

Zillionaire 501

Chapter 501 Unlocking

After making sure the door was securely locked, Alexa finally felt at ease and walked away.

She hesitated for a moment before deciding to wait until Carol was nearly finished before returning. The last thing she wanted was to be stuck alone in the same room with Linsey,

Meanwhile, inside the storage room, Linsey heard the click of the lock but showed no reaction.

She lowered her gaze to her injured hand and let out a silent sigh.

As a designer, her hands were everything-yet they had suffered so much.

But she didn't dwell on the thought for long. Her eyes shifted toward the shelves.

Earlier, she had noticed some old cleaning uniforms stacked there.

Bracing herself against the wall with her uninjured hand, she forced her weak body to stand.

Pain shot through her wounds, leaving her drained, but she had no time to rest. Alexa could return at any moment, and waiting passively wasn't an option.

Carol had already shown no mercy. Once she came back from the birthday party, she wouldn't hesitate to make things worse.

Linsey gritted her teeth, gripping the shelf for support as she pulled herself upright.

Her movements were slow and shaky, but she managed to reach for a uniform before lowering herself back to

the floor.

Changing was far more difficult than she had anticipated. Every movement sent waves of pain through her body. But if she didn't disguise herself, even if she managed to escape, her elegant dress would make her an easy

target.

By the time she finally finished, she was drenched in sweat, her breath coming in uneven gasps.

Her eyes burned, but she forced herself to push the emotions down. There was no time for weakness. She slipped off her high heels next.

When Carol had shoved her earlier, she had instinctively used her hand and foot to shield her abdomen.

Now, not only was her hand injured, but her ankle was swollen again.

The previous sprain had barely healed.

If this kept happening, it would only get worse.

Linsey steadied herself and made her way to the storage room door. Pressing her

ear against it, she listened carefully.

Earlier, she had noticed how deserted this part of the hotel was.

Most of the staff were occupied with Carol's birthday party, which was why they had been bold enough to lock

her up here.

If word got out that a guest had been forcibly detained, it would be a scandal that could damage the Lawson family's reputation.

After a few moments of silence, Linsey confirmed that the hallway was empty.

Only then did she reach into her hair, carefully pulling out a small clip.

She inserted the pointed end into the keyhole, twisting it with practiced precision.

The lock released.

Her eyes lit up.

Memories of her childhood at the orphanage surfaced-of the time she had been locked in an attic while playing.

No one had come when she cried for help. She had felt utterly helpless.

It was Dolores who had saved her that day, who had taught her how to pick a lock

so she would never be trapped again.

She never imagined that lesson would one day save her life.

Linsey carefully cracked open the door, peeking out. The hallway was empty.

Without hesitation, she stepped out, making sure to close the door behind her.

She had one destination in mind-the security room. And she wasn't going to stop until she got there.

Chapter 502 Carol, Happy Birthday!

Meanwhile, the banquet hall buzzed with excitement.

"Happy birthday, Carol!"

Amid the cheerful well-wishes, Carol beamed as she sliced into the towering cake.

Suddenly, a burst of colorful confetti rained from above, drifting down like tiny stars, wrapping the room in a

dreamlike celebration.

"Carol, happy birthday! This is for you." Jeffery stepped beside her, his voice warm as he handed over a beautifully wrapped gift box.

He paused briefly before adding with a smile, "Of course, this isn't the only gift. I've prepared more-things I know you'll love. They're waiting for you in your room, ready to be unwrapped one by one tonight."

Gasps of envy rippled through the crowd.

"Carol, you're so lucky to have a brother like Jeffery!"

"He's spoiled her since childhood. How could any man ever compare? She might never get married!"

"With Jeffery by her side, she hardly needs anyone else!"

As she listened to the admiring voices, Carol's heart swelled with happiness.

She turned to Jeffery with a playful glint in her eyes. "Of course, my brother treats me well, but I still want to get married!"

"Oh?" Someone caught onto her words and teased, "Sounds like Carol has someone in mind!"

