

Zillionaire 1081

Chapter 1081:

The sound of Dolores' muffled weeping pierced straight through Linsey's chest, making her own eyes burn with unshed tears. Just this past month alone, she had watched Dolores shed countless tears over Dustin.

Clearly, her expectations of him had been far too generous. This man, who crumbled under pressure, had been handed opportunity after opportunity to stand by Dolores these past few days, yet he had chosen inaction every single time.

Whatever Hester demanded of him, he simply complied without question. Whether Dustin was being genuinely filial or merely spineless remained unclear.

The longer Linsey dwelt on it, the more her anger simmered beneath the surface.

Her palm moved in gentle circles across Dolores' back, each stroke meant to ease the storm of emotions.

"Dolores, it's okay, it's okay. Let it out if you need to. We're alone here, and I'm not going anywhere."

Linsey's voice was barely above a whisper, and she felt the rigid tension in Dolores' frame gradually melt away.

Her gaze drifted downward as she turned over Dolores' earlier words in her mind.

If her suspicions were correct, Joanne's appearance at the jewelry store this morning had been anything but coincidental. Since Linsey had refused to bend to Joanne's demands earlier, the woman had likely orchestrated this encounter to provoke Dolores and force a different outcome.

Linsey had never entertained the thought of partnering with Joanne. But that didn't give the woman license to deliberately target the people she held dear!

Eventually, Dolores pulled back with a final sniffle, releasing her hold on Linsey. Her eyes were still tearful, but her voice carried newfound resolve. "I've made up my mind. I refuse to wallow in self-pity any longer."

Confusion flickered across Linsey's features. "What do you mean? What are you planning?"

Dolores straightened, her tone growing firm. "I've been hiding away at your place for far too many days. Mountains of work are piling up at the company, and I made a promise to elevate it to new heights. I won't let myself lose momentum over some man."

Linsey's eyes sparked with sudden brightness. Dolores's swift emotional recovery didn't catch her off guard in the slightest. Strength had always been woven into the very fabric of who Dolores was. Without that inner steel, she never would have propelled the Davidson Group to such remarkable success at her age.

Linsey held an unshakeable belief that someday Dolores would rise to become one of Grester's most formidable and respected business leaders!

Linsey and Dolores didn't linger outside for much longer. Soon enough, they made their way back toward Shari's hospital room. Several bodyguards came into view as they approached the door, standing at attention.

"Ms. Brooks, Ms. Davidson." The head guard offered them a respectful nod.

At the sight of them, Linsey's face brightened with anticipation. "Has Elva arrived safely?"

"Yes, we just brought Elva here a short while ago. Mr. Riley had something to attend to and stepped out, but he'll be back soon," the head guard responded.

Linsey's face lit up as she turned to Dolores, catching the same spark of joy reflected in her friend's eyes.

“Thank goodness we got Elva back safe and sound,” Dolores said. This welcome news lifted the heavy weight from Dolores’ chest, and her shoulders visibly relaxed.

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Chapter 1082:

One by one, they entered the ward. The moment they pushed open the door, Shari’s muffled sobs reached their ears.

“Elva, don’t be afraid. I’m here now, and I’ll never leave you again,” Shari said.

At the sound from the doorway, Shari instinctively drew her daughter closer, her protective gaze snapping toward the entrance with wary intensity.

Relief flooded her features when Linsey and Dolores came into view, tears threatening to spill from her grateful eyes.

“Linsey, Dolores.” Shari gently released Elva and turned to face Linsey, her voice thick with emotion. “Linsey, I can’t even begin to thank you properly. Without your help, I don’t know what would have become of Elva and me...”

Noticing her mother’s tears beginning to flow again, little Elva quietly pressed a tissue into Shari’s hand and whispered softly, “Mom, please don’t cry.”

Linsey quickly stepped forward with a warm smile. “Shari, you know we don’t need formal thanks between us. What matters is that you and Elva are both safe.”

Her gaze shifted to the thoughtful little girl beside them. “Look, even Elva is asking you to stop crying. Shouldn’t you listen to your wise daughter?”

