

## Chapter 12

Elizabeth's eyes widened in horror. What did she just hear??

For the first time that night, she was speechless. Her lips parted slightly, but no words came out. She had no idea what the man was trying to pass across.

The hall owner's voice still echoed in her ears as he repeated himself once more to make sure everyone heard him properly.

"The venue is no longer available for your event. The hall has just been purchased..."

She turned sharply toward the man in the formal suit, her heels clicking furiously on the floor as she walked up to him. "What do you mean it's no longer available?" she snapped. "I transferred three hundred thousand dollars to you to rent this place for tonight. How dare you show up halfway into the event and tell me to evacuate?"

The manager held up both hands calmly. "I understand your frustration, Miss McCarthy. But the situation has changed. Things were no longer as it seemed as at the time I agreed to rent it out to you, now I have to follow the request of the new owner."

Ryan, still seated in the VIP chair, didn't flinch. He leaned back, arms folded, a passive expression on his face. His brows were slightly furrowed, as though he, too, was trying to make sense of what had just happened.

As if he hadn't predicted it all.

Julian stepped beside Elizabeth, his chest puffed up as he desperately tried to compose himself and show he was capable of speaking up. "You

must be joking," he said to the manager. "You can't just kick us out! You signed a contract with us! That's how business works!"

"Plus the new owner isn't even here yet, and we can't make use of a hall we paid for before he arrives?" he asked tightening his jaw as if controlling his anger.

The manager let out a tired sigh and nodded slowly. "Yes, and that contract has been voided. I've already processed a full refund to Miss McCarthy's account—every cent. Because someone else offered to buy this entire hall for double what it's worth. An offer I couldn't refuse."

Elizabeth looked at him coldly like he was losing his mind. "What?! When? When did someone walk in and buy the entire hall?! We've been here the whole time!"

Julian scoffed. "Is this a prank? A stunt? Do you think you can insult the McCarthys and get away with it?"

"I don't make the rules anymore," the manager said with a professional smile. "I simply follow the instructions of the new owner. If you refuse to leave, he can press charges for trespassing. And I'm afraid I'll have no legal protection to offer you."

Ryan still sat there with an unreadable expression. The manager himself didn't know it was him who just called to buy the event hall. In fact, he thought the buyer hadn't arrived yet.

Not a single guest, not even Julian or Elizabeth, seemed to consider the possibility that he could be the buyer. The idea was too absurd. Too far from what they believed.

So absurd, in fact, that no one thought to look his way.

Elizabeth turned back to the manager. "This is outrageous! Do you know who I am?!"

"I do," the manager replied curtly. "Which is why I assumed you'd prefer to leave gracefully instead of being dragged out by court orders." 1

Some of the guests held their mouths to prevent them from laughing after hearing this from the manager to Elizabeth. Elizabeth couldn't even speak, her head was spinning. What sort of embarrassment is this?

With that, the manager turned to his staff and snapped his fingers.

Like clockwork, his team sprang into action immediately.

Dozens of workers entered the hall and began tearing down the decorations. The beautiful floral arch over the stage was pulled apart. Balloons popped one after the other. Banners and lights were unhooked, rolled up, folded, tossed into bins.

The massive "Happy Birthday & Engagement" sign was ripped in half with one loud tear.

"No! No, no, stop!" Elizabeth shrieked, grabbing one of the workers by the sleeve. "This is my event! Do you know how much I paid for those?!"

The manager stepped in swiftly. "I'm sorry, Miss McCarthy. But I have refunded you on those too. I have a business to protect. This venue has a new owner. And I won't jeopardize my livelihood because you're having a tantrum."

Elizabeth looked like she might explode. Her cheeks burned red, her fists clenched tight.