At once, her cheeks flushed. She lowered her head, her thoughts drifting to Ruben's striking face.

But he hadn't come tonight.

Not that she was too disappointed-Jeffery had mentioned he was away on a business trip.

If he were still in Grester, she was certain he would have attended.

As the crowd noticed her reaction, the excitement in the room grew.

"Carol! Do you really have someone you like? Tell us-we might have some advice!"

"Oh, please! Carol is the daughter of the Lawson family. No man in town could resist her! The moment she speaks up, she'll have him wrapped around her finger!"

"Exactly! We're just waiting for her wedding announcement!"

As their playful teasing continued, Carol found herself daydreaming about a grand wedding with Ruben.

"Alright, you guys! It's my birthday-why are you teasing me so much?" she huffed, though the faint smile on her lips betrayed her amusement.

While the others laughed, Jeffery remained silent.

He already knew where Carol's heart lay-Ruben.

He had told her time and time again-Ruben was married. And not just married-he loved his wife deeply. There was no place for Carol in his heart. Still, she refused to see it.

Jeffery sighed inwardly. Even if, by some impossible chance, the CR founder abandoned his wife for Carol, that would only make him even more reluctant to let her marry such a man.

But Carol hadn't realized that yet.

The conversation left him feeling restless. Finding an excuse, he leaned toward her and said, "Carol, I'm stepping out for bit. Enjoy yourself—I'll be back later."

Chapter 503 What Happened To Your Hand

Carol didn't dwell on it and simply nodded. "Go ahead, Jeffery."

She had to wrap things up at the banquet quickly-there was unfinished business waiting in the storage room.

Jeffery failed to notice the cold glint lurking beneath Carol's obedient facade.

To avoid drawing attention, he didn't head straight outside. Instead, he took a winding path through the interior before finally stepping out for some fresh air.

As he rounded a corner, something caught his eye.

A janitor in uniform was up ahead-but why were they limping?

Moved by concern, Jeffery walked over and asked politely, "Are you hurt? Do you need help getting to the hotel's medical room?"

The person tensed for a brief moment before answering in a muffled voice, "No, thank you."

Jeffery frowned, sensing something off. He took a closer look, and in an instant, realization struck.

His chest tightened. His expression darkened. "It's you!"

Linsey clenched her teeth, frustration bubbling inside her. Of all people, why did she have to run into Jeffery?

She kept her head down, quickening her pace. "Sorry, you've got the wrong person."

A sharp pain shot through her wrist.

Her face drained of color as she met Jeffery's cold gaze. Panic twisted inside her.

It was over. He wasn't going to let her go.

Seeing her reaction, Jeffery scoffed. "So it really is you."

His eyes flicked over her, suspicion creeping into his voice. "I had someone take you away for questioning earlier. So why are you here now? And in a janitor's uniform, no less?"

His expression hardened as a conclusion formed in his mind. "You stole

something, didn't you? Not only did you refuse to confess, but now you're trying to run off with it!"

Linsey gritted her teeth against the pain and snapped, "I didn't steal anything! Let go of me!"

Jeffery let out a cold laugh and tightened his grip, determined to drag her back. With a sharp yank, agony shot through Linsey's hand.

"Ah! It hurts!" she nearly cried. Sweat beaded on her forehead, and her face turned ghostly pale

Jeffery hesitated for a moment, then instinctively let go.

Linsey snatched her hand back, gasping for air

She hastily rolled up her sleeve, revealing a hand covered in bruises and raw wounds.

Jeffery's breath caught. His eyes widened. "What happened to your hand?"

The sight stunned him. The injuries were brutal-her fingers swollen, her skin scraped raw, bloodied patches covering her trembling hand.

For reasons she couldn't explain, Linsey's eyes filled with tears.

She looked up at Jeffery, her voice shaking "Mr. Lawson, do you really need to ask? Do you think this is sincere?"

He had been the one to have her locked away to make Carol's happy. And now, he stood there, feigning ignorance. It was almost laughable.

