

Zillionaire 961

Chapter 961:

Dolores eased herself upright slowly, then sank back against the headboard. She let her head drift close to Linsey's, their bodies naturally finding an intimate rhythm.

"Linsey, do you remember our days at the orphanage? You were such a tiny, delicate thing back then, always catching something. Whenever fever took hold of you, Ella and I would keep vigil by your bedside." Dolores' voice carried the weight of tenderness, her eyes soft as they traced the outline of Linsey's hand nestled within her own.

The words stirred something deep within Linsey, distant memories surfacing like photographs developing in gentle light.

"Of course I do," she responded with a smile. "Every time illness claimed me, you looked after me and were always so kind to me."

Dolores arched an eyebrow, mischief flickering in her expression. "So, I wasn't good to you when you were perfectly healthy?"

Though she spoke teasingly, Linsey's response was swift and unwavering. "You're always nice to me. I've always seen you as a sister."

Her voice dropped to something more intimate as she spoke, fingers tightening around Dolores' hand. "Even though you've always sheltered me like your little sister, always standing as my shield, I hope you'll let me be your refuge sometimes too. Don't bury everything so deep inside, carrying those burdens alone."

Linsey shifted to capture Dolores' gaze completely. "Dolores, we trust each other more than anyone else in this world. No matter how crushing life becomes, letting me share that weight will lighten the load."

The meaning behind Linsey's words crystallized perfectly in Dolores' mind. Joy bloomed across Dolores' face, even as tears began gathering at the corners of her eyes.

Before they could fall, Linsey pressed a gentle finger to the corner of Dolores' eye. Her voice carried a mock sternness. "It's perfectly acceptable to shed tears over some man, but never because of words I speak. We're sisters in every way that matters. Save those precious tears for something truly deserving. Besides, you should catch a glimpse of yourself in the mirror. Do you have any idea how puffy your eyes look right now?"

Dolores blinked in startled realization, her fingertips flying to her swollen eyelids. "Are they really that obvious?"

Linsey's voice softened with gentle honesty. "They're crimson and swollen. Anyone could see you've been crying."

Dolores released a sigh that carried both resignation and bitter acknowledgment. Self-mockery crept into her tone as she spoke. "How pathetic I must look. What's there to mourn over, really? It's just a guy. I'll move on soon enough."

Dolores' attempt at dismissal came as no surprise to Linsey. She studied Dolores with unwavering intensity before asking, "Have you truly decided then? Are you certain you want to sever things with Dustin?"

Dolores' lips compressed into a thin line. "I honestly don't know how to navigate his mother's hostility. She's made her position crystal clear, and I refuse to linger where I'm clearly unwanted."

Linsey considered this carefully, weighing her words before speaking with deliberate slowness. "Let's set aside what Dustin thinks or whatever he might do next. First, you need to answer something more fundamental. Can you truly let him go?"

After a thoughtful pause, Linsey leaned forward. "Since graduation, dating has never really been on your radar. You've poured yourself into building your career. Dustin is probably the first person who's truly captured your heart in years. Are you really prepared to walk away from that?"

Dolores shifted her gaze, her expression caught in a web of conflicting emotions. "I won't deny it. I still have feelings for Dustin, and I know he cares for me too. But this time, what we feel for each other isn't enough to bridge the divide."

Chapter 962:

Her jaw tightened as she pressed on. "His mother despises me. Even from our brief encounter, her disdain was clear. She sees me as nothing more than an unwelcome intrusion in Dustin's life."

Linsey absorbed her friend's words in contemplative silence, recognizing the weight of defeat in Dolores' voice. She understood Dolores' fierce independence, the pride that had always defined her approach to life's challenges.

The realization struck Linsey that Dustin's mother's rejection must have shattered something fundamental in her confidence.

Dolores met Linsey's eyes with unwavering resolve. "Some people might try to charm their partner's parents, bending themselves into whatever shape might earn approval. But that's not who I am. The woman Dustin's mother envisions as perfect for him bears no resemblance to me. No amount of self-transformation could ever satisfy her standards."

