

Zillionaire 771

Chapter 771 Drinking Milk Isn't Enough

Collin nodded seriously. "You're too young for us to settle this with a physical contest. Let us try another method to determine the winner."

Zander immediately looked interested. Curiously, he asked, "What method?"

Collin didn't reply immediately. Instead, he lifted Zander over to the sofa.

Zander casually rested his hands on Collin's shoulders, but there was something oddly familiar about the whole

situation.

Mommy often held him like this. However, it was different because Mommy wasn't as tall as this bad man.

This man's grip was firm and strong while Mommy's hold was soft and gentle.

Also, he liked how Mommy smelt. It was a familiar scent.

This man's scent, however, was a completely alien one, but he didn't find it unpleasant.

*Zander had always watched enviously as Gorman lifted Zenia playfully into the air.

He had always wanted to experience the same, but Gorman had always told him that he was the older one and

shouldn't compete with Zenia.

This was the first time Zander had experienced such a thrilling height.

"Did you drink a lot of milk to grow this tall?" Zander asked curiously.

Collin smiled, amused by Zander's question. "Drinking milk isn't enough. You need to also exercise regularly,"

Collin answered.

"Hey, kid, I lifted you high too. Why am I not getting the same attention he is getting?" Dustin interrupted.

Zander shot Dustin an uninterested glance, then scoffed and turned back to Collin. He leaned comfortably against Collin, showing that he no longer hated him as much as he used to. However, this amnesty didn't apply

to Dustin as Zander still disliked him.

Dustin watched on in disbelief at the casual way in which Zander had discarded his enmity with Collin.

The kid's change of heart was way too quick.

Just moments ago, he and Collin had both been heavily disliked by Zander. Now,

it seemed like Zander didn't want to let Collin go.

Collin soon sat down and put Zander in his lap.

< Channel 775 tonning this sent En

"Have you had anything to eat? grow you like now to get you something to eat Collin when he took out a tissue to wipe Zander's tears.

It was when Collin wiped his face that Zander realized that he had been crying

His face immediately reddened in embarrassment, and he hurriedly got off Collin's lap and sat upright by

himself on the sofa

"I'm not hungry. I just want to duel with you," Zander replied.

However, his stomach seemed to disagree with this as it growled.

Dustin burst into loud laughter at this. However, a warning glare from Collin immediately shot him up.

Still, Zander had caught notice of this, and he seemed to grow smaller with embarrassment.

Collin called over his assistant and said, "Go get some breakfast suitable for a child. Hurry up."

The assistant bowed and then went to do as he had been told.

Zander was totally fascinated by Collin's ability to give orders to his subordinate.

He stared in awe at the retreating figure before turning back to Collin with something of reverence in his eyes.

"Sir, why does that person listen to you?" Zander innocently asked.

Collin looked slightly taken aback by the question. He, however, casually replied, "Because he works for me. He's expected to do everything I ask."

This kid who had just called him a bad man not long ago was now treating him with respect.

Were all kids this fickle-minded?

Chapter 772 He'll Tell Me When He's Ready-

Zander looked up at Collin, eyes wide with curiosity. "Do you have a lot of people working for you? Do they

beat up bad guys for you?"

Collin grinned, calm and confident. "Of course. Every single one of them knows what they're doing."

"Wow!" Zander's face lit up with pure admiration. "Sir, you're awesome!"

Dustin snorted and teased, "Took you long enough to realize. Weren't you the one talking about challenging him

earlier?"

Zander froze like he had been caught, then puffed out his chest and tightened his little fists. "I'm still small right now. But when I grow up, I'll have my own crew. Then I'll come back and challenge him for real!"

Collin reached over and softly ruffled Zander's hair. "But why do you even want to challenge me, huh?"

Zander went completely quiet, his lips sealed shut like he was guarding a secret.

Collin gave him a long look and asked gently, "Your mom told you not to say anything?"

"You've got it wrong!" Zander shouted, then quickly looked away. His little eyes darted left and right. "She doesn't even know I came to challenge you. I didn't say anything."