Jeffery's brows knitted deeper. His gaze lingered on her hand, and for a fleeting moment, sympathy flickered in

his eyes.

He despised her because of the theft accusation-but he had never wanted this. And what did she mean?

Chapter 504 I Finally Found

You!

Jeffery sighed slowly and said calmly, "You got hurt and blamed me for no reason, but I won't hold it against you. The hotel has a medical room. I can take you there to get your wound treated."

Linsey's anger flared even more at his words. "How can you say this has nothing to do with you? I-"

She was about to call him out for his arrogance and reveal that Carol was the real culprit when a voice suddenly called from behind.

"Linsey! I finally found you!"

Linsey turned and saw Millie running toward her, her face beaming excitedly.

Behind her, their friends followed closely.

Linsey blinked in surprise. "What are you all doing here?"

Millie stopped to catch her breath, then held up a USB drive with a victorious smirk. "I got the banquet hall's surveillance footage, Linsey! You didn't steal anything-we have proof now."

Linsey's face lit up. "Really? Thank you! I was heading to the security room to get it, but I didn't expect you to

have it already."

Jeffery, who had been standing silently nearby, frowned. "You didn't steal anything?"

Before Linsey could respond, Millie scoffed. "Why, Mr. Lawson? Disappointed that Linsey proved her innocence? You and Carol sure have a lot in common."

"Miss Burke, I'd appreciate it if you spoke respectfully about Carol." Jeffery's expression darkened.

Millie let out a sharp laugh. "Respect? That's rich coming from you. You want us to respect Carol, but has she ever respected us?"

Her eyes flashed with anger as she pointed at herself. "Back in college, she spread lies about me, pushed me to the edge."

Then she gestured toward Linsey. "And tonight, she faked a lounge video to frame Linsey for theft. And you? You sided with her and dragged Linsey away like she was a criminal!"

She was so furious she had to pause to steady her breath. Then, with unwavering determination, she continued, "With this evidence, we can take Carol to court! And yet here you are, acting all righteous, telling us to resp her. How ridiculous."

Linsey stood quietly, watching Millie speak up for her.

She had spent the entire night exhausted from fighting to clear her name.

But now, the weight of frustration didn't feel as heavy anymore with Millie by her side,

Jeffery remained silent for a long moment before finally addressing Linsey, his expression unreadable.

"I'm sorry. My family didn't handle the situation well tonight. But I don't believe Carol would go as far as to fake surveillance footage. Someone must have misled her into thinking you stole something."

Linsey was pissed off. She opened her mouth to argue, but he continued, "I'll get to the bottom of this and make sure your name gets cleared."

Millie's face turned red with rage. Was he seriously still defending his sister? "Jeffery, you-"

Before she could finish, he extended his hand toward her. "Miss Burke, please hand over the video. Once I uncover the truth, I'll make sure everyone knows."

Chapter 505 You Already

Know The Answer, Don't...

Millie didn't hesitate-she immediately hid the USB drive behind her back.

She shot Jeffery a sharp glare, her voice laced with outrage. "Jeffery, do you have no shame? I went through so much to get this evidence. If you take it, how is Linsey supposed to prove her innocence? Do you even have a conscience?"

Linsey's heart sank. She had thought Jeffery was at least more reasonable than Carol.

But in the end, he was just as blind. As long as it involved Carol, he would always take her side-no questions

asked.

A bitter smile tugged at Linsey's lips.

Of course, he would protect his sister. That was natural.

So why did it hurt so much?

Jeffery remained firm, his hand still outstretched. "I'll explain everything to the guests tonight and clear up this

misunderstanding."

His tone left no room for argument-he wasn't letting them leave without the USB drive.

Millie's anger flared.

Why should she hand over the evidence to him?

She sucked in a deep breath, ready to lash out, but before she could, Linsey calmly rolled up her sleeve.

The moment her arm was exposed, the air around them seemed to freeze.

"Mr. Lawson, tell me how do you plan to explain these injuries?"

