

Zillionaire 691

Chapter 691 The Auction's About To Begin

Gorman gave a gentle smile. "The auction's about to begin. Let's head inside and find our seats."

"Alright," Linsey responded.

Together, they joined the slow stream of guests entering the venue.

Whether by coincidence or intentional design, Linsey and Gorman ended up seated right next to Collin.

"Ms. Bright."

The low voice caught Linsey off guard, making her heart skip a beat.

She turned calmly toward Collin, meeting his gaze without flinching. "What is it?"

This time, she didn't bother disguising her voice. It was unmistakably Linsey speaking.

Collin's eyes flickered. His gaze locked onto her; he was unwilling to look away.

She had changed over the past four years-he could feel it.

Her makeup was slightly different, maybe her demeanor too.

But the real difference was harder to define.

Maybe it was the time they lost-the years they should have spent together-that made her feel so unfamiliar now.

A quiet trace of sorrow crossed his face.

After a moment, he said with composure, "Tonight's auction has quite a few valuable pieces. If anything catches your eye,

I'll have it sent to you."

Gorman, sitting beside Linsey, frowned slightly at Collin's uncharacteristic boldness.

Linsey, too, was momentarily thrown off.

Just as she was about to respond, she noticed a familiar figure out of the corner of her eye.

"Collin, do you mind if I sit next to you? I don't know many people here, and Ivy suggested I stay close to you," Haven said

sweetly.

Linsey's expression instantly cooled. She turned her gaze forward, ignoring the scene unfolding beside her.

Collin hesitated—he had intended to decline—but thinking of Ivy and the fact it was just a seat, he nodded politely. "Sure."

Haven lit up at his reply.

Even though he had been so blunt with her earlier, she felt he still cared in some small way.

Once seated, she noticed Collin glancing off to the side.

Curious, she followed his gaze-and was stunned to find it fixed on the masked woman beside him.

Linsey's graceful presence and distinct aura made Haven's eyes widen.

She didn't overthink it. With a soft smile, she leaned toward Collin and asked, "Is it okay to wear a mask to tonight's event?"

I haven't seen anyone else doing it-only this lady here."

She didn't bother to lower her voice, so Linsey heard her clearly.

Her lips pressed into a thin line as she silently listened to their exchange, trying not to react.

At the same time, she recalled the conversation she had eavesdropped on earlier in the courtyard-the voices and the

words still fresh in her mind.

Collin pulled his gaze away from Linsey and answered evenly, "It's her choice."

Haven, still watching Collin closely, sensed the shift in his demeanor.

This wasn't the usual cold and distant Collin. He seemed conflicted, like he was holding back something-emotions he

didn't want to show.

When she noticed that, Haven's brows knitted slightly.

Then, just moments later, she caught him turning back to look at the masked woman again.

Chapter 692 Do You Like

The Painting

Haven felt certain-something was off.

Soon, the auction officially began.

The first item was brought onto the stage.

"Ladies and gentlemen, please take a look," the auctioneer announced. "Our opening item is an oil painting titled Country Road. What makes this piece extra special is that the artist is actually present with us tonight."

A wave of surprise rippled through the audience.

"The color palette is vibrant, and the technique is exceptional. The artist clearly has incredible talent."

"The artist's here? Tell us who it is!"

With a proud smile, the auctioneer revealed. "This painting is the work of none other than Haven Walton. She's recently returned."

Gasps and murmurs filled the room.

"I didn't see that coming! Miss Walton's quite the talent."

"Well then, I definitely need to make her acquaintance."

The auctioneer continued, clearly enjoying the moment, "Miss Walton, would you mind standing to greet our guests?"

Haven rose gracefully, accepting the microphone from a staff member. In a soft, composed voice, she said, "Good evening, everyone. I'm Haven Walton. It's a real honor to have my painting included in tonight's auction. Thank you for your warm appreciation."

Her appearance drew even more admiration from the crowd.

"Who would've thought-she's not just gifted, she's beautiful too!"

Someone spotted her seat beside Collin and pointed it out. "Look, she's sitting next to Mr. Riley! So, she knows him?"

"Mr. Riley's been a lone wolf for years. This is the first woman we've seen by his side."

Haven was delighted by the whispers and assumptions swirling around them.

