

Trading My Ex for His Uncle (Nyla)

Chapter 941

Nyla felt a pang of guilt flash in her eyes. "It's nothing. Just some clothes I bought with Valarie while shopping."

Why would clothes need hiding?

Seeing that Damon wasn't convinced, she quickly added, "Really, it's just clothes."

Damon couldn't help but chuckle. "Nyla, do you know the saying, 'the more you try to hide, the more obvious it becomes'?"

The more she tried to explain, the more suspicious it sounded.

Nyla bit her lip, subconsciously clenching her fingers around the bag. She regretted accepting the clothes from Valarie earlier.

Now, the awkwardness was overwhelming, and she wished she could disappear into the floor.

Under Damon's half-smiling gaze, her initial embarrassment slowly turned into irritation. She snapped, "Why do you need to know so much? Some things are just hard for a woman to explain to you." Damon froze, momentarily surprised by her snap. Then, he couldn't help but laugh. "Okay, my bad."

Even though he admitted his fault, Nyla only felt more frustrated.

"I'm going upstairs... You can keep working," she said calmly, making a show of walking past Damon to leave the room.

Once upstairs, she hurried into her bedroom and locked the door behind her. After sitting there for a while, she finally calmed down.

Looking down at the bag in her hand, she felt conflicted.

Should she throw it away? It was really expensive, though. She didn't want to waste it.

However, if she kept it and Damon found out, she might as well have asked for a hole to fall into.

After some thought, she still didn't know what to do with it. She shoved the clothes deep in her closet, planning to deal with it later when Damon wasn't home.

With that settled, Nyla finally relaxed.

When she opened the door and went downstairs, her composure had returned.

While getting some water in the

kitchen, she suddenly felt a pair of

arms

wrap around her waist. The familiar scent of pine filled the air, and she froze mid-pour.

"What are you doing? This is the kitchen. Lydia might come in any second," Nyla complained.

"She's already gone to bed," Damon replied.

His warm breath brushed against her ear, sending a tingle down her spine.

Nyla turned to push him away, but before she could, he grabbed her hands and pressed them against the counter.

"So, why didn't you buy anything when you were out shopping with Valarie? Did you not find anything you liked?" Damon asked.

The image of the lingerie set Valarie

had bought flashed in Nyla's mind and she instinctively pressed her lips together. "I didn't really shop, I'll buy something next time."

Seeing her avoid the question, Damon smirked. His voice dropped low. "I've been too busy lately and haven't had time to spend with you. That's my fault. I'll make sure to pay more attention." en FindNovel

Just as Nyla was about to respond, he captured her lips in a kiss.

When the kiss ended, she felt a bit dizzy, while Damon effortlessly picked her up and carried her upstairs.

While they were showering, Damon whispered in her ear, "So, what did you really buy?"

The shape of the items in the bag did look like clothes, but if they were ordinary clothes, Nyla wouldn't have looked so uncomfortable.

He thought for a moment, and a possible answer started to form in his mind, but he needed confirmation.

Nyla's face turned crimson, her ears flushed. "Nothing... Why do you keep asking?!"

Seeing her flustered, Damon was sure of his guess, and he couldn't help but laugh. "What kind are they? Let me see."

His voice was light, clearly enjoying the moment. Since they'd gotten together, he had always taken the lead. Now that Nyla was being proactive, it pleased him.

Chapter 942

Nyla bit her lip. "It's not what you think! Don't jump to conclusions!"

"Oh? What do you think I'm thinking? Tell me," Damon coaxed.

Nyla turned her head away, clearly unwilling to answer.

Damon took her hands, his movements growing more urgent. "Not going to say?"

The water in the bathtub rippled in circles.

By the end of it, Nyla was too exhausted to move, but Damon still wouldn't stop. It seemed like he wouldn't let her go unless she answered.

Finally, Nyla gritted her teeth, her frustration and embarrassment clear as she asked, "I'm tired. Can I just sleep now?"

Damon leaned down and kissed her lips, then asked gently, "Where did you put it?"

"In the back of the closet..." Nyla replied, adding without hesitation, "And it's for you."

For the rest of the night, she regretted saying those words.

Damon kept flipping her over, persistently asking her who the clothes were really for. It wasn't until dawn that he finally let her go.

Exhausted, Nyla could barely keep her eyes open. The moment her head hit the pillow, she fell asleep.

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Nyla woke up at 12:30 p.m.

Glancing at the time, she quickly sat up, then collapsed back onto the bed.

After a moment, she called the HR department at Prospectus Technology to request leave, only to be told that Damon had already taken care of it for her. Nyla sighed in relief. Ruby and Leon could handle the experiment for the day, so she sent a quick message to Ruby and set her phone down to go back to sleep. She didn't get up until nearly 2:00 p.m.

As soon as she went downstairs, Lydia hurried over.

Upon seeing the marks on Nyla's neck, she thought that youthful energy was something else.

"Ms. Kinsey, the food's been kept warm. Would you like to eat now?" Lydia asked.

"Mm," Nyla hummed in agreement.

After sleeping all day, she was starving. While she ate, Valarie called.

"I've been so busy today, this is the first chance I've had to call. How did the clothes I bought for you work out? Did they make Damon want you even more?" Valarie asked.

Nyla was silent for a moment, then gritted her teeth and replied, "If you ever buy me something like that again, I'll tell Brandon that you're into lingerie."

Hearing the exasperation in Nyla's voice, Valarie couldn't help but laugh. "Sounds like things went well last night. You should keep it up-buy a few more sets." "Forget it. I'm not cut out for this," Nyla grumbled.

Last night, Damon had only known about the lingerie set. Even without seeing them, he had kept her up all night. If she actually wore them... she couldn't even imagine what would happen.

Now that she thought about it, when she was half asleep last night, Damon seemed to have said he wanted her to wear them tonight.

Just thinking about it made Nyla

grind her teeth. She was already so exhausted that she could barely get out of bed this morning. If he wanted her to wear them tonight, she'd have no chance of making it to work tomorrow.

What confused her even more was that, even though Damon hadn't slept all night either, he still managed to get up and go to work this morning.

Valarie's laughing voice came

through. Wearing it occasionally to

spice things up is fine, but if you wear it every day, it's like taking too many tonics-it might even cause a nosebleed."

Nyla was speechless.

"I'm not talking to you anymore. Let's leave it at that." she muttered,

After hanging up, she started thinking about how to handle tonight.

Suddenly, her phone buzzed.

Damon: [Lydia told me you're up. Eat more to recover. Don't forget what you promised me last night. I'll be home early tonight. Wait for me.]

Chapter 943

Seeing the message, Nyla was speechless.

Nyla: [Not tonight, I have to work tomorrow!]

Damon: [Just once tonight.]

Nyla: [One time is still not happening. You can sleep in the guest room tonight.]

In the CEO office of Prospectus Technology...

Damon couldn't help but smile when he read Nyla's reply.

He could already picture her embarrassed and annoyed expression. She was probably glaring at her phone screen, her brows furrowed, with her ears turning red.

Remembering how exhausted she had been the previous night, he decided to show some "mercy" and let her off the hook this time.

A smile still tugged at his lips as he typed a response.

At that moment, Charlotte knocked and entered with a contract.

When she saw Damon's smile, she paused in her steps.

"Uncle Damon, what are you looking at? You look happy," she asked.

Damon flipped his phone face down on the desk, his expression turning cold as he looked up at her. "No deal. I'm not interested in your project."

Charlotte sat down across from him, raising an eyebrow. "But you haven't even seen my proposal. How can you say that?"

"I don't need to see it. Find someone else to work with," Damon replied.

Damon was Charlotte's uncle, but in business, he showed no mercy. Although Charlotte was used to his bluntness, she still felt a bit hurt.

"Uncle Damon, you're my family. I promise, if you work with me just this once, I'll never bother you again," she vowed.