Millie gasped, her voice trembling with shock. "Linsey... What happened to your hand?"

She instinctively reached out, wanting to touch Linsey's wounds, but hesitated, afraid of making the pain worse.

The injuries weren't just deep, raw cuts across the back of her hand. Her wrist was swollen and badly bruised, clearly sprained.

Jeffery's eyes darkened, his pupils dilating as he stared at Linsey in disbelief. His voice was low and heavy "What are you saying? Are you implying that these wounds are..."

Before he could finish, Linsey's lips curled into a cold, mocking smile. Her clear eyes locked onto Jeffery's. "Mr. Lawson, you already know the answer, don't you?" Her tone was steady, unwavering. "That's right. Carol

10:57

did this to me. She pushed me down, spraining my wrist and ankle. My shoulder slammed into the metal shelves in the storage room."

Jeffery's brows furrowed deeply. His lips parted slightly, but Linsey didn't give him a chance to speak.

"And when I fell, I couldn't move my hand because of the sprain. Carol then stomped on it with her high heel. That's why it looks like this now."

"You're lying!" Jeffery's fists clenched tightly.

Linsey didn't falter. She met his gaze head-on, her words carrying the weight of undeniable truth. "Believe me or don't-it doesn't change what happened. Carol knows the truth better than anyone. If you can't give me a reasonable explanation, I'll take my medical report to the police and file a complaint against her."

Millie had been silent, but as Linsey spoke, her expression turned pained.

Carol had really done this? How could someone be so cruel?

What kind of hatred could drive a person to hurt someone like this?

Chapter 506 You Have Two Options

Jeffery fell silent, momentarily thrown off balance.

His gaze lingered on the injuries marking Linsey's hand, his expression unreadable, shadowed with something

unreadable.

For a fleeting second, he considered offering some kind of reassurance.

But the thought of Carol snapped him back to reality.

His face remained void of emotion as he addressed Linsey in a composed tone. "Ms. Brooks, you have two options."

Linsey's brows knitted together, a flicker of disbelief flashing in her eyes.

From the way he spoke, it was obvious-he still refused to accept the truth.

And just as she expected, he continued, "I'll write you a check for \$5 million. Take

it and walk away. Pretend none of this ever happened. The moment you accept the offer, I trust you understand the value of discretion.

Or stand your ground-go back inside, clear your name, accuse whoever you wish, even involve the authorities

if that's what you want. I won't interfere."

He paused, lifting his gaze. The ice-cold sharpness in his eyes sent an unmistakable warning.

Linsey felt her chest tighten.

His voice remained detached. "But I think you're well aware of my family's influence in town. If you decide to challenge us, I won't hesitate to play along. Just remember-no matter how long you fight, the result won't change. You'll lose."

Linsey's fingers curled into trembling fists, frustration and fury churning inside her.

This was beyond cruel, beyond insulting.

Did he really see her as nothing more than an opportunist?

A bitter laugh nearly escaped her lips.

She had assumed Carol was the worst of the Lawsons.

Who knew Jeffery was even more despicable?

He knew exactly what his sister had done, yet he still shielded her, acting as if she were faultless.

And now, he was twisting the situation to paint her as some money-hungry schemer while positioning himself

and Carol as the victims.

How laughable. Her lips curled into a smirk before she let out a cold chuckle.

As he saw her lack of response, Jeffery's brows furrowed. "What's the issue with you now?"

"My issue?" Linsey's smirk vanished as she met his gaze, her expression cool and detached. "Well, you seem remarkably skilled at intimidation. I take it this isn't your first time cleaning up Carol's mess?"

If not for the searing pain in her injured hand, she would have applauded his dedication to playing the perfect

big brother.

A flicker of irritation crossed Jeffery's face. "Enough. Which will it be? I don't have time to stand around."

Millie, already at her limit, stepped forward, hand twitching as if she were about to slap him.

She had heard more than enough.

But before she could follow through, Linsey gently held her back.