Collin nodded like he understood. "Alright then. Since you're putting the challenge on hold, I'll take you home

after breakfast."

Zander turned his head with a dramatic huff. "Nope! I'm staying right here. From now on, I'm watching you

closely!"

"What?" Collin tilted his head, confused.

Zander narrowed his eyes with determination. "I'm gonna figure out your weak spot. That way, when I'm older,

I'll definitely beat you!"

Collin laughed, clearly amused. Dustin sighed and shook his head. "You little troublemaker. Why's your brain always stuck on fighting?"

"I'm not a troublemaker!" Zander shot back, clearly offended.

Collin's eyes twitched with interest. He asked smoothly, "Oh? Then what is your name?"

Zander's face changed fast. "Not telling you!" he said, then his eyes darted around like he just remembered something. "Wait! I gotta pee. Where's the bathroom?"

Collin pointed down the hallway. "You okay to go by yourself, or need a hand?" he asked kindly.

"No! I can do it alone!" Zander jumped off the couch and hurried off on his tiny legs. Halfway to the bathroom, he spun around and warned like a little general, "Don't follow me! I need privacy, got it?"

Without saying another word, he rushed into the bathroom, slammed the door shut, and locked it tight.

Dustin, still sitting on the couch, glanced over at Collin and said confidently, "He's definitely making a call in

there."

While talking, Dustin leaned forward, starting to get up, and lowered his voice. "Collin, let's see who the kid's calling. Maybe we'll finally figure out who his mom is. I saw he's got a smartwatch-it probably makes calls."

Collin stayed cool, and calmly placed a hand on Dustin's knee, nudging him to sit back down.

Dustin looked confused. "Collin, what's the deal?"

Collin spoke gently. "If he finds out we're eavesdropping, he's gonna be pissed."

"Collin, since when do we care if a kid gets mad? He's just-" Dustin started, clearly not getting it.

But before he could finish, Collin cut in, his voice calm and serious. "He might actually be my kid."

Dustin stopped cold, his eyes widening just a little in shock. Collin looked him straight in the eye and went on after a short pause. "If he's mine... I don't want him to hate me the first time we meet. I've already missed the beginning of his life."

He let out a long breath, fingers laced and tightening a little. "Even if he's not mine, we can't just ignore what he said and spy on him. That's messed up."

Dustin hadn't expected Collin to think that deep, that fast.

He opened his mouth again, still not ready to let it go. "Then how are we supposed to find out who he is? The kid's sharp as hell-he won't say a word, and we've got nothing to go on."

Collin's face softened out of nowhere as he thought about how much Zander looked like him. "There's no need to push. I'll wait. He'll tell me when he's ready."

Chapter 773 Mommy Won't Believe That

When Zander locked the bathroom door, he made sure there was no sound coming from outside.

He then tapped on his watch a couple of times.

Soon, Zenia's hushed voice came through the watch. "You aren't back yet, Zander?"

Whispering so he couldn't be heard, Zander said, "The bad man is a tough nut to crack. I need more time."

"But if you're not back soon, Mommy would know you're gone," Zenía said nervously.

"If Mommy asks, just tell her I went to play with Jimmie."

"Who's Jimmie?" Zenia asked curiously.

Zander without hesitation lied. "It's a friend I made here in Grester. Just tell Mommy that. Don't change the

story!"

Zenia, however, was quite hesitant. "We've only been in Grester for a few days, and we've mostly been at the hotel. How then could you have made a new friend? Mommy won't believe that."

"Just do as I say. I'll be back once I've dealt with the bad man," Zander said earnestly.

Then, Lindsey's voice came through on Zenia's end, curiously asking, "Who are you talking to, sweetie, and

where's Zander?"

Zander immediately looked panicked.

He fumbled with his watch, trying to disconnect the call.

His mother was already asking about him! He had no idea if Zenia would be able to cover for him.

It was barely more than a minute before Zenia called him back. Zander hesitated

to answer the call, scared of who could be on the other end.

His heart raced as he froze in fear.

He waited for the call to end on its own.