With a modest smile, she responded sweetly, "Collin and I are just friends. Please don't take it the wrong way."

Collin grew faintly irritated on hearing the chatter.

But since Haven had already offered an explanation, he chose to stay quiet, not wanting to feed the gossip.

The auctioneer stepped in smoothly. "Thank you, Miss Walton."

Haven handed the microphone back and returned to her seat.

Leaning in close to Collin, she whispered apologetically, "I didn't expect them to mention us like that. But I explained it. I

hope you're not upset."

Collin's expression didn't waver. "I got it," he replied flatly, showing neither annoyance nor warmth.

But to Linsey, watching from the side, it looked far more intimate than it was.

Her breathing grew shallow, her fingers curling tightly in her lap.

Just then, Gorman leaned over and murmured, "Do you like the painting?"

Snapped out of her thoughts, Linsey almost dismissed it witho

smile. "I... It's alright."

thinking. But she caught herself. Instead, she gave a faint

Pulling herself together, she felt embarrassed. She shouldn't have let her jealousy cloud her judgment.

In truth, she hadn't even taken a proper look at the painting yet.

Gorman, watching her closely, gave a slow, amused smile. "Honestly, it's no more

than a beginner's piece. I'm not sure

what everyone's so impressed by."

Linsey blinked in surprise.

She turned to him and asked quietly, "Are you serious?"

Chapter 693 It's A Masterpiece!

Gorman looked deeply into Linsey's eyes and said, "I'm always serious when it comes to you."

Linsey's heart skipped a beat.

Had he already forgotten everything she told him? Otherwise, why would he suddenly say something like that again?

Feeling flustered and at a loss, Linsey chose to ignore him. She turned her focus back to the auction stage.

"We will start the bidding for the oil painting at \$1 million."

"\$1.5 million."

"\$2 million!"

The bidding continued, and by the time it reached three million, most of the bidders had backed off.

Haven began to grow restless.

She bit her lip anxiously. Then, a thought occurred to her. Leaning toward Collin, she whispered, "Collin, I've changed my mind. I don't want to sell the painting to just anyone. Could you help me win it? I'll pay you back later. Besides, it's for charity-so the money goes to a good cause."

Collin paused, then replied coolly, "You can bid for it yourself."

Haven's face fell at his blunt refusal. "But if I do that, people will talk. I'd rather avoid that kind of attention."

"\$3.5 million going once, twice."

Haven's eyes reddened with anxiety. "Collin, please."

Collin frowned. Ivy's voice echoed in his mind. She had asked him to look after Haven.

He exhaled silently, already regretting his agreement. After tonight, he would definitely have a serious talk with Ivy about getting dragged into this kind of mess.

Expression cold, he signaled to the assistant seated behind him. "\$5 million!" the assistant called out.

Gasps erupted across the venue.

"Mr. Riley placed a bid! He jumped straight to \$5 million!"

"She just said they're friends. Come on, there's clearly more going on there."

Linsey sat quietly, hearing the murmurs swirl around her.

In her heart, she couldn't disagree. The bond between Collin and Haven didn't feel like simple friendship.

They had almost gotten married once.

If Haven hadn't abruptly walked away from the wedding, she wouldn't have ended up marrying Collin.

The thought made Linsey's smile bitterly.

Collin ultimately secured the first item of the night.

Soon, the next item was brought on stage.

As soon as it appeared, Haven frowned and said in disbelief, "Why is a plain designer shirt being auctioned?"

Linsey glanced at her but didn't respond.

Right after Haven's remark, the atmosphere in the room shifted. The crowd buzzed with renewed energy.

"That's the winning piece from this year's design competition!"

"I missed Aurora's work at the show yesterday, but seeing it now-it's incredible!"

"Even at the competition, we only saw it on a screen. Seeing it in person tonight is a treat. Her color pairing is brilliant!"

"This should've been the main highlight of the auction. Compared to this, that painting earlier feels so underwhelming."

"Exactly! They're on completely different levels."

"Shh-keep your voice down. The only reason that painting got on the stage was because Haven is a Walton."

The mocking words sliced through the air, hitting Haven hard. Her face flushed with embarrassment and rising fury.

