

Chapter 44

Ryan looked Julian in the eye, and looked very obvious that he was unshaken by the mocking smiles plastered across both his and Elizabeth face.

Ryan took a deep breath to steady himself before speaking his next words, "Didn't I already tell you at the station that I'd be attending this party? And not just attending... I told you what I came told you what I came to do here. I'm the one receiving the Golden Award tonight."

There were three awards in all, the bronze, silver and gold awards, all presented to different category of individual, based on their contribution, which could be money or any contribution that wasn't money but shook the hall.

"So, yes... that is why I am here," Ryan repeated as they still stood in front of him. He was about to push past them and walk towards the gate before Julian blocked his path as if not wanting him to pass yet.

Julian let out a loud, mocking laugh that drew the attention of nearby guests. "The only award you'll be getting tonight is a slap across the face from security when they bounce you from the entrance."

Ryan's browns furrowed in uncertainty. "And what do you mean by that?" He asked Julian, and Julian laughed one more time.

"You idiot!" Julian said with a smirk.

He moved closer to Ryan with slow steps, pointed a finger arrogantly toward the security checkpoint near the grand entrance. It was sophisticated and it looked so advanced. There was a security identity scanner standing by.

"Do you know what that Machine is? Nope! I know you don't know what it is, you have never been to such a high-society event," Elizabeth said coldly.

"You clearly don't know how this works. There's a thumbprint scanner at the checkpoint. It's programmed to recognize top-tier personalities only. Celebrities, philanthropists, high-level executives... not lowlife nobodies. You'll get denied at the first scan. The scan would immediately know you are from the slums and don't belong here."

Ryan scoffed. "And what makes you think your thumb will be recognized, but mine won't? What makes you think you rank higher than I do, Julian?"

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Julian raised an eyebrow before he spoke again. "Of course, I rank higher than you, the system knows that too. This is because I've been attending this event since I was twenty-one. I've donated millions over the years. I sit on one of the advisory boards. You, Ryan? You're a former delivery boy who stumbled into unemployment, now what? Now you borrow clothes to wear to impress people, like a kindergarten boy playing dressup. That's not the same as my position."

Elizabeth folded her arms tightly across her chest, rolling her eyes. Her voice filled with condescension. "Oh there's more... Because we're people of value, Ryan. People who give. People who donate. We build the state, don't you get it? We contribute to its development, and you? You're a burden, a stain on the city's progress. You are just a liability, all you've done is leech."

She looked him up and down in disgust. "You should be ashamed to even show your face here. You are still a nuisance, still as irrelevant as ever. Honestly, you're embarrassing yourself."

Ryan gave a light smile. "I'm not here to be a nuisance, Elizabeth. I'm

here to claim my award... the Golden Award. The same award you can only dream of. And in case you've forgotten, I was also the one who rescheduled the party from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM."

Julian huffed. "Oh, shut up. That was just a coincidence. There's no way you had anything to do with that decision, do not forget that you are a nobody, Ryan... You? Shift an elite event? Get real, pauper. You don't have that kind of power or authority, not even in the slums where you came from."

Elizabeth took a step forward, visibly irritated. "Do you even know what the Golden Award stands for? It's for the person who makes the highest and most significant contribution at the event. Not even us or my parents are receiving it. And that's because the organizers only select someone who has done something extraordinary."

She sneered. "And you, Ryan, you have nothing extraordinary to offer."

She crossed her arms again and looked him square in the eye. "But if you believe in yourself so much, then how about we make a bet? Since you're so confident you'll be leaving with that award tonight, let's wager on it. If you lose, you'll go straight back to the police station and tell them to take their eyes off us—clear our names entirely."

Ryan raised an eyebrow, trying to understand what he gains. "And if I win?"

Julian held up a finger, cutting Elizabeth off before she could answer. "Hold on, babe. This is Ryan Walker we're talking about. The guy who probably wears borrowed underwear. He's got nothing to offer... nothing to show."

He stepped in close, lowering his voice slightly but keeping the confidence intact. "So let's up the stakes a bit. Let make it 2 bets. First—

If he can even get past security and enter the venue like the rest of us, I'll give him five hundred million dollars. Cash. But if he fails, he clears our names with the police and admits we had nothing to do with anything."

Elizabeth chuckled beside him, clearly entertained by the drama. Other guests nearby had begun to subtly eavesdrop.

Julian continued. "Second—if, by some divine miracle, he not only gets in but also wins the Golden Award tonight... I'll give him my two most expensive sports cars. That'll leave me with no cars and just four hundred million dollars in my account."

Elizabeth added with a smirk, "And we'll shake your hand for proving miracles exist."

Julian leaned forward, whispering close to Ryan's face. "But if I win—and I will—you will kneel before me, kiss my boots in front of everyone at this party, and then you'll leave this town. Forever. You'll disappear, Ryan. Just like you should've done a long time ago."

Ryan finally spoke. His voice was calm and so confident that it shocked them both. "Done."

Julian raised a brow. "Wait, just like that? You're accepting both bets without blinking?"

Ryan nodded. "Why not? It sounds entertaining."

Elizabeth laughed again. "Entertaining? You're about to humiliate yourself in front of half the city."

Julian grinned and rubbed his hands together. "Well, then, what are we waiting for? Let's get this over with."