

Zillionaire 1281

Chapter 1281:

Collin stayed silent, his face unreadable.

Desperation spilled into Kylee's voice as she pressed a trembling hand to her chest. "How can you just turn on me like this, Collin? Didn't you have feelings for me? Are you still angry that I left you and went overseas?"

Elsewhere, Linsey wandered over to the buffet table, happily sampling sweet treats.

All of a sudden, she felt someone's shadow fall across her.

Linsey glanced up, startled, and her mouth fell open as she exclaimed, "Felix? What are you doing here?"

"Didn't expect to run into me, did you?" Felix teased, his gaze lingering as he looked her up and down.

He couldn't help but notice how stunning Linsey had become since they had last met. A bitter pang of regret hit him. If only he had taken things further back when they were together.

That thought alone made Felix wet his lips unconsciously, his throat tightening as he swallowed.

Linsey caught the predatory glint in his eyes, and a wave of disgust rolled over her.

She could hardly believe she had ever been foolish enough to fall for a guy like him.

Without a second's pause, she turned away, balancing her plate, ready to make a quick exit.

But before she could get far, Felix stepped in front of her, cutting off her escape.

Linsey couldn't contain herself any longer. "Felix, what exactly are you after?" she demanded.

Felix didn't hold back. "Because of you, Collin sabotaged my project and nearly drove me to ruin. If not for some powerful ally bailing me out, you would have obliterated my life! I want compensation for the emotional toll!"

Linsey's anger morphed into scorn, the absurdity of his claim almost laughable. "You've got it all wrong. You're the one who owes me for the pain and misery you caused. If it weren't for you, I wouldn't have suffered so much!" she shot back icily.

Felix froze, his face flushing a vivid crimson, momentarily speechless. Regaining his nerve, he brazenly doubled down. "I don't care. You're paying me today, or you're not leaving!"

"How much are you demanding?" Linsey asked, her expression blank.

Thinking she was caving, Felix extended a hand. "Not much—just \$50 million."

Linsey let out a derisive laugh. "Are you out of your mind? \$50 million? I don't have that kind of money to throw at you."

Felix smirked, undeterred. "I saw that gold bracelet Collin gave you—\$30 million, wasn't it? You're loaded now. \$50 million is just spare change for you." Tilting his head smugly, he added, "If I hadn't pushed you to move in with Collin back then, would you be living such a good life now? For that, you owe me an extra \$10 million as a thank-you."

Without a second thought, Linsey grabbed the plate and flung it at him, smearing his face with cream.

"\$50 million?" she snapped. "I wouldn't give you fifty cents! Get over yourself, you pathetic leech! Stay out of my life!"

Caught off guard, Felix stood there, a creamy mess, as he processed the humiliation.

Chapter 1282:

“Linsey!” he roared, drawing every eye in the vicinity.

Linsey had no interest in prolonging the confrontation and turned to walk away. But Felix wasn’t done.

He rushed after her, seizing her shoulders and shouting to the crowd, “Look at this! A shameless woman who left me for a rich guy and now has the nerve to insult me!”

“Felix, have you lost it?” Linsey exclaimed, struggling to pull free.

He gripped her tightly, raising his voice. “Come see! Linsey acted all innocent with me, wouldn’t let me touch her for over five years. But on our wedding day, she fell for Collin, ditched me, and had sex...”

Before he could finish, Linsey’s hand cracked across his face, her eyes brimming with furious tears.

Her rage drowned out all reason as she shouted, “Enough, Felix! How long are you going to keep harassing and defaming me?”

Lowering his voice with a smug grin, Felix hissed, “Pay up, or I’ll make an even bigger scene.”

Before he could say more, several towering figures charged toward him.

Collin’s bodyguards pinned Felix to the floor, one delivering a sharp slap across his face. “Keep your vile mouth shut! How dare you slander Mrs. Riley?”