She then added, "More importantly, I've never compromised my authentic self for anyone. The moment I start changing to fit someone else's mold, I cease to be me."

When Linsey finally emerged from the guest bedroom, afternoon sunlight streamed through the windows.

Collin had been working on his laptop in the living room. The instant he saw her, he abandoned his laptop and rose to his feet.

"Are you hungry?" he asked, concern evident in his voice. "I'll whip up something for you."

"I'm alright. I'd rather wait for Dolores to wake up so we can share a meal together," Linsey replied, crossing the room toward him before adding, "Shouldn't you be at the office today?"

Collin's fingers traced through her hair with tender care. "The morning was light, so I decided to work from here instead."

He noticed the subtle shadows beneath her eyes—clear evidence of a restless night spent consoling Dolores.

"You haven't eaten in hours. Let me make you mac and cheese," he said, his tone leaving no room for argument. "I understand your concern for Dolores, but neglecting yourself won't help anyone."

Without waiting for a response, Collin gently guided her toward the kitchen. Instead of letting her enter, he settled her at the dining table with a firm but gentle hand. "Ten minutes is all I need."

Linsey surrendered, a mix of exasperation and warmth blooming on her face. "Alright, I'll wait for your special dish then!"

A quiet laugh escaped him as he disappeared into the kitchen, already gathering ingredients.

From her seat at the table, Linsey observed his purposeful movements, the quiet confidence with which he navigated the space. She could see beyond the practicality of the moment—Collin had anticipated she might need him, and so he had chosen to stay within reach rather than retreat to his office.

Collin embodied a quiet generosity—always offering more than his words promised.

A wave of tenderness washed over Linsey as she let herself drift into thought. Inevitably, her mind wandered to Dolores, still curled up in the guest bedroom.

Last night had unfolded in whispered confessions and silent tears, with Dolores finally allowing her composure to crumble.

When Linsey had woken, she had instinctively searched her sleeping face for signs of healing, only to find that even in sleep, Dolores bore the telltale puffiness around her eyes.

Throughout their years of friendship, Linsey had seen Dolores face many challenges with strength. But she had never seen her so utterly broken.

Chapter 963:

Distress settled deep in Linsey's chest.

Yet beneath her worry, Linsey held onto hope. Last night's emotional release would likely work its healing magic on Dolores.

Dolores possessed that rare resilience—the ability to gather her scattered pieces and forge ahead despite the wounds.

With rest and time to mend, Linsey felt certain her friend would emerge stronger, just as she always had.

The thought brought warmth to Linsey's features, her lips curving in quiet optimism.

As she lingered at the dining table, the rich aroma of macaroni and cheese began threading through the air, drawing her attention. Moments later, Collin appeared from the kitchen and placed the food before her.

"This smells incredible!" Linsey's eyes brightened. She seized her fork without ceremony, eager to eat.

Tenderness softening his striking features, Collin's intense gaze lingered on her face.

Between savoring bites, Linsey glanced up with sudden curiosity.

"Where did the children disappear to?"

Their absence felt unusual for this hour.

Normally, Zenia and Zander would claim her attention after lunch, their laughter filling the house.

These past few days, however, Dolores' crisis had consumed her focus, leaving little energy for anything else.

Collin replied, "Those two are practically bursting with energy today. I sent them out with the housekeeper after lunch."

His tone grew more reassuring as he continued, "Several of my security team went along as well. They're thoroughly protected."

Linsey's shoulders relaxed with relief.

Collin's people had never failed to keep their family safe.

The phone's shrill interruption sliced through her peaceful meal. One glance at the caller ID drained the color from her face. Her fork clattered against the plate as she fumbled for the phone.

Collin watched her lips part to speak, only to freeze as the caller's voice cut through whatever greeting she had prepared.

Shadows deepened across Linsey's features as she stared downward, her voice barely above a whisper. "Of course, I understand. I'll be there within the half-hour. Thank you for your patience."

Something in her subdued tone set off warning bells in Collin's mind.

A thought struck him.

The end of the call marked the death of Linsey's appetite. Her plate sat forgotten.

