

Zillionaire 1301

Chapter 1301:

Collin did not hide his opinion. "You're only making things harder for yourself."

She replied without backing down, "Say whatever you want, but I'm not letting you interfere with what I have planned."

Realizing she needed to make her point stronger, Linsey added in a serious tone, "If you get involved, I'll cut you out of my life for good."

Without waiting for his reaction, she grabbed her bag and walked out the door, not once looking back.

Watching from the side, Roland felt a shiver of worry, afraid Collin might lose his cool completely. The last time Linsey gave him the cold shoulder, Collin's reaction had been anything but calm.

Roland lingered in place, uncertain, before finally deciding to step forward and say something on Linsey's behalf.

To his surprise, Collin showed no sign of anger. Instead, he muttered to himself, "Stubborn woman."

In his mind, he truly believed Linsey was being foolish. She never admitted it and always ended up upset. He figured if she saw things clearly, she would realize that depending on him could give her the influence to do whatever she pleased in Grester.

Even so, Linsey insisted on doing things her own way.

With a deep frown, Collin turned to Roland and asked, "Why do I even care about such a hardheaded woman?"

A look of confusion flashed across Roland's face. "Mr. Riley? I'm not sure what you mean," he stammered, caught off guard.

Honestly, even if he did understand, Roland knew better than to say anything rash.

Trying to smooth things over, Roland offered a careful compliment. "Actually, Mrs. Riley isn't foolish at all. She's quite clever, and there are many things to admire about her."

Collin's eyes narrowed. "Like what?"

Although the question came out of nowhere, Roland replied without missing a beat, "Mrs. Riley is beautiful, she has a kind heart, and even as someone without family, she's proven to be independent and resilient, making her mark as a talented designer..."

That answer made Collin pause. For a moment, a hint of pride flickered in his expression.

Thinking it over, he had to admit Linsey was truly deserving of his affection. Still, a small part of him wished she would lean on him just a little more. Having Linsey depend on him always left Collin feeling satisfied, like he was truly needed.

Elsewhere, Linsey stepped into her office, only for Lara to rush over with panic written all over her face. "Linsey, something terrible has happened!"

Linsey reached out to steady her, noticing Lara nearly lost her footing. "Catch your breath and tell me what's wrong."

In her rush, Lara didn't even pause to gather herself before she started explaining the emergency.

"We were supposed to have a themed show for the Rainbow design project this afternoon, inviting all our major clients," Lara said, her voice tight with worry. "But now, every single design draft has disappeared."

“Disappeared?” Linsey’s brow furrowed as she listened. “Who was responsible for this project? How could something so important just go missing right before the event?”

Chapter 1302:

“It was Cynthia’s responsibility,” Lara replied, barely able to hide her frustration. “At first, the project was mine, and another colleague was helping me. But Cynthia wanted it for herself, so she went to Joanna and took the project right out from under us. It’s bad enough she stole the work, but now she’s let everything fall apart at the worst possible time. I can’t stand it!”

Linsey didn’t answer right away. She fell silent, thinking through the situation carefully. Cynthia’s work had always been average—nothing remarkable—but she wasn’t the type to mess up a task this simple.

On top of that, the design drafts vanished right after Linsey had stepped back in as design director. The timing felt way too convenient. A strong suspicion settled in Linsey’s mind. She couldn’t believe this was all just by chance.

She fixed Lara with her usual steady and focused gaze. “Lara, where is Cynthia right now?”

Meanwhile, in the office of the marketing director, Cynthia was raising a glass with Joanna, both of them clearly in high spirits.

“Relax, Joanna. I lied and told everyone the drafts were lost. In truth, I hid them at my place. Unless Linsey decides to search my home, there’s no way she’ll get her hands on them,” Cynthia said, full of confidence.

Joanna smiled and nodded. “Nicely done. I’ll be sure to speak well of you to Felix and help move your promotion along.”

Cynthia’s face lit up with excitement and gratitude. “Thank you, Joanna!” Ever since the fiasco with the fake gift at the birthday party, Kylee had completely stopped speaking to her.