She turned to Collin again, her tone soft but aggrieved. "Collin, did you hear that? How can they say something so awful about my painting? How can that awful shirt be better than my art? My oil painting is real art-it's a masterpiece!"

Chapter 694 Is Ms. Aurora Bright In Attendance...

Collin looked at Haven, his expression unreadable. In a low voice, he said, "This design won a prestigious competition this

year. What do you think?"

On stage, the auctioneer spoke up again, "Is Ms. Aurora Bright in attendance tonight? If so, would you please stand and

greet everyone?"

Linsey pressed her lips together, preparing to tell Gorman she didn't want to reveal her identity.

But before she could speak, Gorman gently helped her to her feet.

In an instant, all eyes in the room turned to her-Linsey, standing in silence with her mask on.

"Did you watch the competition yesterday? She clearly said the design was inspired by her child. That made it obvious." "She looks so young... Hard to believe she's a mother."

"But look at her elegance. Even with the mask, I can tell she's beautiful."

Collin's expression shifted the moment he heard someone mention Aurora was a mother. A serious look clouded his eyes.

He was now sure-Aurora Bright was Linsey.

So... Linsey had a child?

His mind flashed back to the airport. That little girl who looked so much like Linsey-was she her daughter?

But then again... The girl had called Gorman Daddy.

Collin's chest tightened, his breathing subtly strained.

No. He didn't want to believe it.

The thoughts running wild in his head made his face grow noticeably tense.

Haven, annoyed that an unknown designer had suddenly stolen the spotlight, noticed the way Collin's expression changed

-and quietly began to think things over.

Just then, a staff member approached Linsey and handed her a microphone. Though she didn't want to speak, it was impossible to avoid it now.

Linsey lowered her gaze and adjusted her voice, speaking in a soft, composed tone. "Good evening, everyone. I'm the designer, Aurora Bright. The piece on stage was created under very challenging conditions, and I'm aware it isn't flawless. I hope whoever wins the piece won't be troubled by its imperfections. If any adjustments are needed later, I'll gladly make

them."

She then added with quiet sincerity, "If no one wishes to bid, I'll do my best to donate personally to the local charities in

Grester."

A curious voice from the audience rang out. "Ms. Bright, if you bid on your own design, aren't you basically paying for it and donating the funds yourself?"

Linsey smiled gently and replied, "Yes-but in return, I've earned a name for myself, and in this industry, that's priceless."

The crowd chuckled, warmed by her honesty.

Even though they couldn't see her face, there was something about her presence

and words that drew people in. No one seemed the least bit put off.

When Linsey finally sat back down, her polite smile disappeared. She gave Gorman a look of mild frustration-as if to say, "Why did you make me stand up?"

Gorman let out a soft laugh and said warmly, "You did great."

Catching Collin's sharp gaze from the seat nearby, Gorman paused briefly, then casually lifted his hand and tucked a loose strand of Linsey's hair behind her ear.

"It was slightly out of place," Gorman said lightly.

His gesture was so natural that Linsey didn't feel it crossed any lines.

Without giving it much thought, she adjusted her hair and said quietly, "I'll freshen up after the auction."

Chapter 695 I Have To Win

It

"We will begin the bidding for the championship piece by Ms. Aurora Bright at \$1 million."

As soon as the announcement echoed, the room went still.

Haven let out a small, mocking chuckle.

So, this was Aurora's masterpiece? She had expected something more. To her surprise, the starting price was the same as

hers.

What amused her even more-no one placed a bid.

Just as that thought crossed her mind, a voice rang out, loud and clear. "\$2 million!"

Haven's smile froze on her lips.

In the blink of an eye, the room burst to life with bids.

"\$3 million!"

"\$4 million!"

"\$5 million!"

"\$7 million!"

"\$8 million!"

Haven struggled to keep her expression steady.

Her painting had only sold for five million. Now, Aurora's piece was already at eight million.

And the real competition hadn't even started.

The auctioneer's voice cut through the murmurs. "\$8 million going once!"

Haven took a deep breath, forcing herself to stay calm. It was just eight million. Nothing to fuss about.

Then came a voice that silenced the room. "\$10 million!"

Gasps echoed all around.

"Did it just jump to \$10 million?"

"Who made that bid?"

Haven turned toward Aurora, stunned. The man beside her had raised his paddle.

