

Zillionaire 1091

Chapter 1091:

And now, with their negligible efforts as justification, they dared to meddle in the Lawson family's decisions?

It was laughable. They had clearly forgotten their place.

Cruz drew in a sharp breath, clearly on the verge of speaking. But before he could, Linsey's voice rang out, calm and composed. "So," she said with a gentle lilt, "do any of you have a better candidate in mind?"

At her question, the tension in the room briefly lessened. The directors seemed relieved, assuming they were being granted a real voice in the matter.

"Linsey, you're being very reasonable. I'm sure you've considered all the angles," one began, seizing the opening. "Personally, I think Beal is a solid choice. He's been with the company for years and has proven experience."

"Indeed, we could support Beal as a team," another chimed in.

"Actually, Gerry is quite capable too," added a third. "Perhaps we could hold a fair competition between the two and vote on it. Of course, you would have the final say."

Linsey listened in silence, a faint, unreadable smile curving her lips.

She knew full well that both Beal Greville and Geny Swain were the indulged sons of two veteran directors—neither of whom had shown any real initiative beyond basking in the privileges of their inherited positions. And yet, here they were, being paraded as viable leaders.

The directors faltered slightly beneath Linsey's gaze. There was something unsettling in her calmness—an invisible pressure that made them squirm.

“Linsey,” one of them finally said with an air of patronizing concern, “please don’t take this the wrong way. It’s not that we doubt your abilities... but you’re still quite young. Entrusting you with such a major responsibility might be... premature.”

Linsey’s eyes gleamed as she leaned forward slightly, locking eyes with him. “You say I’m too young, but Beal and Gerry—aren’t they just three or four years older than me? Why is it that they’re considered ready, and I’m not?”

A murmur of surprise rippled through the room. The directors hadn’t expected her to challenge them so directly.

Some began to frown, preparing to launch into a lecture—but Linsey didn’t give them the chance.

“You also claim that I was just a fashion designer, lacking management experience. But may I ask—what have you accomplished during your time here? In the past few years, has this company shown any signs of real growth? No. It’s been in steady decline, hasn’t it?” she continued.

The room bristled.

“You!” one of the directors began, his voice thick with indignation. The truth in Linsey’s words cut deep. The board’s anger wasn’t because she was wrong—it was because she was right.

The Lawson Group had been hemorrhaging relevance for years, and everyone knew it.

At this rate, even the recently revived Davidson Group might overtake them.

Linsey remained poised, her tone now laced with quiet steel. “Why are you so eager to challenge Cruz and Myla’s decision? Is it their judgment you’re questioning—or are you planning to replace them?” Her final words hung in the air like a guillotine.

“Absurd!” one director exploded.

“Preposterous!” barked another.

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Several were now red with fury, fists clenched, teetering on the edge of slamming their palms against the table.

Yet none could disguise one unsettling truth: They had just been outmaneuvered by a woman they had gravely underestimated.

Linsey didn’t even dignify the haughty old directors with a reaction. With a faint roll of her eyes, she crossed her arms and spoke with calm confidence. “Let me make something very clear to you. The moment I take over as CEO of Lawson Group, my husband—the founder of CR Corporation—will immediately propose a new partnership with us, reestablishing the collaboration that was abruptly cut off four years ago.”

Her words, delivered with effortless grace, sent an immediate ripple of excitement through the room.

Even Cruz, Myla, and Jeffery turned to her in stunned disbelief.

None of them had heard a whisper of this possibility before.

And yet, what Linsey had just offered wasn’t a mere promise—it was a golden bridge to survival.

A renewed alliance with CR Corporation would bring tremendous benefit to Lawson Group, now more than ever. It was obvious to all: Collin’s one and only condition was that Linsey take the reins. Around the table, the eyes of the directors began to gleam with a renewed fervor.

Their once-wavering expressions gave way to hope, ambition—even desperation—as though Linsey alone held the key to the firm’s salvation.

