

Chapter 57

Gasps came from the audience instantly. Even Claudia blinked in surprise.

Elizabeth began, "Mr. Jared, please, I..."

"Silence!" he thundered. "You may act like a brat in your father's house, but not here. Here, we expect class, humility, and respect. None of which you've shown tonight."

Julian opened his mouth to object, but Mr. Jared raised a hand. "I'm not done."

The hall fell deathly still again.

"I've been watching everything from the surveillance room, I heard every word, I witnessed every action... Including your accusations, your insults, and your assault on a journalist."

He turned slightly to the crowd.

"And for those of you still wondering why Mr. Ryan Walker was granted the golden seat and will be receiving the golden award tonight, let me clarify. Mr. Walker made the most outstanding contribution this year, far beyond any financial donation."

People leaned forward with curiosity.

What Mr. Jared did not say, but the board members already knew was that Ryan had anonymously donated a ten percent share of Energy Alpha Ltd, one of NOVA Group's most profitable subsidiaries. A stake valued at over seventy million dollars, with long-term implications for sustainable energy investments across the country.

But Ryan had requested anonymity. He did not want the applause or want

the spotlight, he only wanted to help.

Mr. Jared gave a nod toward Ryan but kept his tone composed. "Mr. Walker is a man of value. He seeks to contribute, not to brag and he doesn't make a noise about his contributions like the McCarthys. He doesn't need to throw his weight around or buy respect. His actions tonight have spoken louder than any donation."

Julian let out a sarcastic scoff. "So now humility wins golden seats, huh?"

Mr. Jared turned his eyes slowly toward Julian, his expression becoming icy. "Humility wins respect and tonight, you lost both."

Julian clenched his jaw but remained silent. The weight of the room's attention was suffocating him. His palms were sweaty, and he could feel the heat rising up his neck.

Elizabeth, still red-faced and trembling with indignation, snapped, "This is ridiculous! Are we all just going to pretend this makes sense? That he, a nobody, deserves this?!"

"You all are delusional if you think he's worth anything," Elizabeth hissed, stepping forward, her voice breaking. "Do you know what it's like to carry someone, feed them, clothe them, give them everything... this man is nothing, he deserves nothing and I know this is some planned nonsense!"

Ryan finally spoke, his voice was still calm and steady. "You never gave me anything, Elizabeth. All you did was insult me."

Elizabeth froze, her mouth hanging open for a second before she quickly shut it again, blinking fast to hide the sudden tears forming in her eyes. The embarrassment from that evening was becoming too much.

Mr. Jared took a step forward, his presence as commanding as ever. "Enough!"

He raised a hand and looked around the hall. "What the board decides cannot be changed. Mr. Walker showed us what contribution truly means and he deserves and would be given the golden award tonight."

He turned back to Elizabeth and Julian. "Now get out..."

Elizabeth didn't wait.

Her heels clacked rapidly across the floor and the sound so loud due to the intense silence in the hall.

Julian followed more slowly, dragging his feet. His leg felt so heavy to him at that point due to the stares from the crowd.

As they passed through the doors, the door closed behind them with a loud thud.

The entire hall erupted in an applause, every single person, clapping for Ryan Walker.

Claudia gave a gentle smile.

Philip approached quietly, standing beside them. "Mr. Walker," he said respectfully, "on behalf of the board... thank you. You have earned the golden award tonight."