

## **Zillionaire 651**

### Chapter 651 Is Linsey With Anyone

Dustin turned to look at her. There was an apologetic look on Dolores's face, and something about it tugged at him. "It's not a work photo," he said quietly.

Dolores bit her lip and lowered her voice. "What kind of photo was it? I'm really sorry, Dustin. I didn't mean to

interrupt. I didn't know it was something important."

Her guilt made him uncomfortable. He quickly replied, "It's fine. I just saw a kid that looked really familiar."

Thinking of the boy again, Dustin blurted, "That kid looked just like Collin. He's the spitting image of Collin

when he was younger."

Dolores cursed silently. So Dustin had seen Zander.

After a brief pause, her eyes narrowed with interest. She tilted her head and asked, "Wait, what did you just say? A kid that looks like Collin?"

Still unaware of the trap he was walking into, Dustin nodded. "Yeah. The one that just passed by. I wanted to take a picture to show Collin, but I missed the chance."

Dolores let out a cold laugh. Her voice turned sharp. "Incredible! Just incredible! So Collin already has a kid? Four years ago, he acted like he was so devoted. And now, not long after, he's already had a child with another woman? And that child is old enough to walk around? Wow. Collin really is a two-faced jerk."

Dustin stared at her, stunned. "No, no... That's not what I meant."

"Oh, really? Didn't you just say there's a kid who looks exactly like Collin? What more is there to say?" Dolores raised an eyebrow, mockery all over her face.

She gave a little shrug and added with a bitter smile, "Anyway, it doesn't matter. Collin and Linsey divorced four years ago. They're done. Whoever he sleeps with or has kids with is none of her business. And Linsey-she deserves better, too."

Dustin couldn't come up with anything to say.

He had been the one who brought it up in the first place.

And now, even if he wanted to take it back, he couldn't.

"I-I was wrong. That kid probably doesn't look like Collin. I wasn't serious. And these past few years hasn't-" "Enough. I don't care what Collin has or hasn't done," Dolores said, cutting him off sharply. She took a breath and steadied her tone. "You've helped me in the past, so I'll let this go. Let's not make it a big deal."

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With that, she put on a calm, collected face and turned to leave.

Dustin reached out and grabbed her sleeve without thinking. "Hold on..."

She turned back, brows raised. "What is it now?"

He hesitated. At first, he wanted to smooth things over. But then, another question slipped out. "Is Linsey with

anyone?"

Dolores rolled her eyes dramatically. "Whether she does or not has nothing to do with Collin. So don't go digging into her life for his sake."

She pulled her arm free and walked away, her steps quick and firm.

Dustin stood frozen, regret clouding his eyes.

Why had he even brought up Collin?

He knew Dolores couldn't stand Collin because of what happened with Linsey.

Now she was clearly upset with him too.

With a heavy sigh, Dustin dropped the thought of Zander entirely.

Chapter 652 I Promise We'll Always Stay Toget...

Dolores slipped back into the private room and quietly shut the door behind her.

Only when her eyes met Linsey's worried expression did the tightness in her chest begin to ease.

She flashed Linsey a calm smile. "Everything's alright now."

Caylee exhaled sharply, pressing a hand to her chest. "Thank goodness. I almost made a huge mistake."

Turning toward her, Linsey gave a gentle shake of her head. "It's not on you. Coming back to Grester, I knew I'd eventually run into someone from my past. You've never met those people, so of course, you wouldn't know how to react right away. Besides, I was the one who asked you to take Zander to the play area."

Back then, Caylee had only heard Dustin's name mentioned as a close associate of Collin, but she had never

seen him in person.

After getting a clear look at Dustin's face, she silently vowed never to let something like that happen again.

Zander, who had been quietly observing, finally looked up at Linsey. "Mommy, was that man dangerous? Why are we hiding from him?"

Before Linsey could answer, Dolores stepped in, her tone serious. "Zander, that man is connected to someone who hurt your mom. If he finds out about you, he might try to use you to hurt her again, and we can't let that

happen."

Fear flickered across Zander's face, his body stiffening at her words.

Immediately, Linsey pulled him into her arms, holding him close. "Dolores, don't scare him like that," she said softly, a hint of helplessness in her voice.

Dolores didn't back down. "Zander needs to have some awareness of the risks. What if that man really tries to

take him away?"

She took a moment before she continued, "You've sacrificed so much for Zander and Zenia, carrying them, raising them alone, enduring everything by yourself. And what has that man ever done? Aside from being their biological father, he hasn't lifted a finger. So why should he have any claim to them now?"

Hearing those words, Zander clung to Linsey's side, gripping her clothes tightly. "Mommy, I don't want anyone else. Zenia and I just want to stay with you."

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Reaching out, Linsey gently brushed her fingers through Zander's hair. "Don't be scared," she said. "Du didn't mean it that way. No one's going to take you or your sister from me. I promise we'll always stay together."

Dolores's heart sank a little at the sight of Zander's troubled expression.

A soft sigh escaped her lips. "Let me check if Dustin had left the building. Once I'm sure he's gone, I'll make

sure you both get back to the hotel safely, it's not wise to linger out here too long."

After thinking it through, Dolores added in a more cautious tone, "Until Gorman arrives, we need to keep both

Zander and Zenia completely out of sight, especially from Collin and Dustin. Once Gorman's here, at least we'll have someone we can count on to keep them protected."

Linsey gave a firm nod. "That makes sense. I'll be extra careful from now on."

Looking down at Zander, who still seemed unsettled in her arms, she continued gently, "Even if Collin finds out I've returned, I won't let him see Zander. It's better this way, especially since Zander really..."

The resemblance was undeniable. Anyone who had ever met Collin would instantly notice how much Zander

looked like him.

That alone explained why Dustin had reacted the way he did.

Once Dolores confirmed that Dustin had left the restaurant, she led the way, quietly ensuring Linsey and Zander made it back to their hotel without incident.

At the same time, Dustin had returned to CR Corporation, though his thoughts remained fixed on Dolores.

Chapter 653 I Haven't Been With Anyone But Linsey

As he caught sight of Collin at work in his office, Dustin's thoughts immediately jumped to Zander-the boy he had spotted earlier at the restaurant.

There was no doubt in his mind. The resemblance hadn't been imagined. That child truly looked like a younger

version of Collin.

Regret hit him hard. He hadn't managed to take a photo as proof.

Having known Collin for years, Dustin understood him inside and out. Without something concrete, even the most detailed explanation wouldn't hold water. Collin would dismiss it without a second thought.

What made it even more bewildering was the fact that Collin hadn't been romantically involved with anyone but Linsey in all these years.

So the appearance of a child bearing Collin's features came as a complete shock.

A sudden possibility dawned on Dustin. Maybe-just maybe-Linsey had already been pregnant when she and Collin parted ways four years ago.

The idea stunned him.

"What are you just standing there for?" Collin asked in a steady tone, then lifted his gaze toward Dustin, who stood by the door.

That snapped Dustin out of it. Seeing the stunned look on his friend's face, Collin arched a brow. "What's going

on?"

Still rattled, Dustin tried to gather himself. He opened his mouth, hesitated, then forced himself to walk toward the desk. "Can I ask you something... personal?"

Collin didn't even glance at him. "No."

Dustin ignored the rejection, sat down with a straight face, and leaned forward. "Look, Collin, this might come off as invasive, but it's something important. You deserve to know."

Lifting his gaze, Collin fixed his eyes on him. "Then quit dragging it out. Just say what you came to say."

Dustin paused briefly, unsure how to phrase the question without sounding intrusive. Still, he pressed forward. "Collin, have you been with anyone... romantically, in the past few years?"

That line barely left his mouth before Collin's expression shifted into something cold and sharp. "What did you just say?"

Noticing the irritation flare across his friend's face, Dustin quickly raised his hands in defense. "I didn't mean

anything by it-1 was just wondering"

With a slight drop of his gaze, Collin grew thoughtful before asking coldly, "Did you go talk to Dolores again

Over time, Collin had picked up on Dustin's strange concern for Dolores-far too frequent to be casual.

There was no doubt in his mind that Dolores, being Linsey's closest friend, probably knew everything about Linsey's whereabouts since the divorce.

But at this point, Collin had lost any right to approach Dolores and ask where Linsey might be.

Instead, he pinned his hopes on Dustin. Maybe one day, he would come back with news about Linsey. Maybe he would say the words Collin could no longer ask for himself.

That was why he had always allowed, even quietly encouraged, Dustin's connection with Dolores.

A moment ago, when Dustin suddenly threw the question at him, Collin instantly suspected that Dolores might be using Dustin to speak on her behalf.

To him, that suggested the question Dolores raised could very well reflect Linsey's true intentions.

That thought alone lit a spark behind Collin's eyes.