After a tense moment of silence, one of the directors finally broke ranks and said, “I fully support Linsey taking over as CEO of the firm.” And just like that, the rest followed like dominoes.

“With Linsey at the helm, Lawson Group is bound to flourish! I second the motion!”

“Drake, Rowan—perhaps it’s time to stop this debate. Linsey is Cruz’s daughter. She’s the rightful heir to the firm’s future. There’s no need for further deliberation.”

Drake Greville and Rowan Swain, who had been clinging tightly to their ambitions, visibly stiffened.

Their faces were practically stone. But even in their resentment, they couldn’t deny it—Linsey had played her hand masterfully. She had presented the trump card no one could counter.

Given the firm’s declining state, a partnership with CR Corporation had once seemed out of reach.

In fact, their abrupt fallout with CR Corporation had cost them dearly, both financially and in reputation.

They had struggled for four long years just to stay afloat. And now, a lifeline had been offered—one they couldn’t afford to reject.

With a tight, forced smile, Drake muttered, “I have no objections.”

Rowan followed, clearly swallowing his pride. “Nor do I.”

Cruz, who had been bracing for a long battle with these stubborn old men, finally allowed himself to exhale. Linsey had done more in a few words than he could have accomplished with hours of persuasion.

He was deeply moved. Not just by her cleverness, but by her willingness to bring CR Corporation’s support to the family—clearly a gesture of love from Collin, but also a sign of Linsey’s own resolve.

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“Good,” Cruz said, rising to his feet with finality. “Then it’s settled.” Linsey was officially named the new president of Lawson Group.

The decision had taken mere minutes, but its impact was profound. Everyone in the room now viewed Linsey not as a newcomer, but as a savior.

And saviors, they knew, deserved worship.

“Linsey, your influence is truly impressive. To rekindle a partnership with CR Corporation... remarkable.”

“Indeed, such decisiveness. Just what Lawson Group needs.”

Linsey couldn’t help but smile at their sudden change of tone.

How ironic, she thought.

They all knew the truth—this deal was Collin’s gift to her. And yet, they didn’t hesitate to shower her with flattery, hoping to curry favor. But that didn’t matter. Let them believe what they wanted. What truly mattered... was reviving the Lawson Group.

Moments after the board meeting concluded, word of Linsey’s appointment as president rippled through the Lawson Group like wildfire.

Alongside this, rumors swirled that Linsey, now leading the company, had secured a partnership with CR Corporation. The news sparked a vibrant buzz among employees.

“Wow, have you heard? We’re going to collaborate with CR Corporation! I won’t be laid off anymore!” one worker exclaimed.

“Looks like the firm’s not going under after all, thanks to Linsey!” another chimed in.

“Linsey... is truly my hero for saving our jobs!”

“It’s not just about keeping our jobs. If this deal with CR Corporation pulls through, we might even see raises!”

The reality defied the expectations of the company’s veteran directors. They had braced for backlash, convinced that employees would resist Linsey’s appointment as president.

After all, Linsey’s youth and inexperience were undeniable.

Her background in fashion design hardly equipped her to navigate the intense demands of leading the entire Lawson Group.

Yet, astonishingly, the company’s employees embraced her appointment with unexpected enthusiasm.

Even Linsey herself was taken aback by their warm reception. After a busy day at the Lawson Group, Linsey finally retreated home late at night to rest.

“I braced myself for pushback from the staff. But instead, they not only accepted me—they seemed genuinely excited,” she confessed, settling into a chair.

Collin, listening to her recount the board meeting, let out a quiet laugh. “That just shows the strong impression you’ve already made on the team.”

Linsey pressed her lips together, unconvinced. “I suspect they’re only supportive because of your decision to partner with Lawson Group again. Why else would they trust someone like me to take charge?”

If her presidency hinged solely on being the Lawson family's daughter, it would strike most as preposterous—especially the veteran executives, who would likely view it as unjust.

