

Chapter 123

Ryan's phone started ringing the moment he walked into the garage.

He slid his hand into his suit pocket and pulled it out, glancing casually at the screen, but then he froze.

The name staring back at him made his jaw tighten instantly.

"Lord Ryder," he muttered anxiously.

His brows knitted together in a frown.

"How is this even possible?" he asked himself.

He had gone out of his way to block every number she had ever used to reach him. He had changed his lines, cut off every possible contact route. How in the world was her number still showing up?

For a long second, he simply stood there, with the phone in his hand, watching the screen flash.

The driver glanced over, sensing there was a problem but wisely said nothing.

Finally, Ryan exhaled slowly and answered the call.

Before he could speak, her voice came up.

"Ryan... have you taken a moment to check what's going on at Nova Inc.?"

Ryan stopped walking entirely, his foot got rooted to the floor. His tone was clipped when he replied, "What do you mean by that?"

Lord Ryder laughed. "Oh, don't sound so tense. You'll find out soon enough."



Ryan's grip on the phone tightened. "Ryder, I'm not in the mood for your games. What exactly are you talking about?"

There was a pause, Then she spoke again, her voice turning into something more playful.

"Let's just say... not everything in your empire is as secure as you think."

Ryan's brows drew closer together as his heart began to race slightly. "Be clear."

"Why ruin the surprise?" she murmured. "Enjoy the calm while it lasts, Ryan."

And just like that, she hung up...

Ryan stared at his phone for a moment, his jaw clenched. Every instinct in him screamed that this wasn't just a random taunt.

Lord Ryder didn't waste her breath unless she was trying to get under his skin or unless she knew something.

Before he could dwell on it, another sharp tone broke through his thoughts. His phone lit up again for the second time with another incoming call.

This time it was Claudia.

A strange, immediate heaviness settled in his chest. Something felt wrong, he prayed whatever she was calling for wasn't linked to Lord Ryder.

He answered. "Claudia?"

Her voice came through instantly and it was broken, panicked, raw and filled with fear. "I told you... Ryan... I told you..."

Ryan's stomach tightened. "What are you talking about? Told me what?"



She was crying, her words tumbling over themselves. "He... he did it. Bobby... he just struck..."

Ryan's tone sharpened. "What do you mean struck?"

Her sobs grew heavier, her voice cracking. "He burned it down, Ryan... the Ricco S-Class Store... it's gone. It's all... it's all burning..."

Ryan's eyes went wide. For a moment, he didn't even breathe. "What?"

"My... my store," she gasped between sobs. "Everything I've worked for ... years of building it... billions in stock... the whole thing is in flames."

Ryan closed his eyes briefly, a wave of cold anger flooding his veins.

Her voice broke again. "I... I can't... I can't live after this, Ryan. I can't... I'll just..."

"Don't you dare finish that sentence," Ryan snapped, his voice was sharp, "Don't you dare."

Her sobs didn't stop. "Everything's gone. My staff... my dream... everything..."

He was already moving toward the car, his voice was so quick and urgent. "Where are you right now?"

"In front of the store... watching it burn..." she whispered.

Ryan didn't hesitate. "I'm coming to you now." He slid into the backseat, his driver immediately closing the door behind him. "Ricco S-Class Store," Ryan ordered.

Within minutes, Ryan's Maybach arrived.

Crowds had gathered, their faces filled with shock as they watched a billions burn to ashes.

Staff members stood in shock, some with their hands over their mouths, others weeping openly for the money and property lost.

And in the middle of it all, kneeling on the concrete in front of the store was Claudia.

Her head was bowed, her hands limp in her lap, her entire body trembling.

Ryan stepped out of the car, his fists clenched so tightly his knuckles vibrated. The heat from the fire brushed against his skin even from several feet away, but it wasn't the flames that burned him... it was the sight of her like this.

He pushed past the murmuring crowd and reached her quickly. "Claudia," he said.

She looked up at him with tears on her cheeks, her eyes wide open. "It's all gone, Ryan..."

He bent down and took her by the arms, pulling her gently but firmly to her feet. She collapsed against him instantly, wrapping her arms around his torso in a tight, desperate grip.

Ryan held her there, his hand pressing against the back of her head. He had seen Claudia confident, fiery, stubborn but never this broken.

And it made him so angry...

Her sobs shook against his chest. "He did this to me... he destroyed everything..."

Ryan's jaw locked. His voice was low and dangerous. "Bobby will regret this. With his entire life, I'll make sure he pays for this."

Before he could say more, his phone vibrated again in his pocket. He pulled it out and glanced at the screen.



Nova Inc – Secretary

He answered, still holding Claudia close. "What is it?"

The voice on the other end was polite but slightly urgent. "Sir, there are some people here at the Nova headquarters. They're demanding to see you immediately. They insist it's urgent."

Ryan's brows drew together. "Who are they?"

The secretary hesitated. "They... they wouldn't give their names. Only that it concerns matters you should be aware of right away."

Ryan's grip on the phone tightened. His instincts flared again, whatever Lord Ryder had hinted at earlier... maybe this was it.



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