Damon's gaze turned even colder. "I've already said it no deal. Go back."

The smile faded from Charlotte's face, replaced by a pout. "I helped you with Mr. Jayston. You can't just forget that."

"You were paid for that," Damon replied, his voice icy. "Stop being greedy."

If Charlotte's project hadn't involved the Genge Group, he might have considered it. But now, he wasn't about to give Tom any opportunity to undermine Prospectus Technology.

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Seeing Damon's cold demeanor, Charlotte felt a surge of frustration, but her fear of his unyielding expression kept her from speaking further.

"Fine, forget it," she muttered, standing up and leaving.

As she opened the door, Damon's cold voice echoed from behind her. "I suggest you stay away from Tom. If you don't, you won't even know what's coming." Charlotte grabbed the door handle, frustrated. "You won't help me with a project, so who I associate with is none of your business!"

Damon watched her leave without saying another word.

After all, Charlotte was an adult now,

with her own company. She had to be responsible for her actions. Whatever decisions she made, she would have to bear the

consequences.

Once outside Prospectus Technology, Charlotte glanced at the contract in her hand, her anger flaring. She tossed it into a nearby trash can.

She had assumed Damon would help her, as family. She had been wrong. In his eyes, everything was about business, and she was just another transaction. Since he wouldn't help her, she would have to cooperate with the Genge Group for the sake of her company.

In the evening, Damon came home with Mason.

Noticing his unusually serious expression, Nyla walked over and asked, "What's wrong? Did something happen at work?"

"It's nothing. Don't worry," Damon reassured her.

"You look like something's bothering

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you. How can I not worry? Don't stress too much. Take it

slow there's always more work to do Nyla comforted him.

Damon nodded, his eyes softening as he looked at her. "Mm."

After dinner, Damon headed straight to the study.

Chapter 944

Not long after, Brandon arrived.

Nyla was in the living room playing with Mason. Brandon greeted them briefly before heading straight for the study to meet Damon. "Uncle Damon, why did you call me over?" Brandon asked.

Damon glanced at him and asked, "How's the situation with your fight with Tom? Have you handled it?"

Damon sat at his desk, and though he was seated, Brandon immediately felt an unprecedented pressure as soon as their eyes met.

His smile faltered, and he stiffly replied, "It's still being handled. I hired some online trolls, and now there's a lot of criticism about Tom online."

Damon's gaze hardened. "Stop wasting time on that. Deal with the disloyal partners at the Sumner Group as soon as possible. And keep an eye on Charlotte. She might be working with the Genge Group."

Brandon listened attentively at first, but then couldn't help but exclaim, "No way! Does Charlotte really not know that Tom is targeting both the Sumner Group and Prospectus Technology? Is she out of her mind?" "I don't know. Just keep an eye on it," Damon replied.

"Got it," Brandon answered, though he still couldn't believe Charlotte would actually work with Tom.

He planned to confront her about it after he left. Now that Tom was targeting the Sumner Group, the Sumners had to stick together.

Damon waved him off. "Nothing else. You can go now."

"Oh. Alright..." Brandon replied.

After leaving Damon's villa, Brandon immediately called Charlotte. "Charlotte, I heard from Uncle Damon that you're going to work with the Genge Group. Is that true?"

There was a brief silence on the other end before Charlotte's angry voice echoed. "It's true. What's wrong? Since Uncle Damon won't help me, I have no choice but to find help elsewhere."

Brandon frowned. "What help are you talking about? Wait for me I'm coming to find you."

He hung up and immediately got in his car, speeding off.

At the Genge residence...

Karter sat across from Tom. "Mr. Genge, I've done what you asked. When will you help me?"

Tom smiled, taking a sip of his wine. "Don't rush, Mr. Basham. I'll do what I promised."

"I'm in a hurry, Mr. Genge. I did what you asked, but once the Sumner

Group gets into trouble, ever belongs to FindNovel

I was behind it.

"If the Summer Group and

Prospectus Technology come after me, and t'end up with nothing-no benefits, just a scapegoat-I'll be in a worse situation," Karter replied, frustration clear in his voice.

His impatience was obvious, and he shot Tom an unhappy look. "Don't be so impatient," Tom soothed. "Just wait a little longer."

"Wait for what?" Karter asked, narrowing his eyes.

"You'll find out in a few days," Tom replied cryptically.

Karter's impatience flared, and he coldly warned, "Mr. Genge, I don't have much patience. If you're playing me, I'll tell Damon everything you've been doing behind the

scenes. You wouldn't want him to

find out, would you?"

Tom paused mid-swig, his smile deepening as he assured him, "Don't worry. That won't happen."

Karter snorted but said nothing more, getting up and walking out.

Tom watched him leave, a murderous gleam flashing in his eyes.

Forget that Drake was threatening him. Who did Karter think he was to threaten him too?

If not for his plans still being in motion, Karter would have learned the hard way what happened when someone threatened him.

Chapter 945

After leaving the Genge residence, Karter dialed Damon's number.

"Mr. Sumner, Tom has been stringing me along. It seems like he's not planning to go after the Sumner Group in the short term," Karter reported.

Damon's tone was indifferent as he replied, "Got it. Just keep in touch with him for now-apply some pressure."

"Got it. But what about my 'mistress'? If I keep seeing her so often, my wife is bound to find out. Even if I had a hundred mouths, I couldn't explain it," Karter said hesitantly.

After a brief silence, Damon said, "You've been wanting to land the Zigler Group's project, right? Tomorrow, I'll arrange a meeting with Mr. Zigler. Whether you get the project or not depends on you."

Upon hearing this, Karter instantly felt lighter. His back stopped aching, his legs no longer hurt, and he set aside his worries about his wife finding out.

After all, he'd had plenty of mistresses in the past-what difference would one more make?

"Thanks, Mr. Sumner! You're a true lifesaver!" he chirped.

Damon hung up without another word.

Karter didn't care. As long as he could benefit from Damon, that was all that mattered.

In Charlotte's living room...

Brandon sat across from her with an icy expression.

"Charlotte, you've really lost your mind. Do you know Tom is targeting the Sumner Group and Prospectus Technology right now? And here you are, in cahoots with him. Uncle Damon won't let you off the hook for this," he said sharply.

Charlotte sneered. "I'm doing this because Uncle Damon forced me into it. If he had helped me, I wouldn't need to cooperate with the Genge Group. He doesn't want to help, but should I let my company go under just for the sake of family?"

"I think you're rushing into this project. Given your company's current capacity, you'll be lucky if it doesn't end in bankruptcy," Brandon warned.

Charlotte's company had originally been a branch of the Sumner Group but was handed over to her after Richard's decision.

Through her efforts, she had transformed it from a loss into a profitable business. If she stayed on her current trajectory, her company would undoubtedly flourish in the future.

"I just don't understand why you're in

such a hurry. If you take your time, in two or three years, your company will grow. Why risk everything on this project? If you fail, all the effort you've put in over the years will go to waste," Brandon stressed,

Charlotte smiled mockingly.

"Brandon, I'm not you. Before, Grandpa was there to back you up. After Grandpa passed away, Uncle Damon stepped in to support you. My abilities are no less than

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yours so why won't Uncle Damon

lend me a hand?

"Besides, risk and reward go hand in hand. This may be my only shot at such an opportunity. If I don't take it, who knows when I'll get another chance?" she countered.

She knew that collaborating with Tom was like working with a dangerous ally-one misstep could lead to ruin. But did she have another choice?

Because she was a woman, Richard

was

had handed her a struggling

company, while the profitable ones had gone to Clark and Brandon

Even Damon only supported

Brandon and refused to asevel.ne

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her.

Charlotte was utterly disappointed with the Sumners. She wouldn't ask Damon for help again. She would carve her own path and prove that she could succeed without relying on anyone. Seeing that Charlotte wouldn't listen, Brandon gave up trying to persuade her. He stood up.

