokes at her expense.

"Valarie, it's just a game. I've already explained it to you. Do you really need to blow this out of proportion?" Brandon retorted.

Valarie let out a soft laugh, her tone dripping with irony. "You're right, it's not a big deal. I'm the one overthinking things. Go back and enjoy your game."

Without waiting for a response, she turned and walked swiftly toward the door.

Brandon instinctively wanted to follow, but Tom stepped in his way.

"Mr. Sumner, maybe it's best to let her cool off for now," he said.

"Get out of my way!" Brandon's expression turned icy as he glared at Tom.

Tom, unfazed, raised an eyebrow. "And if I don't?"

...

Valarie had just stepped out of the club when her phone rang.

The manager's voice came through urgently, "Mrs. Weir, Mr. Genge and Mr. Sumner are fighting!" Valarie paused for a moment, then replied with a frown, "That's none of my business. Call the police."

She hung up, got into her car, and left without a second thought.

Brandon and Tom fighting had nothing to do with her.

...

Back at the club, Brandon and Tom were throwing punches, smashing several pieces of furniture in the process.

It wasn't until the police arrived that the fight was broken up. Both men ended up at the police station, sporting bruises.

Around midnight, Damon received a call from the police and went to bail out Brandon.

When Brandon saw that it was Damon who had come, his previously defiant demeanor deflated in an instant. Why did it have to be him?

While the lawyer handled the paperwork, Damon stood off to the side, looking down at Brandon.

His voice was calm but carried a sharp edge. "Getting into a brawl and landing in the police station. Impressive." Brandon instinctively shuddered. "Uncle Damon, I didn't mean to."

If he had known Damon would be the one to show up, he would've kept his temper in check.

Damon smirked, repeating, "Didn't mean to?"

Brandon could only lower his head, silent.

Moments later, the lawyer returned. "Mr. Sumner, everything's been handled. He's free to go."

Damon gave a brief hum and walked toward the exit, not bothering to check whether Brandon was following.

Once outside, Brandon rushed to catch up. "Uncle Damon, I'm sorry for dragging you out here so late. I promise I'll never fight again."

"Get lost. I don't want to see you," Damon replied, throwing him a cold glance.

"Okay, okay, I'll leave right away!" Brandon quickly hailed a cab and disappeared, terrified Damon might call him back.

The lawyer approached Damon, his

expression serious. "Mr. Sumner, we couldn't suppress the news about the fight. It's already spread online."

"I see. Let it be. It's time for him to learn a lesson," Damon replied.

Tom had been coming out with various methods to attack the Sumner Group and Prospectus Technology recently. Yet, not only was Brandon not keeping himself in check, but he also fought Tom in the club-absolutely foolish.

The lawyer hesitated but ultimately nodded. "Understood."

By the time Damon returned home, it was past 1:00 a.m.

Opening the bedroom door, he

Nyla still awake. A flicker of guilt-

flashed in his eyes. "Nyla, I'm sorry

you had to stay up because of me."

Chapter 936

When Damon received the call earlier, it had woken Nyla as well.

She shook her head gently. "It's fine. Did you handle Brandon's situation?"

"Mm," Damon hummed in response.

"Good. Then get changed and rest," she urged.

"Alright," he replied.

...

Early the next morning, Brandon was woken by a call from Charlie.

"Mr. Sumner, the video of your fight with Mr. Genge is all over the Internet. People are talking about it nonstop. It's damaging the company's image," Charlie reported.

Brandon massaged his throbbing temples and replied, "Do whatever it takes to suppress it. I'm on my way to the office."

Half an hour later, he arrived to find several shareholders waiting outside his office, their expressions stormy.

The lead shareholder sneered as he approached. "Mr. Sumner, do you have any idea how much damage last night's incident has caused the company?"

"Do you know what people are saying online? They're questioning your ability to manage the company when you can't even control your own behavior. They're saying the Sumner Group is doomed under your leadership!" "Our stock is going to take a hit today. If you can't resolve this matter, we'll convene a board meeting to remove you as general manager!"

After delivering their ultimatum, the shareholders stormed off.

Brandon's expression darkened as he entered his office.

Charlie followed closely behind. "Mr. Sumner, we've tried to suppress the news, but it's no use. Someone seems to be deliberately fanning the flames."

"Keep trying. I don't care what it takes-get those videos taken down!" Brandon ordered.

"Yes, sir," Charlie replied.

Once alone, Brandon went online to assess the situation.

The comments under the video were scathing, with most of the criticism aimed squarely at him.

[Bosses fighting... Is he fighting because he couldn't win through business? Seems like he isn't quite capable then!]

[Oooh, Mr. Sumner proving himself here. Is it because sales are bad and pressure's high, so he can only brawl to vent?] [The usual high and poised Mr. Sumner fighting like a street thug, how 'different'.]

...

As Brandon read through the comments, he suddenly noticed something odd: Tom seemed to be getting off lightly.

After a moment's thought, he scoffed and called Charlie back.

"Forget suppressing the video. Hire a PR team to shift the focus onto Tom. I'll issue a personal statement to clear things up in a while," he instructed.

Charlie hesitated. "Mr. Sumner, the video clearly shows you throwing the first punch. Keeping it up could damage the Sumner Group's reputation further." "I'm aware. Just do as I say. This will blow over soon enough," Brandon said coolly.

"Understood. I'll take care of it right away," Charlie replied.

After Charlie left, Brandon composed a statement and posted it online:

[Hello, everyone. I'm Brandon Sumner, General Manager of the Sumner Group. I sincerely apologize for the inconvenience my personal matters have caused. Regarding the video of my altercation with Mr. Tom Genge from the Genge Group, I admit it's true.

[However, the incident occurred because, during a dispute with my girlfriend, Mr. Genge provoked me and physically blocked me from going after her when she left in anger.

[While I regret my impulsive actions, I hope everyone can understand that, even as a professional, I am also a person who can lose control when it comes to matters of the heart.

[I was wrong to resort to violence and have reflected deeply. Please do not emulate my actions. Once again, I apologize and hope this matter can be put to rest.]

Chapter 937

After Brandon's post went live, the Sumner Group's PR team quickly sprang into action, hiring a wave of paid commenters to fuel the conversation.

Shortly after, rumors resurfaced about Tom's infidelity during his past relationship with Valarie.

[I used to think Tom was a decent guy. Turns out he's just a scumbag! He cheated on Valarie before and now can't stand seeing her happy with someone else? Pathetic.]

[An ex should stay in the past like they're dead. Tom is the definition of "can't let go". If I were Valarie, I'd be disgusted beyond words.]

[Funny how this morning most comments were roasting Brandon. Tom, you buying some bots yourself?]

...

The heated debate in the comments section quickly reached Tom, who merely snickered upon hearing about it.

He wasn't surprised. After all, he never expected this incident to deliver a decisive blow to the Sumner Group. It was merely the opening move.

Valarie had also seen the video of the fight while at work, but she reacted indifferently.

After watching for a bit, she closed the video and refocused on her tasks.

...

As her workday ended, Brandon texted her, saying he was waiting outside her office building.

Still upset about the previous night, Valarie didn't want to see him.

Valarie: [Let's take a few days to cool down. Go home.]

When he didn't respond, she didn't think much of it. She packed up and left her office

Unexpectedly, when she arrived at the underground parking garage, she saw him standing next to her car.

Brandon, dressed sharply in a gray suit with his usual aloof demeanor, had a hint of rebellion in his slightly open collar. His intense gaze locked onto hers as though he feared she'd vanish if he looked away. Valarie sighed and walked over. "I told you, we need time to cool off."

Brandon looked at her, his eyes filled with guilt. "Valarie, I'm sorry. Last night was my fault. I shouldn't have gone to a gathering with Michelle and Jayden knowing how much you dislike them. I promise, from now on"

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"Brandon," Valarie interrupted, sounding weary. "I'm not upset about you hanging out with them." "Then what is it?" Brandon asked.

"It's that you and your friends don't know where to draw the line. You said it was just a game of truth or dare. If that's all it was, then I hope you won't mind if I start playing 'harmless games' like that with my male friends," Valarie explained.

Brandon's expression darkened instantly, his demeanor shifting as tension filled the air. "I won't allow it."

"Oh, so it's fine for you but not for me? Don't you think that's a bit hypocritical?" Valarie countered.

"Valarie, I was about to refuse when you walked in. I have a girlfriend-I know how to maintain boundaries with Michelle," Brandon said. Valarie paused, then spoke softly. "Let's just take a few days apart to cool down."

She moved to open her car door, but Brandon grabbed her hand.

"Valarie, don't you trust me?" he asked.

Valarie looked up at him, her gaze steady. "If it were my friends egging me on to kiss another man last night, would you have trusted me?"

"I would. Trust is the cornerstone of any relationship. Until something actually happens, I would choose to believe in you," Brandon claimed.

His answer made her laugh bitterly.

She pulled her hand away and said,

"When I went to see Tom, nothing t

happened then either. But you rushed over, demanding answers. That wasn't so long ago. Have you already forgotten?"

Chapter 938

Brandon stiffened, awkwardly replying, "That was different."

"How exactly?" Valarie asked.