When she finally looked up, her face had turned ashen. "Gorman's parents just landed in Grester."

Collin's jaw tightened, his eyes flashing with immediate understanding. "They're demanding a meeting?"

Linsey's mouth formed a thin line as she gave a nod. "Thirty minutes from now."

"I'm coming with you," Collin said without hesitation.

Though Gorman's death hadn't come by their direct hand, the weight of responsibility still pressed heavily on their shoulders.

Chapter 964:

The Greens' immediate pursuit of Linsey upon arrival spoke volumes. Questions would be waiting, accusations likely sharpened by grief.

Gorman had breathed his last protecting her, after all. And Kylee, the one responsible for his death, carried the bitter irony of once being Collin's childhood companion.

Linsey's acceptance came with quiet grace. "Of course."

She naturally wouldn't refuse Collin.

Their promise echoed between them. Whatever difficulty arose, they would face it as one.

The consequences of that terrible day belonged to both of them, and neither would flee from what must be faced.

The Greens had chosen a discreet café known for business discussions. Linsey and Collin found the grieving parents already seated in their reserved room.

Before Linsey could fully open the door, Gorman's mother's quiet weeping reached her ears, each broken sob striking her heart like a physical blow.

Her steps faltered as sympathy washed over her face, evident in the way her features softened. Collin's warm hand enveloped hers from behind, his silent strength grounding her faltering resolve.

She glanced back at him, managing a tremulous smile that softened the worry creasing his brow.

After drawing a steadying breath, Linsey pushed the door open wide and stepped across the threshold.

She greeted Bart and Alissa Green gently, her voice thick with compassion.

In the private room's hushed stillness, Bart cradled Alissa against him, his usually commanding features now etched with hollow lines, worn down by days of relentless anguish and sleepless vigil.

Alissa's quiet sobs punctuated the silence, her appearance more ravaged than ever. Her tear-streaked cheeks were pale, while swollen eyes and ragged breaths suggested she was teetering on the edge of collapse.

The transformation struck Linsey like a physical blow; the two pillars of strength she once knew now seemed diminished, aged by years in mere months. Pain constricted around Linsey's chest, and moisture blurred her vision.

At the sound of her voice, Bart and Alissa slowly lifted their heads.

"Linsey, you came," Alissa said, straightening up, hastily scrubbing tears from her cheeks before offering a tremulous smile.

"Come. Have a seat." Though her voice was warm, fresh tears gathered in the corners of her reddened eyes.

Swallowing past the ache in her throat, Linsey crossed to the sofa and settled beside the grieving woman.

Collin gave a subtle nod in acknowledgment before claiming the seat beside Linsey.

“Alissa...” Linsey’s voice barely escaped as a whisper, her courage faltering. How could she speak of Gorman’s fate? Recognition flickered across Alissa’s features, and new tears began to well.

“Linsey, we’ve already heard what befell our boy.”

Despite hearing the devastating details hours earlier, voicing the reality shattered Alissa’s composure completely. Their son, once so full of vitality and promise— their only child—had been stolen from them.

What parent could endure such brutal loss? Linsey’s vision blurred as tears spilled over. She pressed her lips together, fighting for control, but emotion overwhelmed her.

“Alissa, Bart, I’m so sorry... I never imagined anything like this could happen. That knife... it was meant for me...” The words broke from Linsey’s lips, raw with guilt and grief.

Chapter 965:

Beside her, Collin’s expression darkened at her confession, though he remained silent. Over the past few days, Linsey had shown little outward guilt about Gorman’s death. She had remained focused, visiting Kylee in prison to gather information. After collecting solid evidence, she had gone with him to confront Haven at the Walton family’s residence, watching as police led her away in handcuffs.

Linsey had been ruthless in her pursuit, finding her own way to avenge Gorman’s death. But now Collin understood that beneath her composed exterior, guilt had been quietly gnawing at her all along.

Seeing Gorman’s grieving parents face-to-face had finally cracked her armor.

Alissa took Linsey's hands in hers, managing a pained smile. "Linsey, this tragedy isn't your fault. The blame lies entirely with that killer."