"It's your choice, but you'd better think carefully. Can you handle the consequences?" he asked pointedly. Richard had only given Charlotte a small subsidiary company. If it went bankrupt, she would have nothing. "If you won't help me, then don't tell me what to do," she shot back.

Brandon sighed and turned to leave. Persuading Charlotte seemed futile. He'd have to talk to Damon again.

Chapter 946

After all, Charlotte was Brandon's cousin, and he didn't want to see her stray down the wrong path.

The next morning...

As soon as Damon arrived at the office, Brandon walked in.

"Uncle Damon, I need to talk to you about Charlotte," he said.

Damon's gaze grew cold.

"What about her?" he asked.

Damon had already told Charlotte that her company wasn't capable of handling the project she wanted to pursue and had even suggested several projects better suited for it.

However, she had turned them all down, determined to go after that one risky venture. He hadn't intervened further.

Unexpectedly, she had asked him yesterday not only to partner with her on the project but also to involve the Genge Group.

Damon had refused outright, unwilling to engage.

"Uncle Damon, even if Charlotte has made mistakes, she's still family. I think you're being too harsh on her," Brandon said.

After a long pause, Damon replied coldly, "Brandon, both you and Charlotte are adults now, running your own companies. You should know what's right and wrong without me having to teach you." He could offer help when necessary, but that didn't mean he would clean up after their messes.

If Charlotte went ahead with that project, it would be the end of her company.

Anyone who knew she was betting everything on it would try to take advantage of her. If he agreed to help and things went wrong, he would be expected to step in and fix it. Damon admired ambition, but not when it was reckless.

Brandon's face darkened at the thought of his fight with Tom. But... with their grandfather gone, Damon was the only reliable elder left. Both he and Charlotte wanted to depend

on him.

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"Uncle Damon, no matter how old Charlotte and I get, you'll always be our uncle. You're the one we can rely on. If you won't help us, who will?" Brandon reasoned.

To Brandon, family meant occasional disagreements, but always coming together when things got tough.

"I can help, but only within limits. If you do something stupid again, like fighting in public, I won't get involved," Damon said.

The Sumner Group's fate wasn't a huge concern for him. He had done what he could. Beyond that, he wasn't going to get any more involved.

Brandon lowered his gaze and didn't respond. He felt a wave of sadness as he realized that Damon was no longer someone he could rely on.

Perhaps, when he became the general manager of the Sumner Group, he should have focused on becoming someone others could depend on, rather than always leaning on others. Whether it was the Weir Group or Charlotte, he wasn't able to help them. All he could do was ask Damon for help.

It was time to grow up.

"Uncle Damon, I understand. I'll work harder, and unless absolutely necessary, I won't trouble you again," he said. With that, he turned and left.

Damon watched Brandon's retreating figure with a deep, unreadable expression but didn't call him back. Brandon was too young. He hadn't matured enough to bear the responsibility of the Sumner Group.

From the way he had fought with Tom in public, it was clear he was still a child, thinking that no matter how big a mess he made, someone would always clean it up for him.

Meanwhile, Charlotte was too ambitious for her own abilities. These past few years had gone smoothly for her, making her think she was exceptionally gifted and could succeed at anything she set her mind to.

Both of them needed to fall hard before they would understand what it truly meant to grow up.

Chapter 947

After leaving Prospectus Technology, Brandon headed straight to the office.

Since he could no longer rely on Damon, he decided to focus on improving himself from that point on.

The day passed quickly, with Brandon spending most of his time in meetings or reviewing documents.

It wasn't until Charlie reminded him about a client meeting in the evening that he realized it was almost 6:00 p.m.

He set the file down and cleared his throat. "Got it. Please send me the time and address on my phone."

"Okay, Mr. Sumner," Charlie replied.

Once Charlie left, Brandon skimmed through more files.

When the time came, he got up to meet the client.

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By the end of the meeting, it was already past 8:00 p.m.

He had just seen the client off and was about to head back when he noticed Valarie and a man laughing and chatting as they walked out of a nearby restaurant.

His expression shifted slightly as he turned to look at them. They both seemed to notice him, glancing in his direction.

When Valarie saw it was Brandon, her smile faded, but she quickly turned back to continue her conversation with the man, seemingly ignoring him.

Brandon walked up to them and overheard Valarie telling the man that they should get together for a meal some other time. His expression immediately hardened.

Who was this man, and why hadn't he seen him before?

"Valarie, who is this? You're not going to introduce me?" Brandon asked.

Valarie briefly glanced at him before replying indifferently, "Seth Farlow, my senior from university. He's in Saintornia on a business trip, and since we were nearby, we decided

to have dinner together." She smiled at Seth and added, "Seth, this is my friend, Brandon Sumner."

Hearing Valarie introduce him only as a friend made Brandon's face darken slightly. He stepped forward, pulled Valarie into an embrace, and extended his hand toward Seth.

"Hello, Mr. Farlow. I'm Valarie's boyfriend, Brandon," he said.

Valarie frowned but stayed silent, not wanting to embarrass him in front of Seth.

Seth gave them both a meaningful look. It seemed there was some tension between the two.

He smiled and shook hands with Brandon. "Hello, I'm Seth."

After the handshake, Brandon continued. "Valarie didn't mention you were in town, or else I would've invited you to dinner with us."

"No need for that, Mr. Sumner," Seth replied politely.

"It's the least I could do. You're quite

a gentleman. I wonder, do you have

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single-" Brandon began.

"Brandon!" Valarie interrupted, her voice a little irritated. He was meeting Seth for the first time and was already asking about his

relationship status?

Seth smiled and helped defuse the awkwardness. "Valarie, it's fine. Mr. Sumner, I do have a fiancée, but I appreciate your kindness."

At those words, Brandon immediately backed off, and his smile became more genuine.

"Seth, I apologize for being too

ff

forward. If you're not in a hurry, I can

drive you back. Let me know where

you're staying," he offered.

Valarie quickly rejected him, "No need. I drove here."

"Well, I'll drive your car then," Brandon insisted.

Valarie almost laughed at his persistence. "Brandon, we're not on the same route. You should head back now."

"Of course we are! Any route could take me back to my place," Brandon claimed.

Valarie was rendered speechless.

Seth raised an eyebrow and chuckled. "Valarie, since your boyfriend is offering, let him drive us both."

Valarie didn't want to make things awkward in front of Seth, so she reluctantly agreed. "Fine."

On the way back, Brandon chatted with Seth, who shared many stories from their university days.

By the time Seth was about to get out of the car, Brandon seemed a bit reluctant to say goodbye.

Chapter 948

"Seth, when you have time, let me take you out for a meal," Brandon offered casually.

Seth shook his head. "I'll be busy for a while, but when I'm free, I'll invite you and Valarie out for dinner."

"That sounds good. It's getting late, so take your time heading back," Brandon cautioned.

"Thank you for dropping me off today," Seth replied.

"You're welcome," Brandon answered.

Once Seth was gone, Valarie's expression turned cold. "Brandon, what was all that about?"

Brandon feigned innocence. "Nothing. I just saw you having dinner with Seth, so I stopped by to say hello. I didn't want you to get too tired, so I offered to drive him back."

"Are you saying you weren't suspicious of me and him, and you just came over to 'chat' with him?" Valarie retorted.

Brandon looked genuinely aggrieved. "Valarie, you're being unfair. I really just wanted to say hello."

"Did saying hello really require you to subtly ask if Seth had a girlfriend?" Valarie countered sharply.

Brandon maintained a serious tone. "Who knows? Your university is full of good-looking people, and I actually have a friend who's single. If Seth wasn't seeing anyone, I thought I might as well introduce them." Valarie didn't feel like arguing anymore. She turned away, her voice still cold. "We're done dropping him off. You can leave now."

