

Chapter 20

Julian's leg was still raised high, ready to smash the laptop, when suddenly Ryan moved fast. He moved so fast that Julian couldn't even process it.

The next thing Julian knew, he was no longer standing. He was sitting on the ground, stunned, like a confused child who had slipped on water. He blinked, trying to understand what had just happened. Ryan now stood over the laptop calmly after pushing Julian to the floor.

Julian's mouth opened, but nothing came out.

"You don't get to touch my belongings," Ryan said to Julian, his eyes growing cold and turning a bit reddish.

He slowly bent down to pick up the laptop—his fingers just inches from it—when he heard it.

Crack!

A sharp sound like bones snapping. His heart froze instantly and his hand stopped reaching for the laptop.

He didn't even need to look. The sound alone told him something had gone wrong.

Slowly, Ryan stood up straight. His eyes trailed upward, seeing glossy leather of a female shoe, pressing hard on the laptop.

Standing in front of him... was Elizabeth.

Her face was sharp and emotionless. Her eyes turned cold, nothing like Ryan had seen before. She wasn't just stepping on the laptop, she was

grinding her foot into it, breaking it deeper, shattering it under her foot.

"I always wondered why you held onto this trash," she said quietly with a voice that clearly showed mockery. "You had that thing before our marriage. Years and years... and it gave you nothing. Just like you. A useless machine for a useless man."

She pulled her foot back, and the damaged laptop lay there, crushed and lifeless.

"What did you just do, Elizabeth?" Ryan said with a calm voice, holding himself back from, screaming.

Julian stood up behind her and laughed. "Look at that. You did what he stopped me from doing." He held Elizabeth's hand. "Maybe you're the only one who truly knows how to put this nobody in his place."

Ryan didn't move, his hands clenched beside him, and in that moment, something broke inside of him.

He looked down at the broken laptop. He didn't care about the outer shell. Not the keyboard. Not the screen. It was the files.

The files he had spent years collecting. His Nova profile. His original login ID.

Inside, his heart was breaking but on the outside, he tried to stay calm.

He looked up at Elizabeth and then his eyes drifted to Julian.

"You won't just regret losing me," Ryan said in a low tone as he faced Elizabeth again. "You'll regret ever messing with me."

Julian scoffed. "Don't make me laugh."

He took a step forward and jabbed a finger in Ryan's chest. Then he dusted Ryan's shoulder off like it was dirty, and helped straightened his collar.

"You think you can do something?" he said with a smirk. "Retaliate? Please. You're nothing, don't even give yourself that hope, Ryan. You are just too small, Too poor, Too weak to even pull a string, let alone change anything or make anyone regret anything."

"What do you think she will regret? Dumping your poor, wretched ass for a man of high status like me? A man whose bank account reads 8 billion dollars?"

Ryan didn't blink. He simply nodded once. "Right." He agreed, he didn't argue, he didn't need to argue with Julian to prove a point. Julian was going to pay alongside Elizabeth and they wouldn't even know what hit them.

Julian grinned, shaking his head in disbelief. "Yeah. That's what I thought. The only one who is going to regret anything here is your poor self. You lost a beautiful wife like Elizabeth and also lost a name, you are no longer tagged with a billionaire family, only your poor dying mother."

"You can't even pay for her surgery, because you are too poor, and here you are, thinking of making someone regret, haha," Julian added, and Ryan nodded.

With that, Julian turned and threw an arm around Elizabeth's waist, gently placing a kiss on her lips. The two of them walked back toward the mansion, smirking like they had won a war.

Ryan stood there, his eyes falling on the broken laptop.

He bent down and carefully lifted it in both hands.

The hinges were broken. The screen cracked. The metal casing bent at one edge. He pressed the power button anyway. But nothing came up, it was dead.

He didn't wait. He turned and walked fast.

He caught the next bus and rushed back to his estate. The ride felt longer than ever. His mind was racing. Thoughts of losing his new life, the one he'd barely started to enjoy, filled his head.

When he got to the mansion, he pushed the front door open and stepped in.

Claudia was standing near the staircase, reviewing documents. She was looking as beautiful as ever. Her eyes lit up when she saw him.

"Boss! You're back," she said politely with a gentle smile. "Oh... you brought the laptop."

But her smile slowly faded as she saw the look on Ryan's face.

His shirt was wrinkled. His eyes were red and in his hands, she saw a cracked, broken laptop.

Claudia stepped forward, concerned. "Boss, what happened?"

Ryan said nothing at first. He handed her the laptop, his fingers trembling just slightly in anger and rage.

"My ex-wife stepped on it," he said with a flat voice. "She did it on purpose. To get back at me."

Claudia gasped, covering her mouth. "Oh no... oh my God. That's terrible."

The sound of her shock pierced Ryan more deeply than he expected. His heart burned with rage towards Julian, Elizabeth and the entire McCarthy family.

He looked at her and spoke with a calm voice. "Claudia... if the files are really gone... does that mean I lose my position as CEO? Does that mean... I lose everything?"

Claudia looked at him, her face slowly falling into a frown. She sighed, as if trying to choose her words carefully.

"Boss... if the files truly can't be recovered... then yes. That's most likely what the board will decide. They'll say the identity can't be verified... and they'll vote to replace you."

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