Her kindness only deepened Linsey's suffering. She had almost hoped Gorman's parents would blame her, scream at her—anything that would mirror the fury she felt toward herself.

But these two broken souls harbored no anger for her whatsoever. Their forgiveness hurt more than any accusation could have.

Bowing her head in guilt, Linsey surrendered to her grief, tears steadily dropping onto her blouse, darkening the fabric.

Collin immediately reached into his jacket, pulling out the crisp handkerchief he always kept close. He began dabbing at her cheeks without a word.

The tender gesture drew Alissa's attention. Mid-motion, Collin's hand stilled as he caught Bart's penetrating stare from across the room.

Something sharp flickered in the older couple's eyes, a quality that made Collin's instincts prick with unease. Still, Collin maintained his steady composure, continuing to dry Linsey's face with careful, gentle strokes until the last tear disappeared.

Collin felt no irritation at Linsey's tears, recognizing the profound weight of her grief. He knew her heart too well. Even if a stranger had perished protecting her, she would have struggled to bear the burden of their sacrifice.

Though Gorman had wounded them deeply, even targeting their children, he had also helped Linsey when she needed it most. His methods, however, had sometimes been extreme.

This was why Collin believed that while Gorman's death might have been unavoidable, it should never have come at the cost of Linsey's safety. Now, every memory of Gorman would be forever shadowed by the image of him collapsing to shield her from harm. Even his past cruelties would slowly fade, leaving only the martyrdom of his final act.

A darker suspicion crept into Collin's thoughts. He couldn't shake the feeling that Gorman had somehow anticipated Kylee's murderous intent and had deliberately positioned himself as Linsey's human shield.

Collin tenderly brushed away Linsey's tears, his wordless comfort more eloquent than any speech. His gentle care caught Alissa's attention, drawing her focus to him.

"You must be Mr. Collin Riley, the distinguished founder of CR Corporation?"

Collin's hand stilled as he turned toward her with measured courtesy. "Yes, Mrs. Green."

His gaze remained steady as it settled on Alissa, though his next words carried a deliberate weight. "I am Linsey's fiancé. Please, call me Collin."

Linsey's breath caught, her tear-dampened eyes darting to Collin with sudden bewilderment. Something in his tone suggested those words held more significance than just a simple introduction. She understood Collin's possessive nature, but he wasn't one to lose composure during delicate situations.

Gorman lay dead, and before them sat grieving parents who had just lost their son.

Linsey couldn't understand why Collin would choose this moment to assert their bond so pointedly in front of the Greens. The thought briefly crossed her mind, but she quickly pushed it aside. After all, she had brought Collin to meet the Greens today. They must already know about their relationship. His declaration was likely nothing more than polite formality.

Chapter 966:

Absorbed in her reasoning, Linsey missed the fleeting shadow that crossed the Greens' faces. But Collin, ever watchful, caught it immediately. In that instant, he knew with certainty that the Greens harbored deep resentment toward him—perhaps even hatred.

Truthfully, Collin cared little for their opinion of him. His sole concern was ensuring they would show Linsey the compassion and respect she deserved.

“Oh?” Alissa’s demeanor shifted so abruptly it seemed impossible she had been weeping just moments before. A soft laugh escaped her lips. “But I heard you and Linsey divorced four years ago. Have you already been engaged?”

The question stirred an uncomfortable feeling in Linsey’s chest. Before she could gather her thoughts to respond, Collin’s voice cut through the tension with measured calm.

“Yes. We’re getting married.”

Alissa opened her mouth to speak, but Collin pressed on with deliberate authority.

“Linsey and I are both devastated by Gorman’s tragic death and deeply regret the circumstances that led to it. We’ve already collaborated with authorities to ensure both the killer and the orchestrator face justice.”

He added, “Regarding Gorman’s remains, his former associates have taken custody. They possess the most comprehensive knowledge of the events surrounding his death. You and your husband should contact them directly for any additional information.”

Collin’s features settled into grave lines as he delivered his words with unwavering conviction. “Should you require any further assistance from me, provided it remains within reasonable and legal bounds, both CR Corporation and I stand ready to offer our full support. Gorman and I maintained a lengthy business rivalry, and I find myself compelled to honor his memory through service to those he left behind.”