"Valarie, you can't just use me and toss me aside," Brandon complained.

Valarie snorted. "I didn't ask you to drive. You insisted."

"I just didn't want you to be tired. Let me take you home," Brandon offered.

Valarie turned around to refuse, but when she saw Brandon's exhaustion, she hesitated. The place they had met was near several restaurants—he must have just finished his business dinner too. Her anger softened slightly. She turned away and said coldly, "I'll drive myself."

"No way I'm letting my girlfriend drive," Brandon said.

Before she could argue further, he started the car.

They drove in silence until they reached her house.

When the car stopped, he turned to her. "Valarie, I've thought it over, and I realize it was my fault. I should have kept my distance from Michelle and stopped my friends from making those jokes.

"I'll make sure to stay away from her in the future. Don't be angry anymore, okay?"

Valarie clenched her hands at her sides but stayed quiet for a long time before speaking. "We're both, tired tonight. We'll talk about this tomorrow. Drive the car back. K have someone pick it up tomorrow."

With that, she opened the door to get out.

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Brandon grabbed her hand. "Valarie, don't go. don't want to fight with you, and I don't want us to be cold to each other. You can be mad at me, but please don't ignore me, okay?"

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His voice was low and pleading.

Valarie pushed his hand away. "It's late, and I don't like making decisions at night. We'll talk tomorrow."

There was a flash of disappointment in Brandon's eyes, but he didn't stop her.

Valarie quickly disappeared behind her front door.

Brandon waited for a while, and when he was sure she wasn't coming back out, he started the car and drove off.

Hearing the sound of the engine as Brandon drove away, Valarie peeked out the window and saw the taillights of her car disappearing around the corner.

She tightened her grip on the curtain, conflicted.

Should she just forgive Brandon like this?

Chapter 949

After some hesitation, Valarie decided to put the matter out of her mind for now. She drew the curtains, grabbed her pajamas, and headed for the shower. The next morning...

After getting up and freshening up, Valarie went downstairs and noticed Brandon sitting at the breakfast table with her father.

She hesitated for a moment but quickly walked over and sat down, pretending nothing was wrong.

"What are you doing here?" she asked.

Brandon smiled. "Valarie, your car is at my place, so I came to give you a ride to work."

"I told you before that I'd have the driver pick it up from you," Valarie said, her tone flat.

"You'll have a hard time without your car this morning," he replied calmly.

Valarie felt a twinge of annoyance. She could always ask the driver to take her or even call a cab-what was the big deal?

She didn't respond, but her expression betrayed her irritation.

Sensing the tension, Jonathan stood up and said, "I've finished breakfast. I'll head to the office first. Since Brandon is here, let him give you a ride to work today."

With that, he quickly left, unwilling to meddle in his daughter's personal matters. It was better for them to sort it out themselves.

Now, only Valarie and Brandon remained in the room. She ignored him, focusing on her breakfast as though he wasn't there.

"Valarie, do you not want to see me?" Brandon asked softly.

Valarie's expression remained neutral. "There's no need to ask questions when you already know the answer."

Brandon looked hurt. He was silent for a few moments before speaking slowly. "Valarie, I know you're still angry. I want to give you the time you asked for, but I'm afraid... the longer this drags on, the more you'll want to push me away." Noticing the unease in his voice, Valarie pursed her lips.

After a long pause, she finally asked, "Brandon, will you really keep your distance from Michelle?"

Brandon recognized the hint of hesitation in her voice and quickly replied, "I promise. If there's a next time, no matter how much I beg, don't forgive me. "These past few days, all I could think about was how upset you were it felt like my heart was burning... Valarie, I never want to argue with you again."

In the past, when he saw couples

arguing on TV, he would scoff, dismissing it as childish drama. He

never understood how simple

matters could escalate into fights.

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It wasn't until he started dating Valarie and experienced their arguments-especially the silence that followed that he realized how painful it was. Seeing the sincerity in his eyes, Valarie sighed softly. "Alright, I forgive you."

Dragging out the conflict any longer would only deepen the hurt for both of them.

Brandon's face lit up with relief. He was about to speak when Valarie added sharply, "But I won't give you a third chance. If I ever see you tangled up with another woman, we're done."

Her tone was firm, her eyes leaving no room for doubt.

Brandon paled slightly but nodded. "Okay, I promise you."

Valarie finished the last sip of her milk, stood up, and said, "I've had enough breakfast. Let's go."

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After dropping her off at the company, Brandon hailed a taxi to his office.

When he reached the top floor, Charlie approached him as he stepped out of the elevator. "Mr. Sumner, Mr. Damon is here. He's waiting for you in your office"

Brandon frowned. Why was Damon there so early?

"Got it," he said.

He entered his office and sat down across from Damon. "Uncle Damon, what brings you here so early?"

"Have the building materials from Karter been put to use yet?" Damon asked without preamble.

Chapter 950

Brandon paused before replying, "They've already been used. Why?"

Damon replied, "Find a way to get the workers to leak the news that the materials are substandard. Make sure it reaches Tom's ears."

Brandon met Damon's cold gaze, remaining silent for a moment before nodding. "Got it."

Damon stood up and instructed, "Get someone trustworthy to handle this. Once the news spreads, Tom will likely find an opportunity to target the Sumner Group."

If Tom hadn't gone quiet all of a sudden, Brandon wouldn't have been asked to release this information.

Brandon nodded in acknowledgment.

After their discussion, Damon left.

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Back at Prospectus Technology, Spencer knocked on the door before entering the office.

"Mr. Sumner, Sullivan has confessed to embezzling over 450,000 dollars in research funds for drug development. However, he's already spent all of it, so it's unlikely we'll be able to recover the money."

Although 450,000 dollars wasn't much for Prospectus Technology, the incident had caused significant damage to the company's reputation.

If a small-time team leader could embezzle such a large sum for over three years without detection, others might be tempted to do the same.

Damon's expression darkened. "It doesn't matter if the money is recovered. We need to make an example of him-pressure them to give him the harshest punishment possible to send a clear warning to anyone else who might be tempted." Spencer nodded. "Understood."

Ruby received a call from Paul.

"Ms. Jenner, Mr. Heseltine has fully confessed to his crimes. He asked me to deliver something to you," Paul said.

Ruby was taken aback. During her

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to confess, so she didn't

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expect him to change his stance so suddenly.

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After considering the evidence Prospectus Technology had on him, she realized that whether he confessed or not, he would be prosecuted soon.

Not hearing a response from Ruby, Paul asked, "Ms. Jenner? Are you listening?" Ruby snapped back to attention and softly replied, "What did he want to give me?" "I'm not sure. When are you free? It's best if we meet to discuss it," Paul suggested. Ruby replied, "This evening. I'm free this evening."

"Alright. How about we meet at the cafe near your office at 7:00 p.m.?" Paul asked. "Sure. Just text me when you're there," Ruby said.

She exhaled slowly after hanging up.

She hadn't expected Sullivan to embezzle the company's research funds, but a mistake was a mistake.

What she could do now was help him with what he needed, to the best of her ability. There really wasn't much else she could do.

When evening came, Paul handed Ruby a box at a cafe near Prospectus Technology.

"Ms. Jenner, this is what Mr. Heseltine asked me to pass to you. I'm not sure what's inside, but he wanted me to apologize to you. He also asked that you forget his previous words and hopes that you can live your life well," Paul relayed.

Ruby took the box, noticing it had a lock with a password. She furrowed her brows in confusion.

"Did he tell you the password?" she asked.

Paul shook his head. "Mr. Heseltine said you'd be able to figure it out, so I don't know what it is either."

Chapter 951

Ruby nodded in understanding. "Alright, I understand. Thank you."

Paul stood up after she spoke. "I still have some work to finish. I'll take my leave now."

Once Paul left, Ruby gazed at the box in her hands, feeling puzzled.

She pondered over it for a moment before trying her birthday as the password, but it didn't work. She tried several other possible passwords related to Sullivan, but each attempt resulted in an error. Eventually, after too many incorrect tries, the lock disabled itself for two hours.

Unable to think of any other possibilities, she decided to set the box aside for now and left the café.

News of the Sumner Group's alleged use of substandard construction materials had begun to spread quietly within the company.

Huxley was in the middle of a meeting with his team to discuss next month's work plans when his assistant suddenly rushed over.

"Mr. Lightner, y-you need to see this!" the assistant exclaimed, handing him a phone.

Huxley's face darkened as he read the screen, but he quickly regained his neutral expression. "I've got it. Let's not worry about that for now and continue with the meeting."

The others in the room were visibly curious about what the assistant had shown him but didn't dare to ask.

Huxley's serious, no-nonsense demeanor often left his subordinates feeling intimidated.

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When the meeting concluded over an hour later, Huxley hurried out of the room with uncharacteristic urgency.

Curious eyes turned toward his assistant, Dillon Feek.

One employee couldn't resist asking, "Mr. Feek, what happened? Why is Mr. Lightner in such a hurry?"

Dillon calmly gathered his documents before looking up at the curious faces and answering with a smile, "It's something unrelated to us. Just focus on your own tasks and don't worry about it." With that, he left, leaving the room full of bewildered employees exchanging confused glances.

Back in his office, Huxley locked the door and immediately called Tom.

"Mr. Genge, those substandard construction materials are already in use, and the issue is starting to spread internally. I think Brandon is already aware of the situation," he informed.

"It doesn't matter if he knows. It's too late now. The market supervision department has already sent investigators to the site," Tom replied, his voice calm and detached.

Initially, Tom had planned to strike at the Sumner Group later, when the construction project was further along. But now that Brandon haet caughton so quickly, Tom had no choice but to accelerate his timeline.

After a brief pause, Huxley's tone turned anxious. "Mr. Genge, do you think this will get traced back to me?"

If it did, not only would he lose his job at the Sumner Group, but his reputation would be ruined as well. No company in Saintornia would hire him.

Although Tom had previously promised him a high salary if he helped with inside information on the Summer Group, Huxley didn't Swfront.

fully trust him. That was why he had asked for 700,000 dollars

What worried him more was the potential fallout for his uncle, a shareholder in the Sumner Group who had helped him secure his job in the first place.

If this situation implicated his uncle, their families might become bitter enemies.

The more Huxley thought about it, the more he regretted agreeing to cooperate with Tom.

Tom chuckled. "Even if it does, so what? You can come work for the Genge Group. I've already promised you double your current salary. What's there to be afraid of?"

Grinding his teeth, Huxley replied,

"Mr. Genge, I've reconsidered. This situation is too risky. I'll return the money you gave me. Find someone else for this. I'll act like I never knew anything about it."

Chapter 952

The other end of the call was silent for a few seconds before Tom's icy voice echoed. "Mr. Lightner, you've already taken my money. Isn't it a bit late to back out now?" "I'll return every penny! And I won't say a word about your plans to anyone," Huxley promised.

Tom let out a cold laugh. "From the moment you accepted my money, there was no turning back. And don't forget-while Brandon finding out about my involvement won't hinder my plans, if he learns you betrayed him, neither he nor your uncle will let you off the hook." Huxley's face turned pale as he hissed, "Tom, are you threatening me?"

"Mr. Lightner, don't misunderstand. We're in the same boat now. I wouldn't do anything to harm you. But if you jump ship, don't blame me when you drown," Tom said before ending the call.

He was confident Huxley would think things through.

Huxley stared at the disconnected line, then slammed his phone onto the desk with a curse.

Tom was a shameless bastard!

Blinded by greed, Huxley had climbed aboard Tom's sinking ship, and now he was stuck.

As his anger subsided, a grim realization dawned on him: he had to finish what he'd started.

He began contemplating his next move but couldn't shake the feeling that something about the situation was off.

How had news about the Sumner Group's substandard materials spread so quickly?

Those materials had only been in use for a few days. Even if a worker noticed an issue, they would've reported it directly to Brandon. There was no reason for such rumors to leak out to employees. The more Huxley thought about it, the stranger it seemed.

He called Tom again but got no answer, despite multiple attempts.

Frustrated and unable to leave during work hours, he could only wait, hoping Tom would see his messages and call back soon.

On the other side...

Tom had seen Huxley's calls but chose not to answer. A few days of silence would remind Huxley of his precarious position. Around 3:00 p.m., Tom's secretary, Pierre Pankey, burst into his office. "Mr. Genge, we've got a problem!"

Tom frowned, his tone sharp. "What could possibly be so urgent?"

"The Sumner Group's legal team is here," Pierre informed him. Tom's expression darkened. "What are they doing here?"

"They're... They're here to serve us a lawsuit," Pierre stuttered.

Tom raised an eyebrow, sneering. "Has Brandon lost his mind?"

Before he could say more, a sharply dressed man carrying a briefcase stepped into the room behind Pierre.

"Mr. Genge, he announced, "you've been accused of spreading false claims about the Sumner Group using non-compliant materials. The Summer Group is officially suing you. Here's the legal notice."

Tom narrowed his eyes as he took the document, scanned it briefly, and threw it onto the floor. "Accusing me of slandering the Sumner Group? What evidence do you have?"

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The man smiled. "Don't worry, Mr. Genge. We wouldn't be here

solid evidence. Perhaps y

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He handed over another document.

Tom took it nonchalantly, but as his eyes scanned the contents, his face grew visibly darker.

He scoffed, his gaze cold as ice. "I underestimated Brandon. So, he managed to dig up this, too?"

Chapter 953

"Mr. Genge, since the letter has been delivered, I'll take my leave," said the Sumner Group's legal representative as he walked out.

Before he was even out of the office, the sound of ripping paper echoed through the room.

Once the Sumner Group's legal representative disappeared through the doorway, Pierre cautiously glanced at Tom and asked, "Mr. Genge, what should we do now?"

Tom's expression was icy. "I merely reported what I heard that the Sumner Group was using substandard construction materials. How is that slander? Tell the legal team to prepare for the case."

Pierre's eyes lit up. "Understood. I'll let them know right away."

When the office fell silent again, Tom picked up his phone and dialed Karter.

"Mr. Basham, teaming up with the Sumner Group to target me-how clever. I won't let this slide. In less than an hour, all the information about your mistress will be delivered straight to your wife," he threatened, his voice trembling with barely restrained anger.

On the other end of the line, Karter chuckled. "Mr. Genge, are you sure she's my mistress? Maybe it's just a little show meant to deceive you."

Tom's grip on his phone tightened, his knuckles whitening.

After a pause, he let out a cold laugh. "I underestimated you this time, but don't think this is over. You'd better be prepared to deal with the fallout."

He hung up abruptly, throwing his phone onto the floor with a resounding thud. His face was clouded with fury.

He had thought himself a master strategist, yet Damon had played him like a fool. This plan couldn't have been Brandon's doing that idiot lacked the brains. It had to be Damon.

Originally, Tom had only planned to throw a wrench in the Sumner Group's operations, but now? He was going all in.

Not only would the Sumner Group fall, but Prospectus Technology wouldn't escape unscathed either.

Brandon couldn't help but smile when he heard about Tom's reaction.

He told the legal representative, "Good work. You can get back to your tasks now."

After the representative left, Brandon immediately contacted Damon to ask about their next move.

"We wait," Damon replied.

"Wait? For what?" Brandon asked, confused.

"For Tom to make his next move," Damon answered.

"Alright," Brandon said.

Damon added thoughtfully, "If you don't want to wait, you can go on the offensive. However, this incident likely won't have much of an impact on Tom. At most, you can use to damage the Genge Group's O reputation a bit."

"Understood, Uncle Damon," Brandon said.

After ending the call, Brandon considered his options.

Ultimately, he decided to stick to Nice

Damon's advice. Taking the offensive might inadvertently provide fom with an opportunity to retaliate, which could jeopardize the Summer Group-something he

couldn't afford.

At Prospectus Technology's CEO office...

Damon set down his phone.

Before he could return to reviewing documents, Spencer knocked on his office door and reported, "Mr. Sumner, something has happened to the Wilkie Group." Damon raised an eyebrow. "What happened?"

"It seems they invested heavily in

one of Starlite's projects. The funds they committed were too

substantial, and when the company ran into cash flow issues, a partner company took advantage of the situation. If they can't resolve this crisis, bankruptcy is a real possibility," Spencer elaborated.

The Wilkie Group had risen rapidly in Saintornia over the past few years, but its foundations were unstable. Any misstep could lead to collapse. However, the fact that a partner exploited them during a financial crunch seemed too coincidental.

"Look into what's really going on," Damon instructed.

If his suspicions were correct, the Wilkie Group had been set up.

Chapter 954

"Understood," Spencer said, leaving the office.

Damon thought the matter over. He suspected that the troubles of the Wilkie Group were somehow connected to Starlite.

Starlite Enterprise, a subsidiary of Nyce Tech, specialized in resorts and theme parks.

In recent years, it had launched several high-profile projects, including a water park in the northern part of the city and a dinosaur theme park in the city center. Their reputation for quality had earned them numerous lucrative deals. Prospectus Technology rarely collaborated with Starlite Enterprise, so Damon hadn't paid much attention to the company before.

If Starlite was involved in the Wilkie Group's downfall, however, it would warrant a deeper investigation.

That evening, as Damon was leaving a meeting, Spencer approached with news. "Mr. Sumner, Mr. Wilkie is here to see you. He's waiting in the reception room."

Damon paused for a moment, unsurprised by the visit.

"I see. Bring in two cups of coffee," he replied.

"Yes, sir," Spencer answered.

When Damon opened the door to the reception room, Pedro immediately stood and greeted, "Mr. Sumner."

"Please, have a seat," Damon said, gesturing for Pedro to sit before taking a seat himself. "You're visiting today because..."

Pedro sighed deeply. "I'm sure you've heard about the Wilkie Group's troubles. I'm here because of that."

"I've heard rumors, but not the details," Damon replied calmly.

Pedro hesitated, his tone laced with regret. "I won't hide it-this mess stems from my granddaughter. Blinded by greed, she pushed through a partnership with Starlite for a theme park project, tying up most of our company's liquid assets. That's why we're in this predicament."

Damon remained expressionless, though he didn't entirely believe Pedro's explanation.

Jane was only the general manager. All the Wilkie Group's shares were in Pedro's hands. She couldn't have committed such a significant portion of the company's assets to a single project without his approval. The project was likely her initiative, but Pedro must have signed off on it.

"And what brings you to Prospectus Technology today?" Damon asked.

Pedro hesitated again before replying, "I'm here to ask for your help, Mr. Sumner. If you can help the Wilkie Group through this crisis, promise we'll repay you once the

theme park project generates returns."

Damon feigned a conflicted expression. "It's not that I don't want to help. But with Tom targeting both the Sumper Group and Prospectus Technology, any involvement with the Wilkie Group might give him more leverage against us. It could put Prospectus Technology at risk."

Although he could assist the Wilkie Group, he wasn't about to make promises without fully understanding the situation.

Moreover, his past dealings with the Wilkies had left him skeptical of their gratitude.

Sensing Damon's hesitation, Pedro gritted his teeth and offered, "If you're willing to help, I'll transfer half of my shares in the Wilkie Group to you."

Giving up half his holdings was painful, but saving the company was more important. After all, if the Wilkie Group collapsed, those shares would become worthless.

Pedro had already made up his mind before coming here. With half the Wilkie Group in Damon's hands, it would be in his best interest to ensure the company's survival.

Chapter 955

Initially, Pedro believed that offering such a significant equity share would tempt Damon. To his surprise, Damon rejected the offer without hesitation.

"Mr. Wilkie, you should look for someone else. With the terms you're offering, I'm sure plenty of people would jump at the chance," Damon said, his tone firm.

Pedro was stunned, his brows knitting together in confusion. Why would Damon refuse such an advantageous offer?

He tried again. "Mr. Sumner, you're the only person I trust in Saintornia."

"But I don't have the energy to take on another company, and I won't risk putting Prospectus Technology in the same position as the Wilkie Group right now," Damon explained, his voice calm but resolute. Pedro gritted his teeth, clearly wrestling with his decision.

Finally, he countered, "Alright then, how about this? If you're willing to help the Wilkie Group, I'll transfer 60% of my shares to you. That would make you the largest shareholder. What do you say?"

To Pedro's dismay, Damon refused again. "Even if you offered me every last share of your company, my answer wouldn't change. Please, seek help elsewhere."

With that, Damon rose from his seat and turned to leave.

"Is this because of what happened with Nyla at my birthday party'?" Pedro asked hastily. "If that's the issue, I'm willing to personally apologize to her. I'll even have Jane apologize if that's what it takes to satisfy Ms. Kinsey." Damon paused and glanced back, his gaze meeting Pedro's. The older man looked ready to set aside all pride for the sake of his company.

"Mr. Wilkie, that incident is long behind us. My refusal to help the Wilkie Group is simply because I want to protect Prospectus Technology.

"It's a company I've poured years of effort into, and I won't put it in jeopardy for anyone. Thousands of employees depend on it. Please, leave now," Damon replied firmly.

Without another word, he walked out of the meeting room, never looking back.

Despair flickered across Pedro's face. Was the Wilkie Group truly doomed to bankruptcy?

In that instant, it was as if he had aged several years. His back bent slightly under the weight of the realization.

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When Pedro returned home, his mood darkened further at the sight of Jane kneeling by the door. Anger flared instantly.

If she hadn't incessantly praised Starlite's project-calling it a golden opportunity and emphasizing its government collaboration he wouldn't have trusted her so much.

He wouldn't have approved such heavy investments that had now brought the Wilkie Group to the brink of collapse.

Pretending not to see Jane, Pedro walked past her.

Unexpectedly, she rushed forward and grabbed his legs.

"Grandpa... I'm sorry! This is all my fault! I didn't know it would turn out like this..." Jane cried, her tears streaming freely.

Remorse etched itself across her

face as she sobbed. Her plan to use the Starlite project to solidify her

standing in the Wilkie Group hanet

backfired spectacularly, leaving the company teetering on the edge of ruin.

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Now, panic consumed her.

If the Wilkie Group went bankrupt, she would lose everything.

If the company survived, though, Pedro would never allow her to remain as general manager. Both outcomes were disastrous.

Pedro looked down at her with icy disdain. "Get out of my sight. I have no granddaughter like you."

Jane shook her head frantically,

tears falling in rivers. "Grandpa, I truly understand my mistake. I shouldn't have been so confident The Wilkie Group will overcome this crisis. I'll ask my friends for help!"

Pedro sneered. "If they truly wanted to help, they would've reached out already. Begging them won't change a thing. Now move. I've wasted enough words on you."

Desperate to redeem herself, Jane

clung tighter to his legs. "Grandpa, there's still Gabriel... His gaming. company has been making money. If we sell it, the funds might Cover the Wilkie Group's losses!"

Chapter 956

Jane's words reminded Pedro of something he had almost forgotten.

Years ago, he had assigned Gabriel to the gaming company, not expecting it to thrive. He had done so simply to keep Gabriel away from the Wilkie Group's core operations. Yet somehow, Gabriel had managed to turn it around. Pedro glanced at his butler and said, "Go and call Gabriel."

