

Chapter 47

Julian's face turned red. "You must be stupid if you really believe that guy belongs on the A-list. Something must have gone wrong in your system. That scanner probably glitched."

The security guard folded his arms and scoffed at what Julian said. "That scanner is one of the most secure and updated biometric systems in the entire country. This is a top-tier event with high-level donations and security. If it showed Ryan Walker's name, it's because he belongs there. He was voted into that list by the event board."

Elizabeth stepped forward now, frustration was showing in her voice as she spoke. "This doesn't make any sense! Ryan? On the A-list? How? That's impossible. He has no standing, no background. He couldn't even afford a hospital bill days ago!"

The guard turned to her. "Ma'am, I don't know what his history is. But I know this, tonight, he is the most important personality on that list. The scanner doesn't lie."

Julian hissed through his clenched teeth. "Shut up. You don't know anything. Don't act like you understand what's going on here, because you don't."

The guard's eyes narrowed. "Watch your tone. Nobody forced you to make a fool of yourself."

Julian took a step forward, his voice becoming low and threatening. "I'm giving you five seconds. Return that money or—"

The guard didn't move.

Julian's rage exploded. Without warning, he launched a punch toward the

guard's face.

But the guard was trained and very fast. He ducked, shifted to the side, and before Julian could recover, he delivered a devastating uppercut straight to Julian's jaw.

AHHHH!

Julian's feet lifted off the ground as the punch sent him flying backward. He hit the floor hard with a loud thud, groaning as his hands flew to his face. Blood gushed from his nose uncontrollably.

Gasps erupted around the entrance.

Elizabeth screamed. "Julian! Oh my God!"

She dropped to her knees beside him, fumbling with a silk handkerchief from her purse, trying to stop the bleeding.

The guard stood firm, his fists were still clenched. "Next time you try that, I won't just break your nose, I'll break your bones as well. Don't you ever threaten me again."

He turned to Elizabeth. "If you love your man, take him inside before he embarrasses himself even more. And don't even dream about that money. It's gone."

Elizabeth glared at him but said nothing. She was still trying to process loss.

Julian groaned and pushed her hand away. "Don't touch me."

"You need to stop bleeding, Julian," she whispered urgently. "You're making a scene."

Julian sat up slowly, his hair was now so very messy, his nose was red and dripping.

People were watching. He could feel the shame burning into his skin.

Elizabeth whispered again, more urgently this time. "You've already promised to contribute two hundred million tonight. If you don't, they'll publicly remove you from the donor board. It'll make the news."

Julian clenched his teeth. "Shit!"

Elizabeth knelt beside him. "You already filled the form. They'll call your name. What are you going to do? You only have four hundred million left in your account."

He slammed his fist on the pavement. "I know! I know!"

She tried to speak gently now. "Julian, you're going broke in just a few days. You've lost your job, your billionaire status, and now your balance is just half of what it used to be. Maybe... maybe you should pull out of this bet with Ryan before it gets worse."

Julian wiped the blood from his nose with his sleeve and sat hunched. "No. Ryan might have hacked that system somehow. But the one thing he can't hack is the human panel giving out the Golden Award."

He looked up at her, eyes filled with rage. "And I know for a fact he has nothing to donate. Nothing that would even come close to competing."

Elizabeth looked at him cautiously. "Are you sure about that? What if... what if he surprises you again?"

Julian shook his head, exhaling deeply. "No. He can't win twice in one night. I'll make sure of that."