Chapter 32

Ryan slowly lifted his head from the wall, his forehead reddened from how hard he'd pressed it. His breathing was ragged, and his eyes were red with the horror that had just crashed into his life like a wrecking ball.

His mother had been kidnapped And he didn't even know where to start from.

The thought swirled in his mind, making him dizzy.

He pushed himself away from the wall and staggered forward slightly, his feet dragging across the tiled hospital corridor. He confused, afraid and totally out of words. His senses were all at war with each other.

His mother... the one person who had always believed in him, even in his darkest days was just kidnapped after he had already saved her from dying.

He whispered to himself, "Who could've done this?"

The question bounced around in his skull and he had no direct response to it. Faces flashed before him like slideshow images — people from his past, enemies he had silenced, and those he had publicly humiliated.

"It can't be Jessica or Matthew," he muttered aloud as he wandered toward the hospital entrance. "No... they don't have the spine. I humiliated them already—they wouldn't dare to retaliate, not like this."

His hands clenched into fists at his sides.

"But Julian..." His lips tightened. "Julian Knight. Elizabeth. The McCarthys..."

He stopped and shook his head slightly.

"'That party... they tried to disgrace me. I walked out like a king instead. That must've stung. Julian—he was embarrassed, rejected by Claudia because of me when he asked her for help with his loan. Could he really have gone this far? Or is it the McCarthys, all of them ganging up?"

His thoughts kept circling.

"If they think this will break me... they're dead wrong."

With these thoughts...Ryan turned on his heel and made his way back into the corridor where the police officers were still gathered, speaking quietly with the hospital staff.

"Officers," he called out, loud enough to pull their attention.

Detective Mark, the oldest among them with a mustache turned to face him.

"Yes?" he asked, a note of impatience in his voice.

"I think I know who took my mother," Ryan said, straightening his back.

Mark raised a brow. "Go on."

"I believe it was the McCarthys. Specifically Elizabeth McCarthy. And her fiancé, Julian Knight."

There was silence for a while after he spoke.

Detective Kelvin, who was the younger officer, looked up from his notepad with a startled expression. Mark's eyes widened slightly as well, and he took an uncertain step forward.

"You... do you even know the names you just called?" Mark asked, slowly.

Ryan nodded. "Yes. I'm not throwing names around for fun. I'm serious."

"You're accusing Elizabeth McCarthy? Daughter of The McCarthy? And Julian Knight?" Kelvin asked, sounding incredulous. "These aren't small names, son. They're high up in the food chain."

Ryan's jaw tightened. "I know exactly who they are."

Mark frowned and lowered his voice. "You better be damn sure. These are billionaires. You can't just walk into a police station and throw accusations around."

"I'm not throwing anything," Ryan replied evenly. "Julian has had it out for me for weeks. And the McCarthys? They tried to humiliate me not too long ago, and it backfired. I know they haven't forgotten. I felt it today when I ran into Julian."

Kelvin exchanged a nervous glance with Mark. "Still... this is dangerous territory. The McCarthys practically run this town."

Ryan laughed bitterly. "And that's supposed to scare me?"

Mark folded his arms. "It should. Because they're untouchable. You've got no proof, no surveillance footage. All you've got is a hunch. Plus you come from a humble background, with no money and name."

"Sometimes," Ryan said, stepping closer, "a hunch is where justice starts. Are you going to investigate? Or let another innocent person disappear because you're afraid of losing your badge?"

Mark stiffened, clearly uncomfortable. "Look, kid—"

"Don't call me kid," Ryan snapped.

Mark's mouth twitched in irritation. "Whatever. I'm not risking my job

on a wild accusation. Especially not against the McCarthys. Or someone like Julian Knight."

Ryan blinked. "What is it about Julian Knight that has everyone shaking in their shoes?"

Mark laughed under his breath. "Are you serious? That man's a billionaire. He works for Nova."

"So?" Ryan asked with a scoff.

"You don't get it," Kelvin added. "Nova doesn't just hire anyone. Julian has connections that go way beyond money. Even politicians are careful around him."

Ryan's patience snapped.

"What if I told you I could fire Julian Knight from Nova, would you agree to dig into this case then?"

The room fell dead silent.

Mark blinked slowly, looking at him as if he'd lost his mind. "What did you say?"

Ryan met his gaze. "You heard me."

Kelvin snorted in disbelief. "What are you saying, you know someone at Nova?"

"No," Ryan said calmly, pulling out his phone. "I am someone at Nova."

Before they could respond, he dialed quickly and pressed the call to speaker.

It rang once.

Then came the crisp, composed voice on the other end. "Claudia Duval speaking."

Mark's eyes widened. Kelvin's jaw dropped slightly.

"Claudia?" Ryan said. "It's me. I need you to do something urgently."

"Go ahead, boss," she said without missing a beat.

Both detectives turned to each other, their eyes blinking rapidly in disbelief.

"Fire Julian Knight," Ryan said with a calm voice. "I want his records wiped, his access revoked, and a memo circulated to every branch."

There was a pause on the line.

"Yes, boss," Claudia replied again, her voice sounding so obedient. " Consider it done. Anything else?"

"That's all. Thank you."

He ended the call and slowly looked up.

Both Mark and Kelvin stood frozen, their faces pale as realization sank in.

"You…" Mark said slowly, pointing a trembling finger at him. "That was Claudia Duval. The Claudia Duval, only female billionaire in the state, works as Ambassador for Nova."

"How do you—" Kelvin began, then stopped. "Wait. Who are you?"

Ryan slipped his phone back into his pocket and gave them a nod.

"I'm Ryan Walker," he said. "The CEO of Nova."

Kelvin's mouth fell open.

Mark nearly stumbled backward. "What... how... you're—"

"I may not look the part," Ryan said calmly. "But don't judge a book by its cover. What ever connections you think Julian Knight or the McCarthys have, I have times of that."

He stepped forward, locking eyes with both men.

"Now that you know who I am, are you ready to stop protecting criminals in suits and start looking into the people who actually kidnapped my mother?"

Both men were too stunned to speak.

Mark nodded slowly, the color returning to his cheeks. "Y-yes... of course, Mr. Walker. We'll open the investigation immediately."