Half an hour later...

Pedro sat behind his desk in the study, while Gabriel stood in the center of the room.

Jane remained kneeling on the floor.

"Gabriel," Pedro began, his tone firm. "I hear your gaming company has been doing well these past couple of years. You're aware of the Wilkie Group's crisis. I've decided to sell the company to save the group. Start preparing the necessary documents for the handover." Gabriel didn't seem surprised by this decision. He nodded calmly. "Alright. But selling in a rush might mean we won't get the best price."

"I know. How much do you think it's worth right now?" Pedro asked.

After a moment of thought, Gabriel replied, "Under normal circumstances, it could go for over 400,000,000 dollars. But given the current urgency, we'd be lucky to get 350,000,000 dollars."

Now that the issue with the Wilkie Group was public, it was inevitable that people would take advantage of the Wilkies' vulnerability.

"Fine. Don't sell it for less than 350,000,000 dollars," Pedro stated.

"I understand. I'll start organizing the paperwork immediately," Gabriel replied.

Pedro cast a cold glance at Jane, who was still kneeling. "Sorting out all the documents for a sale like this is no small task. You'll accompany Gabriel and assist him with the preparation. Stay out of the Wilkie Group for now."

Gabriel hesitated for a moment, a fleeting shadow crossing his eyes. It seemed Pedro still didn't fully trust him.

Sensing her grandfather's implied meaning, Jane quickly stood. "Yes, Grandpa."

She followed Gabriel out of the Wilkie residence, and the two got into the same car to head to the gaming company.

During the drive, Jane's expression remained tense, her mood foul. She didn't even try to speak.

If Gabriel had supported her earlier, using funds from his gaming company to invest in the Starlite project, the Wilkie Group wouldn't be in such a dire situation now. Deep down, she resented him for it.

Gabriel, however, seemed oblivious to her anger. He didn't offer any words of comfort, driving silently.

When they finally arrived at the company Jane couldn't hold back any longer. As they stepped out of the car, she called after him, "Gabriel, aren't you going to say anything to me?"

Despite being married for five years, Jane felt she had never truly understood Gabriel.

He was always calm, detached, and indifferent-even earlier, when Pedro had ordered the sale of the company he had spent years building, Gabriel had shown no reaction.

Her mind raced with doubts. Did he ever truly care about her?

Gabriel turned to look at her. "What do you want me to say, Jane?"

"The Wilkie Group is in such a mess, and you're not even going to try to comfort me?" Jane demanded.

Her accusation didn't seem to

surprise Gabriel. He gazed at her with a soft expression, his voice steady. "Jane, I think what's more important right now is figuring out a way forward-a contingency plan for us.

Jane's face darkened. "A contingency plan? What do you mean? Are you saying the Wilkie Group is doomed to fail?"

Chapter 957

Gabriel looked at Jane and said, "That's not what I mean. I'm just planning ahead. If the Wilkie Group does go bankrupt, at least we'll have a fallback plan." Jane scoffed. "The Wilkie Group will never go bankrupt!"

"Maybe not," Gabriel said evenly. "But it's always good to have a contingency plan. After all, you and I can endure it, but I don't want Wil to suffer."

Upon hearing this, Jane's expression softened slightly. No mother would want her child to endure hardship.

"Fine, let's go. Let's try to get all the documents organized today," she said, briskly heading toward the company's entrance.

She didn't notice the sudden coldness that flashed in Gabriel's eyes.

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By the time they finished organizing the critical documents, I was nearing midnight.

As they stepped out of the company, Jane glanced at the still-lit Wilkie Group building in the distance. Her lips pressed into a thin line, her expression complicated, as if lost in thought.

Gabriel put an arm around her shoulders and spoke softly. "Jane, this isn't your fault. No one could've foreseen that the partner company would backstab the Wilkie Group."

Jane shook her head. "If I hadn't been so overconfident and persuaded Grandpa to partner with Starlite for that amusement park project, the Wilkie Group wouldn't have sunk most of its liquid assets into it and ended up so vulnerable." "We'll get through this," Gabriel comforted. "Once the amusement park project gains traction, things will start looking up."

She didn't respond, letting out a soft sigh instead. The truth was, she wasn't confident at all. She didn't know if the Wilkie Group could weather the storm.

"Let's go. It's late, and we have a lot to handle tomorrow," Gabriel said.

With one last glance at the Wilkie Group building, Jane turned and left with him.

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The gaming company had to be sold in a hurry, ultimately going for 340,000,000 dollars to a specialized gaming firm.

With the funds in hand, Pedro immediately reinvested them into the Wilkie Group, barely resolving the immediate crisis.

Once the Wilkie Group stabilized, Pedro called a board meeting to reassure the shareholders.

Although the company had been temporarily steadied, the shareholders remained dissatisfied with Jane.

"Mr. Wilkie, if I may speak freely, I

don't think MS, Wilkie is suitable to manage a company as large as the

Wilkie Group. I suggest she step down as general manager and take on the role of deputy manager while we select someone more capable to take over," one shareholder said.

"I agree," another chimed in. "Business is like a battlefield. Women should stick to raising families at home."

"To be honest, I used to think Ms. Wilkie was capable and sharp. But this time, the Wilkie Group nearly went bankrupt because of her. If it had, we'd all be penniless!" yet another shareholder added

While listening to the chatter, Pedro's face remained unreadable.

When the room finally quieted, he spoke in a low, commanding voice. "Since you all think Jane is unsuitable, do you have anyone better in mind?"

The shareholders exchanged glances, none daring to speak.

They each had their own agendas, hoping to push their own children into the position. However, with their limited shares, they knew it wasn't feasible, so they kept quiet.

Finally, someone muttered, "I think Theo might be a good choice."

Compared to the strong-willed and independent-minded Jane, Theo would be much easier to control.

Pedro let out a cold laugh. "Theo? Letting him take over would ruin the Wilkie Group faster than anything else."

Since joining the Wilkie Group, Theo hadn't managed to secure a single deal. Pedro was thoroughly disappointed in him.

While the Starlite situation had shaken Pedro's faith in Jane, he still preferred her to Theo.

Chapter 958

Pedro's words immediately silenced the room.

No one dared to argue further. His statement was clear-Jane would remain general manager.

"This partnership with Starlite was indeed a risky move," Pedro said. "But all of you were in favor of it at the time. We can't pin the blame solely on her. I trust she'll learn from this and avoid such risks in the future." The shareholders exchanged uneasy looks but said nothing more. After all, with Pedro holding 80% of the shares, the general manager would remain a Wilkie, no matter what.

Jane mentally took note of the shareholders who had spoken against her, planning to deal with them once this crisis was truly over.

Back in the office after the meeting, Jane turned to Pedro. "Grandpa, thank you for speaking up for me just now. Otherwise, I can't imagine how far those shareholders would have gone in tearing me down." Pedro's gaze was icy. "Don't misunderstand. I only defended you because you're family. You'd better behave yourself and avoid giving the shareholders more ammunition. If you slip up again, I won't protect you." Jane lowered her eyes, hiding her dissatisfaction. "I understand, Grandpa."

"The funds we invested in the Wilkie Group are just a stopgap," Pedro said. "The most urgent task now is to find a new partner. Otherwise, the Wilkie Group's entire production chain will grind to a halt."

In recent years, the Wilkie Group had focused on chip production.

The company that betrayed them was their largest supplier, controlling the semiconductor materials essential for chip manufacturing. Without those materials, the Wilkie Group's production would stop entirely, incurring daily losses in the millions. The priority now was to find a new supplier, or the funds from selling the gaming company wouldn't last more than a few months.

Jane's expression grew serious. "I understand. Tomorrow, I'll head to Southernia and see if I can secure deals with smaller suppliers to keep the production line running while we search for a more stable long-term partner."