Cynthia blamed Linsey for the whole thing. She was convinced that if Linsey hadn't exposed the counterfeit gift, none of this would have happened, and she wouldn't have offended Kylee.

Now that Linsey had made things so difficult for her, Cynthia was determined to make Linsey pay as well.

All the clients scheduled for the design show were influential, including the head of CR Corporation. Cynthia felt confident that if Linsey failed to fix the problem, her standing in the industry would plummet, and Felix would never let her stay on as design director.

In the middle of their laughter, the office door suddenly swung open, and Linsey strode in without warning.

Joanna jumped in surprise, nearly spilling her wine. When she saw Linsey, her smile vanished, and she shot her a cold glare. "Have you forgotten how to knock?"

Linsey's voice was distant. "You haven't earned that kind of respect."

"You—" Joanna sprang to her feet, fury in her eyes, as if she wanted nothing more than to throw Linsey out.

Ignoring her, Linsey turned straight to Cynthia, holding out her hand. "Give them to me."

Cynthia blinked, acting clueless. "What are you talking about?" [Read full story at find-novel-net](#)

Linsey's expression hardened. "Cut the act. I know you're hiding the design drafts. Hand them over now and don't ruin the show this afternoon."

Cynthia shook her head, her voice syrupy sweet. "I told you already, they really are gone."

"Are you testing me? Do you think I won't fire you on the spot?" Linsey warned, her tone sharp.

With Joanna standing behind her, Cynthia looked unbothered. She even dared to sneer. “Are you having trouble with basic comprehension? How many times do I have to repeat myself? Mistakes happen at work all the time.”

Chapter 1303:

Suddenly, Lara burst through the doorway, her face full of panic. “Linsey, something else just happened!”

The Cynthia situation had not yet been solved, but now something else had come up out of nowhere.

A sudden headache pressed behind Linsey’s eyes as she struggled to keep calm and turned to Lara. “What happened this time?”

Breathless and anxious, Lara remarked, “The design show this afternoon—our presenter just complained of severe menstrual pain and insisted on taking the day off. She refuses to go on stage!”

Right away, Linsey asked, “Who is supposed to be presenting?”

Lara responded, “Frida Holt.”

Gesturing toward Cynthia, Lara added, “The last project had both Frida and Cynthia working on it together.”

It only took a moment for Linsey to recognize the name. Her memory quickly connected Frida as Cynthia’s top supporter in the company.

Once the pieces fell into place, Linsey fixed a frosty stare on Cynthia and Joanna. “Did either of you tell her to back out of presenting?”

Joanna retorted with a scoff, "Don't drag me into this. I've already been assigned to another department. How would I know what's happening with your projects? If you keep accusing me, I'll sue for slander."

Cynthia only smirked and replied with a hint of sarcasm, "It's not my responsibility either. Women get cramps all the time. Frida made her own decision."

Even if menstrual pain was common, Linsey could not ignore how perfectly timed the excuse seemed. No part of her doubted that Cynthia and Joanna were working together to make her look bad in front of everyone.

Determined not to let their plan succeed, Linsey stayed composed. With a cutting glare, she left them behind. "Let's see who comes out on top." Not once did Linsey look back as she walked out of the office.

Lara hurried after her, and as she left, she stuck her tongue out at Cynthia just to spite her.

The door slammed behind Linsey, sending a loud bang through the office that sounded almost like thunder.

With a look of annoyance, Cynthia put her hands over her ears and murmured, "How rude can she be?"

Joanna, on the other hand, arched her brow and said quietly, "We'll see what happens now."

Deep down, Joanna believed Linsey was in over her head. She figured that without some kind of miracle, Linsey would never be able to fix this disaster in such a short time.

In the hallway, Lara's earlier boldness faded away, replaced by anxious pacing up and down the corridor. Her words tumbled out as she mumbled to herself, "What should we do, Linsey? The design show starts this afternoon. Everyone has their invitations, the venue is ready, but the main design drafts are missing and our presenter is gone. If Mr. Wells finds out, we're in real trouble!"