A bashful smile crossed Shari’s face before she nodded with newfound determination. “You’re absolutely right.”

Shari took Elva's small hand in hers, her expression growing serious. "Elva, I want you to meet Linsey. She's been my dear friend since our school days."

Elva studied Linsey with careful eyes, then parted her lips to speak in a soft voice. "Hello, Linsey."

"Good girl." Linsey gently stroked Elva's hair, noting how the child appeared far too thin and small for seven years old. The signs of malnourishment were painfully obvious.

After a moment's consideration, Linsey addressed Shari. "For now, just stay here with Elva and focus on her recovery. I've arranged caregivers for both of you—one to attend to your needs and another to look after Elva."

Shari's eyes widened in disbelief. She never expected Linsey to go to such lengths for her sake. Words alone couldn't express the gratitude overwhelming her heart.

Linsey continued reassuringly, "You won't need to worry about security either."

With Elva present, she avoided mentioning Harold and Walter directly. "I'll have my men rotate shifts near the ward. No unwanted visitors will disturb you or Elva." Linsey's voice remained gentle as she covered every detail. "If you need anything at all, just let the caregivers or bodyguards know. They'll handle it immediately."

Shari felt overwhelmed by such kindness, her voice catching as she struggled for words. "Linsey, I truly don't know how to thank you enough."

Sensing her mother's emotions, Elva spoke up with perfect timing. "Linsey, thank you for helping me and my mom."

A warm smile crossed Linsey's face as she paused thoughtfully. "If you really want to thank me, then focus on getting better and regaining your strength." Her hand moved to gently pat Elva's head. "I'll also arrange for the doctor to give you a thorough examination soon. Whether you need surgery or medication, we'll follow whatever the doctor recommends."

Dolores settled back in her chair, her voice carrying quiet authority. “We’re all friends here; there’s no need for such formality. Whatever difficulties you’re facing, don’t hesitate to speak up. We’ll never abandon you.”

Shari’s lips curved into a faint smile, though tears still glistened in her eyes.

Chapter 1083:

The three of them chatted for a while longer. Eventually, Linsey glanced at her watch and exchanged a look with Dolores. It was time to leave, as there were two children waiting at home, and hospital visits couldn’t stretch on indefinitely.

The moment they stepped outside the ward, Linsey spotted Collin walking toward them. Without missing a beat, Dolores quickly suggested her departure. “I should head back and pack my things.”

Before Linsey could respond, Dolores hurried away down the corridor. Linsey’s gaze followed her retreating figure, and she sighed quietly. Such decisiveness could only mean one thing—Dolores had already made her choice.

Collin approached with a puzzled expression. “Is Dolores returning to her own place?”

Linsey nodded. “I’ll fill you in later.”

Turning toward the ward entrance, she gave clear instructions to the men stationed there. “Stay alert and report.”

“Yes, Ms. Brooks.”

Their voices rang out in perfect unison.

Linsey raised an eyebrow, shooting Collin a slightly surprised look. Noticing her expression, Collin smiled and draped his arm around her shoulders. "Everything sorted here, baby? Dinner time's approaching, and the kids are waiting for us at home."

"All set. Let's go," Linsey replied softly.

The couple moved together toward the elevator, their steps synchronized.

"Why do your men follow my orders so readily? Don't they need your approval when you're right here?" Linsey began, curiosity coloring her voice.

Collin's sculpted hand rose without hesitation, his fingers lifting her chin with practiced ease. Though he attempted a stern expression, warmth danced unmistakably in his eyes.

"Baby, isn't it a bit late to be asking this now?" His gaze narrowed playfully. "My men have always been your men. You're free to command them however you see fit. Are you only just realizing this?"

Heat crept up Linsey's cheeks as she smiled sheepishly. "Perhaps because I've never really taken charge of them before."

Collin released an exaggerated sigh, his tone turning melodramatic. "You've always been fiercely independent. Always handling everything yourself, barely needing me at all."

