

Trading My Ex for His Uncle

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Pedro's expression changed slightly, and he instructed, "I'm on my way. Have the tech department fix it right away!"

By the time Pedro reached the company, more than an hour had passed.

Theo sat in his office, fuming, demanding that the tech department resolve the issue within the next half hour.

His secretary, visibly trembling, turned to leave but stopped to greet Pedro as he arrived. "Mr. Wilkie, you're here."

Pedro nodded. "Get back to work."

Once the secretary left, Pedro entered the office and shut the door behind him. "What's going on? It's just a firewall, and it still hasn't been fixed?"

Theo's face remained furious. "Ugh, they're all useless-getting paid so much but can't do anything when it matters!"

Pedro sat down on the sofa, his face hardening. "If it's not fixed in another half hour, I'll handle it myself."

Theo sat across from him, scratching his head in frustration. "What can you do? I don't get it. The firewall was fine before, but now it's under attack out of nowhere."

"Do you think it has something to do with the fund that was transferred into our company account?"

"Forget about the money for now," Pedro replied. "Go to the tech department and find out if they can actually fix the firewall. Once you confirm, come back and let me know."

Theo, sensing the coldness in Pedro's expression, didn't dare argue. "Okay, I'll go now."

About ten minutes later, Theo returned, his face grim. "Grandpa, I asked the head of the tech department. To fix the firewall, they said it'll take at least a full day."

"A day? By the time they fix it, the company will be ruined!" Pedro exclaimed.

"I don't know what else to do. I don't understand this tech stuff either..." Theo muttered.

"Alright, go out now. I'll figure something out," Pedro replied.

"Okay," Theo answered, still feeling uncertain.

As Theo left the office, it suddenly dawned on him that Pedro's decision to think of a solution didn't require him to stay.

Was it because Pedro thought he was useless and couldn't handle anything?

Back in the office, Pedro dialed Drake's number. "Did you attack our company's firewall?"

Drake chuckled. "I didn't expect the Wilkie Group's firewall to be so weak. You called me earlier than I thought you would."

"What do you want?" Pedro demanded.

"I just wanted to demonstrate my capabilities and make it clear that dealing with the Wilkie Group is easy for me. I'm also genuinely interested in working with you," Drake O explained.

Pedro took a deep breath and said slowly, "You want the Wilkie Group to be your pawn against Prospectus Technology, right? I agree, but you must guarantee that when it's all over the Wilkie Group won't be harmed." en

"You don't need to worry about that, Mr. Wilkie, The Wilkie Group isn't at the point where I need to destroy it. Today was just a necessary step to show you that I want to cooperate," Drake replied.

Pedro's expression darkened. "Come to the Wilkie residence tomorrow, and we'll talk face-to-face."

"Mr. Wilkie, I'm busy and can't make it. I'll be at Tie-Fun Restaurant, Room 1, at 8:00 p.m. tonight, waiting for you," Drake said.

Before Pedro could respond, the line went dead. His eyes flashed with anger, and he nearly threw the phone in frustration.

In all his years in business, this was the first time he had been threatened like this!

Drake Mummery... he'd remember that name.

Ten minutes later, Theo burst into the office, looking excited.

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"Grandpa, the hackers attacking our firewall are gone now. The firewall is fixed, and the company is operating normally again!" Theo exclaimed.

Pedro remained calm. "I see. You can go back to work now."

Theo was momentarily taken aback. "Grandpa, aren't you surprised?"

"I'm just tired. I'll head home now," Pedro replied.

Seeing Pedro stand up to leave, Theo quickly stopped him. "Grandpa, since you're here, stay a bit longer. There are a few documents I don't quite understand. Could you help me out?"

Pedro sat back down on the sofa upon noticing Theo's serious expression. "Bring them over."

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An hour later, Pedro's face turned beet red with anger as he glared at Theo. "You're a complete failure! I regret handing the company to you. I might as well have given it to Jane!"

Although Jane lacked boldness, at least she wouldn't make these rookie mistakes like Theo.

Theo's face darkened. "Grandpa, how long has Jane been with the company, and how long have I been here? Isn't it normal that I don't know everything yet? I've been trying hard to learn! You can't expect me to know everything overnight!" Pedro pointed at him, his head throbbing with frustration. "If you don't know, go learn from the other shareholders or the secretary! I've hired so many mentors over the years, and this is what you've become. All that money wasted!"

