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Julian's eyes narrowed at Ryan, and he barked, "What the hell do you mean by that nonsense? Are you out of your mind? The only people that would honor someone like you are your mates from the slums and even that would be in the streets, not at any high-class party."

"This party is held for something more important, and not even close to honoring somebody, talk more of you, a nobody who won't even get access to the venue," Julian added.

Elizabeth scoffed dramatically, turning her disgusted gaze to Ryan. "You must be seriously delusional," she said, her arms crossed and her nose in the air. "The Stallion Night VIP party isn't some circus open to stray dogs. It's organized by the high society of this state—CEOs, royalty, governors, and top businessmen who want to contribute to the development of our state."

She didn't stop there. "People who attend donate millions to the state government. They support causes like orphanages, hospitals, infrastructure. Hell, they even give awards to billionaires who've done remarkable things. What on earth do you have to contribute, Ryan? You're the rags you call clothes which I have burnt to ashes, or the one you borrowed and have been wearing lately that still looks cheap? Someone who couldn't even afford 250,000 naira for his mother's treatment?"

Ryan said nothing. His leg remained calmly crossed and his fingers were interlaced on his lap. He simply watched them rant, but kept silent. His silence only infuriated Julian and Elizabeth more.

Julian leaned forward slightly, crossing Elizabeth who was sitting in the middle a bit. "You think silence makes you look mysterious? It doesn't. It makes you look weak, pathetic, and stupid. You sit there, acting all calm,

but you're nothing, Ryan, nothing!"

Ryan finally spoke with an even calmer voice compared to before. "You'll both see how tonight ends. I'll be there. And I'll be receiving the highest award being given at the event."

Elizabeth exploded into laughter. "Poverty has really started messing with your brain! When they said 'dream big,' they didn't mean 'be stupid! ' Wake up, Ryan. Be honest. G****e gave you that information, right? That's how you found out the location and time." 

Julian sneered. "Exactly. What, did you steal someone's invite or something? Or maybe you just hacked into someone's email and got lucky."

Elizabeth wasn't done. She waved a hand dismissively. "In fact, I'm still wondering how you even got mobile data. With how broke you are, do you stand by the roadside and use free Wi-Fi from restaurants? Or maybe you beg the mall security guards to hotspot you? Just shut up already please. You're embarrassing yourself." 

She was gearing up to keep talking, words already forming on her lips, but Detective Mark raised a hand and cut her off sharply.

"Enough," he said. "This is a police station, not a debate competition. Elizabeth, focus on the questions."

Elizabeth rolled her eyes and muttered, "Whatever," before slumping slightly in her seat.

Detective Mark turned his eyes to Julian and noticed the man fidgeting more than usual. Julian had pulled out his phone and was typing something very fast. His fingers were jittery, almost frantic.



Mark squinted at him. "Mr. Julian, you alright?"

Julian didn't respond immediately. When he finally looked up, he looked startled, his chair even shook slightly. Elizabeth turned to him, looking confused as well.

"Mr. Knight?" Mark asked again. "Anything wrong?"

Julian forced a shaky laugh. "No, nothing. Everything's fine. Just... a bit tired, that's all. It's been a long day." His voice trembled.

Detective Mark didn't buy it. "Was that a call or a text? Because your face changed just now. You looked like you'd seen a ghost or perhaps something of great interest to you."

Julian let out another awkward laugh. "It was just a text message, nothing important. Just... business stuff."

"From who?" Mark pressed another question at him immediately, his eyes narrowing like so many thoughts were going through his mind.

Ryan was now watching Julian closely too as he became more curious as to the way he was behaving. He tilted his head just slightly, as if already suspecting something.

Julian stammered, "no one serious, it is just someone from work. He texted to discuss work with me."

Detective Kelvin scoffed from behind him. "What work? Did you forget we all watched you get fired earlier today?"

Julian froze, the color draining from his face instantly. He totally didn't think of that before lying.

Kelvin walked forward a bit, his voice becoming clearer. "Don't lie in

front of law enforcement. Especially not when you're already a suspect. Transparency is your best option here. Unless you're trying to look guilty.

" Julian opened his mouth to speak, struggling to find words, but was saved by a sudden ring from Ryan's phone.

Ryan reached into his pocket slowly and checked the screen. There was a new text message from his phone.

He opened it and his heart thumped hard the moment he recognized the sender.

The sender was still unknown, no ID and no name, just the same number from the earlier threat. And now, there was another chilling message...

"The police can't help you. Stop wasting your time. You better think of another way to get your mother back."

Ryan's grip on the phone tightened. For a second, he said nothing. Then, without saying a word, he turned the screen around and handed it to Detective Mark.

Detective Mark leaned in to read the message, and the moment the words sank in, his eyes widened.

"Kevin," he called sharply and Kevin rushed over.

Mark turned the phone toward him. Kevin read the message and shook his head.

His jaw clenched. "Damn. It's a live threat, they're watching him."

"What's that?" Elizabeth asked, her voice no longer arrogant, but nervous.

Mark didn't answer her immediately. He was already pulling out a small recorder. "Ryan, is this the same number from the earlier threat?"

Ryan nodded. "Yes. Same one. They're not bluffing, they know what we're doing."

Mark took a photo of the message with his own phone. "We'll get this traced. Immediately."

Elizabeth looked between all of them, suddenly nervous.

Julian was quiet but his face kept turning pale. He leaned back into his seat, and this time it wasn't out of arrogance, but discomfort. Real fear was showing across his face.

Detective Kelvin turned to Mark. "We should notify the cybercrime department and have them monitor Ryan's phone activity."

Mark nodded. "I am already on it."

Elizabeth tried to speak again, but Mark raised a hand. "Miss McCarthy, for now, just sit and wait. Your turn's not over."

Julian suddenly leaned forward, grabbing the opportunity. "Well, I guess this clears it up then, doesn't it? The person who took Ryan's mother just messaged him. It proves Elizabeth and I had nothing to do with it. We'll be taking our leave now."

He stood up confidently, brushing imaginary dust off his coat as if he was finally free.

Detective Mark's head slowly turned toward Julian, and his eyes narrowed. "Excuse me? Where do you think you are going?"

Julian straightened his collar. "You heard me. The real criminal just

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revealed themselves by contacting Ryan directly. This means your suspects are innocent. So, if you don't mind, we have places to be."

Elizabeth also began to rise from her seat, adjusting her bag.

Detective Mark slammed a palm down on the desk.

"Julian Knight, you are not going anywhere until I give you permission to."
"

6/6

Commented [Ma1]:

Commented [Ma2R1]: