

Zillionaire 1261

Chapter 1261:

This time, her aim sent the paper ball skittering past his wheels, coming to rest on the carpet. It had made several trips between them, Collin never bothering to crumple it very tightly, so it kept coming undone.

Upon landing with a dull smack, the paper uncurled, almost as if it were blooming, and inside, something golden caught the light.

Only then did Linsey catch sight of what lay hidden within. Springing from the couch, she crossed the room and bent to inspect it. A diamond-studded gold bracelet sparkled up at her.

A wave of shock swept over her. Kneeling down, she scooped it up, turning it over in her hands. Displeasure colored her voice as she said, "You should have told me you put something inside. Why pull a stunt like that?"

She stared at the jewelry, recognizing its worth, and worry crept in. Breaking it would be a disaster.

Once she was certain no harm had come to it, she extended the bracelet toward him. "Here. You can have this back."

Collin barely paused before saying, "Why would I take it back? It's a gift for you."

Her mouth fell open in disbelief. "A gift? What for?"

Because he wanted her to have it, and that was the only reason. Keeping that thought to himself, Collin gave a short, dismissive laugh and responded, "You're too much of a flirt. That's a tracker bracelet. If you ever step out on me, I'll know right away."

Linsey reacted as if the bracelet had scorched her, tossing it back without a second thought.

Anger flared in her eyes, and her voice shook as she pressed her lips together and said, "I'm not some flirt! You should keep it for yourself, you creep!" No matter how sharply she spoke, Collin held his ground.

Her own stubbornness rising, Linsey clenched her fists and turned toward the door, shaking with fury.

Collin caught her arm before she could get far. With that small motion, she lost her balance and crashed into his arms.

"Let go of me!" Linsey kicked and struggled, shouting, "Collin, you bastard! You already keep me locked in like a prisoner! Now you want to slap a tracker on me too!"

He barely seemed to notice her protests. Holding her firmly with one hand, he reached with the other and tried to fasten the bracelet around her wrist. All she could do was watch as the bracelet slid onto her arm, helplessness making her eyes sting with unshed tears.

"You bastard! If you don't stop, I swear I'll bite you!" Linsey bared her teeth and lunged for his arm, meaning every word.

Collin was quicker. He jerked his arm away, dodging her bite, and she chased after him, refusing to back down.

A second later, he softened, running his fingers through her hair and chuckling. "Relax, I was only joking, silly."

For a moment, Linsey stilled, eyes shimmering with tears as she looked up at him.

A quiet intensity filled the air as Collin arched a brow and said, "There's no tracker at all. It's nothing but a small gift for you."

Doubt lingered in her eyes as Linsey weighed his words in silence.

Chapter 1262:

Without responding, she brushed away a tear and glanced again at the gold bracelet now gleaming on her wrist. Every detail of its design spoke of careful handiwork, colorful stones sparkling along the band, with no hint that anything could be hidden inside.

Reassured by this, she finally allowed herself to accept Collin's explanation, though reluctance still tugged at her thoughts.

While his embrace lingered, Collin pressed his cheek to her shoulder and murmured, his voice velvet-smooth, "So, what do you think?"

Linsey gave a small nod, admitting, "I like it." Almost without thinking, she added, "Did this cost a fortune?"

Collin spoke casually, as if it were nothing special. "I had someone place a bid for it at the auction. It didn't cost much, just \$30 million."

Right then, Linsey leapt off his lap, her eyes wide in disbelief. "Only \$30 million?!"

That number sounded outrageous to her. The bracelet seemed incredibly expensive.

A rush of unease swept over Linsey, so she tried to slip the bracelet off and hand it back. "No, this is far too much. I really can't accept it."

Collin blocked her hands with a firm grip, insisting, "You're my wife. I want you to keep it."

Even with his words, Linsey still couldn't shake the feeling that it was just too much for her to wear.

They went back and forth for a while. After Collin's patience wore thin and he started to look annoyed, Linsey finally gave in and agreed to keep it on.

