

Chapter 52

Philip remained composed. "Yes, sir. We are aware of your history. And we are grateful for your past contributions. However, there has been an update to the guest list."

Mrs. McCarthy stood up intantly beside her husband. "Update? You dare update our seat like it's a hotel reservation? Do you understand the magnitude of disrespect in your tone? Do you even know who we are?"

"I assure you, ma'am, there is no disrespect. This is simply an organizational decision made at the highest level. There was a solid reason for doing what had to be done."

Mr. McCarthy scoffed. "Organizational decision? The only thing your organization should be doing is thanking me for keeping this event afloat all these years."

Philip nodded slightly. "We thank you, sir, for all your contributions so far. But the instructions are clear and it must be met before the event proceeds. That seat has been reassigned to another individual of a much higher standard."

Mrs. McCarthy narrowed her eyes instantly. "To whom, exactly? If our seats were reassigned to another individual of higer status than us, then we deserve to know who this individual is, right?"

Philip cleared his throat. "I am not at liberty to disclose the reasoning behind the reassignment. I can only say that the seat was prepared for someone of notably higher status."

Gasps and murmurs rolled through the crowd.

Mr. McCarthy's face turned red from the anger and humiliation he was

going through. "Higher status? Who the hell has higher status than me in this room? I paid a hundred million last year alone!"

Philip calmly held out his tablet. "This is the official message from the organizers. It came in ten minutes ago, you can have a look."

Mr. McCarthy snatched the device, and his eyes scanning the screen. His hands trembled the moment he saw the information Philip was passing was real. He passed it to his wife, who nearly shrieked in outrage.

"This is ridiculous! An insult! Who made this decision?"

Philip folded his hands calmly. "The entire board, Ma'am. It was unanimous."

Mrs. McCarthy growled, "There has to be a mistake, that seat belongs to us."

"Not anymore, ma'am."

Mr. McCarthy slammed a hand down on the armrest. "Tell me who the seat belongs to, then. Who did you bump us for?"

Philip glanced toward the crowd. "Mr. Ryan Walker... he is the one whom the seat was reserved for."

The name hit everyone's ears and they all turned sharply to where Ryan was seated. His face was as calm as ever, and it remained unreadable.

Cameras started snapping instantly and the guests gasped very loudly as some of them recognized Ryan.

Julian and Elizabeth whipped their heads around and then their eyes also met Ryan sitting beside them like something impossible didn't just happen.

"Ryan... Walker?" Julian whispered.

Elizabeth stared at Ryan with wide, shocked eyes. "What the actual hell is going on tonight?"

Back at the golden seat, Mrs. McCarthy's face twisted in confusion. "Who is that? That name... it can't be." She didn't want to believe that she just heard the name of her daughter's ex husband.

"He's just some... delivery guy," Mr. McCarthy stammered. "He was married to our daughter, for God's sake! We asked her to dump him because he was so useless, what do you mean he is of higher status than me?"

Philip tilted his head. "Well, he is now the honored recipient of the golden seat."

Mrs. McCarthy scoffed in disgust. "We are not moving."

Philip took a deep breath. "If you refuse to comply, I will be forced to have security escort you to a different seat. I am sorry, but the protocols are very strict."

Mr. McCarthy looked around in disbelief. "Security? Do you know what you are even saying?"

Philip didn't move a muscle away from where he was standing. "If you'd rather wait for the press to report that the McCarthys defied the organizers' orders, that's your choice. But I strongly recommend you leave the seat quietly. Mr. Ryan Walker must take his place on the seat."

Julian leaned into Elizabeth. "How... how is this happening?"

Elizabeth's eyes were still on Ryan. She barely heard Julian. Her mouth moved slowly. "How is he doing this?"

Ryan remained seated at the far end of the hall, looking unbothered. Claudia whispered something into his ear, and he chuckled lightly.

Mr. McCarthy stood defiantly, not even planning to take a step away from the golden seat. "My wife and I are not going anywhere."