None of this fazed Linsey. She had no concern about Felix's reaction.

Having only returned yesterday, Linsey knew it was not her fault the drafts disappeared. If Felix tried to blame her, she had no intention of staying quiet about it.

Still, Cynthia was on her team, and as the design director, Linsey understood she would have to answer for whatever went wrong in her department. Coming back and failing to handle such a problem would seriously damage her reputation in the company.

Chapter 1304:

Unlike Lara, who couldn't stop complaining, Linsey kept her expression serious and slipped into deep thought.

A long moment passed before Linsey started asking Lara specific questions about the show. Lara answered every question honestly, making sure to include all the details. As soon as Lara finished, Linsey's whole face lit up. She clapped her hands and said, "I have a plan!"

Lara stared at her in surprise, amazed by how quickly Linsey seemed to figure things out. "Already? What's your idea?"

Linsey signaled for Lara to come closer, and once Lara leaned in, she began to explain her plan in a whisper.

"We've got an easy fix here. The public hasn't seen those design drafts yet. Only the overall theme has been revealed, which means we could swap the drafts for a new set without anyone noticing," Linsey said, outlining her plan.

At the mention of this workaround, Lara's entire demeanor brightened. "That's honestly genius," Lara remarked, her grin widening with newfound hope.

However, her smile quickly faded. A sigh escaped her lips, and Linsey tilted her head, trying to understand the sudden shift in mood.

Linsey studied her expression. "Is something still bothering you?"

Lara didn't hesitate. "Where are we supposed to find design drafts that match the theme in time for the presentation?" she asked, cutting straight to the heart of the matter. "Even if the entire design team worked nonstop, we'd barely manage half of it with the deadline so close."

Instead of getting worried, Linsey simply snapped her fingers and offered a confident smile. "Don't stress about it. I have a solution."

When Collin had restricted her to the villa, Linsey spent her time working on design concepts just to pass the days. By chance, one of those old drafts already aligned with nearly eighty percent of their current design theme.

Though the set was incomplete, they could finish the rest with the full department's help. And when it came to presenting the concept and explaining the finer details, no one could speak about her designs better than she could. She was confident she could step in for Frida and handle that herself.

With this new plan, they would sidestep the crisis, giving Linsey a chance to prove herself to their clients. It was also an opportunity to build connections and, eventually, take Felix down.

Linsey and Lara wasted no time. Once the plan was settled, they dove right in. Lara took it upon herself to encourage the team, while Linsey skipped lunch and rushed straight back to Vista Villa to get started.

Meanwhile, Collin sat in his study, locked in a video call with Dustin. From the computer speakers, Dustin's playful tone cut through clearly. "So, did you and Linsey get into a fight or something?"

Collin narrowed his eyes, uninterested in giving a direct answer. "What makes you say that?"

Dustin raised his hands in defense. "Relax. I'm not spying on you. You just look grumpy, and since you never leave the house, it's not hard to guess who got on your nerves. With only the household staff and Linsey around, she's the obvious suspect."

Collin couldn't argue with that logic and let out a quiet, dismissive snort.

Seeing he had hit the mark, Dustin arched an eyebrow and pressed for details. "Alright, what exactly did you two argue about? You look pretty shaken up."

Chapter 1305:

With a frustrated expression, Collin admitted, "She wants to work at her ex's company, swearing she's just after revenge on him."

After a brief pause, Dustin asked, "What do you think is really going on in her head?"

Collin's confusion was evident.

Dustin began to answer, hesitated, and then tried again, only to shrug in defeat. "No clue, man. I'm as lost as you are."

Annoyed at how little help he was getting, Collin shot him a cold glare. "Aren't you supposed to be the expert on women? You always brag about it. Can't you figure this out?"

Dustin let out a sheepish laugh. "Look, I know how to flirt and buy gifts, but actually understanding women? That's a whole different story. They're impossible to read."