Collin shook his head, his tone sincere. "No, you have a unique appeal. My offer of collaboration alone wouldn't have won them over so easily without it."

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Linsey gave a small smile. "Fine, I'll accept the praise."

The moment felt warm and relaxed, their exchange flowing effortlessly. But a sudden phone ring pierced the calm.

Linsey glanced at the unfamiliar number flashing on her screen, shrugged, and answered.

Instantly, Joanne's rough, accusatory voice barked through.

"Linsey, how dare you snatch Jeffery's role as CEO? What exactly are you trying to do?"

Linsey froze briefly before steadying herself. "Ms. Ellis, you're quite well-informed. My appointment as CEO was finalized just this morning, and here you are, reaching out to check on me hours later." She paused, her voice sharpening. "Or rather, you're worried about Jeffery, aren't you?"

Collin's expression darkened as he overheard, frustration simmering at Joanne's relentless interference.

She had already threatened Linsey once, and now this abrupt call to challenge her?

He couldn't fathom how Joanne had even gotten her number.

Joanne's voice dripped with venomous resentment. "Linsey, it's bad enough you stalled on my offer, but to brazenly steal Jeffery's rightful place as CEO is unthinkable! I'm warning you—step down and hand the Lawson Group's leadership back to Jeffery, or you'll regret it!" After her heated tirade, Joanne's labored breathing filled the line, punctuated by the sound of her swallowing hard.

Linsey, catching the erratic edge in Joanne's tone, pieced it together and let out a dry laugh. "Joanne, did you know? Some people get calm and quiet after a drink. Then there's you—sloshed and stirring up chaos, making unhinged calls and spewing nonsense."

No wonder Joanne's voice was so raspy; she was clearly intoxicated.

Her fixation on Jeffery was intense—his resignation from Lawson Group seemed to rattle her more than it did him.

"Linsey, you know nothing about it!" Joanne's voice spiked into a shout before dropping to a hushed, fervent whisper. "Everything I've worked for over the years was to stand by Jeffery's side, to help him elevate Lawson Group to new heights..."

Linsey's eyes lowered, her tone steady and measured. "Honestly, Joanne, you don't need to tie yourself to a man to prove your worth. Grester is a big place, full of thriving companies. Why define yourself as someone's partner instead of standing on your own?"

Joanne scoffed bitterly. "Because I love Jeffery, and I'm the only one in this world who's truly worthy of him."

The conversation was looping back to this exhausting dead end.

Linsey sighed, her patience thinning. "Joanne, let me make this crystal clear one last time. Jeffery is married to Alicia, who's carrying their child. He doesn't even recall who you are. All your so-called efforts? They're completely futile."

A chilling silence followed.

Just as Linsey thought Joanne had ended the call, her voice returned, icy and threatening. "Linsey, since you keep rejecting my terms, you've cut off every option I had. Now I'm cornered."

Linsey's brows knitted. She was perplexed by Joanne's insistence on blaming her. "So what? Are you planning to kill me like Haven did?"

At her words, Collin's expression turned grave, a cold intensity radiating from him as if he were ready to storm Joanne's doorstep and detain her himself.

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Until this moment, he hadn't grasped how much trouble Joanne could stir.

If he had known sooner, he would have dealt with her when he handled Haven.

"Collin's always by your side, protecting you. Do you think I'd be reckless enough to challenge the founder of CR Corporation?" Joanne's voice sharpened, the slur of alcohol fading. "I wouldn't do something so foolish."

After a brief pause, she added with deliberate menace, "But don't assume you and Collin can simply sweep me aside. As a Walton and Dustin's fiancée, I'm untouchable without hard proof. Cross me, and the Walton family, the Wade family, and Hester will ensure you face consequences."

Linsey's expression hardened. She was stunned by Joanne's brazen audacity.

She responded icily, stating an undeniable truth. "With CR Corporation's influence and reach, we have no reason to fear you. As Lawson Group's CEO, I can wield its resources at will. Do you really think your threats carry weight?"