She had no idea who he was, but his bold move left her speechless.

Linsey was equally shocked. She looked at Gorman, eyes wide. "Why did you raise it so high?"

Gorman's voice was firm. "I have to win it. I know how much this means to you. Better we keep it than lose it to someone

else."

Linsey's gaze softened, but her voice was unsure. "Still, \$10 million is no small- Before she could finish, a familiar voice cut in. "\$15 million."

Linsey turned sharply. Collin stood with his paddle raised, eyes fixed on the piece on stage.

In his deep, steady gaze, she saw something stronger than Gorman's resolve-an unshakable determination. He wanted

that piece badly.

Linsey's breath caught. She didn't understand what Collin was thinking.

But she wasn't the only one shocked.

"Mr. Riley is bidding too?"

"Of course! Aurora's design is one of a kind."

"But \$15 million? That's steep!"

"Come on. When you love something, price doesn't matter! And it's not like Mr. Riley is short on cash."

"Wait... Isn't that Mr. Green next to Aurora? So, they really know each other?" Meanwhile, Haven was in complete disbelief.

She never imagined Collin would bid on Aurora's piece-and personally, at that. His eagerness was crystal clear.

"Collin, you..." Haven began, unable to hold back.

"\$20 million," Gorman called out, raising his paddle once more.

The crowd was stunned silent.

Then Collin replied, cool and calm, "\$30 million."

Gorman didn't flinch. "\$40 million."

Linsey's brows pulled together. It wasn't about the artwork anymore. Now, it was

about something else entirely-neither

of them wanted to lose.

Chapter 696 Have You Developed Feelings For...

Linsey swiftly clasped Gorman's arm, her brow furrowed as she declared, "Gorman, I've already agreed to donate this piece

for auction. I'm indifferent about who wins it, just as long as the proceeds benefit those in need."

Gorman's eyes locked with hers as he firmly said, "Linsey, I need to secure your award-winning creation."

His determination only deepened, especially knowing that Collin was also competing for it-he was adamant about not

backing down.

At the auction, Collin hoisted his paddle once more, his authoritative voice echoing through the hall.
"\$50 million."

Haven seethed with frustration, puzzled by Collin's intense pursuit of the prize-winning piece crafted by Aurora.

A perplexing thought suddenly crossed her mind.

Was it possible that he had taken a fancy to Aurora?

Confusion and astonishment washed over Haven.

She couldn't resist a sidelong glance at Linsey, jealousy and bitterness swelling within her.

Impossible! Aurora was always masked-what could possibly draw Collin to her? Aurora stood like a statue, effortlessly drawing everyone's attention.

Yet, she consistently shielded her face with a mask. Perhaps she was hiding an unsightly visage-that must be why she

never showed her face!

As Haven dwelled on this notion, her features tightened. She seized Collin's wrist and begged, "Collin, stop bidding on this

piece. It's not worth that much."

Collin's expression darkened, his eyes cold as they fixed on Haven's hand clenching his arm. He curtly commanded,

"Release me."

Haven clenched her jaw and tightened her grip. "Collin, think this through. If Ivy were aware of how you're squandering

her lifetime of savings, she would be furious with you."

Meanwhile, Gorman quickly escalated the bid. "\$60 million!"

Collin's cold gaze sent a shiver of fear through Haven.

She inhaled sharply, locked eyes with him, and asked, "Collin, have you developed feelings for Aurora? What draws you to her? You've never seen her face, yet you seem intrigued. Just half an hour ago, you confessed you hadn't moved on from your ex-wife. What's really going on here?"

The auctioneer cast a look towards Collin, who remained silent, and announced, "\$60 million, going once."

A shadow fell over Collin's features at Haven's interrogation.

Unknown to others, Aurora's real identity was Linsey.

Collin puzzled over why Linsey chose to conceal her identity. Perhaps she wanted

to keep this secret from him, or maybe

there were other motives.

In any case, he was bound to keep Aurora's identity secret, to avoid dragging Linsey into any trouble.

"\$60 million, going twice."

Collin took a deep breath, seeking to steady his nerves.

He really had been a bit impulsive.

Given Haven's influential status, he knew he must avoid putting Linsey in jeopardy again, reminiscent of an incident four years prior.

