

Chapter 21

Ryan felt the strength in his knees weaken after hearing what Claudia just said. He stumbled slightly but caught himself.

He couldn't lose it, he couldn't lose it all, the life he just found himself in.

"They'll pay so dearly for all they have done," he said to himself more than to Claudia.

He stared at the ground for a second, trying to push away the fear building up in his chest. He wasn't ready to let go of this life. Not now. Not so soon.

Claudia saw the panic in his eyes and quickly added, "But! Boss, don't worry. We might still have a chance."

She straightened and turned toward the hallway.

"There's a tech expert in the estate as well to support you with issues regarding your data and security," she said. "An engineer and he is very good at what he does, I must say. He works in the staff quarters. I'll get this to him right now to see what he can do about this."

She didn't wait for an answer. She took the laptop and rushed out of the room, her heels clicking fast against the tile floor quickly.

The engineer was his last hope, and if at all he turned out to say he couldn't retrieve it, they would be a great problem for Ryan. Like Claudia had said, in the executive meeting which was supposed to hold the next day, they would vote him down if his identity can't be verified.

Ryan sat on the armrest of a couch, pressing a palm to his head to steady his head which was already banging inside. He had never felt so close to losing everything again. And this time—it would be worse than before.

"You will pay for ever betraying me, Elizabeth. You will pay for everything," he muttered to himself as he kept thinking about Elizabeth had done so far.

Less than ten minutes later, Claudia returned.

"I'm back. Luckily I met him. But I guess there is a little hope," she said as she rushed inside to stand in front of Ryan.

Behind her was a man in his mid-thirties, dressed in a polo shirt and jeans, carrying a tool bag.

Claudia smiled softly. "Boss, the engineer says it won't be easy... but it's possible. He'll work on it immediately. If everything goes well, it should be ready before tomorrow morning—just in time for the meeting."

Ryan's body relaxed a little.

"Thank you, do you best to recover whatever you can get out of the laptop. You may go now," he said to the engineer who bowed slightly before leaving with the old laptop in his hands.

Claudia gave a small bow. "You don't need to worry, sir. Isaac has worked here even for the first CEO of Nova, and he has been of so much help in the past. The files will be recovered. Now... shall we begin the orientation?"

She disappeared into the next room and returned with a stack of documents in her hands.

"These are some files from Nova headquarters," she explained. "Please, have a seat, boss. I'll go through everything with you."

"What are these?" Ryan asked just to be sure as his fingers caressed the document folder.

"Like I said earlier boss, Nova is a very big company. As the new CEO, you must know the basic things about Nova. These files and documents in your hand would help you get a basic knowledge of some NOVA-Related transactions," Claudia explained.

"And I have to know all these?" he asked, feeling a bit overwhelmed by the fact he might be expected to put that much in his head before the next day.

Ryan sat down, and she spread the papers out on the glass table.

"This file contains a breakdown of the businesses Nova owns across the country. This one covers loan applications and debts. These are new investors, and this one is about ongoing deals."

Ryan picked up the loan records and began flipping through. He didn't know why, but he was drawn to that particular one first.

His eyes moved quickly down the list—page after page of names of people who loaned money from Nova and the exact amount of money they owed Nova.

Ryan kept scanning through the document until one name made his eyes widen.

"Julian Marshall Knight," Ryan muttered as his eyes met Julian's full name at number 3 of the 57 people owing Nova.

He blinked. Maybe he didn't see right. He started scanning from the beginning again, and the moment his eyes met Julian's name again, his jaw tightened in anger.

Julian was owing Nova Inc seven billion dollars.

He stared at the number, double-checking it. He wasn't mistaken.



He looked up slowly until his eyes met Claudia.

"Claudia," he said carefully, "Julian Knight... he took a loan of seven billion from Nova?"

"Yes, boss," she said, leaning closer to look at the page. "That's correct. He's one of the biggest borrowers."

Ryan raised his eyebrow. "And his salary? He's only paid... how much?"

Claudia opened her tablet and checked the records. "A hundred thousand dollars monthly."

"Now Eighty," Ryan corrected her.

Claudia looked confused. "Sir?"

"His salary was just cut by twenty percent yesterday. So he only earns eighty thousand dollars monthly now," Ryan said firmly.

Claudia blinked. "Oh! Yes, boss. You're right. I forgot about the new deduction."

She continued softly. "But yes, Julian's wealth... it's not really his. Most of it is borrowed. He doesn't have real capital. He just lives big and boasts off money that isn't his."

Ryan leaned back slightly and muttered, "If he has eight billion dollars like Elizabeth claimed, then seven billion of that is Nova's money. And he is only worth 1 billion dollars."

Claudia nodded slowly. "That's correct, sir. Even the entire 1 billion dollars isn't guaranteed to be his own. He might have a few millions, but he is known for borrowing. Before he was employed at Nova, he borrowed from other top companies around."

She paused. "Is there a problem? Is there anything you would like for me to do Sir?"

Ryan set the file down on the table.

"Yes," he said firmly. "There's a problem."

He stood up and turned to her.

"Claudia, I want you to draft an official repayment notice right now. Give Julian Knight thirty minutes to pay back seven billion dollars into Nova's official bank account."

Claudia's eyes widened. "Thirty minutes, boss?"

"Yes," Ryan repeated. "Failure to do so, he loses his job. Immediately."

Claudia quickly nodded and reached for her laptop. "Yes, boss. I'll do it right now."

"And Claudia..." Ryan added as she typed. "Make sure the notice carries the official CEO stamp."

"Yes, sir."

"But don't let Julian know... that I'm the CEO. My name should be excluded from the letter."

Claudia's lips curved into a knowing smile. "Understood, boss. He won't know what's coming."