Then, an idea crossed his mind, and he quickly shifted the conversation. "Hey, does Linsey still have no idea that you've been faking your disability? When do you plan to tell her?"

For a few moments, Collin remained silent, clearly caught off guard by the question.

After the accident, Collin's legs were badly injured, but after years of intense rehabilitation, he managed to recover completely. Keeping up the act of being disabled made life easier for him. It helped shield him from Fernanda's schemes, so he continued to maintain the lie.

The thought of telling Linsey the truth had never really crossed his mind.

Without warning, the study door flew open.

Collin lifted his head and was taken aback to see Linsey standing there. He quickly closed his laptop, feeling unexpectedly uneasy. “What brings you back here?”

Worry tugged at him. He was unsure if Linsey had overheard what Dustin had said earlier.

Linsey answered plainly, “I just need to pick something up.”

She walked across the room, bent down, and started searching one of the drawers.

A quick glance at her face reassured Collin—her expression hadn’t changed. That meant she hadn’t heard anything unusual.

He offered to help, asking, “What are you looking for?”

Without pausing in her search, Linsey replied, “I’m looking for a silver USB drive. I need it for the design show this afternoon. All my drafts are saved there.” Even though the drawer was organized, the drive was nowhere in sight. She murmured, “That’s odd. Where did it go?”

Collin opened the next drawer and immediately spotted the silver USB drive inside.

Holding it up, he asked, “Is this what you need?”

She looked up, saw what he had, and took it right away. “That’s the one. Thanks.”

With the USB drive in hand, Linsey turned to leave, but after only a few steps, she came to an abrupt stop.

Collin noticed the confusion on her face as she looked back and asked, “Did you forget something?”

“Not at all,” Linsey replied, holding his gaze without flinching. “I thought I heard someone else’s voice just now. Were you on the phone with a friend?”

In an even tone, Collin asked, “How much did you actually overhear?”

She shook her head and answered, “Nothing important. I just heard someone ask when you were going to tell me something. So, what is it that you’re planning to say?”

Chapter 1306:

Drawing out his answer, Collin stared at her. “What I want to tell you is—” He paused, watching her grow more curious. “Honestly, you’re such a fool,” he added.

Linsey shot him a glare. “If anyone’s a fool, it’s you!”

Her steps quickened as she hurried away, still murmuring, “Collin, you’re the most irritating fool I’ve ever met. If you keep making fun of me, I swear I’ll poison your food and make sure you can never talk again!”

Collin sat quietly, watching her march off while her words echoed down the hall. No trace of anger showed on his face. Instead, a small smile tugged at the corner of his mouth.

There were moments when he enjoyed watching her lose her temper, acting like a small, angry kitten.

While Collin was still mulling over the exchange, Dustin’s voice broke the silence. “Has Linsey left already?”

Only then did Collin remember Dustin was there. He opened his laptop again. “She’s gone.”

A wave of relief washed over Dustin, and their conversation picked up where it had left off. Before long, Dustin asked, “Do you have any plans to return and check on things at the company?”

Most people thought Collin was nothing more than a do-nothing, overlooked and ignored by the Riley family. In truth, he was the mastermind behind CR Corporation, the one responsible for all its remarkable successes.

Collin answered without hesitation, "I have complete trust in your leadership. There's nothing for me to worry about."

Dustin was expecting that response and purposely brought up another idea. "I just figured you might want to watch Linsey host the event."

A small crease appeared on Collin's forehead. "What are you talking about?"

"Linsey didn't tell you?" Dustin blinked in mild disbelief. "The Wells Group sent an invitation to us for their design showcase. From what I've heard, she's the one representing."

Collin, completely in the dark, stiffened. His tone shifted immediately into something resolute. "Then I'll be there."

The Wells Group's design exhibition was already in full swing. The venue was alive with industry elites and innovators, the air humming with polite laughter and the soft clink of glasses. Felix moved easily among the crowd, exchanging pleasantries and toasts with senior executives, creating an atmosphere of effortless camaraderie.