When the watch stopped buzzing, he sighed in relief.

The sigh was barely out of his mouth when his watch began to buzz again.

This time, to Zander's dismay, it was Mommy calling!

Terror washed over Zander as he watched the watch buzz. Zenia wasn't good at lying. She had never lied to

Mommy!

15-55

He couldn't bring himself to answer the call.

Zander's mind raced as he tried to find a way out of the mess he was in.

His thought turned to the man outside. Initially, he had not believed what Zenia had said, but after meeting the man today, he couldn't deny that they looked alike.

What was even stranger was how he felt when he was with this man.

He didn't feel like the man was a bad person. Instead, he felt like he was a good person.

Zander needed to investigate further, so he had to stay here.

He needed to understand why they looked alike even if he couldn't teach him a lesson.

With that thought in mind, Zander declined Linsey's call.

He turned off his watch, ensuring no more calls could come through.

He then headed for the door.

As he passed the sink, he flushed and made a show of washing his hands.

When he opened the door, Collin and Dustin turned to him.

"Did you wash your hands?" Collin asked.

"Yes, I did," Zander replied, proudly showing his hands.

A soft smile tugged at the corner of Collin's lips. Finally he said, "Come have breakfast."

Zander, who was quite famished, couldn't resist anymore. He instantly gave in.

"Thank you, sir," he politely said, then reached for the chocolate cake, eagerly unwrapped it, and began to

devour it.

Collin watched Zander ravenously consume the cake with a thoughtful expression on his face.

Dustin watched Collin, a meaningful look on his face.

It was one thing for the boy to look like Collin, but even their taste in food mimicked each other.

Collin had never been fond of sweets except when it came to chocolate. Collin always did indulge when it came to chocolate cake.

How could two people who were not related share so many similarities?

Chapter 774 Who Is This

Person

With each passing moment, Dustin's certainty deepened that Zander was none other than Collin's flesh and

blood.

Without a word, he pulled out his phone and fired off a text to Collin, seated just a few feet away. "I'll eat my

hat if this kid isn't yours!"

Collin read the message. His eyes flicked to Dustin, but he remained motionless, ignoring the message.

Yet beneath his calm exterior, Collin harbored his own suspicions about Zander's true parentage, suspicions he was now determined to put to rest.

One crucial question burned in his mind. Was he truly the boy's father?

After a tense pause, he tapped out a response. "Set it up. We're doing a paternity test."

Meanwhile, across town, Linsey's interrogation of Zenia was in full swing.

"Where has Zander gone?" she demanded, her voice tight with worry.

Normally, her children were models of good behavior, but since their return to Grester, chaos had become their new norm. First, Zander's unauthorized outing with Zenia had ended with her escorted to the police station.

Now, Zander himself had vanished, leaving Zenia to cover his tracks.

Worse still, he had disabled his smartwatch, severing their digital lifeline.

What could be so important that he couldn't answer her calls?

Did he have any idea of the panic he had caused?

Each unanswered question stoked Linsey's anger, transforming her gentle nature into an icy resolve.

Caylee, a silent observer, felt a chill ripple through her at Linsey's expression.

Had Zander sought out Collin once more?

The thought drained the color from her face.

The room fell into an uneasy hush.

Careful not to scare Zenia, Linsey took a calming breath. "Sweetheart," she began gently, "I need you to be honest. Where is your brother, and why isn't he picking up? I'm not angry, just terribly worried. He's even

switched off his watch."

Tears welled in Zenia's eyes, guilt etched across her small face. "He... he went to see the bad man," she

confessed, her voice barely more than a whisper

At those words, Caylee's heart lurched.

Zander had gone to Collin!

It had to be because of Gorman's manipulations.

Sweat beaded on her forehead as she dreaded Linsey's reaction.

Linsey's brow furrowed in confusion. "Bad man? Who is this person?"

She recalled Zander's earlier tale of a "bad man" taking Zenia, though the police had assured her it was mersiy a helpful stranger. With Zenía unharmed, she had let it drop.