Crucially, without Linsey by his side at the moment, he was unable to ensure her safety directly.

"Sold right here, \$60 million." The auctioneer struck the gavel, bringing the bidding to a close.

Gorman had triumphantly secured Aurora's prize-winning creation.

"Wow, \$60 million for this piece? Absolutely astonishing!"

Chapter 697 That Piece Is Stunning!

"Mr. Green actually paid such a large amount for a piece created by Aurora. It really makes me wonder if there might be more to their relationship."

"Why did Mr. Riley withdraw from the bidding? I was sure he'd go head-to-head with Mr. Gorman."

"Did you see that? Ms. Walton held him back from bidding more. It looks like their connection runs deeper than mere

friendship."

"It seems Mr. Riley genuinely appreciates Aurora's art. I was starting to think he might have fallen for..."

"Shh, keep it down. If Ms. Walton catches wind of that, it could upset her."

"Given the turn of events, if Ms. Walton is upset, Mr. Riley surely will be as well. We ought to treat Ms. Walton with extra

courtesy from now on."

These snippets of animated conversation reached Linsey's ears.

She maintained a stoic expression and cast her gaze downward, feeling that much had shifted during her absence from

Grester.

Initially, the changes in Collin had hurt, but the more she heard, the more reconciled she felt.

Linsey considered that her decision to attend the event tonight was validated.

She had clearly seen Collin's position and felt a sense of relief about her own emotions.

She anticipated that soon, Collin might not evoke any emotional response in her at all.

"Linsey, are you doing okay?" Gorman asked.

Linsey came back to the present and shook her head slightly. "I'm fine."

After a moment, she turned to Gorman and murmured, "Thank you for such a spirited bid on my piece, and for

contributing significantly to charity tonight."

Gorman's face warmed, his smile tender.

"

'As long as it brings you joy, it's completely worthwhile." He let out a teasing laugh and added, "It appears Collin admires your work as well. It's unfortunate he didn't continue to bid. With his means, he could have easily matched my offers. I'm

fortunate to have won your piece in the end. It seems you've quite the fan base." Linsey offered a weak smile and softly said, "Stop teasing."

Gorman continued to gaze at her, his smile unwavering. "I'm serious. Your talent alone would command a high price, regardless of me or Collin."

Moved by his earnest tone, Linsey found herself touched.

She faced Gorman, her smile broadening sincerely.

Her expression was undeniably warmer this time.

New items were successively presented on stage.

While the audience was abuzz with excitement and anticipation, Linsey felt detached.

Part of her disinterest derived from the lack of appealing items.

Yet another factor played a role. Despite Collin sitting quietly next to her, she found it difficult to completely disregard his

presence.

Linsey continually reminded herself that Collin had moved on.

Moreover, even without Haven's return to Collin's life, their divorce four years prior had set their paths apart.

She believed that their lives were meant to unfold separately, without overlap.

Time progressed swiftly, and soon, the final auction item was unveiled.

As the covering was removed, revealing the item inside the glass case, a collective gasp filled the room.

"Amazing! That piece is stunning!"

"It's clear why this is the auction's last piece. It's truly magnificent."

"Who could be worthy of such an exquisite necklace?"

Linsey was caught by the comments, her attention drawn to the stage. In an

instant, her composed expression transformed

into one of astonishment.

Chapter 698 This Necklace Is Truly One-of-a-kind

A breathtaking diamond necklace glittered under the stage lights. Even from afar, Linsey could clearly see the intricate, one-of-a-kind patterns etched into its surface.

Every delicate pattern revealed the soft, natural texture of uncut diamonds, glowing with an elegant sheen.

She couldn't look away. The necklace held her completely spellbound.

Just a seat away, Collin caught the subtle shift in Linsey's expression.

It had been years-four, to be exact-since he had seen that kind of light in her eyes.

His pulse quickened without warning, and his chest felt inexplicably warm.

The auctioneer's voice cut through the quiet awe. "Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to present tonight's crowning jewel, the Star of the Desert. This extraordinary piece was created by master designer Amy Estrada, who dedicated five years to perfecting it. Crafted from the rare Speossau diamonds, this necklace is truly one-

of-a-kind."

"No wonder it's so dazzling!"

"Even if I walk away with nothing tonight, just seeing this in person makes the trip worth it."

