

Zillionaire 881

Chapter 881:

And that wasn't the only red flag. Linsey would never abandon her child like this. Ignoring Zander's calls was not her style. If she had chosen to disappear, she would have left clues—a note or a message. But what made the whole situation even stranger was the silence from Zenia's end. Zander hadn't been able to reach his sister either. Surely Linsey wouldn't be so upset with her son that she would isolate him from his sister, too. That didn't add up.

With tension rising fast, Dustin grabbed his phone and placed a call to Dolores.

The line connected almost instantly. "Why are you calling this late?" she asked, her voice edged with confusion.

Shooting a look at Collin, Dustin lowered his voice and got to the point. "Did Linsey get in touch with you today?"

There was a brief pause on the other end, telling but subtle. Dolores returned with a question of her own, feigning confusion. "Why are you suddenly asking about her?"

Dustin had expected resistance. He braced himself and responded with deliberate emphasis, "Dolores, we already know. Linsey had two kids. They're Collin's. You don't have to keep covering for her anymore."

For several seconds, there was only silence. Then came a stunned whisper. "You found out? But... how?"

"That's not important right now," Dustin replied, urgency threading through his words. "The important thing is Linsey is missing. And no one can reach her daughter either. Do you have Caylee's number? Call her. She might still be with Linsey and Zenia."

"Alright. I'll check." Dolores hung up without another word.

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Just ten minutes later, her name lit up on Dustin's screen again. Urgency laced every word when Dolores spoke. "Is Collin with you right now? Send me your location. I'll be there soon."

Without hesitation, Dustin replied, "Got it. Be careful on the road." Quiet tension settled over Collin as he clenched his fists, saying nothing. Dolores's involvement could be the breakthrough they needed. Still, something else was gnawing at the edges of Collin's mind.

In all of Grester, there was only one man with the reach, audacity, and motive to pull off something like this. Everything pointed to Gorman.

"M-mommy... Mommy!"

Linsey could hear her children's voices echoing through the haze of her dream. Zander's panicked cries mixed with Zenia's desperate call for her. They were both looking for her.

"Mommy, where are you?" "Are you going to leave us behind?"

Linsey's face turned pale, beads of sweat appearing on her forehead as she lay there, her eyes squeezed shut.

"No, I wouldn't... Zenia... Zander..." she whispered in a strained, breathless voice. "Mommy's right here..."

A sudden warmth touched her cheek, jarring her from the dream entirely.

Linsey snapped awake as her eyes shot open. Hovering just inches above her was Gorman—his gaze soft, his expression almost too gentle.

Revulsion washed over Linsey like ice. Every moment leading up to her blackout surged back all at once, hitting her like a tidal wave.

Chapter 882:

“Zenial!” Linsey’s arms trembled as she pushed herself upright, her voice cracking with desperation. “Where is my daughter?”

Nothing came back to her—not even a breath of acknowledgment. Her face hardened, and the fear in her eyes turned to steel.

With sudden force, she latched onto Gorman’s arm, her grip tight and shaking. “Tell me what you did to Zenia. Where is she?”

Despite the frantic clutch of her hand, Gorman remained perfectly still, not a flicker of irritation crossing his face. His brows lifted, and his voice came soft, like damp air on skin. It was quiet, but cold enough to chill.

“Why are you panicking, Linsey? Didn’t you arrange for Zander to be taken to Collin? He’s the one who looks too much like his father. If I had to choose, I’d be more inclined to resent him. You’ve already done what it takes to keep your son safe. So why are you still afraid?” A low chuckle slipped from his mouth, but it didn’t reach his eyes. The sound was dry, and something cruel lingered underneath it.

“Zenia reminds me of you. That’s why I’ve always looked at her differently. She matters to me. Hurting her wouldn’t make sense,” he continued.

Color drained from Linsey’s cheeks, and her eyes filled with a hatred she no longer tried to hide.

“You’re vile,” she hissed. Each word came loaded with disgust.

Once she confirmed that Zander was with Collin, she didn’t waste another second. She packed up what she needed and intended to take Zenia straight to the safe house Dolores had arranged.

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Living in that hotel suite came with a risk—Gorman could appear out of nowhere.

By noon, hunger kicked in. Linsey asked Caylee to keep packing and watch Zenia while she stepped out to grab lunch.

She didn't make it far. The second she left the building, she caught sight of Gorman.

One small gesture from him was all it took. Her vision went black before a single word escaped her lips.

Not when she stirred awake did she realize he had orchestrated this. Every move had been calculated. He had been patient, waiting for the one moment she would be alone and unprepared.

The realization hit her hard. Her eyes stung, rimmed red with rage that boiled up from helplessness.

Rather than flinch at her fury, Gorman looked as though he had just received a gift. Her anger delighted him.

He let out a full-bodied laugh, then sighed like a man satisfied by a long-awaited indulgence. "I forgot how alive you look when you stop pretending not to care."

Without hesitation, he leaned in, his eyes gleaming with something close to joy—twisted and bare.

For a moment, he lost himself in the sight of her. Her pupils, wide and dilated, reflected only him. It mesmerized him.

Chapter 883:

"You never really see me... not unless I bring you to this place," he whispered, letting the words settle slowly between them.

His smile shifted, softer now but laced with regret. “If I’d known it would feel this good, I wouldn’t have wasted four years trying to play the part you wanted. I should’ve done this sooner.”

Without hesitation, Linsey delivered a fierce slap across Gorman’s face.

The sound sliced through the quiet of the room.

From the impact, Gorman’s head snapped to the side. For a brief moment, he didn’t move. A faint sting crawled along the edge of his mouth, proof that Linsey hadn’t held back.

A low chuckle slipped from him instead of rage. Just as he began to turn his gaze back to her, something caught his eye—her hand lifting again, ready for another strike.

Something shifted in Gorman’s expression. In one swift motion, he caught her by the wrist, his grip unyielding as a glint of menace sparked in his eyes. “You really think I’ll keep letting that slide?”

A bitter smirk played across Linsey’s lips, her eyes sharp with distrust and simmering with quiet rage. “Do you seriously think people crave your attention?” she said, her voice like ice. “Get over yourself, Gorman. You’re not some gift to the world. Right now, all I see is someone I can’t stand to be near.”

Gorman didn’t respond right away. His gaze lingered on her, swirling with a mix of things he never put into words.

“I’ve been by your side for years, waiting, giving everything—and you call that disgusting? All I’m doing now is reclaiming what’s mine. And this is the thanks I get?” he said, sounding almost wounded.

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A deep crease appeared between Linsey’s brows. Her voice turned stiff, disbelieving. “What exactly are you reclaiming?”

That question made something shift in him. The tension in his face melted into a grin, slow, almost pleased.

“You’ve always belonged to me. You just never realized it.”

Linsey’s composure finally cracked. Her voice rose, sharp and furious. “You’re out of your damn mind.”

For a second, she fought to steady herself, her chest rising and falling as she breathed through the fury. “I already know where this is going. You’ll bring up how I saved your life. Or maybe you’ll say you loved me before Collin ever showed up.”

That name struck him like an exposed nerve. It never failed to cut deep. His expression soured on the spot, the bitterness clawing its way to the surface.

By now, his obsession had consumed him whole. He had stayed by her side for four years, swallowing his pride, pretending not to see that the children she protected didn’t carry his blood, but Collin’s. And still, he treated them like they were his own.

It hadn’t even been a full week since Linsey returned to Grester with the kids, yet Collin had already found a way under her skin again. She had handed Zander over to him without hesitation—just to protect the boy from Gorman’s reach.

Chapter 884:

The more Gorman mulled it over, the more it all felt like a cruel joke.

Gorman couldn’t wrap his head around it. Why was she so willing to reveal Zander and Zenia to Collin as if it were some long-awaited reunion?

“I’ve told you this again and again, Gorman.” Her voice held firm, but her eyes wavered. “Collin being around or not changes nothing. You and I were never meant to be.”

“Stop lying!” Gorman’s voice exploded, shattering the air between them. The sudden fury in his tone made Linsey flinch before she even realized she had moved.

His features twisted violently. The anger in him was thick and consuming, filling the space like smoke.

“How much longer are you going to do this? How many times are you going to pretend I don’t exist, while running back to a man who left you?” Blood rushed to his eyes, casting them a dangerous red. His jaw clenched, and his cheek twitched, like something was barely being held back. “If your love for Collin was real, why’d you walk away from him in the first place? Why end the marriage at all?”

Then came the laughter—dark, unhinged, and full of something that made Linsey’s stomach twist. “That divorce wasn’t an ending. It was fate that cracked open a door for you and me. Don’t you see it, Linsey? You were never meant to stay with him. You were meant to be mine. You have to know that.”

Curled beneath the covers, Linsey sank deeper into the bed, as if the fabric could protect her from what was coming. Tremors ran through her limbs—small, constant, and fueled by fear—she couldn’t hold back.

She forced herself to stop trembling, her muscles tight with effort. A sharp breath slipped out as she clenched her jaw. She finally said, “Gorman, why is this so hard for you to accept? Even if Collin vanished from my life completely, I still wouldn’t choose you. You can’t twist feelings into something they’re not. I really believed you’d understand that by now—after everything, after four years.”

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Out of nowhere, Gorman’s hands clamped onto Linsey’s shoulders like a vice.

Her heart skipped a beat, racing like a runaway train. Instinctively, she squirmed to break free, but Gorman’s grip was unbreakable.

“Linsey, you’re always preaching clarity to me, but what about you, huh?” Gorman’s eyes bored into hers, a mix of confusion and frustration, his words tumbling out in a chaotic rhythm. “How can you even think about forgiving Collin so fast? Have you forgotten the hell he put you through four years ago? Or do you need me to jog your memory to finally cut him loose?”

Linsey bit back the pain shooting through her shoulders, her face pale. “Gorman, you’ve lost your damn mind...”

He barreled on, ignoring her. “Four years ago, you and Collin had that whirlwind marriage, remember? He kept his true self under wraps, thinking you were just some gold-digger chasing the power and wealth of CR Corporation’s founder!”

“Stop it...” Linsey shouted, his words slicing into her heart like a jagged knife. Even after four years, those memories still stung.

“Oh, yeah.” Gorman’s face softened suddenly, his voice dripping with a deceptive warmth. “Collin did have a soft spot for you back then. Why else would he drop a cool billion on that auction necklace for you?” With that, he let go of her shoulders, his fingers brushing her long hair gently. His words were slow and deliberate. “But you saw it with your own eyes, didn’t you? Just days ago, at that auction, Collin threw down \$2.7 billion for the Star of the Desert—for Haven.”

Chapter 885:

Linsey’s pale face froze, stiff as stone.

“I hear Haven’s family is already cozying up with Collin’s grandma, talking wedding plans,” Gorman said, a smile curling his lips. “If nothing derails it, they’ll tie the knot that got shelved five years ago. So, what do you say? Wanna attend their wedding? I could probably snag you an invite.”

Linsey swallowed the dull ache gnawing at her chest, her voice barely above a whisper. “Their marriage? It’s got nothing to do with me.”

Gorman raised an eyebrow, unconvinced. “Nothing? Come on, Linsey. You’re the one who sent Zander to Collin. Once Collin confirms he’s Zander’s dad and marries Haven, who do you think Zander’s gonna call Mom—you or her?”

His words shattered the fragile wall she had built around her heart, and tears welled up, betraying her.

Gorman's smug expression flickered for a moment.

He reached out to wipe her tears, but Linsey turned away sharply, swiping the wetness from her cheeks herself.

"This is none of your damn business," she said, her voice raw and hoarse. "Just tell me where Zenia is."

Gorman let out a soft chuckle, dodging her question about Zenia. Instead, he leaned in. "Linsey, you could lean on me, you know. I'd help you get Zander back from Collin."

"No!" Her voice shot up, cold as ice. "Even if Collin's marrying Haven, he's not the type to hurt Zander. You said it yourself—I went through hell to get Zander to him. So why are you pushing to drag him back now? What's your game, Gorman? You know exactly what you're doing!"

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Zander showing up at Collin's company hadn't been something anyone had planned.

It never crossed Linsey's mind that her son, overwhelmed by her emotional breakdown that night, would take matters into his own hands and confront Collin face-to-face. But the truth behind it all pointed straight to Gorman, who had quietly pulled the strings and ordered Caylee to carry it out.

To Linsey, it was painfully clear—everything spiraling out of control had been Gorman's doing. And now he had the gall to accuse her of pushing Zander toward Collin on purpose? The accusation was nothing short of ridiculous.

Fighting to stay composed, she filled her lungs with air and said, "Where is Zenia? If you've hurt her in any way, I won't stop until I've made you pay."

Not knowing where her daughter was sent her thoughts racing, each one darker than the last. Even if Gorman hadn't shown the same hostility toward Zenia that he did toward Zander, it didn't change the

fact that she, too, was Collin's flesh and blood. Because of that, Linsey refused to believe Gorman could ever truly care for Zenia.

Gorman leaned back with the same unsettling calm he always wore. "She's fine," he said casually. "I just had someone take her out to enjoy the day."