But now, this "bad man" resurfaced, piquing her curiosity,

The children had been confined to the hotel since arriving in Crester. How could they have encountered anyone?

Gently, Linsey touched Zenia's shoulder. "Tell me, who is this bad man? Why did your brother go to see him?

Zenia's words tumbled out in a rush. "The bad man is the one who hurt you and made you cry. Caylee said

he's the boss of CR Corporation. His name is Collin Riley."

Linsey's jaw clenched, and the blood drained from her face.

Caylee blurted out, "It's my doing, Linsey. I told them. That night you and Mr.

Green were at the banquet, Mr. Green instructed me to tell the kids Collin had upset you. The kids only wanted to protect you. I should never

Chapter 775 The Results

Came In

Most of what followed blurred into static in Linsey's ears.

The so-called "bad man" the kids kept referring to? It was Collin.

That meant... Zander was with him right now?

The realization hit her like a blow. Her legs faltered beneath her, and she staggered backward, lightheaded.

"Linsey!" Caylee gasped. She lunged forward, arms wrapping around her. Her voice cracked with remorse. "This

happened because of me. I'm so sorry."

"Mama!" Zenia's tiny arms latched around Linsey's waist, trembling. Her words tumbled out between sobs. "Don't be mad at us. We didn't mean to hide it. Zander just wanted to go teach that bad man a lesson!"

A sharp ring filled Linsey's ears. Each breath grew harder than the last, tight and shallow. Panic clawed at her

chest.

Zander's resemblance to Collin was undeniable. All it would take was one look- Collin would start asking

questions.

Now that the two of them were together, a paternity test wasn't just possible-it was inevitable.

Linsey had spent years carefully hiding the truth, keeping her children far from Collin's world. She did everything to prevent this exact moment.

She had always known that bringing the kids back to Grester meant Collin would find out eventually.

She just didn't think it would happen this fast.

Zenia's tear-streaked cheeks lifted toward her. "Mommy, please don't be mad. I'll text Zander and tell him to come home right now."

Blankness swept over Linsey's expression. It took her a few long seconds before her thoughts came back into

focus.

The storm behind her eyes slowly faded, giving way to a quiet, unnerving stillness.

A faint smile curved Linsey's lips as she smoothed Zenia's hair. "Let him stay, if that's what he's chosen.

There's no need to call him back."

Caylee stared at her, clearly stunned. "Linsey, I—"

She meant to offer help. She meant to bring Zander back herself since it was her mistake to begin with.

But Linsey cut her off before the words could form. Her voice was steady. "Don't bother."

Turning her attention fully to Caylee, she said gently, "We've been through this stick to the plan Follow through with what Gorman tells you. Your grandmother's surgery needs to happen without delay"

Caylee shook her head hard, tears clinging to her lashes. "But Zander's still with Collin. We can't just leave him."

"If we brought him back now, I'd feel even less secure," Linsey replied quietly. Her fingers trailed over Zerial's cheek with care. "Help me pack. Dolores found a new place. We'll check out and move tonight."

Back at Collin's place, Dustin entered with an envelope in hand-the test results. Collin didn't glance up right away. He was seated on the floor, deeply focused on building a plastic block tower with Zander.

Though barely half an hour had passed, Collin was already impressed by the kid's sharp mind.

The toy set was meant for much older kids, but Zander maneuvered the pieces with a level of ease and logic

that spoke volumes.

Whoever raised him had done an exceptional job.

"Collin, here it is. The results came in." Without hesitation, Dustin moved closer and passed the envelope to

Collin.

Normally, it would have taken days before a test like this came back.

But this wasn't a typical case-the request had come from the founder of CR Corporation, and the lab responded accordingly, pushing everything aside to fast-track the results with absolute precision.

Chapter 776 Is Your Mom's Name Linsey Brooks

Collin had expected anxiety to hit him the moment the envelope reached his hands.

Oddly enough, a strange stillness took over instead.

Maybe, deep down, he had already accepted the truth-that this boy was his.

With measured patience, he flipped through the pages until his eyes landed on the final result.