Just then, Linsey passed by. Felix's gaze caught hers, and without hesitation, he approached her. "Linsey."

Linsey's expression made it clear she wasn't in the mood for small talk. "Whatever you need, make it quick. I'm busy," she said coolly, her voice sharp and distant.

But Felix, riding the wave of his good mood, wasn't discouraged by her frostiness. "I heard from Lara about the missing design drafts," he said lightly. "You handled the situation impressively. That kind of quick thinking is rare."

Linsey rolled her eyes, clearly unimpressed. “Keep your praise. I don’t need it.”

Not far from them, Joanna had noticed the exchange. She watched intently, her eyes narrowing, lips pressed into a thin line. Jealousy flared in her gaze, mingled with resentment.

“I can’t believe Linsey actually pulled it off—resolving the crisis so effortlessly,” Joanna muttered.

Chapter 1307:

“I didn’t expect it either,” Cynthia replied cautiously, her voice barely audible above the murmur of the crowd. “Joanna... what do we do now?” Updates are released by [find-novel-net](#)

The event had drawn a host of influential guests, including the rarely seen president of CR Corporation himself. This was supposed to be Cynthia’s big moment, her opportunity to shine. But in her eagerness to sabotage Linsey, she had followed Joanna’s instructions and staged the loss of the design drafts.

To everyone’s shock, Linsey had recovered effortlessly and was now preparing to take the spotlight—leaving Cynthia bitter and fuming.

Joanna’s eyes narrowed as she shot Cynthia a glare. “Don’t rush me. I’m working on something.”

Cynthia said nothing more, choosing to wait in silence.

After a brief pause, a new idea seemed to dawn on Joanna. She leaned in close, whispering hurried instructions into Cynthia’s ear.

Cynthia’s eyes widened in alarm. “Are you sure about this?”

“Absolutely,” Joanna replied with conviction, waving her hand dismissively. “Go now—before more people show up.”

With obvious reluctance but no courage to refuse, Cynthia gave a nod and slipped away to carry out the plan.

Meanwhile, Linsey had grown visibly impatient with Felix.

“The event’s starting,” she said curtly. “I’m due on stage for the presentation. If that’s all, I’ll be on my way.”

But just as she turned, Felix reached out and grabbed her arm. “Wait,” he said urgently. “There’s something I need to ask you.”

Linsey yanked her arm free, her eyes flashing. “If you have something to say, say it—but don’t touch me.”

Felix quickly retracted his hand, schooling his expression. “It’s about my mother. Lately, she hasn’t had much of an appetite. I was wondering if you could... maybe come by and make her some of your soup? Just to see if it helps.”

Linsey stared at him, dumbfounded. “Have you completely lost your mind?” she snapped, her contempt plain. “Did every cook and maid in the city disappear overnight? What gives you the right to ask me for that?”

But Felix didn’t seem to recognize the absurdity of his request. “You used to make soup for her when she wasn’t feeling well. I know we’ve broken up, but... can’t you just help me out? It’s a small thing. Won’t take much time.”

Linsey let out a humorless laugh. “Sure. If you pay me.”

“How much will it cost?” Felix inquired.

“\$10 million,” Linsey blurted out.

“What?” Felix’s eyes widened in disbelief. “Is making soup really that expensive? Are you scamming me?”

Linsey smirked, knowing he would balk at the price. “You think you can order me around for free? Don’t be ridiculous. I don’t owe you anything.”

“Hold on!” Felix reached for her arm again.

Before he could say more, a figure appeared nearby.

Collin caught sight of their close contact and remarked with a chilly grin, “What’s this? Are you two rekindling old sparks?”

Startled by Collin’s sudden presence, Linsey yanked her arm free at his words. “No way! He’s the one who won’t leave me alone,” she said, stepping back from Felix quickly.

Chapter 1308:

Collin’s face remained unreadable, his fingers drumming lightly on the armrest as his gaze flicked between them, finally settling on Felix. Though he stayed silent, Felix felt a cold shiver run through him.