As she spoke, Linsey's thoughts raced elsewhere.

Was Joanne truly Dustin's fiancée?

Had she not only won Hester's blessing but also Dustin's acquiescence to marry her?

If so, it suggested Dustin might be bowing to his mother's wishes to marry Joanne.

What about Dolores?

Had Dustin really given up on her?

But Linsey wasn't naive—Joanne's claims couldn't be trusted outright. If Dustin and Joanne's engagement was official, Collin would surely have heard about it.

Joanne laughed dismissively, her tone flippant. "Fine, maybe I can't be a threat to you."

Her words were casual and careless, causing Linsey to frown in disgust once again.

"But do you think I'm powerless against those close to you?" she continued.

Linsey's eyes narrowed sharply. "What are you implying?"

Joanne's voice grew smug. "I've given you days to reconsider, but you still won't budge. Does that mean you don't care about your dear friend? Is your twenty-year friendship just a sham?"

The realization hit Linsey like a jolt—Joanne was using Dolores as leverage.

"Joanne!" Linsey's voice trembled with fury. "If you so much as touch Dolores, I swear I'll make you pay!"

She hung up abruptly, cutting off any further exchange.

“Collin, get some people to Dolores’ place immediately to check on her. I’m calling her now,” Linsey urged, her voice tense as she jabbed at her phone.

Her words were hurried, but Collin immediately understood.

“Okay, I’ll handle it,” he replied, swiftly dispatching his men to Dolores’ home.

Linsey’s calls to Dolores went unanswered, heightening her unease.

Just two days earlier, Dolores had mentioned staying at her own home. Joanne’s erratic behavior made it impossible to tell if she was just bluffing, but Linsey couldn’t take chances with her friend’s safety—especially since Dolores was likely alone, an easy target if Joanne acted on her words.

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Her pulse raced as the thought sank in, and she rose abruptly. “I’m going to Dolores’.”

Collin stayed close. Without pressing for details, he backed her decision fully, his steady presence easing her mounting panic.

Under the cover of the night, Collin drove Linsey to Dolores’ residence. She kept dialing Dolores’ number during the ride, each unanswered call fueling both her hope for her friend’s safety and her dread of hearing a voice signaling trouble.

After what felt like an endless drive, the car finally pulled up outside Dolores’ apartment building.

Just at that moment, Linsey’s phone call was answered.

Her breath hitched in her throat, a wave of regret crashing over her for letting Dolores go home alone that day.

“Linsey, what’s going on? Why so many calls? And why did Collin send his team here?” Dolores’ voice, laced with confusion but growing clearer, cut through the buzzing in Linsey’s ears. Relief flooded Linsey, her racing heart finally slowing.

Dolores was safe.

The tension that had gripped her left her thoughts muddled, but one truth shone through: Dolores was unharmed.

“Linsey, take a deep breath—Dolores is fine,” Collin said softly, his hand gently patting her back, his voice a steady anchor.

He could guess the source of her panic—Joanne’s earlier call had likely included a threat against Dolores.

“Linsey, are you alright?” Dolores’ tone sharpened with concern upon hearing Collin’s words. “Collin, why isn’t she talking? Did you mess things up with her again? I swear, if you pull another stunt like four years ago, I won’t let you off!”

Collin ignored Dolores’ train of thought, focusing instead on soothing Linsey.

Linsey, tickled by Dolores’ protective outburst, let out a soft chuckle. She leaned forward in the passenger seat, her chest still tight from the ordeal.

“Dolores, I’m fine—just needed a second to catch my breath,” she said, blinking with a faint smile. “Collin and I are downstairs at your place. Hang tight, we’re coming up.”

Dolores, still puzzled, couldn’t fathom why Linsey and Collin had shown up at her house in the dead of night, nor why Collin’s men were stationed at her door.