Across from him, Dustin studied Collin's face, searching for some clue. When none came, he assumed the test had ruled out a connection and felt an unexpected twinge of regret.

"So... it's not a match?" he asked, disappointed.

"He's mine," Collin said quietly, as if confirming something he had always known.

Dustin stood frozen, caught off guard by the answer. His eyes blinked rapidly, struggling to catch up-until a grin stretched across his face.

"You're serious? This little guy is actually yours? That's wild!"

Without a word, Collin extended the document to him, offering silent confirmation.

With barely contained excitement, Dustin rifled through the pages, his enthusiasm bubbling over like a proud parent reading their own child's name in print.

"Wow, Collin, I still can't believe it-you actually have a kid!" Dustin exclaimed.

On the floor nearby, Zander paused, his gaze bouncing between the two adults. "What are you talking about, sir?"

he asked Collin, brows knitting in confusion.

Dustin leaned forward, ready to fill him in. "Calling him sir? You ought to-"

Before the words fully left his mouth, Collin interjected calmly, "We're just discussing something work-related."

Dustin shot Collin a surprised look, but the latter seemed calm-like this was all part of the plan.

So Dustin kept quiet. It wasn't his place to explain things to the kid.

After all, this wasn't just any kid he was Collin's flesh and blood.

Watching Zander continue with his blocks, Collin casually asked, "Still not going to tell me who your mom is?"

Zander turned, meeting his gaze directly. "Nope!" he replied without hesitation.

The moment he let the word fly, he clenched his fists in his lap. If this man figured out who his mom was, there was no telling what he would try to do-maybe even take him away from her. That couldn't happen. He

wouldn't let it.

Outside, the sky was deepening into dusk. It was nearly time to head home.

Just then, a memory stirred in Dustin's mind-the woman he had spotted at the hospital a few weeks back.

Back then, she was carrying Zander in her arms. No doubt about it now. She had to be the boy's mother.

"Collin, I'm telling you-I've seen the boy's mom before," Dustin said, certainty laced through every word.

Without reacting much, Collin fixed him with a calm stare. "The woman you saw probably wasn't her."

That response made Dustin blink. "Wait, what?" he asked, confused.

Then Collin turned to Zander and asked in the same cool tone, "Hey kid, is your mom's name Linsey Brooks?"

Dustin stood there for a beat, wondering if he had misheard entirely.

Had Collin really just said Linsey was the kid's mother?

With his jaw half-dropped, Dustin struggled to ask if his friend had completely lost

it.

But then, something shifted. Zander's eyes went wide as he stared at Collin, his face frozen with disbelief.

The unspoken message in that look was loud and clear. "How do you know?"

Still, the boy rallied quickly, slipping into an innocent tone as he said, "Sir, who's that? My mom doesn't go by

that name."

Collin didn't blink. His gaze stayed locked on the kid, and a faint smile tugged at the corner of his mouth.

The kid wasn't telling the truth. That much was obvious.

Whether he was making this call on his own or following a script Linsey had given him, Collin couldn't quite

tell.

Meanwhile, Dustin remained rooted to the spot, mentally trying to untangle the mess that had just landed in

his laps.

Chapter 777 I Need To Hear

It From Her

Collin had somehow realized Linsey was the child's mother, but Dvatio had no idea how he had questioned it

Just recently, Collin even insisted that Linsey was the one who gave birth to Comets Gogger

And now? Things were spiraling even further into confusion

The more Dustin mulled it over, the less it made sense. He forced a strained smile, lewied in a tote done, and muttered, "Collin, seriously. This kid has never even met Linsey"

His memory was clear-both times he ran into Zander, the boy had been accompanied by the wa

Without a change in expression, Collin gave Dustin a look, then turned to the child, "Take your time to va
"I'll wait until you decide to stop pretending"

33

But Collin wasn't just focused on the boy. His thoughts shifted to Zerts the late gri he had me the
separate times.

There was a chance she was his too.