His fingertip traced a gentle path along her cheek. "Today, however, you used my reputation to intimidate that scumbag. Well done."

"How can you say I used you? That word sounds awful." Linsey's expression grew earnest. "I never wanted to drag you into this, but Shari and Elva's safety was at stake."

Collin's brow creased as he captured her chin once more, his gaze intense and unwavering. "Seriously? Your words cut deep."

Recognition flashed across Linsey's features, and she quickly backtracked. "That's not what I meant."

Her voice dropped to a whisper. "It's just that I really hurt someone today. Without you there, I would've found myself at the police station. And then you went ahead and posted that photo on the company's official account to back me up."

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Chapter 1084:

A low chuckle escaped Collin's lips before he spoke with deliberate slowness. "Linsey, I genuinely wish you would rely on me completely. Everything I possess, everything I am, belongs to you if you want it. All of it is yours to command."

As he spoke, Collin dipped his head gently, pressing his forehead against Linsey's. A wave of tingling heat swept over her, and her heart gave a quiet jolt. Then, in a low, tender voice, he murmured against her ear, "You probably don't realize how happy I am today."

The elevator chimed softly as the doors slid open. They stepped inside together.

There were already a few people standing within, and as Collin's gaze scanned the floor numbers, he noted that more passengers were likely to board soon.

Without hesitation, he guided Linsey to a quiet corner and wrapped an arm protectively around her, shielding her from the crowd.

Nestled in his embrace, she could smell the crisp scent of his cologne, the warmth of his body pressing gently against hers. It made her feel oddly grounded, safe—like nothing could touch her.

She tilted her head up slightly, only to find him looking down at her, his gaze brimming with tenderness and devotion.

Whenever their eyes met like this, Linsey could feel the quiet intensity of his love like a current between them.

Trying to compose herself, she whispered softly as the elevator stopped with a loud ding on the next floor, “Could you stop staring at me like that?”

Collin raised an eyebrow, clearly amused. A chuckle escaped his lips—deep, low, and magnetic. “And why shouldn’t I? Can’t I admire my own fiancée?”

Linsey felt a flush rising in her cheeks. It was ridiculous, truly. After everything they had been through, after all the years, and the children they shared, here she was, still blushing like a teenager in love.

She gave him a quick sideways glance, hoping it would at least make him stop teasing.

But to Collin, her glare held no weight. For one, she clearly wasn’t actually mad. And more importantly, to him, she would always be the brightest, most captivating person in any room. His smile deepened, softening the sharp lines of his usually cool and serious face.

“You still haven’t answered my question,” he reminded her gently.

People were still getting on and off the elevator with each stop, but Linsey and Collin remained tucked into their corner, quiet in their private world.

Linsey frowned slightly, her brows furrowing in confusion. “What question?” she asked, puzzled. Had he really asked something? From what she recalled, their conversation had been lighthearted and scattered.

Collin leaned closer again, his breath brushing against the shell of her ear as he repeated deliberately, “I told you I was really happy today. Do you know why?”

Linsey’s brow furrowed as she gave it a moment’s serious thought. Then she murmured, “Is it because I asked you to post our photo on the company’s official account?”

Just as she finished speaking, the elevator stopped in the underground parking garage.

Collin didn't reply right away. He simply took her hand, threading his fingers through hers as he led her to the car he had driven earlier. The lighting in the garage was low, shrouding the space in a moody dimness.

Linsey had barely shut the car door and hadn't yet fastened her seatbelt when she felt Collin's arm slide around her waist and pull her close.

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Chapter 1085:

With a gentle gasp, she landed against the solid wall of his chest—warm and reassuring. Before she could utter a word, his breath swept over her lips, stealing the space between them.

There was no urgency in the kiss, just a quiet, purposeful press of his mouth against hers—tender yet unwavering.

His calloused palm cradled the back of her neck, brushing softly against her skin, sending delicate shivers down her spine.

And then, in a voice that held both gravity and warmth, he looked into her eyes and whispered, "Linsey, you're the one person in this world who understands me better than anyone else."

