

## Chapter 61

Claudia stood frozen on the empty stretch of road. She kept looking at Ryan's phone in her hand.

Her heart was filled with panic, she couldn't believe Ryan was actually missing.

She turned to Detective Mark, her voice was trembling as she spoke. "Now that we've only found Ryan's phone... what do we do with it? What does this mean?"

Mark took the device from her, examining it briefly before sighing and handing it back. "I'm sorry, Claudia, but this... this isn't a lead, not anymore. Whoever took him dumped the phone here on purpose, they probably knew we could trace it."

Claudia gripped her head with both hands, her breathing became shallow. "No, no... Ryan is the CEO of Nova. He's one of the most influential men in the country, nothing should happen to him. Please, you have to do something!"

Detective Kevin looked around casually, while Mark stepped closer and spoke to her. "We'll try our best, Claudia. But right now, we have no direction."

Mark looked away for a while then turned to focus his eyes on Ryan again. "Do you remember anything strange tonight? Anything unusual before it happened?"

Claudia struggled to think clearly. "No... everything seemed normal. Everyone was leaving the party and then Ryan and I were just walking to his car. He thanked me, we talked and laughed... It... It was a sweet moment." 1



She paused, thinking deeper. "Except... the McCarthys. Elizabeth and Julian kept threatening him throughout the night, they were furious about the VIP seat situation. But Ryan has dealt with them before and I didn't think they could go this far."

"Ryan's mother... she just went missing... and now him. Oh my God, within a day, something is very wrong," Detective Mark whispered.

Mark and Kevin exchanged a look as it all was beginning to look like it was connected.

"Okay," Mark said, "We'll dig into this. The McCarthys will be investigated, but if they're behind it, they've covered their tracks well. Whoever did this was watching your every move."

The detectives returned to their car, promising to check security cameras, road activity, and surveillance data. Claudia remained behind with Isaac, still holding Ryan's phone tightly.

Isaac glanced around nervously. "Ma'am... it's not safe to keep standing here. Staying on this road won't bring him back."

Claudia blinked at him, like awakening from a trance. "You're right... Let's go back to the mansion and probably go through some things, to see if we could get a clue."

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Ryan woke up, regaining consciousness slowly...

He groaned. "What... where am I?"

Above him, a faulty fluorescent bulb was blinking with a light that was unstable.



The room was nearly empty, there was just a table in the corner and a metal chair. It was so quiet that Ryan wondered if he was even the only person in the building.

All of a sudden, a beam of blinding light hit his face.

"Argh!" Ryan squinted, raising his hand to shield his eyes.

Footsteps echoed from the doorway, and the door was shut with a loud sound.

Ryan blinked rapidly as a dark figure stepped into the light. The person was tall, broad-shouldered, and masked.

His heart dropped when he realized it was him, that same man that stopped him from escaping.

The figure paused... then slowly, he began to take off the mask.

Ryan's breath caught in his throat when he finally recognized that symbol from a criminal group led by his dead uncle in the past.

His eyes widened in horror and confusion the moment the man removed the mask completely.

"Uncle Smith?" he whispered.

The man smiled, it was a cold, crooked smirk. "Hmmm...You still recognize me. That's sweet!"

Ryan shook his head slowly. "You're supposed to be dead."

Smith chuckled dryly, tapping a wooden bat against his palm. "That's what everyone thought. But no.. I didn't, and in fact, I am very much alive as you can see, dear nephew."



"You let us believe you were gone," Ryan muttered. "You disappeared and left us with nothing after taking everything from my mother and I."