"Grandpa, what good is saying all this now? The most important thing is to teach me how to read these contracts," Theo argued.

Pedro took a deep breath, pointed at one of the clauses in the contract, and coldly said, "There's a problem here. Mark it."

Theo nodded. "Oh... okay. What's the issue?"

"Just mark it. I'll explain it to you later," Pedro instructed.

There were several similar issues in the documents Theo had brought, but the fool hadn't noticed any of them.

Pedro was already regretting handing the company over to him

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Should he call Jane back from overseas?

If Jane hadn't done all those foolish things to fight with Nyla, he wouldn't have been forced to train Theo.

Unfortunately, a fool was still a fool. Even with training, all he had was a fool who looked decent on the outside.

Mason had just finished his bath and was lying down when he received a call from Alexander. "Buddy, are you asleep yet?"

Upon hearing Alexander's voice, Mason's face lit up. "Master, I was about to sleep. What's up?"

"Do you have time this Saturday? I want to take you out for some fun," Alexander asked.

Mason's mood brightened for a

moment, but then he hesitated. "Master, I don't think I can go My mom said I shouldn't spend too much time with you."

He wanted to go out with his master but didn't want to upset his mom.

"Buddy, all you need to do is tell me if you want to go. I'll talk to your mom," Alexander coaxed.

"No, Master. My mom doesn't like you right now, and she definitely won't agree," Mason protested.

"Alright, then get some rest," Alexander replied.

"Mm. Goodnight, Master," Mason said.

After hanging up, Alexander placed his phone on the table, deep in thought about how to make Nyla accept him as part of her family.

Emerald had really given him a tough challenge!

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As soon as Mason set down the phone, a knock came at the door.

"Buddy, who were you talking to just now?" Nyla asked.

Mason swallowed hard and called out, "Mommy, I wasn't talking to anyone. I was just... talking to myself."

"It's late. Go to bed soon," Nyla urged.

"Okay, Mommy," Mason replied.

The sound of footsteps faded from outside the door, and he let out a breath of relief. If Nyla had walked in just a moment earlier, he wouldn't have been able to explain himself.

The next morning, Damon, Nyla, and Mason sat at the breakfast table.

Damon set his tablet aside and suddenly turned to Nyla. "Nyla, let's get married."

The thought of Drake circling Nyla like a predator had left Damon uneasy. He couldn't shake the feeling that he was on the verge of losing her.

Nyla froze, looking up at him.

Seeing the seriousness in his expression, she couldn't help but laugh. "Other people propose with a ring or at least some flowers.

"But you? You just hit me with a casual, 'Let's get married.' What am I supposed to say to that?"

Damon pressed his lips together. "You're right. That was thoughtless of me. If you're willing, I'll go buy a ring right away."

She rolled her eyes. "You're unbelievable. No sense of romance or surprise at all."

As she took a sip of her milk, she was about to add something more when Damon's phone buzzed on the table.

He glanced at the screen. Upon seeing it was a call from Spencer, his expression darkened. Spencer rarely contacted him early in the morning unless it was urgent.

Damon stood and answered the call a few steps away. "What's going on?"

"Mr. Sumner, we just got a call from the Wilkie Group. They said they want to terminate all our partnerships," Spencer reported.

His tone was laced with anger. The Wilkie Group had been teetering on the brink of bankruptcy not long ago, and it was Prospectus Technology that had bailed them out.

Now, they were turning their backs so soon? He'd never seen anyone so shameless.

Damon's expression remained calm. "Understood. I'll handle it when I get to the office."

He wasn't surprised. Ever since he had refused to sell the 10% shares of the Wilkie Group back to Pedro at a rock-bottom price, he'd anticipated something like this. He just hadn't expected it to happen so soon.

Returning to the table, he told Nyla, "Something's come up at the office. I'll need you to drop Buddy off at school today."

"It's no trouble. You go ahead," Nyla replied.

"Thanks." Damon turned to leave but stopped at the door when he heard hurried footsteps behind him. He turned around to see Nyla approaching. "What is it? Did I forget something?"

"You forgot your cufflinks." She opened her palm to reveal the diamond cufflinks. Damon chuckled. "Guess I was too busy to notice."

"Let me help you put them on," she offered.

