

Zillionaire 871

Chapter 871:

Without a word, he pulled out his phone and sent a text to Collin, who was seated just a few feet away. “I’ll eat my hat if this kid isn’t yours!”

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

Beneath his calm exterior, however, Collin harbored his own suspicions about Zander’s true parentage, suspicions that now burned within him. One crucial question lingered in his mind—was he truly the boy’s father?

After a tense moment, Collin tapped out a response. “Set it up. We’re doing a paternity test.”

Meanwhile, across town, Linsey’s interrogation of Zenia was underway.

“Where has Zander gone?” she demanded, her voice tight with worry. Normally, her children were well-behaved, but since their return to Grester, chaos seemed to be their new norm. First, Zander’s unauthorized outing with Zenia had ended with her being escorted to the police station.

Now, Zander himself had vanished, leaving Zenia to cover for him. 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.

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

Had Zander sought out Collin once again? 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 even switched off his watch."

Tears welled in Zenia's eyes, guilt etched across her small face. "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 story about a "bad man" who had taken Zenia, though the police had assured her it was merely a helpful stranger. With Zenia 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 Grester. How could they have encountered anyone?

Chapter 872:

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 that Collin had upset you. The kids only wanted to protect you. I should never have listened to Mr. Green."

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 as she staggered backward, lightheaded.

"Linsey!" Caylee gasped. She lunged forward, her 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 ringing 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.”

Chapter 873:

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 Zenia’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, putting everything aside to fast-track the results with absolute precision.

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.

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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, disappointment evident in his voice.

"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 furrowing 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."

Chapter 874:

Dustin shot Collin a surprised look, but Collin seemed calm, as if 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 slip, 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 had been 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 lacing 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?

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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 lap.

Collin had somehow realized Linsey was the child's mother, but Dustin had no idea how he had figured it out. Just recently, Collin had even insisted that Linsey was the one who gave birth to Gorman's daughter! 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, leaned in a little closer, 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 another woman.

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

Chapter 875:

But Collin wasn't just focused on the boy. His thoughts shifted to Zenia—the little girl he had met three 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 clumsy 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, Dustin didn't budge, completely thrown off. Then he finally turned and said, "So... what do we do now?"

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

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That caught Dustin off guard. "W-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 I was sure,” Collin said, 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?”

With his eyes locked on the taxi 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.

Chapter 876:

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've 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 quicken. 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.

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“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 didn’t 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 thought. 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.

Chapter 877:

“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 were no bags, no trace of anyone else. Linsey was gone.

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

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!”

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

A beat passed before he continued, his 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.” His fingers curled slightly as 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 mom, and with both of you. But first, we need to find them. Can you help me with that?”

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.

Chapter 878:

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 don’t know where they went,” Zander muttered, his 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.

Sniffling, 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.”

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.

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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.

Chapter 879:

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 said with a small nod. “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.”

“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.”

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The offer brought back a memory for Zander—Collin’s arms had felt oddly safe the last time. He hesitated for 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,” Zander mumbled.

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?”

“Sure...” Zander mumbled.

Dustin showed up just as Collin stepped out of the hotel room with Zander in his arms.

“What happened here?” he asked, glancing around the vacant suite, confusion written all over his face.
“But where’s the boy’s mother?”

Collin didn’t respond right away. He didn’t want to say anything in front of Zander. “I’ll fill you in later. First, find out if Linsey reserved this suite. Also, get your hands on the security footage—see exactly when she left.”

“Understood.”

Collin brought Zander to his apartment near the company. Since Linsey’s departure, he hadn’t visited Vista Villa much. This place was modest—nothing like the villa he used to live in.

By the time they arrived, Zander had dozed off in Collin’s arms, worn out from all the crying. Collin gently slipped off the boy’s coat and shoes, placed him on the bed in the main room, and pulled the covers over him.

Chapter 880:

Once he was sure Zander was fast asleep, he stepped out quietly and closed the door behind him.

In the lounge, Dustin was waiting in a single chair. The moment Collin joined him on the sofa, Dustin leaned in. “What exactly is going on with Linsey?”

Collin gave a quick summary of the situation.

“I knew it. She actually had two kids in secret,” Dustin muttered, stunned. He paused, brow furrowed. “But why did she take off so suddenly? There’s no way she just left her son behind.”

Right then, one of Collin’s men walked in holding a report. He greeted them respectfully.

Dustin jumped in. “Was the room under Linsey’s name?”

Collin looked over at him.

The man lowered his gaze and spoke. “No, sir. The original reservation was made by Gorman. But all the follow-up bookings and the final checkout were handled by someone named Caylee Garrett.”

He handed them a printed image—a snapshot from Caylee’s profile online. “This is Ms. Garrett. She arrived in Grester recently with Ms. Brooks. She’s not from around here.”

Collin took one look and instantly recognized her. She was the same woman who posed as Aurora at the design contest.

Dustin stared at the photo, his eyes widening in shock. “That’s her! Both times I ran into the boy, she was the one looking after him. I figured she was the mom.”

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Collin paused to think. “Which means Caylee vanished with Linsey and the other child—Zeniah.”

He then asked, "Any idea where they went?"

The man's expression tightened. "This part's odd. We only found footage of Ms. Brooks walking out alone that morning. No sign of her, Caylee, or the girl leaving together. Whoever planned this made sure it couldn't be tracked. We're still digging to find out where she went after that."

Dustin shook his head. "Something's not right. This runs deeper."

Collin's eyes darkened. He turned sharply to Dustin. "Call Dolores. Right now."

Dustin looked stunned. "You're thinking of grilling her about Linsey's location?"

He hesitated, then said firmly, "You know how close those two are. No amount of pressure will make her talk. And I won't let you treat her unfairly."

A crease formed between Collin's brows the moment he heard that. His voice dropped, slow and deliberate. "If Dolores really knew where Linsey went, I'd feel better. But right now? I don't think even she knows."

While he spoke, Collin's eyes settled on Dustin, the weight in his gaze unmistakable. "I'm starting to believe Linsey didn't leave by choice."

A cold unease crawled down Dustin's spine. It didn't take much to connect the dots. There was no way Linsey could have erased the hotel's surveillance footage on her own—not without clearance or help.