“N-no, you’ve got it wrong,” Felix stammered, scrambling to explain. “I just wanted her to cook some soup for my mom, that’s all.”

“Cook for your mom?” Collin cut in, his tone sharp with mockery. “You think you can treat my girl like your personal chef? Who do you think you are?”

Felix’s face flushed red, then drained to white. Fearing another financial hit or worse, he didn’t dare argue. Instead, he bowed his head and muttered, “I’m sorry, Mr. Riley. I crossed a line. It won’t happen again.”

“Get lost,” Collin ordered coldly.

Relieved to escape, Felix nodded quickly. “Right, I’m going, I’m going.” As Felix hurried off, Linsey let out a sigh of relief.

She was grateful Collin had shown up; otherwise, Felix might have clung to her like a persistent shadow.

But then a realization hit her. “What are you doing here?” she asked.

Collin’s expression darkened, his voice sharp. “What, ashamed to be seen with someone like me, with my condition?”

“That’s not what I meant,” Linsey said, frowning.

She had never judged him for his disability, yet he always assumed she did. Before she could dwell on it, Collin’s arm slid around her waist, pulling her close.

“Ah!” Linsey gasped, instinctively grabbing his shoulders. “Collin, are you out of your mind?” Her face flushed with embarrassment. “We’re at a public event with people everywhere. You can’t just hold me like this! Let go.”

“Is it a crime to hold my wife?” Collin asked, his expression stern.

“That’s not the issue! This is a public place!” Linsey countered.

“So what if it’s public?” Collin’s grip tightened, his voice firm with defiance. “You can be all cozy with your ex in front of everyone, but I can’t hold you as your partner?”

“I...” Linsey faltered, momentarily speechless.

Before she could respond, Collin gently lifted her chin.

“Linsey,” he said, his face inching closer, his breath grazing her ear. “I’m warning you—if you even think about leaving me for that nobody, I’ll beat him to death right in front of you.”

Linsey winced, brushing his hand away. “I’ve told you a thousand times, that’s over. Can you stop with the jealousy?”

“Oh, so I’m the problem for being jealous?” Collin let out a sharp, ambiguous scoff.

The nearby guests began to take notice of the disturbance, their curious eyes drawn toward Collin and Linsey.

Even though the ring of bodyguards made it difficult for onlookers to see exactly what was happening, Linsey felt heat rise to her cheeks. She gently pushed Collin away and rose to her feet.

“Please, not here. You can hold me as much as you want once we’re home,” she whispered.

Her gentle compromise brought a satisfied smile to Collin’s face, and he reluctantly loosened his grip.

The moment Linsey stood up, Lara appeared at her side, having come to find her.

Chapter 1309:

“Linsey, I’ve prepared all your speech notes,” Lara announced.

The words had barely left her mouth when she caught sight of Collin, leaving her completely speechless. “You... you two...”

Collin arched an eyebrow, his gaze shifting meaningfully to Linsey. “Your colleague seems curious about our relationship. Don’t you think you should enlighten her?”

Linsey caught her lower lip between her teeth. “Lara, allow me to introduce you. This is Collin Riley... my husband.”

“What?!” Lara’s voice pitched higher than intended, and the speech notes slipped from her fingers, scattering across the floor. “When on earth did you get married? How could I not know about this?”

Linsey ran a hand through her hair, clearly flustered. “It’s... complicated. I promise I’ll explain everything later.”

She quickly knelt to gather the fallen papers, then turned back to Collin. “I need to head to the lounge now to prepare for my presentation.”

As he heard Linsey openly acknowledge their marriage, Collin’s mood soared. “Of course. Go take care of what you need to do.”

As Collin watched Linsey disappear into the crowd, the warmth gradually faded from his expression. His face became a mask of cold calculation as he addressed his head of security. “What’s the latest on the Felix investigation?”

Previously, in his effort to defend Linsey’s honor, he had deliberately invested a substantial sum to acquire the Wells Group’s key projects, driving the company to the brink of financial ruin and potential bankruptcy.

Yet somehow, Felix had managed to orchestrate a remarkable turnaround in an impossibly short timeframe.