"It's nothing serious, Collin. I was just wondering, that's all. You don't need to explain if you'd rather not." Dustin's thoughts kept circling back to Zander, whose resemblance to Collin was impossible to ignore.

But now he was starting to believe it might have been nothing more than chance, convincing himself that Zander likely had no connection to Collin whatsoever, and the idea had just been something he imagined.

Collin fixed his gaze on Dustin, silence thick between them for a moment. Then, with deliberate calm, he replied, "No. I haven't been with anyone but Linsey. And I never will."



## Chapter 654 Was There Any Chance She Was...

Collin spoke in a calm, steady voice. Not a trace of emotion showed.

Dustin looked at him, sensing the honesty in his eyes.

He didn't doubt it-not one bit. For the past four years, Collin had buried himself in work. Day in, day out, he had little time for anything else, let alone another woman.

Besides, Dustin knew Collin well. If he had truly moved on from Linsey, there would be no reason for him to wear that wedding ring-the one he had specially designed for her-every single day.

Collin wasn't the type to put on a show. And with his status now, faking feelings for Linsey wouldn't serve any purpose. It would be a waste of time.

After thinking for a moment, Dustin said, "Collin, just one more question. When you and Linsey divorced... Was there any chance she was pregnant?"

Collin's expression darkened. His reply was firm. "No. That's impossible."

Dustin blinked, caught off guard by the certainty. "How can you be so sure? I mean... Pregnancy isn't always obvious, right?"

Collin looked at him coldly, unwilling to explain. "I'm sure. Linsey wasn't pregnant. So stop guessing."

He was certain because he remembered it clearly-four years ago, Linsey had been hurt at Carol's birthday party. From that day until their divorce two months later, they hadn't been intimate.

Before the party, they were still in love. If she had been pregnant then, she would have told him. Something like that couldn't stay hidden.

Besides, with the way he had hurt her, Collin doubted she would ever carry his child. The thought brought a bitter smile to his lips. His eyes dimmed with quiet sadness.

Dustin noticed. Collin's face, already blank, grew even colder.

His heart skipped a beat. He quickly said, "Forget I asked."

Collin took a breath and asked in a low voice, "Have you heard anything about Linsey?"

Dustin replied without thinking. "Dolores warned me not to. She even yelled at me today."

Collin didn't seem surprised. He just nodded slightly. "I see."

Dustin felt uneasy watching him sink into silence.

He had once wondered if the designer Dolores hired might actually be Linsey. But he wasn't sure.

He had even asked Dolores directly once. She mocked him and threw him out of her office.

Honestly, Dustin believed what he told her-it might be better not to bring up Linsey at all. Why stir up old

pain?

Now, he even felt he must have been confused to think that Zander might be Linsey and Collin's child.

Plenty of people looked alike. And Zander was just a kid. His features weren't even fully formed yet.

The more he thought about it, the more he regretted asking those questions. They had only upset Collin.

Still, Dustin knew-whether he spoke her name or not-Collin would always be thinking of Linsey.

Dustin couldn't help but wonder... Was she with someone else now? Married, maybe?

Chapter 655 Don't Stress

The next day, the long-awaited fashion design competition finally kicked off.

Everything was done anonymously. The designers worked behind screens, and only their workstations were

shown in real-time. Judges and viewers could watch every step of their creative process through a live stream.

Before it all began, Dolores and Linsey were in the contestants' private resting

room.

Dolores said to Linsey, gripping her shoulders, "Linsey, don't stress. Let's just aim for a solid spot-maybe second or third. Collin's company brought in Arthur Flores, the world-famous designer. He's a legend. Beating him won't be easy. But no matter what, you'll always be the best in my heart."

Linsey chuckled. "Dolores, you're more nervous than I am."

She playfully waved a hand near Dolores' face. "Take a deep breath. If you calm down, I won't feel a thing."

"I'm calm, I swear," Dolores said, exhaling hard. Still, her face stayed tight with worry.

Just then, the TV screen in the room lit up, showing the main stage. The host walked out to a round of cheers.

A soft knock came at the door. A staff member peeked in. "Ms. Bright, it's time." Linsey gave Dolores's hand a gentle squeeze before getting to her feet.

The staff member paused, clearly taken aback by Linsey's beauty. He hadn't expected her to be this striking. Still, he kept things professional. "This way, please."

Linsey gave a small nod and followed him down a quiet side hallway.

The corridor was empty. She didn't see anyone else until they reached a booth. From inside, she could hear the

buzz of the crowd outside.