Minutes later, Linsey and Collin sat on the couch in Dolores’ living room. Dolores set down two glasses of water, eyeing them with a mix of curiosity and confusion. “Okay, what’s the deal? Why the huge commotion? I was dead asleep when those guys started banging on my door, and then I saw a ton of missed calls on my phone. It jolted me wide awake.”

Linsey flushed with embarrassment. “So you were just sleeping? I thought...”

She managed a bitter smile. “Why did you go to bed so early? You’re usually a night owl! And why didn’t you pick up my calls?”

Dolores blinked innocently, shrugging. “I put my phone on silent.”

Linsey’s frustration bubbled up, nearly stealing her breath again.

“Here, drink this,” Collin said, handing her a glass of water.

Linsey took a few sips, her composure returning, and sighed. “It’s not wrong to silence your phone at night, but today was just bad timing. Thank goodness you’re okay.”

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Chapter 1097:

Dolores’ confusion deepened. “I’ve been swamped with company paperwork and tasks these past two days. I was so exhausted tonight, I crashed right after washing up and forgot to let you know.”

She paused, her face growing serious, and lowered her voice. “Linsey, did someone feed you the wrong information?”

Dolores could tell by Linsey’s reaction that she had believed she might be in danger.

But as their eyes met, Linsey realized something vital—continuing to conceal the truth from her friend would no longer protect her; it would only place her at greater risk.

Up until now, she had chosen silence, not wanting to burden Dolores with unnecessary worry.

However, faced with Joanne's recent threats, Linsey knew she could no longer shield her from reality. Dolores needed to be aware and remain cautious—truly cautious.

With solemn resolve, Linsey began recounting everything—from Joanne's previous provocations to the chilling phone call she had received earlier.

"What Joanne said at the end unsettled me the most. If you were still living with Collin and me, I'd feel safer... but now, with you on your own..." Her voice trailed off as her composure faltered. The fear she had felt during her drive here still clung to her like a shadow. "You have no idea how terrified I was."

Before she could say more, both Collin and Dolores chimed in simultaneously.

"Everything is going to be fine," they reassured Linsey.

Collin gently tightened his grip on her hand, offering a steadying presence. "There's always a solution, Linsey. We just have to stay calm."

Dolores nodded in agreement, her tone surprisingly light. "Even if Joanne really is insane enough to try kidnapping me, you and Collin are clever—you'd find a way to save me."

Though she spoke lightly, Dolores couldn't shake off the unsettling thought that Joanne had used her relationship with Dustin as a tool to threaten Linsey. It disturbed her more than she let on.

Sensing the depth of Linsey's worry, she sat closer, softening her tone. "These past few days must have been incredibly stressful for you. You've been trying to protect me while dealing with so much on your own."

Then her expression hardened with anger. "Joanne really is twisted. No decent human being would deliberately try to tear apart two people who care about each other."

Watching the two women huddle together in hushed solidarity, Collin stood and walked over to the dining table, deliberately giving them space.

He glanced at his phone, hesitated for a moment, then sent a message to Dustin.

Meanwhile, Linsey tried to reassure her friend. “I wasn’t afraid for myself, Dolores. I’m just... scared that you and Dustin might miss your chance.”

At that moment, Dolores’ expression dimmed; her eyes veiled with quiet resolve. “It’s alright. I’ve already decided not to continue with him anyway.”

Linsey blinked in surprise. Just days earlier, she had seen the pain in Dolores’s eyes—the heartbreak and hesitation.

She hadn’t expected her to reach such a final conclusion so soon.

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“But...” Linsey began tentatively.

Dolores understood her instantly. A faint, bittersweet smile tugged at her lips as she slowly shook her head. “Dustin probably only liked me for a moment. Maybe it was just a passing infatuation. The second his mother disapproved, he folded. If his love were truly deep... he would have stood by me.”

She paused for a moment, brushing her fingers over her lap. She had been spending her time juggling work and rest lately—going back and forth between the office and home. There had barely been space in her head to think about Dustin.

Now, when she thought of Dustin, there was only a dull ache. Nothing more.

The pain hadn't vanished—only that she had chosen to move forward one step at a time. The wound of a broken heart still throbbed quietly within her, but healing had already begun.

Dolores' words left a heaviness in Linsey's chest, and a worried crease formed between her brows.

She hesitated, chewing on her bottom lip, uncertain of how to ease Dolores' pain.

Then, out of nowhere, a spark of irritation lit up in her eyes. She turned sharply, pinning Collin with an accusatory glare from across the room.

Linsey's voice came out edged with frustration. "Collin, can you tell me what Dustin's problem is? Seriously, what kind of man acts that irresponsibly?"

She didn't stop there; her anger building, she pressed on. "If I ever see you with Dustin again, don't even think about coming home!" The warning hung in the air, and then Linsey remembered she was actually staying at Collin's place. Doubling down, she shot him a stern look. "I'm telling you now, if Dustin shows up, I'll rough him up myself. And if you dare take his side, I'll pack up the kids and leave with them!"

Collin's face immediately turned frosty. Without a word, he stood up and strode over, an icy intensity rolling off him that even made Dolores tense up beside Linsey.

Linsey's eyes grew wide in surprise as she half-expected Collin to snap at her.

Still, she refused to back down, lifting her chin and locking eyes with him, defiant. "What, Collin? Got something to say?"

Collin stopped right in front of Linsey, saying nothing for a moment. Instead, he simply stared, unreadable.

Dolores, bracing herself, clenched her fists, convinced Collin was about to lash out.

Already upset with Dustin's cowardice, she was now ready to jump in if Collin dared to hurt Linsey.

But then, instead of anger, Collin's hand reached out, only to rest gently on Linsey's head. The touch was warm and unexpectedly tender. Just like that, every trace of Linsey's annoyance melted away. She blinked, surprised by how quickly her irritation vanished, and found herself settling back down.

Linsey hadn't anticipated Collin reacting that way.

They were in the middle of sorting out Dolores and Dustin's mess when he suddenly went off-script with his behavior.

Before Linsey could shoot Collin a look of disapproval, he acted as if nothing unusual had happened. His hand dropped back to his side in a perfectly calm motion.

Without missing a beat, Collin pulled out his phone, holding it out so Dolores could see the message. "Dustin's asking for another chance. He says he'll give you a real answer at his birthday party."

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Chapter 1099:

The shift caught Dolores completely off guard. She had expected Linsey to light into Collin, not for the conversation to take this turn. A moment passed as she stared at the message on Collin's phone, struggling to make sense of what was happening.

It genuinely surprised her that Dustin wanted her at his birthday party.

Linsey quickly snapped back to attention and let her frustration show. "What's Dustin getting at? A real answer? Wasn't he clear enough last time? He's already doing whatever Hester wants, so what kind of promise is he planning to make at his own party?"

Her irritation only grew as Linsey jabbed a finger toward Collin's phone. "If he can find the time to send you this nonsense, he could just as easily talk to Dolores directly. Days have gone by already! If he's chosen to marry Joanne, then he shouldn't keep stringing Dolores along with these vague messages."

Dolores turned away, her silence saying more than any words could—she was finished with the Wade family.

She had finally made up her mind to sever ties with Dustin, and the last thing she needed was more unnecessary pain.

Collin kept quiet, lips pressed in a straight line, making sure Dolores had seen Dustin's message before slipping his phone back into his pocket.

"From what I know about Dustin, he's not one to dodge responsibility. I suspect he's waiting for an opportunity, and the birthday party the day after tomorrow is when he plans to act," Collin said.

Upon hearing that, both Linsey and Dolores looked puzzled.

"A plan? What kind of plan?" Dolores asked, her brow furrowing.

Collin remained silent for a couple of seconds before shaking his head. Linsey immediately countered, "So this is just your guess? You have no idea what Dustin is planning or what he's thinking."