Once Felix had been dealt with, Collin wasted no time at the birthday banquet. He made his exit without looking back.

Once he reached Vista Villa, a bodyguard wheeled him inside. Hands lowering, he carefully rolled up his crisp white sleeves, hiding the old bloodstains on them. A sudden, hushed voice broke the quiet. “Mr. Riley, look at Mrs. Riley...”

Collin followed the direction of the whisper, his eyes shifting toward the living room. It didn’t take him long to spot Linsey, alone on the wide sofa, her posture withdrawn and vulnerable.

Bottles littered the coffee table in messy disarray, some already toppled and rolling across the carpet.

A faint crease appeared between Collin’s brows as he took in the scene. A quick signal sent his bodyguard away. The man nodded in understanding and slipped out, shutting the door behind him.

Now, silence fell, just the two of them in the vast room.

Steering his wheelchair forward, Collin called out to her, his voice low and steady, “Linsey.”

Linsey hardly moved, arms wrapped tightly around herself as if she could disappear into her own skin. Whether she was awake or simply lost to drink, Collin couldn’t tell.

Her lack of response didn’t stir any visible frustration from him.

He turned his wheelchair fully to face her, then reached out and looped an arm around her waist.

Without warning, Linsey slumped forward, collapsing into his lap.

Collin leaned down, his face so close to her neck that he could smell the sharp bite of alcohol.

“Do you have a death wish drinking like this?” His words came out rough, more worried than accusing.

Chapter 1283:

But the message twisted in Linsey's mind. She was lost somewhere between the liquor and her anger. To her, it sounded like nothing but scolding. A bitter shout escaped her lips. "Why do you care?"

Fury took over as Linsey started hitting him with unsteady fists, the blows landing with dull thuds. "What's it to you? Who do you think you are? Get off me. Don't touch me!"

Far more than her drunken violence, what cut Collin deepest was the empty look in her eyes—like she didn't even recognize the man holding her. A firm grip from Collin's hand held Linsey in place, his voice dropping into a cool, steady register. "Who do you think I am? I'm your husband."

The word seemed foreign to Linsey. She blinked several times, shaking her head as if to clear it. "Husband? No, I don't have a husband."

"Linsey," Collin repeated, his tone colder than before, letting her name hang heavy in the air.

A delayed realization dawned in her hazy mind. "Oh, that's right. I do have a husband. I married Collin, didn't I?"

A relentless question followed. "So who am I to you?" Collin pressed, refusing to let her drift away in confusion.

She stared up at him, eyes glazed and full of uncertainty. "Who are you, really? You look a lot like Collin..."

Exasperation flickered across Collin's face. "That's because I am Collin," he answered, annoyance threading his words.

Shakily, Linsey tried to wriggle out of his hold. "Welcome back, I guess. You should get some rest. I need a little space right now."

But Collin wouldn't let her go, his gaze fixed on her reddened, tear-filled eyes. "Why waste your tears on someone who's never deserved them?"

Felix's name never passed his lips, but the implication lingered. Collin had seen her cry for that man too many times—it grated on him even now.

"I'm not crying for him," Linsey shot back, her words clipped and raw. "I'm angry at myself for being foolish enough to have anything to do with a man like that."

A trace of Collin's irritation faded as he heard her answer.

He loosened his grip, fingers trailing gently along her waist. "You don't need to worry about him anymore. I've avenged you."

Confusion overtook Linsey as she jerked her head up, eyes widening in shock. That was when she noticed it—the faint, coppery scent of blood clinging to Collin's clothes. A chill ran down her spine as her mind raced to imagine what he might have done.

"You killed Felix?!" Linsey asked, eyes wide with disbelief.

Collin only chuckled, low and languid, and reached out to lightly pinch her cheek. "What do you think?" he drawled teasingly.

Her breath caught. That smile... that tone... it wasn't a denial. The fog of alcohol evaporated in an instant. She blinked at him, stunned, horror clawing up her throat. "Murder is a crime, Collin! How could you—how could you actually kill Felix?"