"Tom is your ex, and you were crazy about him back then," Brandon explained.

Valarie's disappointment deepened. "So, in your eyes, I'm the kind of person who would still be tangled up with an ex while dating someone new?" "Valarie, don't twist my words. I trust you-I just don't trust Tom," Brandon shot back.

"Well, at least I never did anything with Tom that could be misinterpreted. I'm done discussing this. Let's take some time apart," Valarie insisted. Seeing the exhaustion in her expression, Brandon didn't press further. "Fine. If you need time, take it. I'll also deal with Michelle properly." Valarie nodded, said nothing, and drove off.

Once her car was out of sight, Brandon pulled out his phone and called Jayden. "Where are you? Free to meet? Bring Michelle. No one else."

An hour later, at a high-end restaurant in Saintornia...

Brandon sat across from Jayden and Michelle. His expression was icy, making the air between them tense.

Jayden leaned back in his chair, raising an eyebrow. "Valarie still giving you a hard time?"

Brandon's girlfriend had always struck Jayden as uptight and demanding. Before Brandon started dating her, they'd often joked around without any boundaries. But now that he was in a relationship, it felt like they all had to walk on eggshells. "I asked you here to make one thing clear," Brandon said coldly. "Don't invite me to any gatherings that include Michelle from now on. I won't be attending."

Brandon could still easily distinguish between a friend and a girlfriend.

He should have left Jayden's

birthday gathering the moment he'd given his gift. If he had, whatever happened afterward wouldn't have happened, and he wouldn't be fighting with Valarie.

Michelle paled, her gaze filled with disbelief as she stared at Brandon "Brandon, we've been friends for so

many years, and you're cuttin

me

off over a joke?"

Jayden's face darkened, his tone sharp. "Are you seriously choosing a woman over us? You think this is worth it?"

"If you and Michelle treated me like a friend, you would've respected my girlfriend. You wouldn't have made inappropriate jokes in front of her.

"Jayden, your birthday parties are

usually at venues owned by your et

family business. Last night's

location wasn't a coincidence, was it? Brandon questioned.

Michelle's expression flickered, her hands clenched under the table.

She had been the one to suggest last night's venue and she had had ulterior motives for doing so.

Jayden scoffed. "What are you accusing me of? You think I planned this to provoke Valarie?"

Valarie wasn't so important that he would use his birthday as a platform to pick on her!

"I didn't say that. Interpret it however you like. I've said my piece," Brandon replied.

Without waiting for a response, he stood and left.

Michelle tried to call after him, but Jayden stopped her. "Let him go! We don't need him. It's not like I can't survive without his friendship!" Jayden's face was tight with anger, his fists clenched so hard the veins bulged.

Chapter 939

Michelle glanced at Jayden, her expression tinged with guilt. "Jayden, I'm sorry. If it weren't for me, you and Brandon wouldn't be fighting like this."

Jayden turned to her, noticing the tears welling in her eyes. His frustration eased slightly.

"This isn't your fault. This whole thing is on Brandon," he reassured her.

Michelle nodded, though reluctantly. "But I don't want to be the reason you two are arguing."

After a brief pause, Jayden's tone grew more serious. "Don't worry about it anymore. Leave it to me."

Seeing his tense expression, Michelle didn't press further. She stood up. "I'll head back now. Next time, I'll try to apologize to Brandon and Valarie. Maybe I can help smooth things over." Jayden rose to his feet as well. "I'll walk you out."

Valarie had dinner with Nyla, spending most of the time venting about Brandon.

"I just don't get what's going through his head! Michelle is so obviously a manipulative bitch. How can he not see it?"

"And don't even get me started on Jayden. I heard he's chasing some campus beauty now. With the way he and Michelle are all buddy-buddy, he has zero chance with her. What a joke! "The more I think about it, the angrier I get. Men always stop cherishing what they already have. Ugh!"

Nyla chuckled, trying to calm her down. "You know, the two of you are six years apart. Of course, there will be differences in how you see things.

"At least, Brandon is trying and hasn't done anything unforgivable yet. Maybe you should argue it out with him and not stay mad for too long?"

"Yeah, yeah," Valarie muttered, stabbing her steak with her fork, still clearly upset.

Valarie sighed. Logically, she knew she shouldn't be this angry. She wasn't new to relationships.

If Brandon ever betrayed her, she could walk away. There were plenty of other fish in the sea. With that thought, her mood lightened considerably. "So, how are things between you and Damon lately?" she asked.

"Same as usual. He's been really busy lately, leaving early and coming home late," Nyla answered.

Valarie raised an eyebrow and whispered, "Doesn't that... affect your, you know, frequency?" Nyla's face flushed bright red. She knew exactly what Valarie was implying.