"Sure." He extended his arm, and Nyla carefully fastened the cufflinks onto his sleeves.

When she finished, she looked up at him. "If you're not swamped tonight, come home early. I have something to talk to you about."

"Okay. If I leave on time, I'll call you first," Damon answered.

After he left, Nyla returned to the dining table to finish her breakfast.

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After dropping Mason off at

kindergarten, Nyla was about to

head home when she spotted a familiar figure by the roadside. She instinctively turned to get a better look and confirmed it was Alexander.

She frowned, and she took a deep breath before walking toward him. "Mr. Kinsey, what are you doing here?"

Seeing the guarded expression on her face, Alexander sighed. "Nyla, I just want to talk."

"We've already talked, and there's

nothing more to say. I don't want to

waste either of our time. And I'd

appreciate it if you stopped

contacting Buddy or meeting him," Nyla warned.

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Nyla's eyes were cold, lacking any warmth.

Alexander sighed softly. "Nyla, I truly hope we can have a proper conversation. Aren't you curious at all about how your mother has been living abroad all these years?"

"There's nothing for me to be curious about," Nyla replied. "Mr. Kinsey, I have things to do, so I'll be leaving now."

As she made to leave, Alexander stepped in front of her. "Your mother may be returning to the country next week. She wants to see you. When are you available?"

"I'm not," Nyla said, sidestepping him. She got into her car and drove off.

As she drove, her mind wandered. Why was Emerald coming back now?

Years ago, she had left so decisively. Why return now, to disrupt the peace Nyla had finally found?

After arriving home, Nyla sat down on the couch, lost in thought.

She hesitated briefly before calling Valarie.

When Valarie heard about Emerald's potential return, she immediately suggested, "If she wants to see you, you should meet her. And I think you should try to get to know Alexander a little better."

Nyla frowned. "I don't want to have anything to do with them, nor do I want to force myself to meet people I dislike."

Valarie sighed. "I understand. I'd feel the same way. But there's wisdom in the saying, 'Know your enemy as well as yourself.' Alexander clearly has a reason for seeking you out. Your priority should be figuring out what his motives are."

She added, "Honestly, while Damon's company is powerful in Saintornia, it's no match for the Nixons. If you don't uncover their plans, you'll be at a disadvantage."

Nyla tightened her grip on her phone.

Valarie was right. She needed to understand Alexander's true intentions, or she would remain vulnerable.

"I understand. Thank you, Valarie," she said.

"No need to thank me. We're friends!

Besides, the Weir and Sumner

Groups need Prospectus Technology's support. Your relationship with Damon affects me and Brandon too," Valarie Supplied.

"Alright. I'll let you go for now. We'll talk later." Nyla ended the call.

She set her phone down, now contemplating how to discuss the situation with Damon that evening.

Theo sat across from Damon's desk in the CEO's office at Prospectus Technology.

With a smile, he said, "Mr. Sumner, I've brought the penalty fee for terminating the contract. When can we sign the papers?"

Damon's gaze turned cold as he lightly tapped his fingers on the desk. "Where did you get the money for the penalty?"

From what he knew, the Wilkie Group had barely survived a bankruptcy crisis and couldn't possibly have enough liquidity for such a large sum.

Theo raised an eyebrow, feigning indifference. "You don't need to worry about that. The Wilkie Group has been in Saintornia for years. Raising this amount isn't an issue."

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Although Theo appeared calm, he was just as baffled as Damon about where Pedro had gotten the funds.

When he had asked earlier, Pedro simply instructed him to finalize the termination as soon as possible,

hinting that Prospectus Technology might soon face its downfall

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Damon nodded. "Alright. But let me give you some advice-don't act rashly and

push the Wilkie Group into a deeper abyss.

"The next time your company is on the brink of collapse, I doubt anyone will have the nerve to pull you out."

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Theo's expression darkened, and he let out a cold laugh. "Mr. Sumner, you don't need to lecture me. If you'd been willing to return the 10% stake in the Wilkie Group, we wouldn't have ended up like this."

Damon didn't respond. He simply picked up his pen and signed the termination contract.

The moment he finished, Theo impatiently snatched the contract away and handed a bank card to Damon.

"Mr. Sumner, the penalty fee is on this card. The PIN is six zeroes," he said.

Damon glanced at him but didn't take the card. "Just leave it on the desk."

Theo's face stiffened, and a shadow of resentment flickered in his eyes. "What's this? Mr. Sumner looking down on me?"

Damon opened a document without even looking up. "If that's what you think, then so be it."

Theo's grip on the card tightened until his knuckles turned white. He stared at Damon for a long moment before finally placing the card on the desk. "You should be careful not to let your arrogance make enemies everywhere, Mr. Sumner. You'll only box yourself into a corner."

With that, he turned and left.

After he left, Damon gave the card a brief glance and told Spencer, "Look into how much money is on this card. Don't touch it."

"Yes, Mr. Sumner," Spencer replied.

Downstairs in the parking garage...

Theo got into his car and immediately called Pedro. "Grandpa, I've done what you asked. What's next?"

"Get back to work! Do I need to spell it out for you? Now that we've terminated the partnership with Prospectus Technology, the priority is finding new partners.

"Are you stupid?!" Pedro's voice was sharp with anger. He couldn't fathom how he could have such a foolish grandson!

Theo was long used to his scolding and didn't take it to heart. It went in one ear and out the other. "Got it. I'll head back to the office."

In the Wilkie study...

Pedro hung up and turned to Drake, who was sitting across from him. "Mr. Mummery, I've followed your instructions. Are you satisfied now?"

Drake smiled faintly, his mood seemingly light. "Mr. Wilkie, this is just the beginning. Rest assured, I never shortchange my partners. Once Prospectus Technology collapses, the Wilkie Group will be the largest company in Saintornia."

While this should have thrilled Pedro, he felt a nagging unease.

Drake was a dangerous man, and partnering with him felt like making a deal with the devil.

Sensing the old man's hesitation, Drake narrowed his eyes. "What's wrong, Mr. Wilkie? Are you doubting me?"

Startled, Pedro quickly shook his head. "Not at all... I was just thinking about where we'll find new partners now that we've terminated the partnership with Prospectus Technology."

He was acutely aware that by betraying Prospectus Technology the Wilkie Group had burned bridges with many local businesses. Securing a new partnership would not be easy.

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Drake chuckled. "Is that all? MK is willing to step in. They can resolve all of the Wilkie Group's current issues."

Pedro shook his head. "Thank you, Mr. Mummery, but that won't be necessary. I already have potential partners in mind.

"MK might be a big company, but with its headquarters overseas, it's not ideal. The Wilkie Group is a small player. We're better off sticking with domestic partners."

Seeing through Pedro's guarded tone, Drake didn't press the matter. He nodded. "Fair enough. You can let me know what you need anytime.

"But remember, my one condition is that you aggressively compete for Prospectus Technology's partnerships. No matter the cost, I'll cover any losses."

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Pedro nodded. "With your assurance, I feel more at ease."

Drake smiled, stood, and said, "I won't take up any more of your time. I look forward to hearing good news from you soon."

"Don't worry, Mr. Mummery. I'll do my best," Pedro replied.

Once alone, he let out a long sigh and slumped into his chair. He picked up his phone and dialed a contact. "Hello, Xavier? I'd like to discuss a partnership... When might you be free-"

He was cut off mid-sentence.

"Mr. Wilkie, I don't think I can risk working with the Wilkie Group right now. After what happened with Prospectus Technology, who's to say we won't be next? I'm in a meeting. Let's not waste each other's time."

The call ended abruptly.

Frustrated, Pedro tried several more contacts, only to be met with rejection after rejection. His anger eventually boiled over, and he hurled the phone to the floor.

"I refuse to believe the Wilkie Group can't survive without their cooperation!" he roared.

A maid, alarmed by the commotion, rushed into the study. "Mr. Wilkie, please don't upset yourself! Your blood pressure="

"Call Theo. Tell him to get back here immediately," Pedro ordered.

"Yes, sir, right away," the maid replied.

Theo hurried back to the estate and was greeted at the door by the maid, who warned him, "Mr. Wilkie's furious. Be careful not to set him off."

Theo nodded. "Don't worry. I've got it."

Inside the study, he found his grandfather seething behind his desk.

"Grandpa, what happened? I heard you were really upset."

Pedro exhaled sharply and fixed him with a glare. "I just called several companies we've worked with

before, and none of them wael.ne

partner with us now.

"Terminating with Prospectus Technology has ruined our reputation. It looks like we won't find any major partners in Saintornia."

