

Zillionaire 1231

Chapter 1231:

More details about Collin's experiences were ready to spill from his lips when an unhappy voice suddenly cut through the kitchen air.

"Roland—"

Their heads turned in unison toward the voice and they spotted Collin positioned at the kitchen entrance.

The sight of his employer nearly sent Roland jumping out of his skin, nervous sweat slicking his palms instantly. "M-Mr. Riley." Why did he show up now? Did he overhear anything? Everyone knew how notoriously private he was about his personal affairs.

Anxiety and embarrassment crashed over Roland as the realization hit him. Right now, he wished he could vanish into thin air.

Truth was, Collin had just arrived and hadn't caught Roland mentioning him at all. What sparked his displeasure was seeing how close the two were standing together. His gaze swept over the plate in Linsey's hand before fixing Roland with a stern stare.

"Roland, do you want to lose your job?" he questioned, his face stone cold.

Roland's mouth opened to respond, but Linsey stepped forward first, defending him. "It's not Roland's fault. I offered to help with the dishes."

Rather than calming him, her words only fanned the flames of Collin's anger. "You're my wife, not a servant. Why are you helping?"

Linsey's explanation died on her lips as Collin, fury driving his words, interrupted with a sneer. "You claim to be washing dishes, yet all you two are doing is chatting and laughing here. So, dumped by a jerk and now falling for Roland, huh?"

Roland looked ready to drop to his knees, desperate to convince Collin that he had nothing to do with Linsey.

A long moment passed before Linsey shook herself from shock, only for her surprise to twist into rage. "You're impossible—completely out of your mind!" She had never met someone as paranoid as Collin in her whole life.

Fire flashed in Collin's eyes. "You call me impossible?" he retorted, his voice low and heated. "You'd rather scrub plates and trade stories with a man nearly seventy than spend time with your own husband. Tell me, Linsey—who's really at fault here?"

That simple confrontation exploded into a heated argument, neither willing to back down.

Off to the side, Roland fidgeted anxiously, never once imagining he would be the reason the couple clashed like this.

Stammering, he tried to calm the storm. "Mr. and Mrs. Riley, please—I'm the one to blame. Don't fight over me. I'm begging you."

Yet his trembling pleas faded beneath the rising storm of their voices, leaving him powerless to break through.

Linsey pressed her defense, but Collin twisted every explanation into something darker.

Anger overtook Collin. In one sharp motion, he hurled the plate nearby, sending it crashing to the floor.

That glare he fixed on Linsey held nothing but fury, as if he hoped to scorch her with his eyes alone.

Unmoved by his outburst, Linsey stared right back, her own eyes blazing with defiance.

Neither spoke, but the energy between them practically crackled, both locked in a silent standoff that weighed heavily in the room.

Chapter 1232:

An urgent tone crept into Roland's voice as he found the courage to intervene. His words fell flat, ignored by both Linsey and Collin, who remained frozen in their tense impasse.

Linsey's patience snapped. "Collin, you are the most insufferable, controlling, aggravating man I've ever known! I can't stand you!"

That outburst hit Collin hard, his face going slack before it darkened with resentment. "Big deal. I can't stand you either!"

One final, blistering look was all he gave her before wheeling himself out of the kitchen, refusing to glance back.

Desperately, Roland called after him, "Mr. Riley, please wait—"

But Collin never slowed, eventually disappearing from view.

All Roland could do was let out a weary sigh, turning to Linsey with a kind attempt at reassurance. "Mrs. Riley, don't let it trouble you. I'll speak to him. He went too far just now."

In a house so often ruled by temper, it meant something to have at least one voice of reason.

Linsey's anger eased a little, gratitude flickering in her eyes. She offered a gentle smile. "Thank you for that."

With a calm nod, Roland said, “Just part of my job.” He then quietly slipped away.

Once alone, Linsey returned to the kitchen and set about finishing the dishes. When she finally wrapped up, she dried her hands and made her way to the living room, ready to relax.

Her phone suddenly vibrated, breaking the silence. A quick glance at the screen showed Dolores’ name flashing.

No sooner had she picked up than Dolores’ lively voice spilled out. “Linsey, did you get my message?”

It took Linsey a second to respond. “I haven’t looked yet. I was tied up a moment ago.”

“Go on, check it right now!” Dolores’s words tumbled out in a rush. “I promise, you’ll get a kick out of this.”

Not one to ignore that much enthusiasm, Linsey hung up and scrolled through to find the message Dolores had sent.

Dolores had sent Linsey a video.

Recognition dawned quickly—Joanna’s face filled the frame, and the sight nearly made Linsey gasp. No shoes covered Joanna’s feet as she wandered aimlessly through the neighborhood of Starwood. Curious neighbors had gathered in a loose circle, their ranks flanked by several burly bodyguards in dark suits and shades. A makeshift sign made from a torn delivery box was clutched in Joanna’s hands.

Closer inspection revealed the words, scrawled boldly across the cardboard: “I slept with someone else’s boyfriend.”

Blinking in disbelief, Linsey stared at the screen, half-convinced her eyes were playing tricks. She rubbed them, then looked again just to be sure.

Once reality set in and she realized she hadn’t imagined it, pure shock left her speechless.

Any chance for further thought vanished when Joanna's mortified voice rang out in the recording. Humiliation colored Joanna's face as she shouted to the staring crowd, "I'm a shameless mistress..."

The clip barely lasted forty seconds, but Linsey sat in stunned silence long after it ended.

Chapter 1233:

Eventually, disbelief gave way to laughter—something about witnessing Joanna's very public downfall felt deeply gratifying.

That surge of satisfaction prompted her to call Dolores right away.

As soon as the call connected, Dolores jumped in, her voice bright with amusement. "So, is it as satisfying as you hoped?"

Without a moment's hesitation, Linsey nodded, excitement lacing her reply. "Tell me, Dolores, where in the world did you find that video?"

Dolores's voice rang out, cheerful as ever. "I was the one behind the camera. I happened to pass by while heading your way and stumbled onto this whole mess."

Through the call, Linsey caught snatches of the noisy crowd and asked, "You're still sticking around, aren't you?"

An enthusiastic laugh bubbled from Dolores. "Wouldn't miss it for the world! This kind of drama is rare—how could I walk away now? Honestly, Linsey, did you mastermind this? I'm in awe!"

A wry smile tugged at Linsey's lips. "Not my doing," she admitted, a hint of irony coloring her words. "All I did was reveal Felix's affair. He didn't even pretend to be sorry. Instead, he and Joanna just moved right into the condo."

Fury snapped in Dolores's tone. "You mean the place you saved for? The one you paid for every month? I can't believe the nerve!"

Summing up a complicated story, Linsey explained, "Felix was always good at pulling my strings. I was hopelessly in love and ended up registering the condo under his name."

Dolores erupted, unleashing a string of curses against both Felix and Joanna, unable to hold back her outrage.

Concern cut through her anger as she asked, "So, where are you staying now? Did you check into a hotel? You should really come stay with me."

"Not a hotel. I found another place," Linsey replied, keeping her tone casual.

Back when Linsey and Felix had planned their wedding, Dolores hadn't been able to attend because of a last-minute emergency, so she never found out about the chaos that erupted—how Collin had crashed the ceremony and Linsey ended up married to him instead.

With the subject now out in the open, Linsey decided honesty was best. She recounted everything that had gone down that day, and the strange twists that had followed.

Stunned into silence, Dolores struggled to find any words at all. Given how wild and unbelievable everything sounded, Linsey wasn't at all shocked by Dolores's stunned silence. Instead of rushing her, she allowed Dolores time to let it all sink in.

Eventually, Dolores found her voice again. "Wait, are you telling me Collin Riley is the one serving up payback for you—going after Felix and Joanna?" Felix's bankruptcy was something Collin had come clean about, but he never breathed a word about orchestrating Joanna's public humiliation.

Still, Linsey couldn't shake the feeling he was behind both incidents—after all, no one else she knew could pull off something like that.

A soft "hmm" was all Linsey offered in reply, her tone thoughtful.

Though she had never met Collin, Dolores had certainly heard the stories. Her opinion of him soared as she added, "That man is leagues ahead of Felix. Linsey, you might not want to let this one slip away." A laugh bubbled up from Linsey at the remark.

A few more words passed between them before Dolores excused herself, saying she needed to take care of some work.

Chapter 1234:

Once the call ended, Linsey set her phone aside and drifted into a quiet reverie.

"Mrs. Riley..." The familiar voice broke the spell.

Roland's approach on the stairs pulled Linsey back to the present. She lifted her gaze, curiosity flickering in her eyes. "Is something wrong?"

Frustration weighed on Roland's sigh. "I tried to talk to Mr. Riley upstairs, but he wouldn't listen. He just sent me away."

From his words, it was obvious Collin still hadn't cooled off.

Confusion creased Linsey's brow. She couldn't understand why such a minor squabble had pushed him so far.

Before she could dwell on it, Roland changed the subject abruptly. "Mrs. Riley, are you any good at making desserts?"

A slight nod answered him.

"I can make a few. Why do you ask?" she replied.

Roland's honesty colored his suggestion. "Whenever Mr. Riley gets like this, something sweet usually cheers him up. Maybe you could whip up a dessert to help mend things?"

Reluctance settled over Linsey. The idea of smoothing things over with Collin hardly appealed to her, especially since she placed the blame squarely on his shoulders.

Given how unfairly she had been treated, Linsey saw no reason why she, the wronged party, should be the first to bend.

Still, the memory of that video from Dolores flashed in her mind, stirring up reminders of Collin's unexpected acts of kindness.

No matter how overbearing or irritable he could be, Collin had, in truth, kept her from ending up on the streets after Felix had thrown her out. If it weren't for him, she...

Might have been harmed in that bar, and Felix and Joanna would never have faced justice so quickly.

Weighing all of that, Linsey finally relented and turned to Roland. "Fine, I'll whip up something sweet for him."

A look of genuine relief spread across Roland's face, and he gave a quick, grateful nod. "You have my thanks, Mrs. Riley."

"Just doing what I can." With those words, Linsey made her way to the kitchen. Roland lingered where he was, watching her with new respect.

Many details about Linsey's marriage to Collin lingered in Roland's memory—how she had nearly married someone else before Collin's sudden intervention at the wedding.

It was also common knowledge that they hadn't bothered with a prenuptial agreement, and for a while, Roland had harbored doubts about Linsey's intentions, half-expecting her to be just another gold-digger. All those suspicions now seemed ridiculous.

From his vantage point, it looked as though Collin and Linsey actually fit well together.

But as a butler, Roland knew his opinion didn't count for much. Ivy's approval carried all the weight in the household.

A shiver ran through him as he remembered Ivy's earlier outburst over the phone. Quickly, Roland dabbed at his brow, hoping to avoid any further wrath from her. Check latest chapters at [find~novel~net](#)

Inside the kitchen, Linsey set out disposable cups along with cream and all the other ingredients she would need, determined to surprise Collin with a batch of cream cupcakes.

Chapter 1235:

After baking the soft, golden bases, she swirled a generous topping of cream on each one, finishing them with plump blueberries and glossy cherries. The finished treats went onto a tray, which she balanced as she climbed the stairs.

Upstairs, Collin sat hunched over his desk in the study, each keystroke landing with a ferocity that threatened to destroy the keyboard beneath his fingers.

A sharp knock interrupted the tense silence. Without glancing up, Collin, assuming Roland was at the door, shouted, "Go away. If you don't, I'll come out there with a gun."

Instead of retreating, the visitor turned the handle and stepped inside.

Linsey crossed the threshold, her voice low and calm. "It's just me."

Surprise flickered across Collin's face before his features settled into an impassive mask. "Why are you here? Planning to take me out with those cupcakes?"

The urge to fling those cupcakes right at Collin's head nearly overwhelmed Linsey.

All that time and care spent baking something sweet just for him, and what did she get? Suspicion instead of gratitude. He acted like she might be trying to poison him. Her frustration bubbled over.

Annoyance simmered as she mentally ran through a long list of unspoken complaints.

"If you're not interested, I'll just eat them myself." Huffing, she started to leave, tray in hand.

Before she could step away, Collin's commanding tone cut through the room. "Did I say you were allowed to go?"

Rolling her eyes, Linsey spun back around. "What, mocking me so I'll leave? All I did was bake you something as thanks for helping me get back at Felix and Joanna. Do you honestly believe everyone's as heartless as you are?"

A shadow crossed Collin's face.

Defiance burned in Linsey's eyes as she glared at him one last time and started toward the door.

"Don't move," Collin called after her again.

At the end of her rope, Linsey snapped, "Collin, must you always make things so difficult?"

He refused her cupcakes, wouldn't listen to a word she said, and wouldn't even let her leave. The whole situation was maddening.

In a voice cold as winter, Collin fired back, "I make things so difficult? Every time I say something, you argue. You're always running away, never willing to stay put."

She threw her hands up. "When have I ever argued with you endlessly?"

"You always do." His words left no room for debate. Collin extended his hand expectantly. "Hand over the cupcakes."

Rather than comply, Linsey clutched the tray protectively behind her back, eyes narrowing with suspicion. "What's the plan, toss them straight into the trash?"

With a dramatic eye roll, Collin replied, "Since you're the one trying to make amends, I'll let it slide this time. Just don't make a habit out of it." This text is hosted at findnovel.net

Collin handed a cupcake to her.

For a heartbeat, Linsey hesitated, but she eventually accepted the cupcake, seeing it as his way of making amends.

Curiosity still lingered, so she asked, "What was all that fuss in the kitchen about?"

Collin didn't miss a moment. "Because I was jealous," he admitted, letting a little wounded pride slip into his words. "You're my wife, and I want you close, but it always feels like I'm invisible to you."

Chapter 1236:

Linsey could only stare at him, speechless for once.

A sudden knock at the door broke the awkward silence.

Quick to recover, Linsey cleared her throat and called out, "Come in."

Roland entered cautiously, greeting them both.

A frown settled on Collin's face the moment he caught sight of Roland. Collin couldn't help but think Roland always managed to show up at the worst possible times, interrupting every private moment he

had with Linsey. But Roland, observant as ever, picked up on Collin's irritation the instant he walked in and made himself a little smaller.

He wasted no time. "Sorry to intrude, Mr. Riley, but there's something you need to know," he said quickly.

Collin, unimpressed, gave no sign he wanted to respond.

From her spot by the counter, Linsey took charge. "Is something important going on, Roland?"

Nodding, Roland glanced at her and spoke up. "Mr. Riley's grandmother has arrived."

Linsey blinked, momentarily caught off guard, though not entirely shocked—she figured Ivy was probably here for Collin.

That assumption lasted only a moment, until Roland added, "She asked for you."

"She wants to see me?" Surprise flickered across Linsey's face.

Linsey furrowed her brow, her mind drifting as she tried to make sense of the moment.

Out of nowhere, Collin's voice cut through the silence. He spoke for her. "Go and tell my grandmother Linsey isn't feeling up to a visit right now."

At that, Roland's shoulders tensed. He shifted his weight, clearly uneasy. "But—"

With a look of genuine confusion, Linsey glanced at Collin. "Why did you just lie for me? Why stop me from meeting her?"

Collin shrugged off her question, his patience wearing thin. "Does everything really need an explanation?"

Nothing came to Linsey's mind to say next.

Collin didn't wait for her to gather her thoughts. He waved her off. "Head back to your room. I'll handle her myself."

Reluctantly, Linsey nodded. "Alright," she said, starting for the door.

Roland, however, quickly blocked her path. He turned to Collin, his tone respectful but insistent. "Mr. Riley, your grandmother rushed home the moment her work overseas wrapped up. Please, don't make things harder by being stubborn."

Collin was in no mood for lectures. "That's enough," he snapped, his glare sharp.

"Keep pushing me, and you'll regret it."

The warning was enough to silence Roland.

Linsey, startled by how serious Collin sounded, finally spoke up. "Do you have to be so aggressive all the time?"

He didn't bother to explain, answering simply, "That's just how I am."

She had nothing more to say to that.

Silence crept over the group, the tension almost visible.

Choosing to drop the argument, Linsey headed for the exit.

Chapter 1237:

When she opened the door, she found someone waiting on the other side.

There stood an elderly woman, silver hair perfectly styled, a cane in hand.

Even with age weighing on her, she radiated dignity and refinement.

Linsey's eyes widened, and she stammered, "Mrs. Riley?"

Across from her, Ivy took a moment to study Linsey, her gaze calm and assessing.

Before Ivy could finish sizing Linsey up, Collin swept into view and quickly positioned himself between them.

A step forward put him in front of Linsey as he addressed the older woman. "Grandma, how come we didn't get any word that you'd be visiting today?"

With a sly smile, Ivy avoided giving him a direct answer. "After you two got married, not once did you visit me. Now you act as if I'm trespassing in my grandson's home?"

The comment left Collin silent. He hesitated, searching for the right response, before quietly saying, "That's not what I meant."

As soon as his reply hung in the air, Ivy's expression hardened. She brought her cane down on the floor with a sharp tap. "If you really mean that, then don't get in my way!"

From the second Roland mentioned Ivy's return to the moment Linsey saw her in the flesh, a thousand thoughts ran through Linsey's mind.

Of all her questions, the one that lingered most was why Collin seemed so anxious for her to avoid Ivy.

Trying to make sense of everything, Linsey barely noticed Collin reluctantly stepping aside to clear Ivy's path.

Once more, Ivy's eyes found Linsey's. Her voice was frank and unmistakable. "You're Linsey, aren't you? Come with me downstairs. We need to have a word in private."

The invitation caught Linsey off guard, leaving her stunned for a brief moment. Despite the polite tone, Ivy left no room for refusal. She started down the stairs, cane tapping, expecting Linsey to follow.

After a deep breath, Linsey gathered herself and hurried after her.

Upstairs, Collin intended to follow them, but Roland intercepted him with a subtle warning. "Mr. Riley, since your grandmother requested to speak with your wife alone, perhaps you should stay back. If you hover too much, it might only make her more upset."

Though Collin clearly disliked the idea, he realized Roland had a point. He forced himself to stop and stay where he was. He could only remain in his wheelchair, his eyes lingering on Linsey as she disappeared below, his chest tight with worry.

In the living room below, Linsey took a seat on the sofa beside Ivy while a maid placed steaming cups of coffee on the table.

Taking a slow sip, Ivy seemed pleased. She offered a nod of approval. "This is actually quite a nice cup of coffee."

Linsey, sitting a little nervously at Ivy's side, couldn't hold back any longer. She leaned forward and asked, "Mrs. Riley, did you call me down because there's something you want to talk about?"

Only then did Ivy seem to recall the reason she had come in the first place. She set down her coffee and raised a hand, signaling the maid hovering near the doorway.

The young woman nodded and slipped out. Only then did Ivy reach into her purse, producing a crisp check. She slid it across the table with practiced ease. "This is for you, Linsey."

Chapter 1238:

Linsey's brow furrowed as she took the check, her fingers brushing the smooth paper.

She glanced at the numbers, then froze.

Five million dollars. The sum stared back at her, bold and unreal, like something plucked from a television drama.

Her breath caught, and she counted the zeros again, half-expecting them to vanish. This couldn't be real.

She had never held such wealth, never even imagined it in her grasp.

Her mind spun, conjuring scenes from those over-the-top shows she used to binge. Was this the moment where Ivy paid her to disappear? The thought twisted in her chest, sharp and bitter.

From the start, Collin had forced her into his world. So, the idea of walking away with this fortune—a life of ease, no more scraping by—felt like a victory. Five million dollars could buy a new start, a life where she answered to no one. But her heart sank. Why didn't this feel right? A hollow ache settled in her chest, defying the logic of her daydreams.

