

Chapter 54

The two security guards moved quickly, grabbing Mr. and Mrs. McCarthy each by an arm. Despite their struggles, the guards remained firm, dragging them out of the venue as the crowd watched in silence.

What was happening had everyone talking, some brought their phones out to make videos out of what was happening and cameras now aimed directly at the once-respected couple.

Towards the entrance, the press had gathered quickly, eager to capture the scene of the almighty McCarthy family being thrown out of the venue.

A female press reporter with a camera crew was already speaking into her microphone, her voice was so loud and sounded excited. "In a shocking turn of events at the Stallion Night VIP Party, billionaire couple Mr. and Mrs. McCarthy have just been escorted out for failing to comply with seating protocol. Sources say the golden seat was reserved for a new influential figure, Mr. Ryan Walker."

Julian, who had followed them closely to the entrance in an attempt to salvage their dignity, suddenly stormed toward the female reporter. "Get that camera out of here!" he shouted at her, waving his hand to dismiss them.

The reporter ignored him, continuing with her coverage. "This public embarrassment has left guests in shock, questioning how the mighty McCarthys could fall from grace so suddenly."

"I said get the hell out of here!" Julian roared, his temper peaking instantly, but the reporter didn't stop, she kept going on. And then, without thinking, he raised his hand and slapped the female reporter hard across the cheek and crashed one of the cameras capturing her.

Gasps echoed through the venue.

The camera dropped and hit the floor instantly.

Philip Crown, who had returned to his place beside the stage, walked over immediately, his face was full of rage. "You just assaulted one of our media team members! That woman was only doing her job before you slapped her!"

Julian's face paled. "She was humiliating my family, someone had to shut her up!"

"And now you're going to face the consequences," Philip said coldly. "You should expect a lawsuit, Mr. Knight. We'll be pressing charges first thing tomorrow."

Elizabeth rushed to Julian's side, grabbing his arm tightly as panic set in. She whispered frantically, "Julian, what have you done?"

Back inside the venue, Mr. and Mrs. McCarthy were already gone. Seated on the golden VIP seats were Ryan and Claudia, they looked calm and composed.

Phillip pointed a finger at Julian's face.

"You better expect a letter from our lawyers by 10 Am tomorrow," Philip warned. "And I guarantee you, the press will have a field day with this."

"No, please," Julian finally said, panic now showing in his voice. He raised both hands in a pleading gesture. "Please, Mr. Philip, don't do this, you can't just sue me... I-I wasn't thinking straight, I was trying to protect my in-laws—"

"By slapping a journalist?" Philip snapped. "You've made things worse."

Julian began to sweat visibly, wiping his forehead with a trembling hand. "There must be something we can do, some way to settle this without involving the court. I'll do anything... just name it."

Philip stood quietly for a moment, then slowly turned toward Ryan. "You know what? Let Mr Ryan Walker decide your punishment."

"What?" Julian blinked.

Philip crossed his arms. "He's the one you insulted just moments ago. He's the one who was disrespected by you and your fiancée and her parents. You humiliated him repeatedly, so it's only fair he decides your fate."

All eyes turned to Ryan who Julian was not at his mercy.

Ryan stood up slowly, brushing off his suit. He took the microphone from Philip and adjusted it slightly. His voice came out calm and cool. "Thank you, Mr. Philip, for your fairness and for honoring me tonight."

Then Ryan turned to the young female reporter who had been slapped. "Can you please come forward?"

The reporter, still stunned, stepped up slowly. Her cheek was red, a faint imprint of Julian's hand visible on her face.

Ryan looked at her gently. "I'm sorry you had to go through that, you were only doing your job. Nobody deserves to be treated that way."

He turned slightly, looking at Julian and Elizabeth. "And for someone to behave that way at an event meant to promote unity and generosity... that's shameful."

Ryan looked back at the reporter. "Would you consider forgiving him if he made amends?"

She hesitated. "Well... that depends."

Ryan smiled a little. "How does 200 million dollars sound?"

The reporter's jaw dropped.

The entire audience buzzed with gasps, murmurs, and disbelief.

She blinked, unsure she'd heard right. "Two... hundred million?"

"Yes," Ryan said with a calm voice. "Would that be enough to not only compensate you but help you solve some life problems?"

Tears formed in her eyes. "It would change my entire life forever. It would mean freedom, security... everything I've dreamed of."

"Then if he agrees to pay it, would you forgive him?"

She nodded eagerly. "Absolutely."

Everyone turned to Julian.

"What?" Julian sputtered in absolute silence. "No way! That's robbery! I'd rather go to court. There's no judge on earth that would make me pay that much."

Philip cut in, "Maybe you are right, but the damage to your name? Your business ties? Your already fragile reputation? The press is already on this, Julian. You'll lose more than just money in court... you'll lose everything."

Elizabeth leaned close to him as realization hit her. She quickly whispered to his ear, "Julian, this is serious. If you're dragged to court for assaulting a female journalist, every business will back off. No company will hire you... you'll be blacklisted."

Julian was sweating even more now. "But... if I give them 200 million, I'll only have 200 million left. That's all I have."

"And that 200 million is for your donation," Elizabeth whispered, panic rising in her chest. "If you pay this girl, we can't donate. If we don't donate, the press will crucify us for not supporting the cause."

Julian's legs almost buckled under him.

He turned helplessly to Elizabeth. "What do we do now? I'm trapped, I don't have enough money to do both."

Elizabeth stared at him in disbelief, then turned her gaze slowly to Ryan.

Julian felt his pride cracking like a mirror.

Elizabeth said quietly, "We either face humiliation from this, or worse humiliation from the donation scandal."