

Chapter 2

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The cold air blew across Ryan's face as he stepped out of the house again, hopeless after his wife turned him down, betraying him by giving that much money out to arrange a surprise birthday party for her ex-lover while his mother lay half-dead in the hospital.

His hands were stuffed into the pockets of his worn-out jeans. He didn't have a destination in mind—he just walked. His mind spiraled around just one question "How do I save her?"

It was less than 24 hours. That was all the time his mother had left.

He had knocked on every door, begged every person he knew, even tried the banks—but no one wanted to help a poor delivery guy with no assets and nothing to offer but desperate promises. The more he walked, the more it sank in—he was out of options.

But then, a thought hit him. Maybe the hospital could start the surgery while he continued to search for the money. It was a long shot, but he had to try. He turned around and sprinted back, his lungs burning as he pushed through the hospital entrance once more.

Luckily, he badged into Dr. Jerry at the corridor.

"Please!" he called out, breathless, catching up with Dr. Jerry in the hallway. The man turned, startled, then frowned as Ryan rushed toward him.

"I'm begging you," Ryan said, clutching the doctor's sleeve like a drowning man. "Please, just start the surgery. I'll find a way to pay—whatever it takes. I swear I will."

Ryan didn't mind that people were watching him. He was out of options. There was no job he could do to raise that amount of money within 24 hours.

Dr. Jerry's expression softened, but his voice remained as strict as it was in the beginning. "Mr. Walker, I admire your determination to save your mother, but we have policies. For a surgery of this scale, the full amount—two hundred and fifty thousand dollars—must be paid upfront. There's no room for exceptions."

Ryan's throat tightened. "But she's dying. You said yourself she has less than 24 hours. Are you going to let her die before I am able to raise the money? You have to do something, Doctor."

"I know," the doctor said quietly. "And I'm truly sorry. But my hands are tied."

And with that, he walked away.

Ryan stood frozen for a moment before stumbling toward the waiting area. His knees gave out beneath him, and he collapsed onto the hard hospital floor, his back against the wall, his head sinking into his hands. It felt like the world was collapsing around him, piece by piece.

People moved around him, but he didn't see them. The sounds of the hospital faded into a dull murmur that was coming from some of the mean nurses. All he could feel was helplessness.

Then, a voice broke through the silence.

"Breaking news," came a calm female announcer's tone from the small TV mounted in the corner of the waiting room. Ryan lifted his head, his eyes red from the fear of losing his beloved mother. He had no idea why his eyes were drawn to the screen.

The headline scrolled across the bottom of the screen in bold text:

"Nova has been launched at \$800,000,000 per Nova coin. After rumors that the Nova app was a scam, out of 997,000 existing mining accounts, 996,999 were deleted by the users who truly believed it was scam. According to Nova officials, only one user remains—and he reportedly mined 50 Nova coins. His identity remains hidden for his safety."

Ryan's blood ran cold.

For a moment, he just stared at the screen, unsure if he'd heard it right. Then his mind flashed back—five years ago when he was living on the streets. A night in a quiet internet café, a new app everyone thought was a scam.

He remembered the name clearly: Nova. He had downloaded it out of curiosity, even though others laughed. He had mined Nova coins for a few weeks before life got in the way. He forgot about it, but never deleted his account.

And if this report was true—if someone really had 50 coins left—that person was him.

He shot to his feet, his heart pounding so hard he could barely hear. Could it be real? Had those old coins survived?

Without wasting another second, he ran out of the hospital. His legs moved on instinct, tearing through the night streets. He didn't stop, didn't slow down, until he reached the McCarthy estate the second time that night.

He pushed through the front door, breathless.

Elizabeth and Julian were still lounging in the living room, having a long talk and catching up on old memories. They barely glanced his way as he hurried past.

"Try not to trip," Julian said mockingly.

"Maybe if he ran like that toward a job application, he wouldn't be so broke," Elizabeth added with a flat tone, cold as ice.

Ryan ignored them. Their words didn't matter anymore. Not if what he believed was true.

He bolted up the stairs. His heart was racing as he made his way to the tiny room he called his own after Elizabeth kicked him out of their bedroom.

He dove into his closet and pulled out a battered cardboard box, tossing aside old textbooks and tangled wires until he found it—his old laptop. The screen was cracked in one corner, and the casing was chipped. But it still powered on.

He waited as it booted. It felt like time was moving in slow motion. The desktop finally loaded. His fingers flew across the keyboard as he opened the Nova app, praying the login still worked.

After a slight glitch, the screen flickered and the app loaded.

There it was, Nova app's user interface.

Ryan wiped his face and took a deep breath.

"I need to be sure," he whispered.

He clicked the Withdraw tab on the Nova app. It sent him to the official Nova website. He typed in his account details again. His fingers were shaking, hoping he still remembered the correct password.

"Yes!" He said through clenched teeth as the Password worked at first trial.

It took just a few seconds and his dashboard was displayed on the screen of his laptop, showing the summary:

Balance: 50 Nova coins

Current price: \$800,000,000 per coin

Underneath, it showed an option:

Convert Nova to USD – Total Value Available To Withdraw: \$40,000,000,000

Ryan's eyes widened. He leaned forward, staring hard to make sure he wasn't seeing things.

Total Value: Forty billion dollars.

He clicked Convert to USD.

A small spinning circle appeared on the screen. Then all of sudden, it showed up a notification on the screen.

Transaction Successful.

His screen refreshed, and the number appeared in green:

Available Balance: \$40,000,000,000.00

Ryan let out a cold loud breath. He couldn't believe it, his eyes blurred out in shock. The money was real. Sitting in his Nova wallet. Forty billion dollars for someone who had never even held five thousand dollars in his account before.

He laughed before he could control himself. A broken, breathy laugh. He was still sitting on a cracked chair, in a small room, with nothing but a broken, crappy laptop, and yet, in at that moment, he was one of the richest people on earth.

He stood up, gripping the edge of the table, his eyes filled with shock.

Just when he thought he had seen enough, he a message pop up on his nova dashboard.

Hello Ryan Walker,

Congratulations! Nova Inc. has selected you as the new CEO of the corporation. Your patience and dedication have been recognized. A company representative will contact you shortly.

Ryan's eyes widened. CEO of Nova Inc?