Yes, she had imagined killing the man herself—half-drunken fantasies, heat-of-the-moment daydreams, flashes of wrath. But she had never seriously meant it.

Felix had been awful, but still—death? This?

And Collin... he had done it? For her?

Chapter 1284:

A cold shiver surged through her, sending static across her skin. Her ears rang. The room spun a little. She froze, her thoughts folding in on themselves. Then, from the eye of the storm, Collin cut in almost casually. “Didn’t you want him dead?”

Her lips parted. She nodded. Then she shook her head.

Then nodded again. No—wait. Yes. No. Yes. She sat there, glitching.

Collin raised a brow, completely confused. He clicked his tongue and sighed. “What are you doing? Speak. You’ve got a mouth, don’t you?”

That jolted her. She swallowed and tried again. “Felix was a jerk,” she mumbled. “But... killing him? That’s too far. You did it for me, and I... I—” The rest collapsed in breathy stutters.

Collin, still oddly patient, slid a hand around her waist. “You what?” he coaxed.

Her eyes dropped to the floor. Her voice came out softer, slower. “You didn’t have to go that far for me...”

The realization sank in. He had crossed a line, risked everything, for her. The weight of that truth ached in her chest—tender, confusing, unbearable.

Then she heard a quiet laugh from him.

Her eyes flew up. “Why are you laughing?”

He shouldn’t have laughed. She was just so easy to fool.

But Collin didn't let it show. Instead, he offered another charming little smirk, brushing his thumb across her cheek like she was porcelain. "You're my wife," he said simply. "How could I sit back while someone slandered you in public?"

"But... you can't just kill someone..." Linsey said slowly, caught in his earnest gaze, her voice tapering off.

Before Collin could say more, she suddenly snapped to attention. "The police!" she exclaimed, panic overtaking everything else. "They'll come for you. You need to hide!"

Without waiting, she moved behind him, fumbling to push his wheelchair toward a better hiding spot.

Collin barely stifled another laugh, catching her hand to stop her. "Hide? That's not going to help—"

"Of course it will help!" she cut in, still wobbling slightly on her feet from the alcohol. But she looked dead serious. "I'll take the blame. I'll tell them I killed Felix. I've got a motive, and history with him. They'll believe it."

He stared at her. For the first time, he was speechless. "You'd take the fall for me?" he asked slowly, almost not trusting his ears. She nodded with fierce resolve. "Yes."

Collin frowned, his fingers tightening around hers as he searched her face. "Do you even understand what you're saying? This isn't a slap on the wrist. If they believe you killed him, you could be executed, Linsey."

The words hit her like a blow. Her entire body froze, and for a moment, she looked like someone whose soul had just been yanked out. Collin chuckled under his breath. There it was, the hesitation.

As he had expected—she wasn't ready to die for him.

He was just about to tell her the truth when her voice rang out.

“Let it be.” The words fell from her in a determined whisper. She meant it. She truly believed that if she hadn’t existed in Collin’s world, he wouldn’t have been driven to such lengths. And what was her life, really?

She was an orphan, with no roots. No one would grieve her. In her mind, her death wouldn’t matter.

Chapter 1285:

Collin was different.

Being the firstborn in the Riley family, he carried a different weight on his shoulders. Even if Alfredo never showed him much affection, at least Ivy and Roland stood by his side.

Linsey knew she had to make sure nothing happened to him.

She summoned all her courage, exhaled slowly, and pulled her hands away from the wheelchair. Then, she made up her mind to leave the room.

Collin moved in a heartbeat, catching her arm and blurting out with genuine confusion, “Where do you think you’re going?”

“I’m going to confess. Maybe if I admit everything, they’ll show some mercy, and I won’t have to face the harshest punishment,” she said, her voice steady but low.

A chuckle slipped out of Collin before he could help himself.

Linsey frowned and asked, “What do you find so funny?” There was no trace of sarcasm in her tone; she meant every word. Out of nowhere, Collin drew her into a gentle embrace.

He looked her in the eyes, the corners of his mouth curling up. “You make me laugh because you’re just so endearing,” he told her.

No one had ever offered to put their life on the line for him, and her sincerity struck a chord deep inside him.

Her cheeks flushed with confusion. Linsey stared at him, unsure how to respond to such praise.

Afraid his playful teasing might actually send her to the authorities in tears, Collin decided to be honest. "I didn't kill Felix."

Linsey shot him a doubtful look. "That's not true. I don't believe you!"

He arched a brow and asked, "And why can't you believe it?"

"There's blood on your shirt. That's proof you did it," she replied, gesturing at the stains.

Glancing down, Collin noticed that his sleeves, which he had rolled up earlier, had slipped down and covered the stains.

Tears spilled from Linsey's eyes as she blurted out, "Collin, sometimes your bossiness makes me want to scream, but right now, I can't help feeling touched by what you've done. Still, taking a life is never justified. Please, let me be the one to confess. I refuse to let you end up behind bars because of me."

Collin let out a long breath and said, "Felix is still alive, I never killed him. I only landed a few punches, and the guy couldn't handle it. He coughed up some blood on my shirt, so I sent him straight to the hospital."

Those words stopped Linsey's sobs in their tracks. She sat frozen, stunned and speechless.

"Are you doubting me now?" Collin misunderstood her silence and extended his phone. "Felix is at the hospital right now, guarded by my men. You can check for yourself. Here, call them if you want proof." Without waiting, he held the phone out for her.

For a few heartbeats, Linsey just stared at the phone. Suddenly, she grabbed his arm and sank her teeth into him with all her strength.

A quiet groan escaped Collin. He pinched the back of her neck and lifted her as if she weighed nothing. "What was that for? Why are you biting me out of nowhere?"

"You idiot! You absolutely deserved it!" Linsey yelled, her cheeks streaked with fresh tears. "Who jokes about murder? Do you know how terrified I was?" She truly believed her fate was sealed. In her mind, she saw herself executed and erased from the world, all because she had planned to take the blame for him.

Chapter 1286:

Collin was caught off guard by her outburst. He rubbed his nose, visibly flustered and unsure what to do.

He never actually said he killed Felix. She leaped to that conclusion herself, and he just let her think it, half-amused, never guessing she would take it so hard.

"I..." Before he could explain himself, Linsey's fist landed squarely on his chest, cutting off his words.

Getting up from his lap, she cried even harder and shouted, "Save your excuses! There's no point explaining now! I'm done with you! I never want to hear your voice again! Collin, you're the worst! I've never met anyone as infuriating as you!"

Tears streamed down Linsey's face as she suddenly turned and bolted for the staircase, each hurried step thundering through the house.

"Linsey!" Collin called out, panic surging through him. Forgetting all about his supposed disability, he leapt from the wheelchair. "Come back! I didn't say you could just walk away!"

No response came from Linsey, who only cried louder and sped up the stairs. Racing into her room, she didn't pause before slamming the door behind her, the sound echoing sharply.

When dawn broke, Linsey rose early, washed up, got dressed, and descended the staircase.

Roland reached for her door, meaning to check in, but stopped short when he saw her coming down on her own. A warm smile spread across his face as he called out, "Good morning, Mrs. Riley."

"Good morning, Roland," Linsey replied with a smile.

With a gentle nod, Roland added, "Breakfast is ready whenever you are."

"Thanks, Roland. I'll go eat in a bit." She nodded right back, her expression untroubled. If she felt any tension from last night, she didn't let it show.

Collin sat waiting at the table, taking in the scene. A long, relieved sigh escaped him.