Their conversation was interrupted by the doorbell ringing.

"I'll answer it," Linsey remarked.

She thought she would find a delivery outside, but instead, Kylee stood there.

Linsey froze for a second, caught off guard. Kylee, her eyes hidden behind a pair of sunglasses, looked her up and down with open disdain. "Is Collin home? I came to see him."

Snapping out of her shock, Linsey replied, "Yes, he's here."

She moved aside to let Kylee in.

Although there was more than enough space in the doorway, Kylee deliberately forced her way past, slamming her shoulder hard into Linsey's.

Linsey wasn't prepared. Her head slammed into the edge of the doorframe, and a sharp cry slipped out before she could stop it.

Collin heard the commotion. His voice rang out as he hurried over. "Linsey, what happened?" Worry sharpened his tone.

Before Linsey could say a word, Kylee stepped in front of her, blocking Collin's view, and put on an innocent face. "Collin, I just wanted to come in and talk with..."

"You, but Linsey tried to keep me out."

"So you pushed her?" Collin asked indifferently.

A brief pause followed before Kylee tried to collect herself. "No, she tripped on her own," she replied, feigning calm.

Her eyes flicked over to Linsey, silently pressuring her. "Right, Linsey?"

It was impossible for Linsey to miss the warning in Kylee's stare, and she barely stopped herself from rolling her eyes.

Chapter 1263:

Life had already taught her plenty about jealous childhood friends. Felix's old friend, Joanna, used to pull these tricks, and now she was getting the same treatment from Collin's childhood sweetheart, Kylee. Linsey honestly wondered what she had done to deserve all this drama. Read full story at FundNovel.net

Whenever Joanna played the innocent victim and Linsey defended herself, Felix never took her side. He would only scold her instead.

She figured Collin would probably act just like Felix—unable to see through such games.

That thought left Linsey annoyed. Facing Collin, she said coldly, "I didn't stop her from coming in. She ran into me on purpose. That's the truth. Believe me or not, it's your choice."

She turned to leave, intent on heading upstairs.

Just as she moved past, Collin reached out and caught her hand. His answer came right away. "I believe you."

The words stunned Linsey. Her heart pounded so hard it felt like it might burst. Never in her life did she expect Collin to take her side over his childhood friend. Shock painted Kylee's face.

"Collin, you're saying you don't believe me?"

Holding on to Linsey's hand even tighter, Collin glanced at Kylee. Instead of answering directly, he shifted the conversation. "So, what brings you here today?"

Kylee clearly didn't want to let it go and clung to her innocent act. "Collin, you've known me forever. You should know I would never hurt anyone. Why would I push Linsey for no reason..."

Collin cut her off, the impatience in his tone now unmistakable. "If you have nothing important to say, then you should go."

The message was crystal clear—a dismissal.

Kylee's heart sank with a sharp pang of hurt, but she knew Collin's temperament well enough not to push further.

Swallowing her wounded pride, she cleared her throat and managed to speak through the tightness in her voice. "Actually, I came here to deliver something." Reaching into her designer Hermes bag, Kylee extracted an elegant invitation card and extended it toward him. "My birthday celebration is coming up in just a few days, and I'm throwing a grand banquet at Century Hotel. I'd love for you to be there, Collin."

Collin accepted the invitation card with casual indifference, his striking features betraying no emotion whatsoever. "Fine."

Kylee then turned to Linsey, holding out a second invitation card with barely disguised contempt. "Normally, someone of your... background wouldn't qualify for an invitation to my birthday banquet. But since you're Collin's wife, I suppose I can make an exception out of respect for him."

From the instant they had met, Linsey had felt the waves of disdain rolling off Kylee in almost tangible waves. Something hot and inexplicable ignited in her chest.

Rather than reaching for the invitation card, Linsey met Kylee's condescending gaze head-on. "How thoughtful of you, Kylee. But you're absolutely right. Someone like me has no business in your elite circles. Since we clearly move in different worlds, I won't force myself where I don't belong."