Gorman's earlier words felt like they were designed just to get under his skin

Zander kept turning the blocks in his hands, his fingers dumsy with tension. Then he shot to his feet and
blurted out, "I'm going home. Mommy's probably worried." Collin stood slowly, his voice calm and
deliberate. "I'll give you a lift."

Zander recoiled at once. "No, thanks! I can do it on my own!*

Collin didn't say anything, but his eyes stayed locked on the boy, which only made Zander feel more on
edge.

That soft, unreadable smile stayed on the man's face, and Zander couldn't figure out what it meant or
what to

do next.

His mouth clamped shut, and the tightness around his jaw made it obvious just how nervous he was
feeling In a gentler voice, Collin spoke with care. "You're not just bright-you're one of the sharpest kids
I've come across. That's exactly why I want to meet your mother. I'm curious what kind of woman raised
someone like you."

A flicker of anxiety crept into Zander's eyes.

There was no way he would let that bad man anywhere near his mom. She would get upset again. He couldn't let that happen

"No!" he yelled, and before anyone could react, he dashed out the door.

For a moment, Destin didn't budge, completely thrown off. Then he finally turned and said, "so

Collin, untried, gave his answer without hesitation. "Go after my son."

what do we

That caught Dustin off guard. "What we're really doing that?" he asked. "Didn't you say earlier that we should give

the kid his space

His expression never shifted. That was before he was sure," said Collin, his voice steady. "Now I know the truth. That boy is Linsey's and mine. I need to see her. I need to hear it from her."

Without saying more, he headed for the door, a few of his men falling into step behind him.

Dustin stayed back only a second longer, trying to process what was happening. He couldn't afford to miss this. He needed to see the truth for himself.

He broke into a jog, catching up quickly, all the while wondering if what they suspected was real.

Had Linsey already been carrying Collin's child when they divorced four years ago?

If Linsey had truly been pregnant back then, there was no way Dolores-her closest friend-didn't know.

Still, Dolores had never said a single word to him.

That silence stung more than he expected. To Dolores, it seemed Linsey always came first.

Trailing behind a small child wasn't exactly a challenge.

But the moment they spotted Zander climbing into a taxi on his own, Collin blinked in disbelief.

Meanwhile, Dustin's reaction was much louder. "Wait-your four-year-old just flagged down a taxi? What kind of genius-level kid does that?"

Chapter 778 Why Did You Follow Me

With his eyes locked on the taxi up ahead, Collin allowed a quiet smile to stretch across his lips. "The kid picked that up from Linsey."

The silence that followed was brief. When he finally looked down, he murmured, "She must have gone through

hell these past few years."

Given the choice, he would have preferred Linsey had leaned on Gorman during her time abroad.

Bringing two children into the world and raising them alone could not have been easy.

From the passenger seat, Dustin glanced over, the confidence in Collin's voice prompting a question. "How do you know Linsey is the mother?"

Without blinking, Collin returned the look, his tone steady and firm. "Linsey's the only woman I have ever been with. If it's not her, then who else would it be?"

A different face popped into Dustin's mind-the same woman he had seen twice with Zander. Her name remained a mystery, but the memory stuck.

"We'll get answers once we're there," Dustin said quietly.

It wasn't long before their car pulled in behind the taxi at the entrance of a hotel.

With his eyebrows drawn together, Collin glanced sideways at Dustin, who looked just as thrown off.

"What's he doing at a hotel?" Dustin asked, confused.

Rather than answer, Collin opened the door. "We'll find out soon enough."

Up ahead, Zander was already jumping out of the taxi. The second Collin saw him, the tension in his chest

eased.

He had been uneasy ever since Zander insisted on heading back alone. Now, as he watched the boy rush toward the hotel, those worries faded. Without wasting a second, Collin and Dustin followed.

Every step toward the entrance made Collin's pulse pick up speed. He was moments away from seeing Linsey. And if the child was truly hers, then everything would change.

They watched as Zander entered the hotel and stepped into an elevator.

Both men stood at the entrance, eyes fixed on the floor number lighting up above the doors.

"Stay put. If the kid comes back down, let me know immediately." Collin gave instructions to his men before stepping into the elevator.

