

## Chapter 115

The room was so quiet you could have heard the faint ticking of the clock on the far wall.

Ryan hadn't moved since the second-in-command revealed who he truly was.

He sat there, calm and unbothered, watching Elizabeth lose her strength and composure.

Elizabeth's body felt rooted to the spot, her eyes locked on Ryan as though she couldn't trust her own vision.

Her throat bobbed as she swallowed, her lips parting slightly, but the words came out broken.

"But... how...?" she stammered, unable to believe what she was seeing.

Her voice didn't carry the arrogance she had wielded just minutes ago. It was softer, smaller, and perhaps for the first time in Ryan's presence, almost humble.

Her wings had been broken...

Julian, standing just a step behind her, blinked rapidly, his mind scrambling to make sense of the scene.

But rather than allow the truth to settle in, he leaned closer to Elizabeth, lowering his voice into a whisper meant only for her.

"You... you don't actually believe this, do you?" he asked, his tone was filled with disbelief. "Elizabeth, come on. This has to be some elaborate trick from Ryan and Claudia."



Elizabeth didn't answer. Her gaze remained fixed on Ryan, her breathing was becoming shallow.

Julian continued speaking, desperately to make her see that Ryan was faking it.

"Think about it... Claudia works here, right? Obviously she's using her position in Nova to pull strings. She probably convinced everyone here to play along, to make him look like he's somebody. This... this is a setup to humiliate you. That's all it is."

Still, Elizabeth said nothing.

Julian's frustration began to leak into his tone. "Liz... say something. You don't believe this nonsense, do you?"

But deep down, Elizabeth already knew the truth. The stillness in Ryan's expression, the complete lack of defensiveness, the way the second-in-command himself had spoken with absolute certainty... all of it made denial impossible.

No, Ryan wasn't pretending.

He had risen higher than anything she had ever imagined.

He didn't just own her father's former company... he was now sitting at the very top of Nova Inc.

The reality hit her like a weight pressing down on her chest, making it harder to breathe.

Julian noticed the shift in her posture, the faint shake of her head.

"No... no, no," he muttered, his frown deepening. "You're actually believing this? Elizabeth, don't..."



She shook her head slowly, cutting him off, not because she agreed with him, but because she disagreed entirely. She knew it wasn't an act, she had seen it... Ryan Walker had risen.

Julian's stomach dropped. "You've got to be kidding me," he whispered harshly.

Elizabeth's eyes stung, tears beginning to well in her eyes against her will. She blinked quickly, begging them not to fall, but the moisture was already visible.

She didn't dare speak, because she knew her voice would crack if she did and the man she had been humiliating would see her tears.

And then, after what felt like an eternity of suffocating silence, Ryan moved and he finally decided that it was time to speak.

"You said you had something," he began slowly, "that you came here to bring a proposal. You wanted to show it to the CEO of Nova for a possible collaboration."

He let the sentence hang for a while, watching her expression. 3

"Well," he continued, "I'm the CEO of Nova Inc. So... let's see the proposal."

Elizabeth's breath hitched, her fingers tightening involuntarily on the leather folder in her hands.

Julian's head snapped toward her. "Don't," he murmured quickly. "Don't give it to him. Not until we..."

She ignored him, though her hands trembled.

"Mr. Wentworth," Ryan said, his tone shifting into that of a man used to



being obeyed, "please collect it."

Mr. Wentworth stepped forward without hesitation, holding his hand out to Elizabeth.

She hesitated, clutching the proposal tighter. She didn't speak, but her body language said everything — she didn't want to let it go.

"Elizabeth," Wentworth said in a low, firm voice, "the CEO asked for it."

Her jaw clenched. For a second, she looked as if she might refuse outright. But then Wentworth's hand didn't move.

Her fingers slowly loosened, and with a reluctant grip, she let him take the folder from her hand.

Wentworth walked it over to the desk and placed it in front of Ryan.

Ryan flipped the cover open, and started flipping the pages. His eyes scanned the first page, then the second, his expression giving away nothing.

He turned a few more pages, skimming through it all.

Elizabeth stood rigid, watching him read what she had poured her hope into. She could feel her pulse in her throat.

When Ryan finally closed the folder, he looked up at her with a professional gaze rather than making it look like he had a beef with her.

"It's a bad proposal," he said plainly.

The bluntness of it made her flinch.

Ryan went on explaining... "Nova wouldn't make any profit worth



speaking of from this arrangement. The only one who would gain from it is you. At best, Nova would end up with a two-percent share which is terrible. The risk outweighs the reward by a mile."

He turned to Wentworth and slid the folder across the desk toward him. "Review it, Mr. Wentworth, so she knows this was a fair judgement."

Wentworth opened it, scanning quickly. After a moment, he closed it and gave a small nod. "I agree with the CEO. This would not be beneficial to Nova in any significant way. It's essentially a one-sided deal."

Elizabeth's cheeks burned, her humiliation increasing with every passing second.

Ryan turned his attention back to her. "I'm sorry," he said, though his voice carried no trace of actual sympathy. "The proposal can't be accepted."

The words were simple, but to Elizabeth, they might as well have been a public execution.

Her fingers curled into fists at her sides, her breath sounding like her lungs might pop out. She wanted to argue, to say something, anything, to salvage her dignity. But her mind was blank, her usual arrogance had been stripped away.

The man she had once dismissed as nothing... was now the man holding her future in his hands.

And he had just shut the door on her.