

Chapter 72

"Exactly," Ryder said coldly. "That's why she was perfect, because she is the aging woman who means everything to you, and you won't let her suffer for long, so you would yield to my demands."

Ryan looked away from the screen, his jaw clenched so tightly that a dull ache spread across the sides of his face. He could feel his pulse pounding at his temple.

"You're using her as a pawn," Ryan forced through gritted teeth.

Lord Ryder gave a casual shrug, her expression devoid of empathy. "That's what pawns are for," she said coolly, as if she were explaining basic chess strategy and not the exploitation of a human being.

Ryan's entire body went rigid. His fingers curled into fists against the steel armrests of the chair, the leather straps biting deeper into his skin. "If you lay a hand on her—" he began, his voice trembling from anger and fear.

She didn't let him finish.

"You'll what?" Ryder interrupted with a mocking voice. "Bleed all over my floor? Because that is the only thing you would be doing if you try to resist me."¹

The smirk on her lips twisted cruelly as she turned to the guards without another glance at him.

"Hold him tighter."

Without hesitation, the guards responded. One pressed down on Ryan's shoulder with crushing force, shoving him deeper into the metal chair. The other seized his arm and squeezed so hard it felt like his bones might

snap. The pain was immediate, sharp and deep. Ryan gasped, his jaw locking tighter as he fought against the scream crawling up his throat.

His muscles strained against the restraints, but it was no use. He was completely pinned.

Ryder began circling him slowly...

"Now," she said with a confident tone, "let me tell you the real show tonight."

Ryan's eyes followed her warily, his chest rising and falling in shallow, fast breaths. "What are you talking about?" he asked, though a part of him already knew he wouldn't like the answer.

"At the auction tonight, there is a very important item that would be displayed," she added.

He frowned, his brows pulling together in confusion. "What item?"

She stopped in front of him, her eyes showing a hint of amusement. "Your mother..."

The words hit Ryan hard and left him stunned, he jerked against the restraints. "What?!" he shouted, the words bursting out of him.

"She's the item," Ryder repeated slowly, enjoying the devastation she was causing. "I'm auctioning her off as a maid to the highest bidder. Some wealthy family with more money than morals will take her in and do whatever they please. And I'll make so much money from selling her off."

Ryan's throat tightened. He could barely speak past the rising lump in his throat. "You're sick," he whispered, his voice shook from disbelief and disgust.

"No," she said, as her smile slowly faded and her expression turned serious. "I'm strategic. While you're busy scribbling your name on those Nova transfer papers, she'll be boxed up, labeled, and sold off like some luxury item. You will lose your company and lose as her as well on the same day. I will win, not just once but twice."

Ryan's breathing became erratic now. The walls felt like they were closing in and his heart pounded so loudly he couldn't hear anything else for a moment. 1

"You can't do this..." he rasped.

"I already have," she whispered, almost tenderly.

Ryan turned his eyes back to the screen.

His mother hadn't moved. She was still curled on the cold concrete floor of her cell, her arms wrapped tightly around herself. Her shoulders shook faintly, but whether from cold or despair, he couldn't tell. She looked so small, so lost and utterly broken.

Tears stung his eyes, but he refused to let them fall. Not in front of Ryder, Not like this. 1

"No..." he murmured under his breath.

Lord Ryder leaned in close, her lips brushing the edge of his ear as she whispered into it.

"We have reached an agreement, right?"

Ryan didn't answer, he Couldn't. His eyes were locked on the screen, wide with horror, and his entire body trembled from a rage he could no longer contain.