"Ms. Bright, please put on the gloves and voice changer. All contestants are required to wear them," the staff

member said softly.

She nodded, slipping on the gloves. They covered her hands but allowed her to draw easily. She clipped the voice changer to her collar.

Once everything was set, the host's voice rang out across the venue. "Family, friendship, love... Each of us carries unforgettable emotions. Today's theme is all about those feelings. Every designer sees emotion differently. Now, the staff will hand out plain white T-shirts in random sizes. Your task is to create an emotion - themed design on the T-shirt within two hours."

The crowd reacted instantly, buzzing with surprise.

"Wait, T-shirts? That's it?"

"Don't be so quick to judge. They can modify the shirt too. I think this theme really pushes creativity and basic design skills."

"Still, emotions? That's so old-fashioned, We're in the age of trends."

"You've got it wrong. Emotions are timeless. They shape our lives. They'll always matter, no matter the era."

Chapter 657 That Designer Is Using The Left Hand

After a short pause, Dustin continued with confidence, "Relax. The other designers are not impressive. Two of them are visibly nervous, even with gloves on. And the funniest one? The third from the left. It's been ten minutes, and that designer hasn't even moved..."

Before he could finish, the screen showed a shift. The once-still hands began retrieving tools from the drawers and neatly arranging them across the workstation-each movement crisp and controlled.

Dustin scoffed, "Well, it seems our slowpoke finally decided to wake up. Still, I doubt that kind of start will lead anywhere. Especially with such a dull theme this year."

He leaned back smugly, expecting a nod of agreement-but none came.

Puzzled, Dustin turned toward Collin, only to find him staring intently at one of the screens.

Curious, Dustin followed his gaze-and realized it was locked on the designer he had just mocked.

Dustin had a feeling he was interested in that one.

Before he could say anything, Collin suddenly spoke, his voice quiet but clear. "That designer is using the left

hand."

His tone was flat, yet something unreadable flickered in his eyes-something almost too subtle to notice.

Dustin blinked, surprised. "So? Maybe they're just left-handed."

But Collin didn't answer. His gaze remained fixed, as if searching for something he couldn't quite name.

Despite the identical gloves, the hidden faces, and the altered voices, something about the left-handed designer stirred a strange unease in Collin's chest.

While he sat quietly, lost in thought, the designer on the screen began sketching quick, rough drafts on a scrap sheet. The lines were loose, but there was clear intention in the motion. The sketches were pinned to the top-right corner of the desk with a magnetic clip.

The livestream chat instantly lit up again. "Wait, what is that supposed to be? I can't make sense of it!"

"Left-handed and already wasting time. That sketch looks like it was drawn by a child."

"Honestly, this person has no sense of urgency. Why are they even here?"

"This competition's clearly going to Arthur. No surprises this year."

"Second and third might be worth debating, but other than Arthur, no one's standing out."

"That lefty might as well pack up and leave now."

"I seriously want to know who hired that person. I'm avoiding that brand from now on."

"Hold on-what's the left-handed one doing now?"

"Am I seeing that right?"

"No way. What the hell are they doing?!"

At the third workstation, a small bucket of water-about one-third full-sat beside the palette.

The designer selected several paint colors and carefully squeezed different amounts of each onto the mixing

tray.

With the left hand, the brush moved swiftly, spreading the first color in a long, smooth strip across the fabric.

Then came the next-followed by another.

Some colors were mixed directly on the palette-two or even three at a time— producing shades that stood out in their depth and uniqueness.

Chapter 658 What's Contestant No. 3 Up To

The abrupt movement turned heads across the venue, catching many off guard.

Spectators watching the live stream flooded the comment feed, while murmurs rippled through the seated

crowd.

"What on earth is that lefty doing? I can't make heads or tails of this."

"Is this even design work, or is the lefty just throwing paint around?"

"Looks like something you'd find in a community art class. Are they being serious right now?"

"Hang on-those colors on the palette... they're oddly pleasant when they swirl together."

"Now that you say it, they do have a nice harmony to them. Kind of peaceful, actually."

"I don't know why, but I'm getting the feeling that today's competition might take a turn no one expected."

To ensure fairness, each designer's booth was insulated from outside sound, eliminating any distractions or

unsolicited feedback.

Still, even if Linsey could hear the skepticism, it wouldn't have shaken her.

Composure remained etched on her face as she stayed locked into her process.

Once she had the colors just right, Linsey lowered the board into a bucket of paint with steady hands.