His tone was too easy, too smooth, and Linsey didn't trust a word of it. This was the same man who had gone to great lengths to trap them before they could slip away. Whatever he was up to now, she was certain it wasn't innocent.

Chapter 886:

A sudden ding from his phone echoed through the room.

After a quick glance at his phone, Gorman looked up with a surprisingly gentle tone. "She's back now. Zenia's downstairs." The moment those words registered, Linsey threw back the covers and started to get up.

Before she could take a full step, Gorman's hand clamped around her wrist. "Wait. Something's not right with her. You might want to brace yourself."

His words struck her like ice water. Linsey turned to him, disbelief written across her face. "She's only four!" Her voice cracked. "How could you even think of hurting her and not feel anything?"

Feigning innocence, Gorman widened his eyes and spoke with mock sincerity. "You're accusing the wrong person. I haven't left your side—not once. How would I even have the chance to hurt her?"

"Let go." Linsey tore herself free, done listening, done reasoning. She stormed out of the room, the hallways unfamiliar and twisting, until she finally found the staircase.

The space was lavish, cold in its elegance. A passing thought drifted through her mind—this must be Gorman's estate in Grester.

As her feet hurried down the stairs, her eyes caught a glimpse of the living room. From afar, Caylee looked weighed down by both sadness and gravitas.

A sharp squeeze gripped Linsey's chest as dread took hold. Without thinking, she bolted forward, her voice cracking with urgency. "Zenial!"

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Hearing her name, the little girl stirred in Caylee's arms and lifted her head, eyes searching.

One look at her daughter's face made Linsey stop in her tracks, her breath catching mid-step.

Dirt streaked across Zenia's cheeks, and faint scratches ran along her soft skin. Her dress, once neat, now hung wrinkled and stained with dust.

"Mommy!" Zenia's voice cracked as soon as her eyes locked onto Linsey, tears rushing to the surface.

That single word carried more weight than a full confession—packed with sorrow, fear, and longing.

Without hesitation, Linsey dropped to her knees, arms open, ready to catch the little body barreling toward her.

The instant Zenia collided with her, she pressed her face into Linsey's shoulder and broke into sobs, her cries fragile and aching. "Mommy..."

Hearing the voice tightened something in Linsey's chest, her throat thick with emotion she couldn't swallow.

Blinking fast, she fought the sting behind her eyes and lowered her head, gently cupping the back of Zenia's head with her palm. "You're safe now. Mommy's got you."

Linsey could not begin to imagine what Zenia had endured.

It was the first time that she had seen her daughter like this—heartbroken and helpless.

Unsure of what had happened, Linsey turned to Caylee and asked, “What’s going on?”

Caylee’s face reflected quiet sympathy as she regarded Zenia. But when Linsey addressed her directly, she hesitated, dropping her eyes to the floor as if the words caught in her throat.

Chapter 887:

Confused by the silence, Linsey narrowed her eyes, unsure why Caylee refused to answer.

Before anyone else could speak, Gorman stepped into the room. His lips curved into a faint smile, but the chill in his eyes landed squarely on Caylee. “She asked you a question. Why the delay? Is there something you’re trying to avoid?”

The sound of his voice made Caylee lift her head sharply. Her eyes locked on him, swimming with unease and quiet defiance. She knew he had orchestrated that incident.

After a pause to collect herself, Caylee inhaled and turned to Linsey. “Let’s get Zenia changed first. Her clothes are still a mess.”

Gorman did not argue. With a casual nod, he gestured toward a nearby servant. “Take her to wash up.”

Without thinking, Linsey pulled Zenia closer. The little girl clung to her chest like an anchor, and Linsey had no intention of letting go.

“Linsey,” Caylee stepped forward and gently rested her hand over Linsey’s. “She’ll feel better once she’s cleaned up,” she said softly.

Reluctantly, Linsey looked into Caylee's eyes. After a moment, she let her arms loosen, then crouched down beside Zenia and brushed a strand of hair from her cheek. "Mommy will be right here, okay? Just for a little while."

Zenia nodded without protest, quiet and trusting as she followed the servant upstairs.

Once the child had disappeared from view, Caylee lowered her eyes and exhaled. The strength she had held onto began to waver.

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Before saying anything, she cast a glance at Gorman, her brows pinched in frustration. Then, slowly, she turned to Linsey and began to speak. "After you left..."