Collin's voice came out low, laced with a lazy huskiness that sent a tremor through Linsey's chest.

Almost instinctively, she bit her lip—but before she could apply pressure, Collin gently pressed his thumb against it.

"Don't bite," he murmured, then leaned in, brushing his lips softly against hers in a featherlight kiss.

His gaze held a delicate balance of longing and restraint. Drawing in a quiet breath, he whispered, "Linsey, I can't tell you how happy I was when you made our relationship public."

He then continued, "To be honest, I've been walking on eggshells lately. I kept wondering whether you truly wanted to get back together with me. But I didn't dare ask. I was afraid that pushing too hard might scare you off, so I held back, waited... letting you be the one to decide."

Linsey's heart softened. His words dissolved any trace of doubt in her mind. She looked up, meeting the unguarded vulnerability in his eyes, and asked quietly, "Why wait for me to speak first? Why not say what you were feeling?"

Collin didn't hesitate. "Because if this was just temporary for you, I didn't want to ruin it. I didn't want you to feel pressured or lose interest because I moved too fast."

His honesty struck a chord. Linsey blinked, momentarily speechless. This was Collin—the visionary behind CR Corporation—and yet, here he was, uncertain, cautious... even timid?

She reached up and cupped his cheek, brushing her thumb across his skin. "Did you really think I was playing with your feelings?" She paused for a moment, then added, "And what exactly made you question how I feel about you?"

He didn't answer, but the flicker of self-doubt in his eyes said enough. As she reflected, Linsey realized that in recent days—between helping others and juggling a thousand distractions—she might have overlooked his emotional needs. Perhaps he had every reason to feel uncertain.

She couldn't help but tease him a little. "So, you—the founder of CR Corporation—didn't have the courage to ask your own partner a simple question?"

Collin furrowed his brow, but not in frustration—it was more of a boyish, almost endearing confusion. "Am I your partner?" he asked quietly.

"Of course," Linsey replied without hesitation. "Whose partner would you be if not mine?"

He didn't let up. His eyes locked on hers with quiet intensity. "Just a partner?"

She laughed, the sound light and full of affection.

Leaning in, she kissed the corner of his mouth, her smile playing in her eyes. "So eager to be my husband, are you?"

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Chapter 1086:

A flicker of joy danced briefly in his eyes, but he suppressed it quickly, slipping back into that playfully pitiful tone. "Can I?" he asked, his voice low and hopeful.

Linsey was momentarily taken aback by this softer, more endearing side of Collin.

She couldn't help but wonder when he had learned to be so... disarming. With anyone else, this performance might have seemed contrived or ridiculous. But coming from him—the man she loved—it was completely disarming.

"You're already the father of my children," she said with a teasing smile. "What more could you want? Getting married? That's just a formality. Between us, it hardly matters."

Collin's expression faltered for a heartbeat, but he quickly recovered, his gaze dropping as he gave a quiet nod. "Alright."

Linsey tilted her head, amused by the subtle shadow that crossed his features. He was trying to hide it, but she saw it—the brief, unmistakable flicker of disappointment. And somehow, it made her love him even more.

“Collin, why are you more fixated on getting married than I am?” Linsey teased, giving his cheek a playful pinch. Her tone was light. “You’re the powerhouse of Grester’s business world. If we register our marriage, aren’t you the one getting the raw deal here?”

“I’d gladly let you take advantage of me,” Collin responded, his grin returning with ease. “It’s exactly because I’m wealthy that I worry. What if you don’t even care about the money? Sometimes I wish you enjoyed the creature comforts in life. At least then I’d know how to keep you close forever.”

He paused for a beat before adding with quiet sincerity, “You’re younger than me—and brilliant too. Anyone would say marrying me would be settling for less.”

He leaned into her touch, brushing his cheek against her palm with a tender smile. “You’re twenty-seven, and you’ve already had two kids because of me. Whether we get married or not, I won’t let your future be defined by motherhood. Chase your dreams. I’ll be here, backing you all the way. Whatever you want, I’ll make it yours.”