Gradually, the pigments began to swirl to the surface, dancing along the water's surface like silk threads.

unraveling.

Those watching online instinctively zoomed their view onto Linsey's workstation.

"Is that mist? Looks like there's ice in the bucket."



"The chilled water must be for controlling the paint. Cold temperatures help it set faster, reducing the chances

of colors bleeding into one another."

"But can it really stop the colors from blending entirely? Look-some sections are already mixing, forming soft

waves. I'm not sure this method will hold together."

"That seventh color in the water looks incredible! How did she manage that mix? I'm an art student, and I'd

love to try it myself!"

"Have you noticed how beautifully those shades melt together?"

"Wait-I just realized! Those hues resemble how colors appear in natural daylight!"

"What's Contestant No. 3 up to? I can't look away!"

After ensuring each pigment had fully dispersed into the water, Linsey reached

for the plain white T-shirt provided at the start of the challenge.

With steady hands, she unfolded the fabric and dipped the center into the swirling colors, letting it soak up the

delicate blend.

Bit by bit, she eased the rest of the shirt-starting with the collar, then the sleeves and hem-into the chilled

bucket.

During the process, her gloves brushed against the surface, absorbing some of the frigid water.

That was when something unexpected happened.

A faint smudge of dark dye bled from her gloves, blooming across the otherwise soft-toned water.

When she realized what had happened, Linsey's pulse spiked. She jerked her hands upward, trying to minimize

the damage.

But the harm had already begun-cool, pale water now carried an inky mark.

"This is awful! Who thought it was a good idea to hand out gloves that bleed dye?"

"Unbelievable. Looks like the sponsors went cheap with the materials. Those gloves just ruined the entire

bucket!"

"You all really believe Contestant No. 3 was going to pull off something extraordinary, huh?"

"Why feel bad? The designer in the center-Arthur, right?-is almost finished, and

his work is already shaping up to be a masterpiece."

## Chapter 659 I'll Work With

### What I've Got

"The third designer threw together some flashy tricks, and suddenly it's like everyone forgot what real design

looks like. The crowd's reaction was almost laughable."

"Come on now-what's the plan here? Dye a shirt and call it fashion? If I'm not mistaken, this is supposed to be a fashion design competition, not some kind of dyeing showcase. What's the big deal about the colors this designer threw together? If that's all they have got, maybe they should try their luck at a color- mixing contest

instead."

While Linsey remained frozen for a moment, a staff member quickly emerged from behind the scenes, rushing over with a fresh pair of gloves.

"Ms. Bright, my apologies. These ones are waterproof. Please switch to them right away."

Snapping out of her daze, Linsey gave a quick nod, turned to accept the gloves, and slipped them on with

practiced ease. "Don't worry about it. I should've caught it myself."

Glancing at the paint bucket, the staff member frowned at the visible smudge in the otherwise delicate color

blend. In a lowered voice, he asked, "Would you like a fresh batch of ice water for the dyes?"

He hesitated, then added with concern, "But we're already halfway through the round. I'm not sure you'll have enough time to finish your work."

From his perspective, this step with the shirt was clearly just one part of Linsey's overall vision.

Linsey didn't respond immediately. A few seconds passed before she made up her mind. "No need to swap it. I'll work with what I've got."

After securing the new gloves properly, she offered a calm smile. "Thanks for bringing them."

The staff member almost spoke up, wanting to clarify that the gloves weren't his decision, that he was only responsible for relaying messages between the competitors and the organizers.

But Linsey had already turned away and returned to her workstation, fully focused once more. Choosing to wait until after the event, the staff member kept quiet-for

now.

As he exited the stage area, he couldn't help but wonder when exactly Aurora and the founder of the CR Corporation had crossed paths.

From what he had been told, Aurora had only just set foot in Grester a few days prior, brought in under the Davidson Group's banner.

With no way to make sense of it, the staff member decided to let the thought go.

Back at her workstation, Linsey, now properly gloved, steadied her focus and resumed her task without delay.

Across the venue, Dolores-still locked in a tense exchange with competition staff-caught sight of Linsey's new

gloves from the corner of her eye.

She stopped, confused, and glanced at the staff member in front of her, who was still smiling pleasantly. Then

she asked, "Weren't you the one who said switching gloves would be unfair to the other designers? So what's with the sudden change?"

The staff member, who had been doing his best to keep Dolores calm, was caught off guard as well, surprised that Linsey had received a fresh pair of gloves so

soon.