"Understood, sir."

Without hesitation, Dustin stepped into the elevator alongside Collin

The moment the doors opened on the designated floor, they filed out one after the other, scanning each hallway for signs of Zander

"You head that way." Dustin said, pointing down one corridor.

A single nod from Collin was all it took before he moved swiftly in that direction.

Uncertainty still lingered. If they did not spot Zander soon, they would be forced to ask the front desk for help.

Linsey would not like either option, whether it was following the child or asking at the front desk.

Still, Collin couldn't afford to hesitate. He needed to find her. He needed answers. And he needed them now.

A sudden cry echoed down the hall-fragile, panicked, and unmistakably Zander's. "Mommy Mommy, where did you go? Mommy!"

Collin's heart jumped. He took off in a sprint toward the voice without a second of doubt. He turned a corner and spotted a room with the door thrown wide open, Zander's frantic sobs spilling out from within.

Crossing the threshold without pause, Collin stepped into the room and found Zander stumbling around, red-eyed and disoriented.

"Mommy!" Hearing someone enter, Zander spun around. But the face he saw wasn't the one he wanted. It was the bad man. "Why did you follow me?" he shouted, face flushed with rage. "I don't need your help! I don't

want you!"

A glance around the empty room told Collin everything. The bed was untouched. There was no bags, no trace of anyone else.

Linsey was gone.

Just like before, she left without a word-this time abandoning both Collin and the boy they shared.

Chapter 779 Now She

Doesn't Want Me Anymore

Quiet steps brought Collin closer to the boy, his voice low as he knelt down, eye to eye with Zander's tear-

streaked but fiercely guarded face,

"You said you'd handle this by yourself," he said softly. "But I couldn't stay away. You're my son, and I came to take both you and your mother home."

Those last few words hit like thunder. Zander's breath caught, and his eyes flew wide. "Wait... you're saying

you're my dad?"

A calm nod followed. "Yes. That's right. Haven't you ever noticed how much we look alike?"

Pulling out his phone, Collin opened the photo gallery without another word. Within seconds, he swiped to a photo and turned the screen toward the boy,

"This one's from before you were born. That's your mom and me," Collin continued.

Zander stared at the screen, his expression blank, as he watched Linsey and Collin together.

In the photo, Linsey's smile was bright, while Collin gazed at her with a tender expression.

Even at his age, the emotion in the picture reached Zander.

He took a step back, shaking his head slowly, lips trembling. "No... you're the man who hurt Mommy. You made her cry. You're not my dad. You're mean. You're the bad man!"

Collin did not move. The words landed hard, but he stayed still. "She cried?" he asked gently. When?"

A beat passed before he continued, voice lower this time, "I made a mistake... four years ago. Something I regret every day, I hurt her, and she left. I didn't know where she went. I searched everywhere."

Fingers curling slightly, he exhaled. "I didn't even know you existed. Or your sister. Not until today. Now I see how much your mother has been through."

Little by little, Zander's glare lost its edge. His bottom lip stuck out stubbornly, but his eyes no longer held the same fire. "So it was you," he muttered, folding his arms. "That means you're the bad guy. My sister and I- we're not going to like you, bad dad!"

A dull pressure bloomed in Collin's chest at the boy's words.

In that moment, the truth became undeniable-Linsey hadn't just had a child. She had had two.

"I'm going to do everything I can to make things right," Collin said with calm determination. "With your and with both of you. But first, we need to find them. Can you help me with that?"

m,

Suddenly, the scope of his world had shifted. It no longer revolved around the past-it now included two lives

he never knew he had helped create.

And the person responsible for bringing those children into the world was the same woman who meant everything to him.

Gratitude swelled in his chest.

This time, he wouldn't let that second chance slip away. He wouldn't lose Linsey again.

Tears threatened to spill, sorrow rising as the reality of Zander's missing mother and sister crashed over him. Despite himself, he found a flicker of comfort in the presence of this stranger-this man who claimed to be his

father.

His tone stayed stubborn, but the walls around his heart were beginning to crack.