Ivy leaned forward, her sharp eyes catching the shift in Linsey's expression. "What's wrong?" she asked, tilting her head. "Is the amount too small?"

Linsey shook her head, a small, instinctive movement. "No," she said softly. Curiosity gnawed at her, and she met Ivy's gaze. "Why are you giving me this?" Although she had her suspicions, she needed to hear it said aloud.

Still, Ivy's answer caught her completely off guard.

Ivy's lips curved into a wry smile, and she leaned back, folding her hands in her lap. "The girl meant to marry Collin couldn't stomach his disability. She bolted, leaving him humiliated. To make a point—or maybe to spite me—Collin crashed your wedding and dragged you into this mess. This check is my apology. I hope you'll accept it."

Linsey blinked, the words sinking in. A laugh escaped her, soft and unexpected, bubbling up from the absurdity of it all.

She pressed her hand to the check, feeling its weight against the polished table, and slid it back toward Ivy with a steady push.

Ivy's brow arched, a flicker of confusion crossing her face. "What's this?"

Linsey paused, her fingers lingering on the table's edge. "Collin didn't ruin my life," she said, her voice steady despite the storm in her thoughts. "If anything, he saved me. My wedding was a mistake I didn't see coming—a man who was not only useless but unhinged, cheating with his childhood sweetheart behind my back."

She straightened, her jaw tight. "Collin's stunt pulled me out of that disaster."

Ivy had only heard vague whispers about Collin's dramatic wedding fiasco. The finer details, the ones that truly mattered, remained a mystery to her.

She leaned forward, resting her elbows on the table. "You're saying you don't blame him?" Her tone carried a mix of disbelief and curiosity, as if she were reassessing the woman before her.

"Not at all," Linsey replied, her voice firm.

Ivy studied her, her eyes narrowing as they settled on Linsey's. After a long moment, she asked, "Are you staying with him willingly?"

The question hit like a gust of cold air. Linsey opened her mouth, then closed it, her certainty dissolving. Her fingers curled into her palms, nails biting into her skin.

Ivy remained silent, and she shifted in her chair, breaking the tension. “Has Roland ever told you about Collin’s past?” she asked, her voice gentler now.

Chapter 1239:

Linsey shook her head, a small, honest gesture. “No.”

“Would you like to hear it?” Ivy’s tone was warm, almost conspiratorial, as she leaned closer. A spark of curiosity flared in Linsey’s chest. She nodded, her lips parting slightly. “Yes.”

Ivy’s smile returned, soft and knowing.

She settled back, her hands clasped, and began to unravel the story of Collin—a tale Roland had always meant to share but never dared.

As Ivy recounted the story, her voice remained soft and measured, though it carried the weight of deep sorrow.

Only then did Linsey come to understand the full truth—on the very day Collin was born, his mother, Margaret Riley, tragically lost her life during childbirth.

Not long after, his father, Alfredo, remarried and had another son, Huntley.

From that point on, Collin’s place in the family diminished to something even less than that of a servant. Alfredo had never cared for him, and with Huntley’s arrival, Collin was treated like a shadow in his own home.

But that wasn’t the worst of it.

A devastating car accident left him permanently injured, stripping him of the ability to walk.

As Ivy continued, her eyes clouded with tears, her voice trembling. “Aside from me, no one in this family ever truly cared for Collin. His father and that wicked stepmother treated him with nothing but cruelty. He used to be such a gentle, obedient child... but after enduring so much abuse and neglect, his heart closed off. He became someone different—withdrawn, volatile.”

Linsey felt a tightness in her chest, a sting behind her eyes as emotion threatened to spill over.

Just then, Ivy’s tone shifted. “Linsey,” she said gently, “if you’re not here by choice, I can help you leave. I’ll make sure Collin never bothers you again.”

Linsey didn’t respond right away. Her expression flickered. She was caught between hesitation and something unspoken.

Ivy noticed and smiled patiently. “There’s no rush. Take your time to think it over.”