Millie instinctively halted, gripping Linsey's arm with concern. Her voice dropped

to a worried whisper. "Don't move! Your hand is still injured."

Linsey flashed her a reassuring smile. "My right hand's fine. It's the left that's hurt."

Chapter 507 Are You Telling Me Linsey Got Aw...

Jeffery ignored Linsey and Millie's conversation and said in a firm tone, Ms Brooks, I suggest you think this

through carefully."

Linsey's lips curled into a calm smile as she spoke at an unhurried pace. "Alright, then Hand over \$5 million"

"Linsey!" Millie's eyes widened in shock. She was completely caught off guard by Linsey's response

At those words, the tension in Jeffery's expression finally eased. "No problem."

He retrieved a checkbook from his suit's inner pocket, swiftly scribbled out the amount, and handed it to Linsey. "\$5 million-every last cent."

Linsey accepted it without hesitation, giving the check a cursory glance before murmuring with an ambiguous expression, "You certainly know how to be generous."

Jeffery tucked his pen away and cast a faint glance at Millie. "I trust Miss Burke will keep tonight's events to

herself."

"Get lost." Millie was so furious her breathing turned uneven, snapping at him without restraint.

Without another word, Jeffery turned on his heel and left.

Since Linsey had accepted the money, it was obvious she wouldn't pursue the matter any further.

Everything made sense now-Linsey had staged this entire ordeal just to get a payout.

Carol must have been provoked by Linsey's manipulations, which led to her unintentionally injuring her.

In the end, Linsey was the one orchestrating the situation, and Carol had fallen into her trap.

It was Carol's birthday, and Jeffery didn't want any irrelevant people ruining her celebration.

As for Linsey, Jeffery silently resolved to make sure she was never allowed anywhere near another gathering of

his family.

Meanwhile, Linsey remained completely unaware of his thoughts.

The moment he disappeared from view, Millie let out an annoyed scoff, her frustration clear. "I can believe you actually agreed to his offer for a measly \$5 million!"

Linsey gave a small, resigned smile. "I don't have the means to fight the Lawsons head-on."

She waved the check lightly. "Besides, \$5 million isn't exactly chump change for me.

Millie's expression shifted as she quickly remembered Linsey's reality-she was just a designer with no powerful backing. To her, five million was a fortune.

"Fine," Millie muttered reluctantly. Though she didn't like it, she had to respect Linsey's choice.

Carol had always been insufferably arrogant. None of this was surprising.

Millie was about to suggest taking Linsey to the hospital to treat her wounds when Linsey's next words stopped

her cold.

"Millie, do you have time to help me stir up a little chaos at Carol's birthday party?"

Inside the grand banquet hall, Carol had just wrapped up a conversation with a few guests. Checking the time, she prepared to head toward the storage room and settle things with Linsey once and for all.

But just as she turned, she spotted Alexa-the very person assigned to keep an eye on Linsey.

Carol's expression darkened immediately. As Alexa rushed toward her, she snapped, "Why are you here? Didn't I tell you to guard Linsey in the storage room?"

Alexa hesitated, looking visibly distressed before stammering, "Miss Lawson, I only stepped out for a moment to use the restroom. I locked the storage room before I left, but when I came back..."

Carol instantly understood what had happened. Her grip tightened around Alexa's arm, her voice dripping with fury. "Are you telling me Linsey got away?"

Chapter 508 You're Completely Useless!

Carol's sharp nails dug into Alexa's arm, making her yelp in pain. But Alexa didn't dare resist and instead responded in a subdued voice, "Yes, Miss Lawson. Linsey is gone. I searched the entire storage room multiple times, but she was nowhere to be found. We'll need more people to track her down."

Alexa struggled to keep her panic in check. She had hesitated to report Linsey's escape.

But as a mere servant, she lacked the authority to mobilize the household staff or the hotel employees without the Lawsons' approval.

With no other choice, she had braced herself and come to find Carol.

Carol's fury boiled over. Her grip tightened, making Alexa wince, her face going pale from the pain.