"Mr. Green sent someone to take Zenia and me here. We both saw you lying there. I told her you were just resting from packing, and she believed me."

Gorman stood back, silent as ever, though a flicker of amusement danced beneath his half-lowered eyes.

Linsey remained still, but her hands were clenched tightly in her lap. A storm brewed beneath her calm expression.

"He told us this would be our new home," Caylee continued, her voice turning faint. "He thought Zenia might feel out of place, so he suggested we go for a short walk. Everything was fine until we ran into a group of children. The moment they spotted Zenia, they swarmed her. They shouted things like—she had no father, she was unwanted, like some stray dog."

Her words began to falter, her breath catching with the memory. "I tried to stop them. I told them to leave her alone, but they just laughed. Some pushed me down. The others started shoving Zenia, taunting her. I only managed to scare them off after I picked up a stick."

The blood drained from Linsey's face as her fingers began to tremble. Never once had she faced anything like this while raising Zander and Zenia on her own.

She lived in a time when single parents were nothing out of the ordinary. People didn't shame children for missing a parent.

And yet, here they were. On their very first day in this house, Zenia had already been cruelly targeted.

Chapter 888:

Tears welled up in Linsey's eyes. Her throat felt too tight to speak, but she forced herself to turn and look at Gorman, who stood several feet away. She opened her mouth, but no sound came out.

It took effort just to breathe, but finally, she rasped out the only words that could break through her pain. "Gorman, you've really gone too far."

Gorman arched an eyebrow, a sly grin spreading as he glanced at Caylee, who hung her head like a wilting flower. Turning to Linsey, he said, "Linsey, you're not seriously buying her story, are you? Did you forget what I told you yesterday? Caylee's been quietly pocketing my cash."

Caylee's eyes shot wide with panic. "I didn't lie!" she blurted, her voice trembling.

She turned to Linsey, her gaze pleading, desperate to claw her way out of the hole. "Linsey, I swear, everything I said is true!"

Gorman let out a soft, mocking chuckle, sauntering closer like a cat toying with its prey. "Caylee, what's the point of digging in your heels? You agreed to be my messenger for your grandma's medical bills. Remember last time? Zander grabbed Zenia and bolted because you spilled the beans about Collin, didn't you?"

With that, he plopped onto the sofa, all ease and swagger, picking up a cup from the table and rolling it lazily in his hand. "If I'm guilty of anything, you're just as deep in the mud, Caylee. An accomplice like you? Linsey wouldn't trust you as far as she could throw you."

Caylee's face crumpled, despair washing over her like a cold tide. A bitter, self-mocking smile tugged at her lips. How could she even face Linsey now?

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She was Gorman's accomplice, after all.

Linsey had known about her shady deals with Gorman for a while. No way would Linsey believe her anymore.

Caylee could almost see Linsey's mind turning. Linsey might suspect she had coached those kids to say cruel things in front of Zenia, or worse, orchestrated this whole drama to plant seeds of doubt and sadness in Zenia's heart.

Caylee opened her mouth, grasping for words to salvage herself. But Linsey's voice cut through. "Gorman, do you get a kick out of stirring the pot?"

Gorman's smug look faltered, his brows knitting together just enough to betray his surprise.

"You're the one who set those kids up to bully Zenia, making her feel like she's less than," Linsey snapped.

The memory of Zenia's tear-streaked face flashed in her mind, stabbing at her heart.

For four years, Linsey had poured her soul into raising those kids. Whatever other children had, she would move heaven and earth to give them the same.

Until today, the kids had never felt the sting of not having a dad.

But Gorman's cruel stunt had cast a dark shadow over Zenia's heart. Just as Linsey had always suspected, Gorman didn't give a damn about her kids. He was nothing short of a devil in her eyes now.

Chapter 889:

Linsey sucked in a quick, shaky breath, her hand tightening around Caylee's beside her. She fixed Gorman with a glacial stare as he lounged there, smug as ever. "You planned this whole thing, didn't you? You wanted me to lose faith in Caylee, so I would feel helpless and rely on you."

She paused, letting her thoughts settle before continuing. "If I really cut Caylee loose, you'd stop footing the bill for her grandma's surgery, wouldn't you? Because by then, she'd be no use to you."

Caylee's heart clenched.

Deep down, she had known it from the start—agreeing to Gorman's demands had set her on a road with no good exits.

If she had said no from the jump, she would never have scraped together the money for her grandma's surgery, nor would she have made it to Grester with Linsey.