"Good," Pedro said. "But don't mess this up again. If you do, I won't wait for the shareholders to take action-I'll remove you myself."

With that, he stood and left.

Jane took a deep breath, suppressing her frustration, and called her secretary to finalize the details for her trip.

...

Gabriel stood at the kindergarten gate in the evening, waiting to pick up Wilhelm.

Now that the gaming company had been sold, he was technically unemployed in the eyes of others.

He figured he might as well handle school pick-ups.

After waiting a while, Wilhelm hadn't come out yet, but Mason emerged first.

Recognizing Mason instantly, Gabriel smiled. He walked over to greet him. "Buddy, do you remember me? I'm Wilhelm's father."

Mason looked up at Gabriel's smiling face, frowning slightly.

Mason's features resembled Damon's. When Mason frowned, the resemblance was uncanny.

Though Gabriel's smile remained, he

couldn't help feeling a surge of dislike. His hatred for Damon extended to Mason, making it hard

for him to warm up to the boy.

Mason recognized Gabriel and nodded politely. "Yes, you're here to pick up Wilhelm, right? When I left, he was still packing up his things. He should be out soon."

"Right. Is someone here to pick you up? Your mom?" Gabriel asked.

Not wanting to talk to him further, Mason spotted the family driver nearby and quickly said, "My ride's here. I have to go now. Goodbye."

Chapter 959

Before Gabriel could respond, Mason quickly ran to the waiting driver. He climbed into the car and drove off without looking back.

Gabriel watched the Cayenne disappear into the distance, narrowing his eyes slightly.

"Daddy!" Wilhelm shouted.

Feeling a tug at his leg, Gabriel looked down to find Wilhelm staring up at him, full of excitement.

"Daddy, why are you here to pick me up today?" Wilhelm asked.

Both Gabriel and Jane were usually so busy with work that they relied on the driver for school pickups and drop-offs. As a result, Wilhelm was rarely greeted by either parent. When he saw his father standing outside the school gate, he almost couldn't believe it.

Gabriel smiled and lifted Wilhelm into his arms. "I finished work early today, so I thought I'd come pick you up. Did you have fun at school?"

"Mm-hmm. It was okay," Wilhelm said.

Gabriel noticed Wilhelm didn't seem unhappy, so he carried him toward the car and asked, "What would you like to eat tonight? I'll have the housekeeper prepare it in advance." Wilhelm eagerly listed off several of his favorite dishes, his eyes lighting up with excitement.

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Back home, father and son enjoyed dinner together, but Jane was still nowhere to be seen.

Wilhelm waited for a while, his little eyes drooping as he grew sleepier and sleepier. His head bobbed as he struggled to stay awake, nearly falling off the couch several times. Gabriel steadied him and spoke softly. "Wil, Mommy's working late tonight. Why don't you go to bed first? When she gets home, I'll have her check on you. Okay?"

Disappointment flashed across Wilhelm's face. His parents had been so busy lately that it had been days since he'd seen his mother properly. "Okay," he murmured.

After asking the housekeeper to take Wilhelm upstairs to bed, Gabriel picked up a book and sat on the living room couch, reading.

It wasn't until close to midnight that Jane finally returned, looking completely exhausted.

Gabriel set the book aside and went to take her coat as she entered. "Rough day? Do you want me to give you a massage?"

Jane shook her head. "No, thanks. I need to pack. I have a business trip tomorrow."

"So soon?" Gabriel frowned. "Wil

waited for you all evening. He was so tired he finally fell asleep. He'll be upset if he wakes up tomorrow and you're gone."

"I can't help it," Jane replied with a sigh. "The company's supply chain is at a standstill. If we keep delaying, the losses will only increase. promise, once things settle down, I'll make it up to him." FindNovel

"Okay. Let me help you pack. Do you want me to come with you? I don't have anything pressing right now," Gabriel offered softly.

Jane hesitated for a moment before shaking her head. "No, it's fine. I can handle it."

She was acutely aware of Pedro's distrust of Gabriel. Bringing him along would only invite more scrutiny, which she didn't need at the moment.

For Jane, nothing was more important than securing her position as general manager of the Wilkie Group and her status as the family successor.

If Pedro ever gave her an ultimatum-divorce Gabriel or give up the company-she knew what her choice would be.

When she married Gabriel, it had

been a passionate, impulsive decision. Now, she understood the importance of marrying someone who could be an asset to the Wilkie

Group.

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If she had chosen someone of equal standing, the Wilkie Group wouldn't have had to sell off an entire subsidiary to survive this crisis. Gabriel pressed his lips together and nodded. "Alright."

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After packing, it was nearly 1:00 a.m.

Jane took a quick shower and returned to the bedroom. Gabriel took out a hair dryer and began drying her hair for her.

As he put the dryer away, he casually said, "Jane, I've decided to look for a new job."

#Chapter 960

Chapter 960

Jane's expression shifted as she asked, "Why the sudden decision?"

"The gaming company's been sold, and the Wilkie Group isn't out of the woods yet. Grandpa likely won't assign me to a new role anytime soon, and I can't keep living off you. I might as well look for a new job," Gabriel replied. Seeing the seriousness in his eyes, Jane hesitated. "Let's talk about it when I get back. Grandpa might have other plans for you."

Gabriel crouched in front of her, looking up into her eyes. His voice was gentle, almost pleading. "Jane, I don't want to rely on Grandpa anymore. When we first got married, I didn't want to work for the Wilkies at all. But I couldn't say no to him back then, and one year turned into several.

"Now that the gaming company is gone, I want to forge my own path. And more than that, I hate that I couldn't help you during this crisis. It's been eating at me.

"If I have my own career, maybe I can create opportunities to support you. Don't you think so?"

Jane was momentarily moved by his sincerity. She did need a partner who could support her now-not a man with nothing like Gabriel.

She nodded. "Alright, just don't overwork yourself."

"Don't worry. I've got this," Gabriel answered.

The next morning...

Gabriel drove Jane to the airport before heading straight to Starlite.

As soon as he stepped into Shane's office, Shane immediately stood upon seeing him. "Mr. Hackett, what brings you here?"

Shane's tone was full of deference-an attitude starkly different from how he acted toward Jane.

Gabriel walked over and sat down in Shane's chair, his demeanor calm and composed. "How's the gaming company?"

"Mr. Hackett, it's running as usual, just under a different name. If you'd like, I can have the legal team make the necessary changes today," Shane informed him.

"No need," Gabriel said. "Let's hold off on that. But keep a close watch on the company. I don't want any unexpected problems right now."

Shane nodded hastily. "Understood, sir. I assure you, everything is under control. Give it a month, and the Wilkie Group will change its name to Hackett." As he spoke, his head was lowered. He didn't dare meet Gabriel's eyes.

No one knew that Gabriel was the boss behind Starlite Enterprise and Nyce Tech. He had been staying low all these years, enough that Shane almost thought he was planning to spend the rest of his life under the Wilkies.

Shane didn't expect Gabriel to start attacking the Wilkies a little more than a month ago. He didn't dare ask, merely following Gabriel's instructions.

"Good," Gabriel said, his tone icy.

"Jane's out scouting for new suppliers today. When she finds one, you know what to do with the

amusement park project."

"Of course, Mr. Hackett," Shane replied.

Gabriel left after reviewing Starlite's latest financial reports.

Watching Gabriel's car disappear, Shane wiped the sweat from his brow. He couldn't help but feel a pang of sympathy for Jane.

She was working tirelessly to save her family business, completely unaware that the man she shared her bed with was orchestrating its downfall. At Prospectus Technology...

Spencer knocked and entered Damon's office with a folder in hand.

"Mr. Sumner, we've confirmed that something's off with Starlite Enterprise. Their amusement park project is nothing but smoke and mirrors.

"They don't even own the land yet, but they've already taken hundreds of millions from the Wilkie Group," he reported.