"You're completely useless! You can't even keep one person locked up! Why do I even bother keeping you around?" Carol seethed.

A golden opportunity to punish Linsey had slipped through her fingers.

Alexa gritted her teeth and pleaded, "Miss Lawson, we should act quickly and send people after her. She's likely still somewhere in the hotel."

She hesitated for a moment before adding, "She's injured and has a sprained ankle-she couldn't have gotten

far."

At those words, Carol's anger eased slightly.

"Fine. I'll have my men bring her back." She clenched her fists and muttered under her breath, "Linsey, you sly little rat. When I catch you again, I'll have her beaten up."

A shiver ran down Alexa's spine at Carol's ominous words.

Both knew Linsey was pregnant.

If Carol truly intended to beat her senseless, she might end up losing the baby. Alexa quickly forced any lingering sympathy for Linsey out of her mind.

Then, something occurred to her, and she quickly added, "Miss Lawson, when I checked the storage room, I noticed she had changed out of her gown and heels. She must be disguised as a hotel cleaner now."

Carol finally released her, and Alexa gasped softly, instinctively clutching her aching arm.

"Understood." Carol's gaze darkened as she turned, already reaching for her phone to call her most trusted bodyguards.

"Carol, what's wrong? Hearing Jeffery's voice, Carol stiffened. She turned to see him striding toward her,

concern etched across his face.

She hesitated briefly, then quickly masked her emotions with a smile. At the same time, she shot Alexa a discreet look, silently instructing her to gather reinforcements.

Alexa got the message and immediately hurried off to fetch Carol's men.

Jeffery's eyes flicked toward Alexa's retreating figure, a hint of curiosity in his tone. "You seem to have a rather close connection with Alexa."

Carol smirked. "I heard you personally recruited her, so I pay her a little more attention."

Jeffery's expression softened, and he was just about to casually bring up Alexa's illness when a sudden commotion broke out in the banquet hall.

"The screen just went black!" someone exclaimed.

Both Jeffery and Carol instinctively turned toward the source of the disturbance. Their faces froze.

The massive screen, which had moments ago been displaying an elegant slideshow of Carol's photos, had abruptly switched. Now, it was playing surveillance footage from earlier that night.

The video captured every move Linsey had made in the corner of the banquet hall-clear as day.

Chapter 509 Linsey Must Have Tampered With It!

"What's happening here?"

"Hold on... Isn't that Linsey in the surveillance video?"

"Yeah, look-she's been standing in that same corner ever since she entered the banquet hall. If she really went to the lounge to steal something, she would've had to pass through here, right?"

"Exactly! But in the footage, she never left that spot."

"That's right. I was near Linsey the whole time because of that rumor floating around tonight. I kept an eye on her from a distance as soon as I arrived, right up until Millie went over to talk to her."

"Look closely-right after that, the Lawsons' servant showed up with people to confront Linsey."

On the massive screen, the sped-up footage played, condensing the night's events into just a few seconds. The guests watched intently.

Jeffery's expression darkened, his voice cutting through the murmurs like ice. "Who's controlling the screen? Turn this off immediately!"

Carol stood frozen, completely blindsided. She hadn't expected this footage to even exist.

By the time she snapped out of her shock, the video had already reached the part where she stormed in with

her people.

"No! This isn't real!" she blurted out, spinning around to face the crowd. Panic twisted her features as she yelled, "Don't believe this! The footage is fake! Linsey must have tampered with it!"

For a brief moment, silence hung in the air.

Then, a voice rose from the crowd. "The video is not fake. I see myself in the footage. I was standing right there at exactly 8:15. I remember because a waiter accidentally spilled red wine on me."

Carol's eyes widened in fury as she frantically scanned the crowd, trying to pinpoint the speaker.

But with so many guests packed together, it was impossible to tell.

She recognized that voice. It was one of Millie's friends!

Damn it! Millie again! This had to be her doing!

And then, as if a floodgate had opened, more guests began speaking up.

"Uh... I see myself too. I was checking my phone at that time, and the timestamp matches."