"There's maybe a handful of people here who can afford to bid on something like that."

"Wait, this reminds me-wasn't it a few years back that Mr. Riley supposedly dropped a billion on a necklace for his wife? Sound familiar?"

"Some said that was just gossip, though."

"True or not, if Ms. Walton shows the slightest interest, Mr. Riley could easily take home this piece, too."

"Now I'm really curious to see what he does."

As the voices around her buzzed with curiosity, Linsey felt a sudden chill replace the excitement that had just begun to build in her chest.

Only a handful of people knew the truth behind the story-that four years ago, the founder of CR Corporation really did spend a billion dollars on a necklace.

Back then, right after she married Collin, she hadn't yet discovered that her husband was the mysterious and powerful founder of CR Corporation.

Back when the rumor first surfaced, Linsey couldn't help but suspect Collin might be behind it.

Now, with the benefit of hindsight, she realized the signs had been there all along.

Plenty of hints had slipped through his actions, but her own tangled emotions had kept her from seeing the truth-that Collin was the man behind CR Corporation.

What was more, during that time, Collin had still been confined to a wheelchair, making it nearly impossible for her to associate him with someone so influential.

A flicker of irony crossed Linsey's eyes as the memory settled in.

Even after four long years, the sting of betrayal hadn't completely dulled. The pain still tightened around her chest whenever she revisited that chapter.

"Do you like the necklace, Linsey?" Gorman's voice cut into her spiral of thoughts.

She took a moment before blinking slowly and answering in a composed tone, "Not really."

She told the lie without a moment's hesitation.

Truthfully, she found the necklace captivating. But accepting another gift from Gorman was something she wasn't willing to do.

After considering for a moment, Gorman added, "To me, it looks like it was made for you. It reflects the grace and quiet strength you carry."

His comment caught Linsey slightly off guard. She let out a soft, almost amused breath and replied, "Were you not listening to the auctioneer earlier? This necklace is considered a once-in-a-lifetime piece. The real question is whether I'm even good enough to wear it, not the other way around. If anyone overheard you, they'd probably think I was full of myself."

Chapter 699 You've Already Spent Enough...

A quiet chuckle escaped Gorman as he said, "Let them talk. Anyone who thinks you don't deserve that necklace

clearly doesn't recognize beauty or value when they see it."

Rather than continuing the pointless back-and-forth, Linsey chose to shift a topic.

After a brief pause, she spoke more seriously. "You've already spent enough tonight. This necklace is only going

to get more expensive. There's no need to throw caution to the wind."

Gorman gave her a respectful nod, but then, out of nowhere, he burst into laughter.

The sudden reaction caught Linsey off guard. "What's so funny?" she asked with a hint of confusion.

"It's nothing." Gorman waved a hand dismissively as his laughter faded.

What he didn't share was the thought that had just crossed his mind-Linsey had sounded like a wife reminding her husband not to overspend.

Still, he kept that thought tucked away. Saying it aloud would only irritate her, and he wasn't about to push his

luck.

On the other side, Collin sat still, though his attention had been drifting toward Linsey without him realizing it.

His eyes were drawn to the way she and Gorman interacted, calm and familiar.

Each time he imagined Linsey might have already had a daughter carrying her features with Gorman, a sharp pang and bitterness tightened in his chest.

If that child truly existed, then whatever chance he still held of reconciling with Linsey was gone for good.

In that scenario, he would spend the rest of his life watching her build a future with someone else, quietly carrying that regret wherever he went.

Just then, Haven leaned closer, her eyes still fixed on the necklace. "Collin, isn't this piece absolutely breathtaking?"

Snapped out of his thoughts, Collin quickly straightened and replied in an even tone, "It's the centerpiece of

the night. It's meant to impress."

The lukewarm response made Haven's smile falter.

She tightened her lips, then deliberately added, "You know, my birthday's in just a

little over two weeks. It'll be the first time I celebrate it back in Grester, which makes it feel especially important."

Though Collin's mind wandered elsewhere, his face betrayed nothing. "Is that so?" he responded, his voice steady and even.

Haven, picking up on his lack of enthusiasm, grew increasingly uneasy. His continued indifference gnawed at her patience.