“We have the full picture now,” his lead bodyguard reported in hushed tones. “Kylee and Huntley combined their resources, contributing several million to help his company survive the crisis.”

Collin’s brow furrowed deeply. “What was their motivation?”

“We discreetly apprehended Huntley earlier, and under questioning, he revealed that he’d previously worked with the Wells Group and was aware of your wife’s past relationship with Felix.”

The lead bodyguard continued, "His primary motive for assisting the Wells Group was to manipulate Felix into causing a public spectacle at Kylee's birthday celebration, thereby damaging your wife's reputation. The plan was for you to become so disgusted with her that you'd file for divorce, clearing the way for Huntley to pursue your wife while Kylee could make her move on you."

A laugh escaped Collin's lips, though it held no warmth whatsoever. His striking features remained arctic and imperious.

"Mr. Riley," the head bodyguard ventured carefully, "what are your instructions regarding this situation?"

Collin's fingers found his wedding band, turning it slowly as the diamond caught the light from the crystal chandelier above, casting brilliant sparks.

"Huntley has accumulated quite a few enemies over the years. Since he remains unaware of your true identities, keep him confined for several days, then release him just before he breaks completely. As for Kylee, she's no longer worth our attention. I already dealt with her at the birthday party, and she's been shipped off overseas," he stated with clinical detachment.

"Yes, Mr. Riley," the head bodyguard replied, giving a sharp nod. He then hesitated as another matter came to mind. "What about Felix?"

Chapter 1310:

Something flickered across Collin's eyes, too complex to decipher. "Leave him be for the time being."

He was curious to see exactly how Linsey would choose to settle the score with that worthless excuse for a man. Should she prove unable to handle it herself, he would quietly step in to lend assistance.

At that moment, Dustin pushed his way through the sea of guests and positioned himself directly before Collin.

“I expected to see you here representing CR Corporation, but instead, you surprised me by showing up as my friend,” Dustin said.

Collin just offered a small smile. “Honestly, the CEO is supposed to mingle and shake hands at these events. You’re much more suited for all that than I am, so I’d rather leave it in your capable hands.”

Dustin looked like he wanted to joke further, but his words were cut off as the host’s voice rang out from the front of the room.

“Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for joining us. The event is about to get underway. Please take your seats and settle in,” the host announced.

Chairs shifted, and conversation died down as the guests complied. Once the room was quiet, everyone’s attention snapped forward as the presenter was introduced.

All eyes turned as Linsey stepped onto the stage, draped in a striking red gown that drew admiration from every corner.

A sea of influential faces looked on, but Linsey stayed collected, her speech flowing with confidence and polish.

Never before had Collin seen her so in her element, and he couldn’t help but feel impressed.

Gesturing toward her colleague by the screen, Linsey said, “Let’s move on to the unveiling of our design concepts.”

Out of nowhere, the screen flickered and then cut to black.

Confused murmurs rippled through the audience.

“Why did the screen just go out? Weren’t we about to see the designs?”

“No idea. Did someone mess up backstage?”

Tension grew as people whispered in low voices, searching for answers. Linsey turned to look at the malfunction, her composure faltering for just a second.

Everything had worked perfectly during practice. What could have gone wrong now?

Forcing herself to keep her cool, she faced the audience with a gentle smile. “Looks like our screen is a bit shy today. Give us a moment to calm our nerves, and we’ll get right back on track.”

A few guests couldn’t help but chuckle at Linsey’s quip, and just like that, the tension in the room began to fade.

As Collin surveyed the gathering, his gaze landed on Cynthia and Joanna lurking in the shadows, each wearing a sly, unfriendly grin.

Without missing a beat, he discreetly signaled for his bodyguard and leaned in to quietly deliver instructions.

The bodyguard nodded. “Understood, Mr. Riley,” he replied, before quickly making his way toward the edge of the hall.

Backstage, Linsey wasted no time rushing to her colleague’s side, her face etched with worry. “Can you tell me what happened?”