Kylee had fully expected Linsey to snatch up the invitation card with pathetic gratitude. This bold defiance caught her completely off guard, nearly shattering her composure.

Though she genuinely despised the idea of Linsey attending her banquet, every aspect of her carefully crafted plan depended entirely on Linsey's presence. Kylee's brow creased as conflicting thoughts warred in her mind. She was torn between her wounded pride and her desperate need for Linsey to attend. The problem was, her ego simply wouldn't allow her to lower herself to actual persuasion.

Chapter 1264:

But what if Linsey truly refused to come? Wouldn't that render all her scheming completely worthless? Uncertainty gnawed at her. An uncomfortable tension settled over the room like a heavy blanket.

Thankfully, Collin chose that moment to intervene.

Without asking Linsey's opinion, he reached over and took the invitation card himself. "We'll attend together."

Linsey's displeasure flared instantly, the urge to contradict him right in front of Kylee almost overwhelming. She couldn't stand the way he made decisions for her, as if her own thoughts and feelings didn't matter at all.

Kylee lowered her hand with visible relief, then couldn't resist taking another jab while praising Collin. "You're always so wonderfully considerate, Collin."

"You should head back now," Collin repeated, his tone leaving no room for argument.

Though reluctance was written all over her face, Kylee forced herself to comply.

"Of course."

"Roland, show her out," Collin commanded.

Roland, who had just finished preparing a fresh cup of coffee for Kylee, blinked in surprise at how quickly her visit was ending. Still, he recovered smoothly and responded to Collin with practiced professionalism. "Of course, Mr. Riley."

Setting the untouched coffee cup carefully on the side table, he gestured toward the door with polished courtesy. "Miss Russell, please allow me to escort you out."

Linsey remained silent, watching Kylee's retreat with sharp eyes. Only after their unwelcome guest had vanished completely from sight did she whirl around to face Collin, curiosity burning too hot to contain. "I clearly refused her invitation. So why did you just decide for me anyway?"

Collin's fingers moved with deliberate precision as he straightened his tie, his attention shifting to the ornate invitation card without any attempt to hide his reasoning.

"You're my wife now. Attending these social gatherings is simply part of navigating high society. Kylee's birthday banquet could be the perfect opportunity for you to build connections and expand your network," he explained.

Linsey said nothing in response, but her thoughts churned with frustration. Even if attending such events was truly necessary, surely countless other opportunities would present themselves in the future. Why did it have to be this particular banquet, hosted by that insufferable woman?

The memory of Kylee's condescending attitude sent fresh waves of barely controlled anger coursing through her veins.

With that fire still burning bright, she met Collin's expectant gaze and delivered her final answer with unwavering determination. "I don't want to go."

"Why?" Collin pressed.

Linsey's teeth sank into her lower lip. "Miss Russell despises me completely. Why should I bend over backward to attend her birthday celebration?"

Something in Collin's expression shifted. He clearly disagreed with her assessment. "If Kylee truly hated you, she wouldn't have bothered extending a personal invitation."

His defense of Kylee struck a nerve, and frustration bubbled up in Linsey's chest, sharpening her voice. "She literally shoved me moments ago! You witnessed it yourself, didn't you? Otherwise, why would you claim to believe me? The way she handed me that invitation was pure mockery. Every word dripped with condescension, making it crystal clear that I'm beneath her station and only received this opportunity through your influence!"

Silence fell over Collin like a heavy curtain, his thoughts completely unreadable. Linsey assumed he had run out of arguments and prepared to return to her room.

Chapter 1265:

Just as she turned to leave, Collin's voice cut through the air.

Rather than addressing her valid concerns, he said, "I've already confirmed your attendance. What exactly am I supposed to do if you refuse to show?"

"I don't know. That's your problem to solve." Raw emotion still coursed through Linsey as the words tumbled out recklessly. "If you can't find a decent solution, just drag someone else to play your wife at the banquet."

The moment those words left her mouth, shock froze her blood.

Collin's previously composed features turned thunderous, dangerous energy radiating from his entire being.

"I..." Fear crept into Linsey's voice. She scrambled to backtrack.

But Collin's patience had evaporated completely. Without sparing her a glance, his hand shot out and captured her wrist with unsettling precision.

The next moment, he yanked her forward, sending her tumbling directly onto his lap, half of her body crashing into his solid embrace.

Before she could process what had happened, Collin's fingers clamped around her face, his jaw locked tight as he let out a chilling laugh. "What did you just say? Care to repeat those words?"

Pain shot through Linsey's compressed cheeks, her mouth forced into an awkward shape that made speaking impossible.

She could only mumble incoherently while shaking her head, desperately trying to take back her reckless statement. Yet Collin's rage burned just as fiercely.

His cold stare bore into her delicate features as he sneered, "Linsey, do you enjoy being betrayed?"

Every other woman in high society fought tooth and nail to preserve their marriages. Yet here she was, practically handing him permission to find a replacement. What twisted logic was running through her head?

The thought only stoked Collin's fury higher, his grip tightening mercilessly against her skin.

Linsey gasped from the pressure, writhing to escape his iron hold. She barely managed to suck in air before rushing to clarify, "That's not what I meant at all."

"Then enlighten me," he growled icily.

Words failed Linsey as she pressed her quivering lips together. "I didn't mean anything by it. I simply don't want to attend."

Collin's voice dropped to a commanding rumble. "That choice is yours to make."

Tension crackled between them like a live wire.

Linsey found herself completely outmatched, unable to mount any effective defense against Collin's will.

Eventually, Collin abandoned the argument entirely, spinning his wheelchair around to leave her behind.

“Collin! I have every right to refuse. You can’t keep bulldozing over me like this!” Linsey’s voice cracked as she called after him.

No matter how desperately she shouted, Collin moved as though her words were nothing but empty air, stabbing the elevator button without a backward glance.

The elevator doors slid open and swallowed him whole, erasing Collin from Linsey’s sight completely.

As she watched him disappear, Linsey’s shoulders caved inward, defeat written plainly across her features.

Irritation simmered beneath Linsey’s skin, leaving her unable to understand why she always got roped into things she wanted no part of. Latest content published on FindNovel.net

Chapter 1266:

No argument from Collin would sway her this time; her resolve stood firm. Attending Kylee’s birthday celebration simply wasn’t happening—not unless Collin intended to physically force her out the door.

Determination set her jaw as she dropped onto the sofa again, phone in hand. She found the group chat buzzing with more than a hundred new notifications in barely ten minutes.

Worries and desperate requests from her coworkers filled the screen, each one urging her to step up and lead.

Thoughts swirled in Linsey’s head as she weighed her next move. Her breakup with Felix had severed every remaining connection between them. Truth be told, Felix’s company owed its meteoric rise to her dedication and sacrifice during those years. Nearly every success, especially the entire Fashion Design Department, traced back to Linsey’s vision and labor. Watching Felix and Joanna claim her home was bad enough—she refused to let them destroy the one department she had built from scratch.

The phone trembled in her grip as Linsey steadied her breath, determination settling in. Just as she made up her mind to head back to the office, a new obstacle appeared.

With Collin's need for control hovering over everything, getting his approval would be the next hurdle.

She paused, weighed her options, and finally rose from the sofa, moving with purpose toward the study upstairs.

Collin sat behind his desk, his face unreadable, head snapping up at the sound of the door.

Recognizing her, he immediately braced for another round about the banquet.

He spoke up before she could utter a word, his voice cold. "Leave. Now."

"I'm not leaving. I haven't finished what I intended to say." Linsey met his gaze without fear.

Collin kept his lips sealed, making it clear through his expression that he had no intention of engaging with her.