She believed she had everything a man like Collin could possibly want-grace, intelligence, and charm-yet none of it seemed to matter to him.

In her mind, she had already dropped enough hints. Any man with a shred of decency would have taken the cue and offered to gift her that necklace for her birthday.

For someone like Collin, securing the necklace should have been effortless.

Money wasn't the issue. As the founder of CR Corporation, he could buy out the entire auction if he pleased.

What truly mattered was whether he wanted to make that gesture.

On stage, the auctioneer picked up the pace and addressed the crowd. "Esteemed guests, we'll begin the bidding for the Star of the Desert diamond necklace at \$100 million!"

The atmosphere in the room shifted. Whispers spread, and expressions changed. With that price, many of the admirers silently pulled back, losing their interest.

It wasn't surprising-most could only dream of competing at that level.

Moments passed before someone finally broke the silence. "\$110 million."

Another voice followed. "\$120 million."

Then came another. "\$130 million."

The bidding climbed slowly, each number drawing more attention. Those seated farther back craned their necks, eager to witness just how far it would go.

"\$200 million!" someone shouted.

"\$250 million," the next bidder said without a moment's hesitation.

A curious voice from the crowd suddenly rang out. "Isn't it odd? Mr. Riley and Mr. Green haven't made a single

move."

Chapter 700 We're Going

To Win It!

"Mr. Green and Mr. Riley probably just don't like this necklace."

"That can't be right. I'm quite sure that I heard Ms. Walton say the Star of the Desert is beautiful she must like

it to have said that."

"Well, Aurora didn't seem all that interested. Perhaps that's why Mr. Green hasn't raised his paddle *

Slowly but steadily, the price climbed to three hundred million dollars.

Many of the wealthy bidders began to back out upon realization that they couldn't keep up.

The Star of the Desert was quite beautiful, but they couldn't afford it.

Soon, there was only one bidder left, and the woman at his side was practically shaking with excitement.
"We're going to win it!"

The auctioneer smiled at this and said, "\$350 million, going once!"

The auctioneer's words had barely left his mouth when the two men on either side

of Linsey raised their paddles at the same time.

"\$1 billion," Collin said.

"\$400 million," Gorman said.

Although both of them had spoken at the same time, Collin's bid of one billion completely drowned out

Gorman's offer.

"Am I hearing right? \$1 billion? Seriously!"

"You heard right."

"Four years ago, I missed seeing Mr. Riley spend a billion on a necklace. Today I've witnessed it with my own

eyes."

"I knew Mr. Riley would bid on it the moment Ms. Walton said she liked it!"

"That's what you expect from a top tycoon like him. He spent a billion dollars without batting an eye."

Even the auctioneer appeared momentarily dazed.

However, he didn't stay that way for long, as he had seen his fair share of surprises in auctions. Regaining his composure, he said, "Currently, Mr. Riley is the highest bidder with a bid of \$1 billion."

Gorman hadn't been expecting such a move from Collin.

Of course he expected competition from him, but the force of that competition shook Gorman

He cursed silently at Collin's unexpected move.

Linsey, too, was shocked by Collin's one-billion bid,

She knew a billion dollars meant nothing to someone like Collin.

What surprised Linsey was that Collin had called out such an amount only because Haven liked the necklace.

It finally dawned on her that someone in his position could give anyone a billion-dollar gift on a whim.

A bitter smile tugged at the corners of Linsey's lips. Collin must really care about Haven.

Linsey's chest tightened at this realization, and the urge to flee threatened to overwhelm her. She wanted nothing more than to escape the scene of Collin showering Haven with affection.

However, in the end her reason won over her emotions.

She kept her cool by reminding herself that this wasn't a big deal, as there was nothing between her and Collin

anymore.

It was therefore his choice to decide who he gifted things to.

Haven, in contrast to Linsey's mood, was ecstatic.

Her heart pounded with exhilaration at Colin's grand gesture.

Just a moment ago, Collin had been very cold to her, leaving her to believe he didn't care about her.

However, now she believed she had just misunderstood him. He seemed to be the kind of man who spoke with actions rather than words.

Haven believed she was finally going to get a taste of what it felt like to be the center of attention.

She was sure the Star of the Desert would be hers.

Linsey took a deep breath and turned to Gorman. "I..."