Someone else, eager for drama, chimed in, "Who hasn't heard the gossip about Jeffery and Linsey looking alike! That's why I even noticed Linsey tonight. I was watching from 7:50 onward, and I never saw her leave that

corner."

"Yeah, same here! I kept quiet earlier because I thought maybe I was misremembering"

"Now it's obvious which footage is fake, isn't it?"

"How embarrassing-an influential family like the Lawsons framing an ordinary guest for theft."

And then, a more daring voice threw out a wild guess. "You know... What if Linsey is actually Cruz's illegitimate daughter? Maybe Carol framed her out of hatred!"

Gasps rippled through the crowd. The whispers grew louder, speculation running wild

Carol felt like the ground was crumbling beneath her. "All of you, shut up!" she shrieked, her composure finally snapping. The mention of an illegitimate daughter had hit a nerve. Her breath came in short, furious gasps as she glared at the guests. "Shut up! My dad has no illegitimate daughter! If any of you keep spreading these ridiculous lies, I'll make sure you regret it!"

Chapter 510 Linsey, You've

Got Some Nerve

Seeing the situation spiraling out of control, Jeffery could no longer stand by. He quickly caught hold of Carol, who was on the verge of collapsing, his voice firm yet urgent as he tried to steady her emotions.

"Carol, take a deep breath. Don't let this get to you. Let's go home first, okay?"

The guests, unsettled by Carol's sharp threats, exchanged displeased glances. "Carol, do you really think you hold all the power here? Look around. Everyone at this banquet can see how much Linsey resembles your brother. You're the only one who refuses to acknowledge it!"

The words struck Carol like a bolt of lightning. She stiffened, her face draining of color. "What... What did you

just say?"

Her mind spun in chaos.

Linsey looked like Jeffery?

That was impossible.

That wretched girl-how could she ever compare to him?

No. There was no way.

Her brother belonged to her alone. Her father could never have an illegitimate daughter!

Jeffery, noticing the deepening pallor on Carol's face, felt a surge of unease. Without a second thought, he tightened his grip and tried to lead her away.

Just then, a sudden disruption echoed through the banquet hall's sound system.

"What's happening?"

"Wait-there's more?!"

As murmurs filled the room, several figures emerged from the shadows, striding toward the stage.

At the center of them stood Linsey, microphone in hand, her expression calm and composed

"I believe everyone here has seen the surveillance footage by now. Let me be clear-I, Linsey, did not steal anything from Carol."

Her words sent a ripple of shock through the crowd. Gasps broke out one after another.

"Wasn't Linsey taken away by the Lawson family?"

"When did she change outfits?"

"Oh my God! Look at her hand-it's covered in blood!"

The camera zoomed in on Linsey's face, slightly pale yet unwavering, before shifting to her injured right hand.

"Yes, everyone. These wounds? Carol did this to me earlier in the storage room."

As Linsey spoke, Millie crouched beside her and carefully lifted her left pant leg, revealing a swollen, bruised

ankle.

A collective gasp spread through the audience.

"Linsey, you shameless cunt! Get down from there!" Carol shrieked, her self— control snapping.

She lunged forward, ready to drag Linsey off the stage, but Millie's people quickly moved to block her path.

Jeffery, still restraining Carol, cast a cold, piercing glare at Linsey. His voice was sharp and laced with anger. "Linsey, you've got some nerve."

Linsey had taken his check, yet now she dared to expose everything in front of everyone.

Linsey met his cutting gaze without a trace of fear. Instead, she reached into her pocket and pulled out the

check.

Her voice rang clear through the microphone. "Mr. Lawson, are you talking about this check? The one you tried to use to silence me?"

A poised smile played on her lips. "Don't worry, Mr. Lawson. I keep my word. You gave me two choices, remember? I'm choosing the second one."

She held the check up for everyone to see. "And as for this five-million-dollar check, I'll return it to you right here, in front of all these witnesses. That way, no one can say I took your money without delivering on a deal."