Linsey’s eyes sharpened, an eyebrow lifting as she locked eyes with him. “Remember, you said that.”

Seeing the shift in her expression, Collin straightened, seizing the moment. “I swear, every word I said came straight from the heart—no holding back. I’ll keep working harder, so money’s something you’ll never have to stress over.”

A laugh slipped from Linsey’s lips as she leaned in and planted a kiss on his cheek. “Sure, money’s great. But honestly? It’s your looks, your body, the whole package—you’re exactly my type. There’s no way I’m letting go of a man like that,” she said.

Collin finally exhaled, a smile softening his face.

He made a mental note right then: stay in shape no matter what. But Linsey’s tone shifted as she pulled back slightly. “Collin, there’s one last thing—and it matters most of all.”

Collin met her eyes head-on, now serious. “Tell me.”

With her gaze steady, she pressed her lips together and said slowly, “Don’t ever lie to me again. That’s my non-negotiable.”

Hearing that, Collin couldn’t help but think back to what had happened four years ago.

Back then, there was a single truth he hadn’t had the courage to share, and it cost him four precious years with Linsey.

This time, he swore to himself he wouldn’t make the same mistake again.

“Alright,” Collin said, his voice steady and full of conviction.

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Chapter 1087:

Linsey’s tone softened, laced with something fragile underneath. “The road ahead is long. If there ever comes a day you stop loving me, tell me right away. Let’s end it clean, no lies, no cheating.”

Collin knew better than to make grand promises about the future.

Words meant little—only time could prove anything now.

“I’ll remember,” he replied, each syllable deliberate.

He meant to show her through actions, not empty vows.

Seeing that he had taken her seriously, Linsey gave a small nod. Then she straightened in the passenger seat and clicked her seatbelt into place. “Still early—let’s go get that marriage registered.”

Collin froze for a moment, completely caught off guard. He turned to her with wide eyes. “Linsey... you mean it? You really want to marry me?”

Linsey didn’t look at him. Her gaze stayed on the windshield. “If I didn’t, do you think I’d go through all that just now?”

She glanced over, a flicker of amusement in her voice. “Now drive. The registry office won’t wait for us.”

It finally sank in. Collin’s face broke into a wide, disbelieving smile. He fumbled with his seatbelt, clipped it into place, and with hands just a little shaky, fired up the engine.

Roughly an hour passed before CR Corporation’s official account shared an exciting announcement. “Mr. Riley would like me to share some wonderful news—he and Ms. Linsey Brooks are now officially married.”

A vivid photograph of their marriage certificate accompanied the post, drawing immediate attention.

Well-wishers wasted no time flooding the comments. “Congratulations to the newlyweds! You owe us a party!”

Someone else chimed in, “It’s been four years. Any chance Linsey will reveal a fresh design? She was the creative heart of CR Corporation for so long! Finally, something new about her!”

Curiosity spread quickly. “Wait, are you serious? The designer who just took first place is actually Linsey.”

The feed erupted. “I can’t believe this! Linsey’s wedding to Collin isn’t even the most shocking news anymore!”

Fans expressed their awe. “She’s taken her work to a whole new level after all this time. Those designs are next-level!”

One supporter was overcome with emotion. “I can’t stop crying. Linsey has always been my inspiration. She dedicated four years to her craft, so of course Collin fell for her. She’s amazing!”

Praise kept pouring in. “Linsey’s talent is unmatched! Beauty is just the beginning—she has a legendary reputation from her days in Grester. Plus, word is she bravely confronted a dangerous man recently. Collin picked the perfect partner!”

“Apparently, Linsey’s charm seemed to steal the spotlight from Collin himself.”

Speculation quickly spread. “Maybe Collin felt the pressure from everyone fawning over Linsey, so he hurried to make things official.”

Social media buzzed with comments, each more enthusiastic than the last.

Not even half an hour passed before news of their marriage soared straight to the top of the trending topics, holding its place without faltering.

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Chapter 1088:

Evening had settled in by the time Linsey caught up with all the chatter online.