Theo blinked in surprise. "Is that why you're so worked up?"

Seeing his grandfather's scowl deepen, he quickly added, "Don't worry about it, Grandpa. If

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companies in Saintornia won't work with us, we'll just look elsewhere.

"Maybe this is an opportunity to expand into new markets. In a few years, the Wilkie Group could even open branch offices."

Pedro scoffed. "You're delusional! I'll be lucky if you don't run the company into the ground!"

Theo shrugged. "It's not my fault the

companies in Saintornia are

spooked. You know why they're

avoiding us-breaking off with

Prospectus Technology made

everyone nervous.

"They'd just helped us not too long ago, and we ended the partnership the moment we caught our breath. Anyone would lose faith.

"Honestly, I don't understand why you insisted on terminating the contract in the first place."

Although the partnership with Prospectus Technology had been less profitable than before, it was still turning a profit.

"That's none of your concern!" Pedro snapped. "Do as you're told and stop asking questions!"

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Theo's expression darkened, and he frowned. "Grandpa, it's not that I don't want

to listen to you, but this situation is already affecting the company. I need to give the shareholders an explanation. Several of them confronted me today."

Just thinking about the scowls on those shareholders' faces irritated him. He knew full well that they didn't take him seriously. Some even had the nerve to compare him unfavorably to Jane.

Pedro stared at him coldly. "A few complaints from shareholders, and you're already falling apart? What will you do if the company faces a real crisis?"

"Grandpa, if you keep stirring things up like this, we might not need to wait for a real crisis-the company could collapse any day now," Theo countered.

"Say that again?" Pedro growled.

Facing his grandfather's icy glare, Theo instinctively shrank back, muttering under his breath, "I'm just stating the facts..."

"Get out!" Pedro hurled a file at his feet, his face livid with anger.

Theo sighed helplessly. "Grandpa, getting mad won't fix anything. You insisted on breaking off the partnership with Prospectus Technology, and now I'm stuck cleaning up the mess."

"If you say one more word, you won't need to show up at the company tomorrow!" Pedro threatened.

Theo fell silent. So much for speaking the truth...

He turned and left the study.

His phone rang the moment he stepped out of the house. It was his secretary. "Mr. Wilkie, since we terminated the partnership with Prospectus Technology, our production line has ground to a halt. Inventory is piling up, and if this continues, the company's cash flow could dry up at any moment," his secretary reported.

Every day the factory sat idle cost millions in losses. The Wilkie Group, still recovering, didn't have much cash on hand. Another month of this, and they'd be staring down bankruptcy again.

Theo frowned. "Understood. I'll head back now."

In Damon's office...

Spencer stood before him with a report. "Mr. Sumner, after ending the partnership with the Wilkie Group, we're struggling to meet product demand. We need to find a new partner quickly."

"I understand. Schedule a meeting with Mr. Guinness from the Watson Group," Damon instructed.

Spencer nodded. "Got it. I'll arrange it right away."

Damon picked up a document and began reviewing it.

Not long after, Spencer returned, knocking before stepping into the office. "Mr. Sumner, I contacted M Guinness, but he said he's been swamped lately. Their production is maxed out, and they can't take on new projects."

Damon put down his pen and looked at him. "Alright. Reach out to other companies and see if anyone is willing to work with us."

After Spencer left, Damon walked over to the window and made a call. "Mr. Guinness, you've been preparing to work with Prospectus Technology for a while now. Why is it that back then you had surplus capacity, but now you're suddenly overloaded?"

There was a pause on the other end before Percy Guinness replied, sounding somewhat helpless, "Mr. Sumner, it's not that I don't want to work with you. The truth is, we recently landed a massive order. Our production lines are running day and night, and we really don't have the capacity for more. I suggest you try reaching out to someone else."

"Understood." After ending the call, Damon immediately contacted Tom. "Check whether the Watson Group has recently signed any large contracts. If so, find out with whom."

Tom, caught off guard for a moment, quickly replied, "Alright. I'll look into it."

After the call ended, Tom leaned back in his chair, feeling slightly dazed.

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Tom wondered if he had just gone from being Drake's lackey to Damon's errand boy. He sighed and summoned his secretary.

Less than an hour later, the investigation was complete.