"That can't be. The rules were finalized before the competition began. All contestants are supposed to use the same standard tools," he responded.

Dolores retorted, "What kind of nonsense rule is that supposed to be? We're talking about gloves, not handing

out brand-new T-shirts! That bucket's filled with ice water, and her gloves were drenched. You wouldn't let her switch them out-do you want our designer to get sick or something?"

Scrambling for a response, the staff member stammered, "Ms. Davidson, I truly had no idea this happened.

Someone must've acted without clearance."

Grabbing his walkie-talkie, he quickly radioed a colleague to get clarification.

It wasn't long before Dolores distinctly heard a voice crackle through the walkie-talkie. "The founder of the CR

Corporation gave the order himself. How could we possibly go against that? CR Corporation funded most of

this year's competition. And to be honest, he wasn't even favoring his own designer, so we didn't have much

room to object."

Chapter 660 Beats Sitting Around Doing Nothing

Dolores blinked, visibly stunned by what she had just heard.

Of all people, she hadn't expected Collin to be the one behind the delivery of fresh gloves to Linsey.

A flurry of questions raced through her mind. Had he somehow already guessed that Linsey was Contestant No.

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The idea seemed unlikely-completely implausible, even. The competition was built on strict anonymity. Only the assigned staffer knew which designer occupied which booth.

Still, the longer she mulled it over, the more uneasy she became. At that moment, the urge to march into the venue and pull Linsey out surged within her.

Without wasting time, she turned to the staff member and asked, "Does the founder of the CR Corporation know that Aurora is the designer representing my firm?"

Upon hearing that, the staff member quickly responded with confident certainty, "Ms. Davidson, I can promise you we've followed the anonymous competition guidelines to the letter. Each company's representative is only aware of their own designer's booth. There's absolutely no way for them to identify the designers from other companies!"

After a short breath, the staffer added, "It's likely he just saw a designer struggling and felt compelled to help. That's probably all it was."

Dolores gave a dry, skeptical laugh. There was no way Collin, of all people, would go out of his way for a stranger simply out of goodwill.

Elsewhere, inside a private lounge, Dustin had just walked an event organizer out the door after yet another round of flattering small talk aimed at Collin.

As the door clicked shut, he turned and studied his friend on the sofa, curiosity etched across his face.

Collin hadn't moved. His eyes stayed locked on the screen showing Linsey's booth.

With a confused frown, Dustin scratched his head.

What was Collin doing helping a designer affiliated with a rival company?

Sure, it was just a pair of gloves-but the fact that Collin had intervened personally made the act anything but meaningless.

Instead of confronting him about it, Dustin kept his questions to himself and quietly returned to his seat, choosing-for now-to watch in

silence.

Turning his attention away from Arthur's meticulous progress, Dustin shifted his gaze to Linsey's screen, drawn in by Collin's unwavering focus.

A small part of him began to wonder if there was something special-something distinct-about this designer that had captured Collin's interest, especially given how selective the man usually was.

For a fleeting moment, Dustin even entertained the idea that Collin believed this designer could potentially outshine Arthur, the seasoned expert they had flown in for this very competition.

That thought struck him as ridiculous almost immediately.

Arthur wasn't just skilled-he was a veteran in the fashion world. Surely, someone still in the middle of dyeing a basic white shirt couldn't possibly outdo him.

But just as he dismissed the notion, something unexpected happened. Dustin's breath caught.

The designer who had spent the entire time focused on dyeing suddenly paused and began to lift the shirt from the bucket, droplets of paint trailing off the hem. Rather than wring it out, she reached for a pair of scissors without hesitation and began snipping along both side seams of the still-damp fabric.

"Why is Contestant No. 3 cutting it up? Did they just give up and decide to play around?"

"That shirt's soaked-shouldn't they dry it first?"

"They don't have time for that! The round's almost over!"

"Well, at least they will look busy for the rest of the event. Beats sitting around doing nothing."

"What a complete waste-of time, of materials, of effort."

"Hold on-look at what they're doing now! They're stitching it!"

Carefully, Linsey separated the soaked shirt into two pieces and laid them out, smoothing them flat before suspending them carefully on her workstation.

Without missing a beat, she reached for a spool of dark thread, slid it cleanly through a needle, and tied off the end.



Leaning slightly over her workspace, she pressed one hand on the fabric for balance while guiding the needle with the other. She pierced the cloth with pinpoint accuracy, then brought the needle back out at another exact spot, already beginning the next step of her design.