"I... I don't know where they went," Zander muttered, voice barely steady. "Mommy got mad because I ran away. Now she doesn't want me anymore."

Collin's breath caught as he watched Zander begin to cry.

Without hesitation, he reached out and gently smoothed a hand over Zander's head. "That's not true. Your mom would never leave you by choice. She loves you way too much for that. Something must've happened—something she couldn't avoid."

Thoughts swirled through his mind; he tried to make sense of it all. From what he knew of Linsey, she would never abandon her kids unless the situation left her no other option.

Whatever made her run-it had to be serious.

Sniffing, Zander suddenly brightened with a spark of realization. He raised his wrist and quickly tapped the screen of his smartwatch.

"I'll call Mommy," he said, breath hitching. "I should have answered earlier. She tried to reach me, and I didn't pick up. It's my fault. I was being bad. I need to say sorry to Mommy."

Chapter 780 I Still Don't

Know Your Name -

Collin's eyes drifted to the smartwatch on Zander's wrist. He couldn't shake the thought of the boy sneaking off earlier that morning-probably to make a secret call. "Did you manage to speak with your mom today?" he asked gently.

A small shake of the head came from Zander. "I only talked to my sister for a second."

Without another word, Zander lowered his gaze and tapped in Linsey's number.

The smartwatch let out a long string of beeps, yet no one answered.

His lips trembled. The call disconnected without a response, and he hurried to dial again, clinging to hope.

Yet, no one picked up.

"She's not answering," he whispered, voice cracking. "Mommy's mad... she doesn't want to talk to me..."

Tears pooled in his eyes, and regret hit him like a wave.

At that moment, he found himself wishing he could rewind time to that morning. Had he known Mommy would be this upset, he never would have snuck out.

Desperate to hear from someone, Zander tried a new approach. "I'll try my sister," he muttered, dialing Zenia's

number.

But that line stayed quiet, too. Even the messages he sent went unanswered.

One tear spilled over and landed on the screen, blurring the digital clock beneath

it.

A shaky breath left his lips, followed by a broken sob. "They're ignoring me.

Mommy and my sister-they're not talking to me anymore..."

Confusion settled into Collin's brow. Something didn't feel right.

He didn't believe for a second that Linsey would ignore her son on purpose. Even if she was angry, this wasn't

like her.

After a pause, Collin knelt and gently wiped the boy's cheeks. "Hey, it's okay. Maybe they're just caught up in something. Doesn't mean they don't care."

With warmth in his voice, he added, "Why don't you come home with me for now? We'll find Mommy and your sister together."

Eyes wide and full of heartbreak, Zander looked up at him. "You really think you can find them, bad man?" he asked through heavy sobs.

Collin held back the urge to correct him. This wasn't the time for titles or pride. Instead, he softened his tone and offered the only thing he could right now: a quiet, steady smile.

"That's right." Collin gave a small nod before continuing. "You saw them this morning, didn't you? My team's good—really good. If anyone can find your mom and sister, it's them."

Images of Collin's capable staff flashed through Zander's mind. Their quiet efficiency and sharp uniforms had left an impression.

For the first time, something shifted in his expression. "Okay... I'll believe you this once."

"So... does that mean you're ready to come home with me?" Collin asked, making sure to keep his tone as gentle as possible so he wouldn't scare Zander.

Rather than answer right away, Zander looked down at his shoes, lips pursed in thought. A few quiet moments passed before he gave a slow, thoughtful nod. That one gesture was enough to ease the tension in Collin's chest. He exhaled and opened his arms with a small smile. "Come here. I'll carry you."

The offer brought back a memory for Zander—Collin's arms had felt oddly safe the last time. He hesitated just a second before stepping forward. Without saying a word, he tucked himself into the man's arms, letting himself be lifted once more.

"You know... I still don't know your name." Collin glanced at the boy's flushed face.

He recalled that the little girl's name was Zenia.

Zander introduced himself to Collin, telling him his name.

An eyebrow arched slightly as Collin spoke. "Can I call you Zander?"