"Mr. Genge, the Watson Group hasn't signed any major contracts recently. However, they've been in contact with Mr. Mummery," Tom's secretary reported.

Tom sneered. "I see. That'll be all."

After the secretary left, Tom immediately informed Damon. "The Watson Group has been meeting with Drake. Looks like they're working together now. Be careful."

"Got it," Damon answered.

Hanging up, Damon placed his phone on the desk, his expression darkening as he thought things through.

Drake's intentions were clear, and he was beginning to make moves against Prospectus Technology. As for Alexander, it was only a matter of time before he acted as well.

The more Damon considered the situation, the darker his expression grew.

Taking a deep breath, he called Spencer back into the office. "Spencer, how long have you been working with me?"

"Nearly ten years, Mr. Sumner," Spencer replied.

"Has it really been that long? Time flies." Damon nodded thoughtfully. "I need you to take care of something for me-discreetly. You're the only one I can trust."

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That evening, Damon returned to his villa.

As he stepped into the living room, the coldness in his demeanor melted away.

Nyla was arranging flowers. Hearing his footsteps, she turned and smiled. "You're back."

"Yeah," he replied.

"Come sit down—I have something to tell you," Nyla said.

"I have something to tell you too."

"Then let me go first," Nyla said, her eyes sparkling. "You can go after me."

"Alright," Damon said.

"Close your eyes first," she said with a playful smile.

He obeyed. Moments later, he heard her footsteps retreating, then returning, stopping beside him.

"Can I open them now?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied.

When Damon opened his eyes, he saw a pair of matching rings held out to him. He froze.

Nyla smiled. "I saw these rings while shopping and thought they'd make perfect wedding bands. I was.

waiting for you to propose, but since you haven't, I figured I'd take matters into my own hands."

"Nyla..." Damon looked up at her, his eyes reddening.

"To be honest, I lied this morning about wanting a grand proposal," she said, her voice soft and warm. "After everything we've been through our misunderstandings; our years apart I realized I don't need anything extravagant. As long as we're together, that's all that matters to me."

Damon lowered his gaze. "I'm sorry for everything I put you and Buddy through."

If he hadn't been so indecisive in the past, torn between Rebecca and Nyla, he wouldn't have given Rebecca the chance to hurt Nyla.

Even now, after they had reconciled, he couldn't protect her and Mason from the dangers closing in on them.

"None of that matters anymore," Nyla said, wrapping her arms around him. "As long as the three of us are together, I'm happy."

Damon composed himself and said, "Nyla, there's something I need to tell you. I'm planning to send you and Buddy abroad."

Nyla frowned. "What do you mean? Are you asking me and Buddy to leave with Alexander?"

"No," Damon quickly clarified. "I want to send you somewhere safe, where neither Alexander nor Drake can find you. Once everything in Saintornia is settled, I'll come join you."

"I'm not going!" she said firmly.

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Seeing Nyla's furious expression, Damon spoke calmly. "Nyla, don't get upset yet. Let me finish."

"What's there to listen to?" Nyla snapped. "Do you really think Alexander and Drake wouldn't be able to find me and Buddy? Going abroad would be even more dangerous. Not only could we run into unforeseen incidents, but they could also find us and drag us back to Meristate."

Damon stood and pulled her into his arms. "I understand what you're worried about. But if I'm suggesting sending you both away, it means I've already arranged everything to ensure your safety. Trust me, okay?"

"I won't do it!" Nyla shoved him away, her voice cold. "No matter what you say, I'm not agreeing to leave the country."

With that, she turned and left the room.

Damon's eyes filled with helplessness and pain as he watched her retreating figure.

He knew why Nyla refused to leave-it was because she was worried about him. But he was just as concerned about her and Mason's safety.

Because of their earlier argument, Nyla didn't spare Damon a single glance during dinner. She focused entirely on talking to Mason.

Damon tried to start a conversation several times, but seeing her icy expression, the words died in his throat.

After dinner, as Nyla headed upstairs, Damon couldn't hold back anymore.

"Nyla," he said, grabbing her hand. "Can we talk in the study?"

She pulled her hand away. "We have nothing to talk about. I'm not leaving the country. There's no point in discussing this further."

As soon as she finished speaking, Damon scooped her up and carried her toward the study.

"What are you doing? Put me down!" Nyla shouted, startled and angry.

Damon didn't respond. He strode into the study, kicked the door shut, and set her down on the sofa.

"Nyla, we need to have this conversation," he said firmly.

"I've said everything I need to say. I'm not going abroad. Even if you send me and Buddy away, I'll find a way to come back.

"Alexander and Drake are after me. If they can't find me, they'll come after you instead. And when that

happens, Prospectus Technology
will really be in trouble," Nyla said.

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"I know that, Nyla," Damon replied. "But to me, nothing is more important than

your and Buddy's safety."

Nyla took a deep breath. "I

understand your concern, but we're a family. Whether it's good times or bad, we should face everything

or

"That's final-this discussion is over. As for getting married, it's up to

If you

fi want to, we'll do it. If notes too."

She turned to leave, but Damon grabbed her hand. "I want to! Of course, I do! I've

dreamed of marrying you, but right now—"

"Then that's settled," Nyla interrupted, squeezing his hand. "We'll go get our marriage registered tomorrow morning."

Damon looked into her eyes and saw determination and love shining back at him. "Alright," he said softly.

The next morning, they arrived at the courthouse bright and early. As soon as the doors opened, they went inside.

Half an hour later, they emerged hand in hand, each holding a marriage certificate.

Damon looked at Nyla, his voice gentle. "Mrs. Sumner, I'll be counting on you from now on."

"Mr. Sumner, same here," she replied with a warm smile.

Opening her marriage certificate, she said, "Let's take a picture."

"Alright," Damon said.

He took out his phone, and they leaned in close to snap a selfie.

"All set. You should head to work now. I have something to take care of later," Nyla said.

Raising a brow, Damon asked, "What is it?"

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"Just some womanly matters. Don't pry," Nyla chided, though her tone lacked sharpness.

Damon nodded. "Got it. Do you need me to drive you?"

"No, I'll take a cab," she replied.

"Alright," he said.

As Damon drove away, Nyla slipped her marriage certificate into her bag and flagged down a taxi. Her destination: the restaurant where she had arranged to meet Alexander.

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When she arrived, she found herself 30 minutes early. Yet, Alexander was already there.

"You're here," he remarked, standing as she approached.

"Yes," she replied, seating herself across from him.

Her expression was composed, her gaze devoid of the resentment that once lingered there. "Why are you so early?"

"I didn't have anything else to do, so I came early," he said, shrugging lightly. "What did you want to talk about?"

Nyla drew a steady breath before speaking. "I thought about what you said after I got home. You're right—she's my mother. I can't cut her out of my life completely. I'm willing to try to accept her, but I need you to be honest with me. Why are you really here in Saintornia?"

Alexander's eyes flashed with surprise. "Nyla, I came to take you and Buddy to Meristate. That's all. Your mother has been eager to have you both live there. Now is the perfect time. She also wants you to inherit the Nixons."

Nyla blinked, processing his words. "Doesn't she already have a son and a daughter? Why would she want me to inherit it?"

The question lingered in her mind.

Why would someone who hadn't visited her in all these years entrust such a powerful legacy to her? Any reasonable person would sense something amiss. "Your younger siblings... aren't quite suited to inherit the family," Alexander explained.

Her brow arched. "Why not?"

"It's complicated," he said, exhaling deeply. "You'll understand once you're in Meristate."

"I'm only planning to learn about her life there," Nyla clarified. "That doesn't mean I'm agreeing to go with you."

Alexander nodded. "I understand. You're hesitant because of Damon, aren't you?"

"Yes," she admitted. "So I need you to promise not to do anything to him. If you do, I'll never forgive you or her."

Both knew precisely who "her" referred to.

"You have my word," Alexander assured her. "But if you return to Meristate, you and Damon will be

worlds apart in life and status. Your

mother will never accept him."

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Nyla's gaze turned icy. "What she thinks of Damon has nothing to do with

my She hasn't been a part of

my life for years. She has no right to interfere now."

Sensing the tension around the subject of Damon, Alexander wisely changed the conversation.

"By the way, Buddy is incredibly

talented," he said. "If he goes to Meristate, his future will be limitless. He has a natural gift for computers. With the right guidance, I'm confident he could become one of the best in the field."

Nyla sipped her drink, her face betraying no emotion as she suppressed the anger brewing within her.

Forcing a thin smile, she asked, "When did you start contacting Buddy?"