Bart listened in silence, fighting back a cold laugh. The audacity of it struck him as almost admirable. Collin had managed to recast a lifelong nemesis and romantic rival as nothing more than a professional competitor.

Bart could see exactly what Collin was doing, wrapping Linsey in layers of protective lies.

Alissa understood what Collin meant and caught her husband’s eye. After the briefest hesitation, Bart, catching her cue, offered an almost imperceptible nod of consent.

Alissa seized the moment without delay. She fixed Linsey with a direct stare, her voice carrying deliberate weight. "Linsey, the reason we arranged this meeting so urgently is because we desperately need your assistance with something." Her mask of composure cracked slightly, revealing underlying tension. "However, it's a matter that requires absolute privacy."

The instant those loaded words escaped her lips, Collin's fingers locked around Linsey's with protective intensity, his gaze cutting toward the Greens like a blade honed by suspicion. He could feel it. Alissa and Bart were finally prepared to drop their pretense and expose the real agenda driving their visit.

The unexpected demand caught Linsey off guard. The realization dawned on her. Alissa was asking Collin to leave. But what could possibly require such privacy?

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Green, but that won't be possible," Collin chimed in, his smile pleasant though his refusal was firm.

He had already noticed the subtle disdain in Bart's and Alissa's eyes earlier, a slip that hadn't gone unnoticed.

Even if Bart and Alissa meant well and harbored no ill will, Collin would never leave Linsey to handle them alone.

If he had trusted them completely, he wouldn't have insisted on accompanying her in the first place. After all the unexpected dangers Linsey had faced, Collin had grown steadfast in his commitment to keeping her safe.

Chapter 967:

Brushing aside the brief annoyance that flickered across Alissa's face, Collin continued with quiet determination. "As I said earlier, Linsey and I are engaged. We handle whatever comes our way together. We don't keep things from each other."

He squeezed Linsey's hand gently, his affectionate gaze settling on her face. "So, Mrs. Green, whatever you need to discuss, please feel free to share it with both of us. That way, we can figure out the best way to help you."

Throughout Collin's words, Linsey stayed silent, but her fingers found his and squeezed back with silent support. Her feelings mirrored his completely.

Still, Alissa turned to address her directly, her voice carrying a subtle challenge. "Linsey, do you feel the same way?"

Linsey looked straight into Alissa's eyes, offering a gentle nod before speaking in her characteristically soft tone. "Alissa, please tell us what you and Bart need. If we can help, we absolutely will."

Alissa didn't answer right away. Her gaze dropped momentarily, and a mysterious smile touched the corners of her mouth.

"Linsey, I genuinely like you," Alissa began, her voice warming with apparent fondness. "I'll never forget visiting Gorman at his new place once, back when he was still with us. We happened to find you there with him that day. We spent such a lovely, peaceful afternoon together. I kept thinking what a remarkable young woman you were, and how perfectly suited you would have been as Gorman's wife."

When those words reached her ears, a wave of unease settled deep inside Linsey.

Alissa had been recounting something that happened while she was overseas. Gorman had fallen ill with a fever, and out of kindness, she brought him medicine. Worried by how pale he looked, she even cooked something soothing for him.

But then, without warning, Gorman's parents showed up for a surprise visit. Since then, Alissa had been stopping by often, claiming to visit Gorman. Yet, somehow, each of her visits also included a stop at Linsey's place, where she always left generous snacks. Gorman had once mentioned that Alissa adored the kids and loved caring for them.

Still, Linsey had her doubts. From what she observed, Alissa's attention wasn't truly on the children—it was on her.

That said, Linsey never felt anything romantic toward Gorman, so she didn't pay much attention to whatever Alissa might have been thinking. Alissa was kind, and Linsey responded with polite

friendliness—nothing more. She kept her distance, always careful not to blur the line between strangers and friends.

But now, Alissa's words carried weight. They could stir doubts in Collin's mind—make him wonder if something had truly happened between her and Gorman while she was away.