"If he truly intended to break up with Dolores, he wouldn't keep meeting her despite knowing Hester was watching him closely," Collin replied with quiet certainty.

Dolores lowered her gaze, her mind whirling with confusion.

Nothing made sense anymore.

Why wouldn't Dustin tell her if he had another plan? After all, this involved the two of them.

Besides, during this time, it seemed to her that Dustin was entirely acting according to Hester's expectations.

This included going with Joanne to the jewelry store and agreeing to have Joanne as his date for the birthday party.

Without saying a word to her, she naturally couldn't trust him.

"I received an invitation to Dustin's birthday party. Joanne sent it to my office yesterday," Dolores said quietly.

Linsey turned to look at her. "Are you planning to go?"

"I don't know." Dolores raised her head, eyes glistening with unshed tears as she looked at her friend. "Linsey, I honestly don't know what to do anymore. Everything feels like such a mess in my head right now." She had been so certain she could let go of Dustin for good.

But Collin's words had thrown her right back into that familiar whirlpool of conflicted feelings.

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Chapter 1100:

Linsey's heart clenched at the pain written across Dolores' face. She pulled her friend into a warm embrace. "Dolores, listen to me. Whatever you decide, I'm here for you. I'll support you no matter what."

Linsey could see the truth clearly.

Dolores truly didn't care about Dustin anymore; none of this would matter to her. But somewhere deep inside, she still harbored feelings for him and nursed that tiny flame of hope despite everything.

"Look, if you don't want to go, we'll make our own plans for the day after tomorrow. We can hit up that new restaurant you mentioned, maybe catch a movie. Who cares about some birthday party?" Linsey

offered with an encouraging smile. "But if you do decide to go, Collin and I are coming with you. Getting invitations won't be a problem."

Collin remained quiet nearby, nodding his agreement with Linsey's words.

His main concern was Linsey's happiness, honestly.

But watching how deeply Linsey cared about Dolores, he realized that his wife wouldn't find peace until this whole situation got sorted out. Plus, being Dustin's friend, he genuinely hoped things wouldn't end badly for everyone involved. But Dustin's plan sounded like it was going to be one hell of a spectacle.

Linsey and Collin didn't leave Dolores' place until well past midnight. Before departing, Collin quietly arranged for a few of his men to watch over the area and keep Dolores safe. They would maintain their guard around the clock, ready to step in if needed.

Only with these security measures in place did Linsey feel comfortable enough to finally head home.

Without them, Collin knew he would have no chance of convincing her to leave at all.

Even in the car, Linsey couldn't stop ranting. Her jaw was clenched as she snapped, "Dustin is seriously pissing me off! What the hell is he doing? I had to keep it together in front of Dolores, but now he's inviting her to his birthday? What's next? Is he gonna propose to Joanne right in front of her? Has he completely lost it?"

Collin let her blow off steam, calm and quiet. Once she paused, he gently asked, "Babe, remember what I promised you the day we remarried?"

Linsey paused mid-rant, narrowed her eyes, and gave him a playful slap on the arm. "I'm talking about Dolores, Collin. Don't go changing the subject on me."

Collin held her hand, his voice serious now. "I promised you I'd never lie to you again."

He hesitated, then added, “Which is why... Even though Dustin begged me not to say anything, I’ve gotta tell you what he’s really planning.”

Linsey’s eyes went wide. “Wait—what? What did you just say?”

The very next day, Linsey went to visit Shari at the hospital again. Shari looked much better after a few days of proper rest.

“Linsey, I really owe you big time,” Shari said sincerely. “You even got a specialist for Elva. I seriously don’t know how to thank you enough.”

Linsey let out a soft laugh. “Girl, I’ve lost count of how many times you’ve said thank you. You know you don’t have to keep doing that. We’re not strangers.”

As she spoke, she reached out and gently patted Elva’s head. “As long as you and this little one are okay, I can breathe easy.”

Elva nodded sweetly. “We’ll be alright, Linsey. Mom and me both.”