“What are they all saying?” Confused, she glanced at Collin after reading the last comment.

Her day had been a whirlwind—lending Shari a hand, catching up with Dolores, then rushing off to finalize her marriage with Collin, leaving little time for social media.

It took a moment for her to piece together why people thought Collin had rushed to the registrar’s office.

Collin hesitated for a heartbeat, then offered an explanation. “Once our photo was posted, someone shared a video in the comments—the one where you dealt with Harold in the restaurant with just a mop and a swift kick. Suddenly, everyone started declaring they wanted to marry you.”

Curiosity led Linsey to CR Corporation’s latest post, where a cascade of reactions awaited.

She browsed through them, laughter bubbling up from time to time. “Collin, can’t you tell they’re just having fun? Nobody’s really proposing. It’s all in good humor.”

Collin arched his eyebrows, revealing his doubts.

As she scrolled further, Linsey noticed a handful of teasing remarks suggesting Collin didn’t quite measure up.

Turning serious, she told him directly, “Collin, you know they’re just being playful. Besides, plenty of comments wish us happiness. Don’t let it get to you.”

Linsey hesitated for a moment, concerned that Collin might continue to dwell in his quiet despondency. She gently added, “You’re powerful, influential, tall, incredibly handsome... and you treat me better than anyone ever has.”

Though a faint blush warmed her cheeks, she spoke with unwavering sincerity. “In short, you’re extraordinary—far more than I ever dared to hope for.”

She couldn’t pinpoint exactly when Collin had begun to harbor such insecurities.

But now that she saw them surface so clearly, she realized something needed to change. If left unchecked, this silent unease could begin to erode the beautiful connection they had rebuilt.

Determined, Linsey set down her phone, cradled Collin’s face between her palms, and looked deep into his eyes. “Sweetheart, believe me—you’re the most perfect husband in the world to me. And I only love you. No one else.”

She leaned forward and pressed a tender kiss to his lips, as if sealing her vow, offering him comfort in its purest form.

That night, as husband and wife reunited in every sense, their love spoke louder than words. A night meant for passion unfolded with warmth, laughter, and intimacy—a fitting celebration of their renewed vows.

The monthly board meeting of Lawson Group was usually a routine gathering attended by key executives and a few committed shareholders, but today's session was bustling with unfamiliar faces. Even some reclusive directors had shown up.

Whispers filled the room like static: Jeffery was planning to transfer his shares to Linsey—the true daughter of the Lawson family. And this required a board vote.

Until now, few within the company had known of this development. And now, whispers ignited like wildfire.

“She’s the wife of Collin, the founder of CR Corporation!”

“Wait—Linsey’s Cruz and Myla’s real daughter?”

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Chapter 1089:

“How did they only just find her now? What a mess.”

“I heard she grew up in an orphanage... and now she’s married to Collin? If she ever decides she doesn’t like someone, our career could be over.”

“Anyone remember Carol’s lavish birthday party four years ago? Jeffery sided with Carol back then and made Linsey suffer. She probably hasn’t forgotten.”

“Rumor is, this share transfer is Jeffery’s way of apologizing.”

“Well, let’s just hope she lets the past go. Right now, saving this company should be everyone’s focus.”

The low hum of conversation ceased abruptly as the door to the boardroom opened.

Cruz entered with Myla and Linsey at his side, followed closely by Jeffery. Their arrival cast a sudden hush over the room.

Linsey, dressed in understated elegance, drew countless eyes. Her composed aura made an immediate impression; she was no longer the orphan girl. She was poised, powerful—and visibly unshaken.

Once seated, Cruz addressed the room. “By now, you’ve likely all heard the news. Linsey is, without a doubt, my daughter. Now that she has returned to us, it’s only right that we correct past mistakes and give her what is rightfully hers.”

Jeffery followed, his voice measured. “Over the last four years, I’ve been unable to contribute to the firm as I should have, due to illness. Regardless of circumstance, I feel it is my duty to transfer my shares in recognition of our failure to protect Linsey.”

Linsey sat calmly beside them, unmoved by the theatrics.