"Alissa, I..." Linsey began, her voice catching. She struggled to find the right words. Her eyes flicked to Collin, panic flashing for a moment. But with Gorman's parents watching, she couldn't explain anything to him—not now. Whatever she might say would sound wrong in that heavy silence.

She braced herself for irritation in Collin's eyes—but it never came. Instead, to her surprise, he gently said, "It's alright, I understand."

Those words washed over her like warm rain. Relief bloomed in her chest. Thank God—he didn't doubt her.

Collin might question others, but he would never question Linsey, not the woman he loved.

He knew the truth: she had left for those four years because of him—because of the lies he once kept hidden. And if she had fallen for someone else during that time, even then, he would have accepted it, so long as the man treated her right.

Chapter 968:

It was the same grace he extended to Zenia. Even when he wasn't sure she was his daughter, he never held it against her.

To Collin, Linsey's happiness meant everything. He would give her the world just to see her smile. Now that they were together again, he made a vow—to trust her fully. That was the only way to honor the love they had fought so hard to protect.

Collin said calmly, “Mrs. Green, let’s not get lost in things that don’t matter. Gorman’s remains are still waiting. They’re yours to claim.” His voice was steady, his face unreadable—calm like a still lake. No one could guess what he truly felt.

“Collin!” Bart jumped to his feet, rage twisting his face. He bared his teeth. “My son died because of you! You’ll do exactly what we say, without one word of protest! This is payback!”

His outburst hit Linsey like a physical blow. She stared, stunned, unable to believe what she was seeing. This furious, bitter man—was this the same gentle, quiet father she once knew?

“Bart...” she whispered, finally finding her voice. Her brows furrowed in confusion as she saw the truth behind Gorman’s parents.

“Enough! Don’t bother pretending to be nice!” Bart snapped, cutting her off coldly.

Alissa’s face remained solemn, yet she didn’t speak to contradict Bart’s words. It was clear—she agreed with him.

Only then did Linsey truly understand. This was how they saw it. In their eyes, she was the reason Gorman had died.

What surprised her most was how kind Alissa had been earlier.

Collin noticed the faint frown on Linsey’s face and the way her breath caught. He let out a quiet sigh before addressing Bart calmly. “If that’s what you believe, Mr. and Mrs. Green, then say it plainly. If you’re after revenge, then there’s nothing left to discuss. The person who murdered Gorman is already behind bars. If you want justice, then face the real killer.”

“Collin!” Alissa snapped, trembling with fury. She pointed at him with shaking hands. “You couldn’t wait for my son to die! You let Kylee murder him, didn’t you? You’ve been targeting him all along! That assassination attempt—it had your fingerprints all over it!”

Linsey couldn't stay quiet any longer. Her voice turned cold. "Alissa, please choose your words carefully. The case was investigated thoroughly. Kylee and Haven were the ones responsible for Gorman's death."

Her tone sharp, she took Collin by the arm and added firmly, "If there's nothing more to say, we'll be leaving."

Without another word, she took Collin's hand and moved toward the door.

"Stop right there!" Alissa's voice rang out, icy and mocking. "Our men have already surrounded this place. If either of you tries to step out..."

Linsey froze in her tracks, her eyes wide with disbelief.

Alissa's next words made her blood run cold. "Collin will pay the price for my son's death."

A wave of fear rushed through Linsey.

They had come here alone, without any backup.

If Alissa was telling the truth, and the Green family's men were really outside, Collin might be able to escape—but not if he had to protect her too.

She knew it. And so did Collin.

Still, without hesitation, Collin pulled her behind him and whispered, "Don't be afraid, Linsey. Stay close to me. I'll get you out."

His grip tightened as he prepared himself to face whatever awaited them beyond the door.

Chapter 969:

But Linsey couldn't let him do this. Not like this. Not alone.

"No," she said firmly, stopping him. She turned to face Alissa and Bart. "What exactly do you want?"

Alissa had only mentioned making Collin pay. She hadn't clarified what would happen to Linsey.

And now, Linsey realized—they had contacted her as soon as they arrived. That meant they had a plan. And that plan involved her.

