

Chapter 7

Ryan sat in silence waiting for Claudia inside Ricco Store’s private VIP chamber. She had gone to an inner cubicle within the VIP chamber.

Claudia returned shortly, not with clothes, but with a warm, genuine smile and a leather folder in her hand. She placed the folder on the table and took the seat across from him.

“Mr. Walker,” she began, her voice softer now, “I didn’t bring you here just because of what happened outside. I brought you here because I’ve been looking for you.”

Ryan blinked, unsure what she meant. “Looking for me?”

She nodded. “I’m not just the owner of Ricco S-Class Store. I’m also a shareholder and global ambassador for Nova Inc.”

Ryan sat up straighter, a small knot forming in his chest. He was sitting in front of an influential woman.

“I know you already saw the message,” Claudia continued, tapping lightly on the folder in front of her. “The one informing you that you’ve been appointed as the new CEO of Nova.”

“Yes,” Ryan said slowly, “I saw it but have no idea what it means.. I mean...”

“Then allow me to officially welcome you.” She slid the folder across the table to him. “I was assigned to locate you the moment the board voted on the appointment. The system flagged your account after the transfer, but your personal profile took some time to verify. Once it was confirmed, Nova activated our field protocol to get you onboarded immediately.”

Ryan opened the folder, slowly, his fingers trembling a little.

Inside was a welcome letter with the Nova Inc. logo at the top. There were documents, professional, and unmistakably official. His name appeared on the CEO contract header, along with the title: Chief Executive Officer – Nova Inc. (Ten-Year Term).

His mouth dropped open in shock.

Claudia watched his face closely. “Nova is much bigger than the app you mined years ago. That was only one segment of the company. We operate across blockchain finance, AI development, energy research, defense contracts, aerospace ventures—you name it. What you hold in your hands is the highest seat in the entire organization.”

Ryan didn’t respond immediately. He scanned the papers again, still trying to wrap his head around it. “And they’re handing all of that to me?”

Claudia nodded. “Yes. The board voted unanimously. You didn’t just hold onto your Nova coins—you were the only one who believed in the project long-term. That shows your capacity to take this project forward. Nova is built on innovation and foresight. You demonstrated both, whether you intended to or not.”

Ryan leaned back slightly. “I’m still trying to understand why me. I have no corporate background. No experience leading a billion-dollar company.”

“You don’t need it,” she replied. “Nova has its own way of identifying leaders. Talent and intuition matter more than resume lines. And we’ve got a global executive team to support you. You won’t be alone. I, Claudia Duval, has also been appointed to assist you.”

She paused, then added with a smile, “congratulations, Mr. Walker.”

Ryan let out a breath, still overwhelmed but beginning to accept it. His head was spinning in circles, unsure how he became a billionaire and a CEO to a billion-dollar company like Nova, all in one night.

“What happens now?” he asked.

“You’re expected to join your first executive orientation in forty-eight hours,” Claudia said.

She stood and walked to a side cabinet, returning with a black card box.

“This,” she said, handing it to him, “is your access badge. It’s not just for Nova—it opens secure doors, links to your encrypted account, and gives you priority access to facilities worldwide. Only three others in the world have one like it.”

Ryan took it slowly, holding the weight of it in his hand. It didn’t just look valuable—it felt like power.

“This card grants you unlimited access. It would command people at your service, Mr. Walker,” she said with a calm tone that sent chills down Ryan’s spine as he imagined the power he now controlled.

Claudia gave him a moment, then said, “Now, about your outfit. You’ll need something sharp for tonight. You must be planning to attend an event or something. I know just the right pair of our most expensive suit which cost \$200,000. And guess what, that would be a gift from me to you for the embarrassment my staff caused you.”

“No. Thank you so much, Claudia. I truly appreciate your gesture, but I am afraid, I would rather go for something casual for now. I don’t want to draw too much attention,” he said to her and she smiled and nodded.

“I understand. About your meeting in 48 hours, I will pick you up from the event you are heading to, and then I’ll run you through the details,” she said to him with a smile.

Ryan finally smiled a little before standing up.

“Thank you, Duval.”

After Ryan left Ms. Duval at the Ricco Store, he booked a black cab that had dropped him off at the fancy event hall where the birthday party for Elizabeth’s ex-boyfriend, Julian Knight, was being held.

He stepped out of the cab and took a deep breath. The entrance was bright with crystal lights, and rich guests were arriving in expensive cars. All of the men wore sharp suits. The women wore shiny dresses, their high heels making clicking sounds on the marble steps as they walked in.