Linsey, all too familiar with his stubborn moods, didn't let it get to her. Instead, she put forth her proposal without hesitation. "I'll stand by your side as your wife at the birthday party. But you have to promise me one thing."

He didn't seem swayed at all. In a detached voice, he responded, "Go ahead. What is it?"

She looked him square in the eye and replied, "I want the freedom to live as I please."

Without giving it a moment's thought, Collin shot her down. "Keep dreaming."

Linsey refused to let his cold response shake her. "I'm not asking to run away from you. There's a world of difference between freedom and escape. I give you my word I won't disappear. All I want is the chance to live a regular life again."

Collin frowned. "Tell me, how is your life not normal right now?"

Her patience was wearing thin as she snapped, "Nothing about this is normal. I can't set foot outside unless I get your say-so. Your bodyguards act like prison guards!"

The debate stretched on for thirty minutes before Linsey finally prevailed.

Chapter 1267:

A grudging acceptance came from Collin. "Alright, you win. But listen closely." He narrowed his eyes, making sure she got the message. "If you try to fool me, don't expect any kindness."

A silent nod was all she gave in return.

On the day of Kylee's birthday, the Century Hotel looked like something out of a dream, every inch draped in luxury.

Rows of champagne flutes glittered, stacked into a shimmering wall. Lilies imported from overseas spilled across the hall, while massive screens looped through radiant images of Kylee.

Invitations had gone out only to the elite. No ordinary guests filled this ballroom. There were power players—politicians, executives, award-winning stars, and the best-known socialites. The place buzzed with the energy of the upper crust. Making her entrance in a dazzling red gown, Kylee stole every glance in the room. Admiring socialites clustered around her, their compliments tumbling over one another.

Elegantly lifting her champagne flute, Kylee acknowledged the chorus of compliments around her. "Thank you. Here's to a wonderful night!"

When the moment faded, the crowd drifted apart, each guest drawn toward laughter, food, or sparkling drinks. Kylee wandered away from the bustle, seeking a quiet spot to catch her breath.

She found herself studying the wall clock. A subtle crease appeared between her brows, as if some thought tugged at her from within.

A cheerful call broke the silence. "Kylee!" The voice practically danced, warm and eager.

Turning around, she spotted her cousin Cynthia.

"Happy birthday, Kylee!" Cynthia beamed and extended a small jewelry box, both hands outstretched. "I picked out something special just for you."

"Thank you, Cynthia. Would it be alright if I take a look now?" Kylee accepted the box, curiosity lighting up her face.

Cynthia nodded, her answer quick. "Go ahead, open it."

Without waiting, Kylee untied the ribbon and opened the box right there. As the lid came off, a dazzling gold bracelet, glittering with diamonds, shimmered in the light.

She picked up the bracelet, and her delight grew, her entire face brightening as she admired the gift.

Pretending to hesitate, she looked up and said, "It must have cost a fortune, didn't it?"

Cynthia brushed aside her concern with a small wave. "Forget about the price. All that matters is that you like it."

She changed the subject with gentle curiosity. "By the way, I noticed you eyeing the clock a while ago. Are you waiting for someone?"

Cradling the bracelet, Kylee didn't hold back her feelings. "The birthday dinner is about to begin, but Collin hasn't shown up yet. I can't shake the worry that he might skip it this year."

Cynthia already knew a bit about what passed between Kylee and Collin.

She tried to soothe her cousin's worry, her smile confident. "Mr. Riley cares about you more than anyone. He's never skipped your birthday before, and I doubt he'd start now."

Chapter 1268:

"I really hope you're right." Kylee gave a small nod, letting Cynthia's reassurance linger between them.

An uneasy feeling crept into her chest, refusing to let go.

Kylee's words to Cynthia stalled in her throat when someone familiar appeared at the entrance.

The moment she recognized Collin, her face brightened. She darted away from Cynthia, eager to reach him.

Eyes from across the banquet hall followed her sudden dash. A ripple passed through the crowd as they glimpsed what had caught her attention.