It had been a while since they'd been intimate. Damon was always busy, and by the time he came home, she was already asleep. Their schedules rarely lined up these days.

However, she wasn't particularly bothered by it. While their intimate moments were nice, it wasn't something she craved constantly. Valarie, sensing the silence, guessed correctly. She looked at Nyla in exasperation. "You're way too relaxed about this."

Confused, Nyla asked, "What does this have to do with being relaxed?"

Valarie sighed dramatically. "Yesterday, bumped into Damon while I was meeting a business partner. The woman he was working with? Drop-dead gorgeous. She was practically throwing herself at him, but luckily, he didn't even blink at her.

"Still, you should be careful of all the women out there who won't take no for an answer.

"Even though Damon has made your relationship public, some women just won't give up. They'll keep testing the waters.

"You need to keep him satisfied at home. If he's full at home, he won't be tempted by what's out there."

Nyla was rendered speechless.

She didn't think Damon was the type

to cheat. If he were, he wouldn't have spent five years without a single woman by his side. Plus, now that they had a child together, she felt even more secure.

"It's not as dramatic as you're making it sound," she muttered.

Valarie looked at her seriously. "It's absolutely as dramatic as I'm making it sound. You two are at the stage where things can start to feel stale.

"Without excitement, it's easy for someone to swoop in. I mean, look at what happened with me and Tom-

She abruptly stopped herself.

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"Anyway, intimacy is important for women. A lack of a good sex life can mess with your hormones," Valarie warned.

Nyla mulled over her words. There might be some truth to it, though she wasn't entirely convinced.

"But he's so busy... I don't want to add to his stress," she replied.

"Stress? Please. It's not stress, it's bonding. It's the most direct way for you two to connect," Valarie said matter-of-factly.

"Fine..." Nyla relented.

Valarie raised an eyebrow, refusing to back down despite Nyla's lack of enthusiasm. "Let's eat quickly, and then we'll go shopping. We're getting some clothes."

Before long, Valarie had dragged Nyla into a boutique specializing in lingerie and not the ordinary kind.

Valarie selected a set and held it up against Nyla, grinning. "This one is perfect for you."

Nyla glanced at the sheer fabric in Valarie's hands. The material was practically transparent, covering only the bare essentials. Her face flushed bright red.

She walked over and whispered, "Valarie, we don't need this. Let's go look at coats instead."

Just imagining herself wearing this in front of Damon made her want to dig a hole and hide in it, overwhelmed by embarrassment.

Valarie raised an eyebrow but refrained from teasing her further. Turning to the sales assistant, she said, "I'll take this one in size S, please."

After paying with her card, Valarie took the bag from the sales assistant and smoothly pulled Nyla out of the shop.

It took more than ten meters before Nyla could breathe a sigh of relief.

The mall was huge, but she was still worried about bumping into someone she knew. That would be awkward!

Valarie couldn't help but tease her. "Why are you acting like you've got something to hide?"

Nyla glared at her. "Well, thanks for taking me to that kind of boutique."

"What kind of boutique? Please, are you from the last century? This is normal now," Valarie replied.

"As if you have tons of experience..." Nyla muttered.

Valarie scoffed. "Not like I haven't seen things. Besides, it's about entertaining both the other person and yourself. If you don't want to wear it, just have Damon wear it."

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Nyla nearly choked. Asking Damon to wear lingerie? Right, unless she was tired of living.

Despite herself, certain images flashed in her mind-images she definitely didn't want to entertain.

She quickly shook her head, trying to dispel the disturbing thoughts.

"Are we still shopping or not?" she asked, trying to steer the conversation elsewhere. Valarie grinned. "Nope, let's go."

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Back at the villa, Valarie handed Nyla the lingerie. "Here. It's yours. The rest is up to you."

Nyla instinctively wanted to reject it, but Valarie shoved the bag into her hands. "I can't fit a size S, and this was over 700 dollars."

Nyla's eyes widened. Just a few pieces of sheer fabric, and it cost over 700 dollars? They might as well have just robbed her... "Can we return it?" she asked, shocked.

"How's that possible? Just take it. Not like I'm asking you to wear it right now. You'll know when the timing is right. And if you really don't want to wear it, just toss it," Valarie assured her.

"Fine..." Nyla replied, resigned.

When she entered the villa, she felt like she was carrying a ticking time bomb.

As soon as Nyla stepped into the living room, however, she froze.

Damon was sitting on the couch, reviewing some documents.

Alarmed, she instinctively hid the bag behind her.

Damon glanced up just in time to catch her frantic movement. He raised an eyebrow and asked, "What's that you're hiding?"