But Linsey’s thoughts were anything but calm.

When Collin had first forced her into living with him, she had been overwhelmed, constantly seeking a way out. But things had changed. And now, hearing all that Ivy had shared, Linsey saw him through a different lens—one not shaped by force or fear, but by pain and loneliness.

She began to realize: maybe Collin wasn’t cruel by nature. Maybe he was just... broken.

And maybe his possessiveness stemmed from a desperate longing not to be left behind again. The idea of leaving him now felt crueler than staying.

Her heart ached at the thought of him alone once more.

Time passed in silence. Then, slowly, Linsey sat up straight, her voice calm but resolute. “I’m willing to stay. I want to take care of Collin.”

Ivy, mid-sip of her coffee, was so stunned that she choked, coughing violently. Linsey quickly moved beside her, gently patting her back in concern. "Are you alright?" she asked softly.

"I'm fine," Ivy said, waving a hand.

Still dazed, she stared at Linsey. "Have you truly thought this through? This is a lifelong decision. And Collin... he's disabled. The doctors say there's little chance he'll ever walk again."

Chapter 1240:

But Linsey didn't hesitate. She nodded, her gaze unwavering. "I'm an orphan, and the condo I once called home now belongs to my ex and his mistress. I have nowhere to go. Living here gives me shelter, and it gives Collin someone by his side. It's not just about charity... It's mutual. We both need this."

Ivy's eyes welled with tears. Her lips trembled as the weight of Linsey's words sank in. Read complete version only at fundnovel.net

Linsey was startled by Ivy's reaction, her expression panicked. "Did I say something wrong?"

Moved beyond measure, Ivy reached out and grasped Linsey's hand tightly. "You didn't say anything wrong," she whispered through tears. "I'm just... so happy. Collin has always been alone. He had no real friends. Plenty of girls were drawn to him before the accident, but once he was injured, they disappeared. You... you're the first person who's chosen him despite it all. Without hesitation."

She paused, her voice thick with emotion. "Thank you, Linsey. From the bottom of my heart."

Linsey quickly responded, "You're welcome, Ivy."

Her gentle, comforting words gradually soothed Ivy's turbulent emotions.

Ivy dabbed away the moisture gathering at the corners of her eyes before speaking. "Stop calling me Mrs. Riley. That's how outsiders address me. Since you've married Collin, just call me Ivy from now on."

Their conversation flowed naturally for several hours, and before either realized it, dusk had settled over the estate.

Linsey invited Ivy to stay for dinner, but Ivy mentioned pressing matters awaiting her attention and gracefully declined.

Understanding her situation, Linsey didn't press the matter and personally walked her to the door.

Before departing, Ivy clasped Linsey's hand with affection and spoke softly. "Linsey, if Collin ever wrongs you, come straight to me. I'll stand up for you."

Having grown up without family, Linsey had never experienced such affection. Meeting Ivy's loving gaze, she felt something profound stir within her chest. Several moments passed in meaningful silence before she replied, her voice slightly thick with emotion, "Thank you, Ivy."

Ivy's heart melted at her sweetness, and she gently caressed Linsey's cheek. "It's truly a blessing for Collin to find such a treasure."

After seeing Ivy off, Linsey made her way back to the living room. A servant had already set dinner and respectfully reminded her that the meal was ready.

"Where's Collin?" Linsey's eyes drifted toward the staircase as she addressed the servant. "Please call him down for dinner."

The servant's expression grew uncomfortable. "Mr. Riley said he won't be eating tonight."

"Why?" Linsey's gaze returned to the servant, surprise flickering across her features.

The servant maintained his troubled expression, hesitating before answering, "Mr. Riley mentioned he's too angry to eat."

Hearing that, Linsey felt a mixture of confusion and exasperation. She couldn't begin to imagine who had provoked him this time.

Watching Linsey's prolonged silence, the servant couldn't help but venture, "Mrs. Riley, perhaps you could try persuading Mr. Riley?"

Linsey made her way to the study. The moment she opened the door, a shadow flashed before her eyes.