

Chapter 22

Julian lay on the soft, king-sized bed with his arms wrapped around Elizabeth as they both chuckled softly. The humiliation of Ryan earlier that day still felt fresh in their minds, and the memory brought nothing but satisfaction to both of them.

Elizabeth leaned in and kissed Julian gently on the lips, letting it linger a few seconds before pulling away with a sweet grin.

"I still can't believe I crushed that garbage laptop under my foot," she said with a proud smile. "The only thing that poor excuse of a man ever valued, and I took it away just like that."

Julian laughed and rubbed her arm. "You were brilliant. I was going to do it, but you did it so perfectly. You really know how to hit where it hurts."

Elizabeth sat up slightly, brushing a strand of hair from her face. "I mean, does Ryan even listen to himself when he talks? All that nonsense about making me regret leaving him?" She scoffed. "A pauper like him? What was he thinking?"

Julian shook his head. "He lives in a fantasy. Ryan must be completely delusional to even think for a second that you would regret choosing me over him. He's too broke to even save his dying mother, yet he wants to act like he has something to offer."

Elizabeth burst into laughter again and kissed Julian's lips. "I am so blessed to be with a man like you. A real man, a billionaire. And I can't wait for that one billion-dollar mansion you promised to get after our honeymoon."

Julian smirked, feeling a bit proud. "You'll get it, baby. And the five hundred million-dollar wedding too. I am willing to spend that much on

our wedding, half a billion."

She smiled so wide. "It's just too bad the wedding is still a few weeks away. I can't wait to officially become the bride of someone richer than my father. I used to think my father was wealthy until I met you."

Julian raised a brow. "Richer than your father?"

She giggled. "Yes, of course. My dad doesn't even have up to four billion in his account. You're in the 8th. It's not even close."

Julian's pride swelled as he laid back again on the pillows. "That's hard work. Every single dollar came from smart decisions, discipline, and strategy."

Elizabeth rolled on top of him playfully. "Well, I'm glad your strategies led you to me."

Julian smiled and wrapped his arms around her. "I told you, we're not going to stay in your father's house after the wedding. Our home will be a one billion-dollar masterpiece. Everything would be perfect. Unlike Ryan who lived with you in your parent's house, I can give you a real future."

They both laughed at Ryan again.

All of a sudden, in that moment, Julian's phone buzzed from the nightstand. He had just received a message.

Still chuckling, he reached out lazily and picked the phone up. But the moment his eyes landed on the screen, his smile fell off his face instantly.

His body froze and the laughter stopped.

His eyes darted across the message, reading it again and again to be sure it was real.

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His lips parted slightly, but no words came out. Slowly, he sat up straight.

Elizabeth noticed immediately.

"Julian?" she asked, confused. "What's wrong?"

He didn't answer. His thumb slowly scrolled down the message again.

"FROM: NOVA INC. – BOARD OF DIRECTORS

TO: MR. JULIAN KNIGHT

You are hereby notified to return the total sum of \$7,000,000,000 borrowed under your name, within 30 minutes, to Nova's official corporate account.

This message carries the CEO's authorization. Failure to comply will result in job termination and legal action."

Julian's chest began to pound. The room suddenly felt hotter, smaller. He wiped his sweaty palms on the bedsheet. His vision blurred as fear crushed his confidence.

Elizabeth sat up next to him. "Julian? What is it? You're scaring me." Her face turned pale as he spoke out in fear.

He quickly turned the phone over, hiding the screen from her as she drew closer to him, attempting to look into his phone.

"Nothing. It's nothing serious," he said too fast, too stiffly that she knew something was definitely wrong.

She frowned. "Are you sure? You look like you've just seen a ghost."

Julian forced a laugh. "Just a weird work message. I'll handle it."

Elizabeth wasn't convinced. "Work message?" she repeated, eyes narrowing. "You're acting strange. Let me see it."

He shook his head, standing up too quickly. "No. It's confidential."

Elizabeth followed him, now completely suspicious. "Julian, don't lie to me. What's going on?"

He grabbed his shirt from the floor and started buttoning it. His heart was still racing.

Elizabeth stepped in front of him, blocking the path. "Julian. Let me see your phone. What's happening please?"

He moved past her. "I need to make a call."

"To who?" she asked firmly. "Why can't you talk here?"

"I just need to make a quick business call," he snapped, not turning around.

Elizabeth folded her arms. "Julian, this isn't funny. You were fine one minute, and now you're walking out like the house is burning down."

Julian turned briefly and gave her a shaky smile. "Relax, babe. I'll be right back."

She stepped forward. "Is it about the wedding?"

"No."

"Then the mansion?"

"No."

She was growing frustrated now. "Then what is it? Why are you acting like you've been threatened?"

He froze for a second, then forced a smile again. "It's just a small hiccup at the office. You know how these things are."

He was already halfway out the door.

Elizabeth's voice followed behind him. "Julian, you better not be hiding anything from me."

But he didn't turn back.

He couldn't.

Because the truth was, Julian had just 30 minutes to return \$7 billion to Nova.

The real money he had left was just \$1 billion.

He had already promised to spend two billion, one for the mansion, one for the wedding.

That meant he was already in deep trouble.

He borrowed everything else just to impress Elizabeth. He had no idea how Nova's CEO found out or why this was happening now. He had borrowed that amount through the help of Mr. Henry, the director of finance, now, the CEO had found out about it.

But if he didn't move fast, his entire life would crash before his eyes. He would gradually start becoming broke.

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He couldn't let Elizabeth find out.

Not yet.

Not ever.

He needed to figure something out before everything came crashing down.

As Julian stepped out of the room and closed the door behind him, Elizabeth stood in the middle of the room, confused and still waiting for an answer.

Commented [Ma1]:

Commented [Ma2R1]:

Commented [Ma3R1]: