

Chapter 37

"Confidential?" Detective Mark repeated, his voice slowing down a bit to make his next words clear. "Mr. Knight, we are the police. We are not hackers or criminals. We need transparency if you're as wealthy and connected as you claim."

Elizabeth rolled her eyes dramatically and stepped forward, tossing her long hair over her shoulder. "Detective, come on. This is ridiculous. Julian doesn't need to prove anything. He's a billionaire. Everyone knows that. But if you insist, then he would show you..."

Mrs. McCarthy stood frozen, trying to read the tension that was all over Julian, while Mr. McCarthy frowned slightly, his eyes narrowing at Julian as he had began to notice it as well.

Elizabeth turned to Julian with a wide, haughty grin, nudging his arm. "Show them, babe. Seriously, shut this down already. Show them your bank balance. Let them see. Eight billion, that's a whole lot of money. Let them choke on it."

Julian's face twitched. The veins in his head already starting to pulse.

"I, I would," he said, fumbling for his phone, "but... the signal here is poor. I think my mobile network's acting up."

Detective Kelvin raised an eyebrow. "Signal? We're getting full bars, why is the signal only poor at your phone."

Elizabeth wasn't letting it go, she also wanted him to show them as she felt so proud. "Come on, Julian," she said, laughing confidently. "Don't be shy. This is your chance to shut Ryan up once and for all."

Julian's fingers tapped aimlessly on the screen. "It's not loading. See?"

He turned the phone, but quickly lowered it before anyone could get a real look. "Stupid network."

"Oh?" Ryan's calm voice cut through the silence like a blade. "Would you like me to hotspot you?"

Julian froze. Everyone turned to Ryan.

He pulled out his phone casually. "I've got full signal and a Super-fast Wi-Fi too. One click, and you're connected."

Julian looked like he'd swallowed a lemon, his face looked so bitter anyone could tell something was wrong.

Elizabeth turned sharply to him, a little bit suspicious now. "Julian, just take the hotspot. What's the problem?"

"I uhhmm... I don't like using unsecured connections," Julian muttered, his eyes darting nervously. "Especially when accessing sensitive banking apps."

Ryan scoffed. "Ah, that's fair. You are right, Security is important. But this is my private connection. Completely secure, hold me responsible if you notice any problems later on."

Detective Mark gave a small nod. "It'll work."

Elizabeth grabbed Julian's arm now whispering to his ear. "Julian! What the hell are you doing? Just log in and show them. This is turning into a circus."

Julian shook his head. "I don't need to prove anything. My reputation—"

"Is clearly in question," Mark interrupted flatly. "Mr. Knight, we're not asking about your reputation. We're asking for verification."

Sweat rolled down Julian's temple.

"Okay," he said, pulling out his phone again, "maybe I'll try again."

Ryan stepped forward and held out his phone. "Here's the hotspot, just connect."

Julian looked at the phone like it was a loaded weapon.

Elizabeth's voice cracked slightly now. "Why are you hesitating?"

"I'm not," Julian said defensively. "I just... I forgot my banking password."

Everyone blinked, unable to understand where all the excuses were coming from.

"You forgot your password?" Elizabeth repeated, her voice filled with disbelief.

Ryan chuckled under his breath.

Julian tried to recover a little from the tension. "It happens! These apps time out and lock you out all the time. And for security—"

"You said you checked your account this morning," Elizabeth said sharply. "When I asked about the 1 billion dollar house you promised me after the wedding. You told me we were still good."

Julian's mouth opened and closed like a fish.

Detective Mark folded his arms. "Sir, are you refusing to comply?"

Julian shook his head quickly. "No! No. I'm just... having trouble accessing the app."

Elizabeth's eyes narrowed, and she took a step back from him.

Mrs. McCarthy looked down, embarrassed.

Mr. McCarthy turned toward Julian, his face looking a bit stiff. "Julian," he said with authority, "I asked you for a house worth 100 million as a gift. You told me you'd already sorted the payment. Was that a lie?" 1

"No!" Julian snapped too quickly. "It's done. It's just... tied up in processing."

Ryan crossed his arms. "Or maybe," he said calmly, "you're not a billionaire anymore."

Julian turned to him, his face turning red. "Don't be ridiculous."

"Then prove it," Ryan said simply.

Julian looked around again, the pressure mounting. All eyes were now on him. There was no escape.

Detective Mark stepped closer. "One last time, Mr. Knight. Show us or we may need to assume your claims are fabricated and proceed accordingly."

Julian's throat bobbed. He wiped his palms on his face as sweat came running down.

Elizabeth's voice sounded icy now as she turned to him, "Julian, I swear, if you're lying to me..."

"I'm not!" he shouted, panic taking over, "I had over 8 billion. I returned 7 billion to Nova. It was a loan, okay?!"

Mr. McCarthy's eyes widened. "You loaned money?"