After last night's commotion, he had crept upstairs and found the bedroom door locked. He spent ages pleading and knocking, but Linsey never let him in, and at one point, she even shouted at him to leave, her voice breaking. The only option left had been the guest room, where Collin tossed and turned the whole night, unable to shake the worry gnawing at him.

Now, as he watched Linsey move about with her usual composure, a wave of relief finally settled over him.

Surely, he thought, she couldn't still be mad. That was all it was—a harmless spat.

Snapping out of his thoughts as she drew near, Collin straightened up, put on a bright face, and greeted her. "Morning."

Linsey offered no reaction at all. Without a single glance in Collin's direction, she wore a blank expression, pulled out her chair, and quietly sat down. The smile faded from Collin's face, leaving him looking momentarily stunned. Just then, Roland appeared with a bounce in his step.

"Mrs. Riley, would you prefer some juice, milk, or maybe coffee?" he asked brightly.

A gentle smile replaced Linsey's cool demeanor. "Juice would be lovely. Thank you."

"Alright." Roland quickly fetched her a glass and set it before her.

After finishing up, he shot Collin a bright smile and asked, "Mr. Riley, can I get you some juice—"

Chapter 1287:

"Leave. Now!" Collin growled in a low voice, with an air of menace.

Shock made Roland's hands shake so badly he nearly let the jug crash to the floor.

"Yes, Mr. Riley," Roland responded in a trembling voice, retreating several steps, bewildered.

A moment ago, Collin seemed perfectly calm. What had set him off so quickly?

Had he himself crossed a line somehow?

All he had done was offer juice.

The confusion only grew.

Fingers running through his hair, Roland tried to piece together what might have happened.

A lavish breakfast tempted the senses, and Linsey dug in with a bright smile, clearly enjoying herself.

Collin, by contrast, wore a stormy look and pushed his food around, clearly displeased.

Every time Linsey caught Roland's eye, she lit up with easy chatter, but whenever Collin looked her way, she acted as if he wasn't even there. The realization that he was being completely overlooked hit Collin for the first time.

Pausing to think, Collin wondered if his voice had been so low that Linsey hadn't heard him—maybe her slight wasn't intentional after all.

Determined to try again, he took a steadying breath and sat up straighter. "Linsey," he called out a bit louder this time, attempting a friendlier tone. "Is breakfast to your liking?"

Linsey toyed with the scrambled egg on her plate, her fork nudging it absentmindedly.

When Collin posed his question, she barely suppressed a sigh of exasperation.

He ought to be familiar with its flavor, considering they ate the same meal daily. Moreover, since he hadn't even prepared it, why bother asking? Linsey muttered to herself silently, irritation simmering.

Still harboring resentment from yesterday's disagreement, she disregarded him and focused on her egg.

"Linsey." Collin's voice sharpened, a clear sign of his growing agitation. Sensing the mounting strain, Roland stepped in, softly urging, "Mrs. Riley, Mr. Riley is addressing you. Please answer."

"Who?" Linsey glanced around, her eyes deliberately skipping over Collin as if he were a ghost. Turning to Roland with a feigned look of innocence, she remarked, "It's just us two here, right?"

Her words cast a frosty pall over the room.

Roland's face paled, his voice quivering as he whispered urgently, "Mrs. Riley, Mr. Riley is right there. Ignoring him will only upset him."

He realized their recent spat was the root of Collin's unexplained frustration.

Unperturbed, Linsey shrugged and resumed cutting her egg with her utensils.

Collin, observing her defiant attitude, felt a wave of anger knot his stomach.

Suddenly, his fork and knife clanged loudly against his plate.

Startled, Roland stammered, "Mr. Riley, Mrs. Riley is only..."

He tried to defuse the situation for Linsey, but Collin's cold stare silenced him, leaving him quietly concerned for her. It was evident Collin was furious this time.

Chapter 1288:

Unfazed by Collin's temper, Linsey finished her meal and sipped the last of her juice.