This moment, to her, was merely ceremonial.

The names, the legacy, the public recognition—they were all secondary. What truly mattered to her now were the resources and influence she could harness to carve her own path forward.

The Lawson name meant little. And no amount of shares would change that.

She had no intention of moving in with the Lawson family. This wasn't about reconciliation. It was about reclaiming her power.

A gentle smile lit up Myla's face as she turned to Linsey. "On top of everything else, I've decided to transfer my share of the company to Linsey as well."

Maintaining a graceful composure, Linsey returned the gesture with a poised and measured smile—warm, but unmistakably formal.

No complications arose as the meeting progressed.

Almost every shareholder voiced clear support for Jeffery and Myla's decision to hand over their shares.

When it came time for paperwork, the contracts were signed in record time—quick, clean, and entirely without fuss.

"Congratulations, Linsey," someone said, setting off a round of well-wishes.

Praise drifted across the room. "With you joining us, the firm is sure to prosper."

Determining sincerity was no easy task; the line between heartfelt compliments and obligatory politeness felt especially thin today.

Despite the official titles, Linsey remained a newcomer and partial shareholder, and plenty of uncertainty lingered about how fully she would be welcomed into the firm's leadership in practice.

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Chapter 1090:

"Thank you all," Linsey replied with the right blend of humility and gratitude.

Once the last item was settled and the votes tallied, Cruz told the group again, "Jeffery has let me know he's stepping away from Lawson Group management. I respect his choice and wish him well."

The announcement landed softly. No one looked especially shocked. Jeffery's absence from day-to-day matters had grown more pronounced for years, and everyone knew his health had played a role.

Suddenly, the future of the president's seat hung in the air, unclaimed, open to speculation.

A ripple of glances passed among the directors as they processed the shift.

With Jeffery bowing out, the logical next step would be for one of the vice presidents to rise to the top, and most candidates just happened to be the sons and daughters of the directors in the room. Of course, every director in the room immediately began weighing which of their own would be the perfect fit for that job.

The real challenge, however, was how to frame their recommendations as unbiased and in the best interest of the company.

Cruz stood at the head of the table, his voice ringing out. "Now that Jeffery has resigned, we're left with a vacancy at the top. I've already made my decision about who should fill it. Since all parties are present, I'll announce it right here."

A spark of anticipation ran through the room as each director leaned forward, waiting for the name they'd been hoping for.

Cruz took his time, scanning every face in the room with steady resolve before speaking with careful precision. "After conferring with the vice chairman, we've chosen Linsey to serve as the new CEO of the Lawson Group."

A heavy silence fell as the words landed, shock radiating from every corner.

Directors who had just moments before been quietly confident now stared in stunned disbelief.

“You can’t be serious, Cruz!” One voice broke through.

Very quickly, other directors piled on, their voices growing louder and more urgent. “She might be a new shareholder, but her background is in fashion, not corporate leadership! Isn’t this much too abrupt?” “She’s never worked at the firm and barely knows our internal structure. How can employees feel secure under such sudden change?” “With her age and limited experience, shouldn’t we consider this more carefully before making such a big leap?”

Every comment betrayed the fact that no one expected Cruz and Myla’s level of support for Linsey.

Not only were they passing her their shares, but they also wanted her to lead the entire company.

It struck the directors as reckless—almost unthinkable.

One director, who had known Cruz since their youth, spoke up with heartfelt urgency. “Cruz, something this important deserves a proper discussion. Lawson Group is vast. There are plenty of key roles Linsey could step into while she gains experience.”

“I believe the role of fashion design director suits Linsey perfectly,” the director continued. “She’s already an accomplished designer with a stellar reputation—putting her in charge of our fashion division makes perfect sense.”

The moment those words left his lips, a flicker of discontent crossed both Cruz’s and Myla’s faces. Even Jeffery’s brows knitted into a deep frown.

It was true—these directors had once contributed to the Lawson Group during its formative years. But in the decades that followed, most of them had done little more than reap the benefits, offering precious few ideas of actual value.