But if she kept playing Gorman's game, Linsey would eventually wash her hands of her, fed up with the betrayal. And once she was no longer Linsey's assistant, she would have nothing to offer Gorman. He would cut off the surgery funds without a second thought.

Every path led to the same dead end. It was only a matter of when.

But now? Caylee was done selling her soul to Gorman.

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As for her grandma's surgery fees, she would find another way to make it work.

Gorman's eyes locked onto Linsey, a knowing glint in his gaze before his lips curved into a sly, loaded smile. "Linsey, when you say that, you're really just talking to Caylee, aren't you? You're boxing her in,

making sure she's got no choice but to stick by you. You know as long as Caylee works for you, I'll keep footing the bill for her grandma's hospital stay."

Linsey's face twisted, irritation bubbling up like a pot about to boil over. "Don't go slapping your sneaky assumptions on everyone else! You think we're all as calculating as you? We're not playing those games! I trust Caylee because I know her. She's been by my side for years, and I've got a better read on her than you ever will."

As Caylee listened, her eyes flickered intensely, tears threatening to spill. She gave Linsey's hand a quiet squeeze, her heart swelling with gratitude. The heavy cloud of gloom that had been weighing her down for days lifted, just like that.

Out of nowhere, Gorman clapped his hands, a mocking show of applause. "Well, ain't that a heartwarming little bond you two got? Since you're so tight, I won't waste my breath trying to drive a wedge between you."

Then he turned to Caylee, flashing her a polished, gentlemanly smile. "In fact, you can help me out. Talk some sense into Linsey. Two weeks from now, I'm throwing the wedding I've planned for her. I'm hoping she'll slip into the dress I designed for her."

Linsey's and Caylee's jaws dropped, their eyes wide with shock.

"A wedding?" Linsey's laugh was sharp, laced with fury. "When did I ever say I'd marry you?"

Chapter 890:

Gorman rose abruptly and closed the distance between them. The sudden nearness made Linsey and Caylee's skin crawl.

"Linsey, haven't you figured it out yet?" Gorman's face was all smiles, but his words cut. "You're out of moves. This is me calling the shots."

Linsey's face hardened, her fists balling up as she fought the urge to wipe that smug look off his face with a slap.

"I'm not marrying you," she spat. "You can lock me up here forever, but I won't sign papers with you or walk down any aisle."

"Oh, really?" Gorman's gaze drifted upward, his voice dropping to a chilling whisper. "Linsey, you will. Because Zenia needs a dad."

Her grip tightened, a jolt of pain shooting through her as she stared at Gorman, disbelief and rage flashing in her eyes. Her head pounded, thoughts grinding to a halt as a deafening buzz filled her ears, drowning out the world.

It hit her like a freight train: Gorman was using Zenia to twist her arm. Setting up those kids to torment Zenia was just the opening move in his sick game.

Gorman's tone was calm, almost casual. "You can dig your heels in and stay here forever; I've got all the time in the world. But Zenia? She's only four. She needs school, friends, a real future. As her mom, can you really stomach clipping her wings like that?"

Linsey's legs buckled, her body swaying like a tree in a storm. She would have hit the floor if Caylee hadn't caught her just in time.

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"Linsey, head upstairs and take a breather," Gorman said, his eyes fixed on her pale face. "This place is locked down tighter than a drum, inside and out. Trying to slip away with Zenia? You'd just be spinning your wheels."

With that, Gorman turned and walked off, leaving Linsey and Caylee frozen in place, their minds reeling, unable to process the weight of his words.

When Linsey walked into the room, the servant had just finished helping Zenia freshen up.

“Mommy!” Zenia spotted her and leapt off the bed, running straight into her arms.

Linsey’s cold heart softened just a little. She scooped Zenia up, gently smoothing her freshly dried hair, and managed a smile. “Are you tired, Zenia? Do you want to take a nap?” It was around the usual time for their afternoon rest.

Zenia usually napped with Zander. But today, Zander wasn’t there.

“Mommy, will you stay with me while I sleep?” she asked softly.

“Of course,” Linsey replied with a warm smile, trying to sound calm so Zenia wouldn’t feel scared.

The servant quietly stepped out. Linsey laid Zenia back on the bed and lay beside her, pulling the covers up with care.

“Close your eyes now,” she whispered, patting Zenia’s shoulder gently. Zenia snuggled close to her, blinking slowly. After a short silence, she asked in a small voice, “Mommy, isn’t Zander coming back? Will he know where to find us?”