"Linsey!" Collin's voice, thick with irritation, snapped through clenched teeth. "Are you oblivious or just not listening? Why are you acting like I'm not here?" Linsey nearly let out another exasperated sigh.

Why was she ignoring him? Couldn't he guess? His sanctimonious attitude, though he was at fault, was infuriating.

Though her thoughts brimmed with grievances, she refused to engage.

Content and sated, she pushed her chair back, rose, and offered Roland a smile. "No need to fix lunch for me today. I'm heading out and will eat elsewhere."

"Um..." Roland hesitated, glancing cautiously at Collin, whose face darkened further.

"No chance!" Collin shot back, his tone unyielding.

Linsey, who had been tuning him out, spun around at this, her anger flaring. "We had a deal! If I went to Kylee's birthday party with you, you wouldn't meddle with my plans to go out!"

Collin knew this but pretended otherwise, his face impassive as he callously dismissed their agreement. "I don't recall saying that."

"You!" Linsey was floored by his betrayal; her fists tightened in frustration, and words failed her.

Taking a deep breath to quell her fury, she asserted, "I'm a person, not your captive. Whatever you say, I'm going out today."

"Go ahead and see if you can," Collin said, his voice sharp as ice and his eyes unwavering.

"Just watch me," Linsey snapped, her resolve burning bright.

Without another word, she strode out the door, head held high.

Not once did Collin call after her. He simply watched, the coldness on his face giving nothing away. He was sure she wouldn't get far.

As she set foot outside, two bodyguards immediately blocked her path, sticking to their orders without question.

She fought hard, refusing to go quietly, but they ignored her outrage and dragged her straight back into the house.

As he saw her return, Collin's lips curled into a mocking grin. "That was quick. Didn't you say you were going out?"

Anger shook Linsey as she struggled to stand. "You're unbelievable!" she shouted, her fists clenched tight.

In a flash, she lunged at Collin, the room tensing around her.

Both bodyguards called out at once, “Mr. Riley!”

Every movement Linsey made was aimed at Collin.

Their eyes locked, and she seized his arm, sinking her teeth in hard enough to make him feel every bit of her rage.

Before the guards could intervene, Collin spoke with a sharp edge. “Let her go. I can handle this.”

The bodyguards traded uncertain looks but stepped back as ordered.

All the while, Linsey bit down, refusing to let up until blood welled on his skin.

Chapter 1289:

Collin stifled a pained sound, gritting his teeth, but he didn’t push her away.

Even as Collin stayed perfectly composed, Roland’s heart pounded in his chest. Alarm flickered across his face as he watched Linsey. “Mrs. Riley, please stop! Don’t bite Mr. Riley—if you need to lash out, let it be me instead.”

Intent on stepping in, he took a step forward, but Collin’s chilling command cut through the air. “Stay back. Let her do what she needs.”

Distress overtook Roland, his voice trembling. “Sir, this isn’t safe. What will happen if your grandpa finds out you let yourself get bitten until you bled?”

“Enough,” Collin said, his glare sending a shiver down Roland’s spine. “I want you out of here. Don’t make me say it again.”

With heavy reluctance, Roland retreated, looking over his shoulder several times, his furrowed gray brows a clear sign of his worry. Silence settled as only Collin and Linsey stood by the table now.

Slowly, Collin lifted his free hand, using those rough fingertips to stroke the back of her neck with unexpected tenderness, almost as if he were trying to settle a frightened kitten.

“Had enough yet?” Collin whispered, his tone soft and teasing. “Maybe you want a taste of the other arm?”

Frustration bubbled within Linsey at first, but that low, soothing voice eased her agitation in a way she didn’t expect.

It was then that she realized the sharp tang of blood in her mouth.

Her jaw loosened as she let go of his arm, eyes lowering. She carefully rolled up his sleeve to check what she had done.

A fierce bite mark stained Collin’s forearm, the bruise and trickle of blood evidence of her anger.