Ryan didn’t wear a suit. He didn’t think he needed to.

Instead, he wore a brand-new pair of blue jeans and a black t-shirt. Nothing fancy, but new and not from his old closet. The clothes fit well, the fabric was of high quality. He had bought them earlier that night from Ricco’s VIP chamber—though you wouldn’t know that by looking.

Despite the billions in his bank account and the title of CEO waiting on the other end of a scheduled phone call with Ms. Claudia Duval, Ryan didn’t feel like showing off. He had come to observe, not perform. He wanted to know what his wife, Elizabeth was up to. Why she had suddenly reached out. Why she’d asked him to be here.

He walked up the steps and entered the hall casually and with confidence despite looking too casual for the party dress code.

The moment he stepped through the doors, conversations slowed down and everyone’s eyes turned toward him. They started whispering among themselves immediately.

“Why is he dressed like that?”

“Is he one of the caterers?”

Ryan didn’t react. He walked in quietly, scanning the room with calm eyes.

A few people—mostly young men standing near the bar—raised their glasses and called out mockingly. “Hey, buddy, get us another bottle of champagne, will you?” Those men were Julian Knights best friends, mocking Ryan.

A woman in a red dress whispered to her friend, “Isn’t that Elizabeth’s husband? What’s he doing dressed like that? Did he walk in off the street?”

“He’s the guy she was forced to marry, right? I thought she left him already.”

A cluster of guests nearby chuckled loudly, making no attempt to hide it.

“I swear I’ve seen that guy doing food delivery,” someone said, loud enough for Ryan to hear. “How did a woman as stunning and classy as Elizabeth get to meet him?”

Ryan kept walking. He didn’t look at anyone, didn’t respond. If they wanted to joke, let them joke. They didn’t know who he was.

Ryan didn’t bother about their talks and murmur. But what bothered him was what he saw next.

Near the center of the hall, surrounded by white and gold decorations and a massive ice sculpture, stood Elizabeth’s parents.

Ryan’s eyes narrowed slightly. He hadn’t expected them to be here. This was a birthday party for Julian, Elizabeth’s ex. Why would her parents attend this?

And if they were here, that means they had known Elizabeth was still in contact with her ex. It meant they were okay with it and they approved of it.

He felt bitterness rise in his throat because of the lack of respect from the McCarthy family towards him.

His thoughts were interrupted when he felt a hand suddenly grab his playfully.

He looked up, and to his shock he saw his wife, Elizabeth.

There was a cold smile playing on her lips, her grip was very firm on his wrist. Her long silver dress sparkled under the chandeliers, and her makeup was done like she was ready for a magazine shoot. She acted like she hadn’t just mocked him few hours back and even left his mother for dead at the hospital.

“There you are!” she said with a flat tone, despite trying so much to act lively and playful. Her coldness was still in every expression. Her voice was loud enough for nearby guests to hear. “Come on, everyone’s been waiting for you.”

Ryan stared at her, confused by the act, even though her voice still sounded like the Elizabeth he knew.

Before he could respond, Elizabeth was already pulling him forward. “Let’s get some attention on my wonderful husband,” she said with a cold smirk.

She dragged him toward the center of the hall—toward the small stage beside the DJ booth.

The music was loud, the beat pulsing through the speakers. But as soon as they stepped up, Elizabeth lifted her hand to the DJ.

“Stop the music for a second,” she said into the microphone.

The music cut immediately as if everything was planned out already.

Everyone turned their attention to the stage, fully focused on Ryan and Elizabeth.

Ryan stood still. He wasn’t sure what was happening. For a brief moment, he actually thought she was serious. Was she really about to introduce him properly? To honor him?

The crowd stared, waiting.

Elizabeth smiled brightly, holding his arm and turning slightly toward the audience.

Then she leaned into the microphone and said with an icy tone, “So, dear husband... where did you borrow those clothes from?”

The room burst into laughter.

Some laughed hard. Some gave polite chuckles. But most looked right at Ryan and enjoyed the joke at his expense.

Ryan’s expression didn’t change but his jaw tensed slightly.

So that was it.

That was why she brought him here.

She never wanted to respect him. This wasn’t about introducing him as her husband. It was about setting him up—to mock him in front of a wealthy crowd.

Elizabeth wasn’t done.

She held up her hand and gestured toward his outfit. “I mean, I refused to buy him new clothes, so I guess he borrowed something to try and blend in.”

This time around, everyone burst into a loud laughter.