

## Chapter 108

Ryan Walker sat on the edge of his bed, his elbows resting on his knees and his eyes glued to the floor as he was lost in his thoughts.

Lord Ryder, that name alone was enough to rob him of sleep.

The phone call earlier had shaken him in a way no boardroom confrontation ever could. Her voice kept repeating in his head, refusing to fade.

Ryan leaned back slowly, letting himself fall into the bed. He stared up at the ceiling and spread his arms wide across the duvet.

He knew she wouldn't back down. Lord Ryder never did. And now, with a hundred million dollars lost to him, she would come back, smarter, more strategic, and more dangerous. That was the kind of enemy he'd made.

You've tasted power, Ryan. But now, you've painted a target on your back.

He exhaled slowly, the knot in his chest refusing to loosen. Just then, he was snapped out of his thoughts by a sharp ding.

DING

His phone buzzed once on the nightstand beside him.

Reaching for it, he unlocked the screen and saw that it was a message from Elizabeth.

Ryan narrowed his eyes.

"Don't celebrate just yet. Victory over my family is temporary, Walker."

Ryan stared at the message for a second, then another, before his fingers



began to move.

"Who said I was celebrating? This doesn't even feel like a win yet."

He hit send.

Barely a second passed before her response popped back on his screen.

"Then I suggest you do celebrate now because this is the last win you'll ever have over me or my family. Enjoy it while it lasts."

Ryan scoffed.

He rolled his eyes and chuckled to himself without any amusement. Typical Elizabeth, arrogant and petty. He began typing a response but paused halfway through. What was the point? Nothing he'd say would change the reality she was refusing to accept.

But before he could even decide whether to reply or ignore her, his screen lit up again, this time with an incoming call.

The name Elizabeth McCarthy displayed on the phone screen. He considered letting it ring out but curiosity got the better of him.

He accepted the call and brought the phone to his ear.

"Yes?" he said plainly.

"Don't you dare act arrogant with me, Ryan," Elizabeth's voice snapped through the speaker. "You think you've won? You haven't. And you're going to regret everything you've done to us."

Ryan didn't answer right away. "Is that so?" he said eventually in a low voice sounding very uninterested.



"Yes, that's very so," she snapped again. "By this time tomorrow, everything will change, you'll see. We're not done yet."

Ryan leaned against the headboard as his curiosity piqued. "You're being awfully vague for someone so confident. Care to explain how exactly you plan to rebuild an empire I just dismantled?"

Elizabeth didn't hesitate. "Tomorrow, we're meeting with the CEO of Nova Technologies. Heard of them?"

Ryan's brow arched slightly, though his voice didn't betray his interest. "Maybe."

"Well, we're scheduled to meet him tomorrow and we've prepared our proposals. My father's friend connected us. He knows people, Ryan, real people and that's something you never understood. When I told you that my family is powerful, I wasn't joking. We always have a way."

Ryan chuckled, though not loud enough for her to hear. "And you think Nova's CEO is just going to hand you a golden parachute?"

"He's smart," she replied confidently. "And we have a pitch. If he sees potential in what we're offering, then yes, he'll partner with us. And once that happens... we rise. Bigger, Stronger and more untouchable than ever before."

Ryan raised his head slightly, amused now. "And how exactly did you get in touch with this mysterious CEO?"

Elizabeth let out a breath, as if talking to a child. "I already told you. Through one of my father's long-time friends, someone highly connected. We sent a formal proposal through the appropriate channels, and we're waiting for a response."



There was a pause, Ryan smirked to himself. Appropriate channels, she said?

Right at that moment, his tablet, which lay beside him on the bed, beeped twice. He glanced sideways at it and the notification banner caught his eye.

Incoming mail: NEW REQUEST TO MEET — FROM ELIZABETH MCCARTHY

His jaw didn't drop. Instead, his smirk deepened.

He tapped the notification, and sure enough, the message opened.

The subject line read: Request for Partnership Meeting with CEO of Nova Technologies.

The body of the message was long, dramatic, and very much Elizabeth.

Dear Sir,

My name is Elizabeth McCarthy, daughter of Mr. McCarthy. On behalf of my family, we are seeking an urgent audience with you to propose a mutually beneficial collaboration between our companies...

It went on and on.

Ryan held the phone to his ear with one hand and scrolled through the email with the other. He was still on the call with her.

"I see," he said coolly, masking every hint of amusement from his voice.

"And you're sure you sent the proposal to the right person?"

"Yes, Ryan," she said, sounding irritated. "The email was from a verified source, one of Nova's official contacts. Why are you asking? Feeling



threatened?"

He chuckled softly. "Not at all."

"Well, you should be," she snapped. "Because once the CEO sees our proposal and agrees to the meeting, you'll realize just how quickly the tables can turn. We're not going down without a fight, Ryan. I'm not the kind of woman who stays down after a slap. I strike back."

Ryan didn't reply immediately. His fingers flew over the screen of the tablet, replying to her email.

Approved.

Meeting scheduled for tomorrow evening. Please arrive at Nova Technologies HQ, Conference Hall B. —CEO

He hit send.

His phone buzzed immediately as Elizabeth received the reply on her end.

A small laugh escaped her lips. "Well, would you look at that?" she said, sounding overconfident. "You hear that, Ryan? We just got approved. I told you my family is powerful. While you sit there on your throne built out of borrowed power, we're building something real, something big."

Ryan smiled lazily.

"I see."

"Oh, you should see," she went on, clearly enjoying herself now. "You underestimate us, and that's your weakness. We bounce back, always."

"You're right," Ryan said slowly, "your family is something else."



"Damn right we are," she laughed. "Anyway, I have a lot to prepare for tomorrow. Just wanted to give you a heads-up. Maybe even let you know you've got competition now."

Ryan exhaled, not in frustration, but in amusement. "Sure. See you at the top."

Elizabeth paused for a moment, confused. "What?"

But Ryan didn't answer. He simply cut the call. The screen went dark in his hand.

"Well tomorrow would be interesting," Ryan said, chuckling.

Very interesting, he thought.

Because Elizabeth McCarthy had no idea that the man she was so desperate to impress...

Was the very man she had underestimated all along.

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