"Did anyone else just see what happened? Why would that woman—"

"Who exactly is she? I don't remember her face at all."

"Someone mentioned she's Collin's new bride. Honestly, I never expected her to outshine Miss Russell. Maybe she's a celebrity?"

Whispers and hushed chatter filled the air, curiosity bouncing between every guest.

Excitement colored Kylee's face when she approached Collin, but that feeling vanished when her gaze landed on Linsey, leaving her rooted in surprise. The gown draping Linsey was a near match to the one Kylee had chosen.

Frozen in place, Linsey mirrored the same disbelief.

Collin wanted her to make the right impression as his wife, so he took charge of her preparations for the evening.

The stylist paraded countless luxurious gowns before her, and Linsey picked the one that caught her eye.

She had never imagined things would turn out like this.

The only thing separating their gowns was the color—Kylee's was a bold red while Linsey's shone in white—yet everything else, down to the brooches, matched so closely it seemed planned.

Surprise flickered across Linsey's face, and unease tugged at her mind. It dawned on her that showing up in the same dress as the guest of honor on Kylee's birthday might spell trouble. She fretted over whether Kylee would assume she had done it on purpose.

Meanwhile, a growing chorus of whispers rippled through the room, and snippets of those sharp remarks found their way to Linsey.

Catching bits of the gossip, Linsey sensed that things were spiraling. If the guests were twisting the situation, she figured Kylee might start thinking along those lines as well. [READ LATEST CHAPTERS AT find•novel.net](#)

Linsey hovered on the edge of defending herself, ready to explain that it was nothing but chance, when Kylee stepped in and took command of the moment. Flashing her a friendly smile, Kylee said in a clear voice, making sure everyone could hear, "Linsey, what are the odds that we'd pick almost the same dress tonight?"

With gratitude, Linsey met her gaze and replied, "Yes, what a surprise," recognizing that Kylee was trying to put everyone at ease. She played along to help dispel the tension.

Their easy exchange was enough to smooth ruffled feathers, leaving no room for awkwardness. In moments, the buzz in the hall faded away. A hush swept through the room as guests caught sight of the friendly exchange, and soon their conversations drifted elsewhere.

Relief washed over Kylee when she realized no one was watching anymore. Turning, she fixed her eyes on Collin.

Chapter 1269:

In a teasing tone, she called out, "Collin, I swear, you're usually the one who shows up first at my birthday. Now look at you, keeping everyone waiting."

"There was traffic. I couldn't help it," Collin replied succinctly.

While their exchange lingered in the air, Cynthia came over, wearing a wide grin. She looped her arm around Kylee's and greeted them. "Kylee. Mr. Riley."

From afar, Cynthia hadn't recognized the woman at Collin's side. As she drew closer, her eyes finally landed on Linsey, and her whole face changed in an instant. "Linsey? Why are you here?"

Linsey's eyebrows knitted together as she recognized Cynthia.

He looked from one woman to the other, then fixed his eyes on Linsey. "Did you two already meet?"

"We work together," Linsey replied, keeping her response simple while leaving plenty unsaid.

Truth be told, their relationship was more of a rivalry than any real partnership. Whenever they were at work, Cynthia wasted no opportunity to undermine her. Felix once told her to just put up with it, making a point to mention Cynthia's powerful family.

Watching Cynthia and Kylee interact so warmly now, Linsey finally realized where Cynthia's confidence came from.

Collin let the matter rest, giving only the smallest nod in response.

Without missing a beat, Kylee suggested, "Let's not stand here all night. Come on, let's get something to eat."

A staff member approached quietly and leaned in to speak to Kylee.

For a moment, a different look crossed her face, but she quickly replaced it with a gentle smile and turned to Collin. "Collin, grab some food and take it easy. I need to deal with something, but I'll be back soon."

He barely reacted. "Do as you like."

Cynthia left right after her, sticking close.