Before Linsey could get a word out, Collin was already offering his other arm, patient and unbothered. “Take another shot if you need to.”

For a moment, Linsey stared at him, thrown off by his calmness.

No hint of anger flashed in his eyes. He looked at her as if he truly wanted to help her let off steam.

“My jaw hurts now. I think I’ve had enough,” she muttered, brushing his arm away, her face blank.

With unhurried ease, Collin rolled down his sleeve, barely acknowledging the injury. “Go on up and get some rest. When you’re ready for another bite, just say the word.”

Linsey’s composure finally shattered. “Collin, what is it you really want from me?” Her voice trembled, exhaustion and confusion bubbling to the surface. She simply couldn’t grasp him—ice-cold and unyielding one moment, then suddenly gentle, as if nothing had passed between them.

A measured glance was all Collin gave her before tossing the question back, “What about you? What is it you’re after?”

In his mind, he had stretched his patience as far as it could go, coaxing her, bending more than he ever had—yet she only seemed to shout louder. The absurdity struck him. What sort of high-society wife dared speak to her husband this way? Only Linsey would.

Emotion thickened Linsey’s reply. “I told you before—I just want to leave the house. That’s all.”

Calm as ever, Collin repeated himself. “And I’ve told you, that’s not happening!”

Chapter 1290:

“You gave me your word!” Linsey retorted, desperation coloring her tone. With a casual shrug, Collin’s response was almost flippant. “I don’t recall promising anything.”

Stunned into silence, Linsey could only stare, anger and helplessness churning inside.

She pressed her lips together, fighting to stay composed, but the tears she had held back finally slipped down her cheeks—silent and unstoppable.

The sight of her tears didn’t escape Collin, and for an instant, pain jabbed at his chest.

Breaking the tense silence, he finally asked, “Why is it so important for you to leave the house?”

Linsey roughly scrubbed away her tears, her voice trembling. "I just want out. I can't stand being trapped here by you."

A blank mask settled over Collin's features as he continued, "Where are you so desperate to go?"

Stubbornness hardened Linsey's tone. "Where I go is my own business. Why interrogate me? You come and go as you please, and I never pry."

A chill crept into Collin's reply. "I have every right to ask—you're my wife."

"And if I am?" Linsey scoffed, her voice raw. "Don't I deserve space and privacy? Are secrets only for husbands?"

Frustration spilled over as she asked, "Go ahead, ask anyone—what husband expects his wife to be chained to his side every second, never allowed out?" Their argument caught fire again, tension crackling between them.

A stony expression froze Collin's face, while Linsey stared him down, defiant and unyielding.

After a long minute, Linsey's confidence finally wilted, her eyes rimmed with red. "Fine. Do what you want. I can't stand you, you selfish jerk!"

Ice filled Collin's eyes in a flash, his voice razor-sharp. "Say that again, Linsey. Just try me."

Defiance blazed in Linsey's eyes. "I'll scream it to the world—I can't stand you!"

A dangerous glint flashed in Collin's gaze. "Careful, Linsey. You're asking for trouble."

Linsey stared him down, voice shaking but stubborn. "Go ahead, do your worst. If you want to shoot, then pull the trigger."

For a moment, Collin's finger nearly twitched, but he only leveled her with a cold ultimatum. "You have three seconds to apologize, and I'll pretend this never happened."

A fierce spark lit Linsey's face. "Never. I'd rather say sorry to a mutt off the street than to you."

"Linsey!" His voice cracked through the room, pressure bearing down like a storm.

She threw his name back at him, just as heated. "Collin! You're not the only one with a backbone. If you think you can bully me, you're dead wrong. Lock me up all you want—I'm still leaving this house!"

With her chin raised high, Linsey spun on her heel and marched for the stairs, refusing to look back.

The bedroom door slammed so hard behind her that the echo seemed to rattle the whole house.