Linsey's eyes wandered around the room before she spotted something. That spark in her gaze made it clear she was ready to slip away.

Collin, as if he had eyes on his back, quickly grabbed her, questioning her intent. "Where are you off to?"

Linsey let out a frustrated breath, thinking his suspicion had no end.

Over and over, she had promised not to disappear, but even though he said he believed her, he just kept second-guessing every move she made.

Exasperation colored Linsey's sigh as she gestured toward her intended destination. "I'm not trying to escape. I just need to get over there."

Collin's gaze followed the direction of her finger and landed on the "Ladies Room" sign posted above a nearby door.

His mouth set in a thin line before he finally let go of her hand, a playful scolding on his lips. "You could've said something if you needed the restroom. It's not like you lost your voice."

A scowl flickered across Linsey's face. "How was I supposed to know you'd be this paranoid? You're the one who dragged me here to mingle, and now you act like I'm plotting my escape!"

Neither of them was willing to back down, each stubbornly convinced the other was in the wrong.

Chapter 1270:

Earlier, Linsey had downed several glasses of water, and now, after two minutes of pointless bickering, she found herself desperately needing a bathroom break.

In the end, she waved a white flag. "Fine, blame me if it makes you happy."

Collin, smug as ever, replied, "Well, it was your fault."

Rolling her eyes in private, Linsey lifted her skirt slightly and hurried off toward the restroom.

At that very moment, Kylee had taken care of her business and happened to be walking toward the restroom too. The sight of Linsey approaching in a hurry sparked a sly idea that quickly took hold.

Spotting a cleaning lady wiping down the mirrors, Kylee called her over, her voice dripping with authority. "You there! Come here. I have something for you to do." Once her orders were given, Kylee slipped into the restroom, clearly pleased with herself and determined to get there before Linsey.

Oblivious to everything except her urgent need, Linsey made a beeline for the restroom, completely unaware of Kylee's presence.

Just as relief was in sight, a cleaning lady in uniform stepped directly into her path. “Are you planning to use the restroom, miss?” the woman asked, blocking her way.

“That’s right,” Linsey replied, ready to enter the restroom—only to be stopped again.

With a strong accent and an air of authority, the cleaning lady explained, “There’s a policy here. Using the restroom requires a fee.”

A wave of disbelief washed over Linsey. Never had she imagined that a high-end venue would actually charge for restroom access. The whole thing felt absurd.

With no time to dwell on it, urgency won out. “Fine, how much is it? I’ll send it to you right now.”

Her hand was halfway into her purse when the cleaning lady added a final condition. “It’s 50 cents per visit, but no transfers. Only cash is accepted.”

Frustration bubbled up. “Seriously? Now you’re just making things impossible!” Of course, Linsey hadn’t brought any coins to an event like this. Who carries loose change to a fancy gala?

Desperate, she tried to reason with the janitor, but the woman wouldn’t budge, especially with Kylee’s earlier warning in the back of her mind.

Having hit a wall, Linsey hurried back to Collin for backup. “Hey, do you have 50 cents on you?”

His brows rose in confusion before he replied, “50 cents? What do I look like? I don’t even carry change, but I could write you a check for \$500 billion. Is that enough?”

“Can we skip the billionaire routine for once?” That only made Linsey more aggravated.

She stamped her foot in annoyance. “Honestly, who knew a place this fancy would charge for the bathroom? I just need to go, but they won’t let me in without cash. Not even an app is good enough.”

Amused by the whole scenario, Collin burst out laughing. “You’re being charged to pee? You must have been tricked.”

The thought had crossed Linsey’s mind too. Still, she couldn’t help but wonder who would go to such trouble at a run-of-the-mill banquet just to mess with her. Confusion lingered as she tried to puzzle it out.

“We’ll discuss this another time,” Linsey said, brushing off the topic with a wave of her hand. Her voice softened as she pressed her palms together in a pleading gesture. “Collin, you’re so resourceful—surely you can get me some cash, can’t you?”