As Linsey stood her ground, even a little, Alissa's lips curled into a faint, knowing smile. She spoke slowly, her voice smooth and heavy with meaning. "You should've said this earlier."

She stepped closer, her voice soft. "You know, Linsey... Gorman loved you more than anything. He told us more than once—if he couldn't marry you, he'd rather stay single forever. No wife. No children."

The moment those words left her mouth, Collin nearly lost control. His fists clenched, his body tensed.

Alissa's meaning was clear. Did she want Linsey to marry the dead?

Linsey's arms tightened around Collin, her gaze cutting through Alissa like steel. "So what's your endgame here? Are you trying to trap me into marriage? Gorman is dead. Who exactly am I supposed to wed? Does the Green family keep spare men in reserve?"

"Of course not," Alissa's voice carried the calm of someone delivering a weather report. "Six years ago, at our insistence, Gorman froze his sperm at an overseas facility. Since you were his greatest love, the woman he died protecting, you should honor that sacrifice by carrying his child."

The words struck Linsey like lightning splitting a clear sky.

Collin surged forward, his body becoming a wall between them, radiating menace. “Absolutely not. Don’t even entertain the thought.” The sheer audacity left him reeling! These people actually expected Linsey to cooperate with them to have a child through IVF.

Linsey’s hands turned to ice, shock coursing through her veins. She had braced herself for countless scenarios. She thought Alissa and Bart might demand exorbitant sums of money or a lifetime of servitude to their family. But this? The thought of bearing Gorman’s child had never even crossed her mind. It struck her as completely insane.

Suddenly, everything made sense. This explained their desperate rush to find her the moment they arrived in Grester, not even bothering to collect Gorman’s body first. They cared more about a potential grandchild than they ever had about their actual son.

Alissa caught sight of Linsey’s appalled expression and let out a harsh laugh. “Wipe that look off your face, Linsey. Think rationally. Gorman died saving you, and now we’re left with nothing of him. We’re not demanding your life. Just one child to preserve his legacy. Is that really so unreasonable?”

With that, her eyes drifted pointedly toward Collin.

Alissa found his arrogance almost amusing. This man truly believed he could single-handedly shield Linsey from everything. His overconfidence had handed them the perfect opening. Had Collin arrived with an army of bodyguards, controlling Linsey would have been impossible. Instead, fate seemed to smile upon their scheme, clearing every obstacle from their path.

Satisfaction bloomed across Alissa’s face as her tone turned almost conversational. “Besides, you’ve already been through childbirth once, so you know what to expect. One more pregnancy shouldn’t pose any challenge. You’re still young—a few months of recovery, and you’ll be perfectly fine. What could possibly frighten you?”

Linsey’s fingers twisted into Collin’s shirt, her pulse hammering against her ribs. Any lingering hope that Alissa and Bart might abandon this twisted demand finally died. The moment Alissa voiced this deranged proposal, Linsey realized any hope of rational discussion had vanished. No sane person would demand that a woman, with her own fiancé, bear a child for their dead son.

Chapter 970:

She had once believed Alissa and Bart possessed genuine warmth and decency, but their masks had finally slipped away completely. As her mind raced, a chilling clarity emerged.

When Gorman had first held her captive, her fierce resistance had only inflamed his obsession. Her defiance had driven him to tighten his control over both her and Zenia's lives, trapping them deeper in his web.

If she fought too hard against Alissa and Bart now, if she let her revulsion show too clearly, it would only push them toward more desperate measures.

She and Collin had come without any backup. Linsey never imagined Alissa and Bart would show such a terrifying side. Now that things had spiraled this far, they had to tread carefully. One look at their wild expressions told Linsey everything—pushing the Greens any further could lead to disaster.

Thinking quickly, she gently squeezed Collin's hand. He understood right away. Their trust in each other ran deep now. No words were needed. Alissa and Bart didn't notice the quiet signal between them. They stood there, confident that their plan was going to succeed.

Then, Linsey stepped forward from behind Collin. "If you want me to cooperate with your IVF plan, shouldn't you take me to the hospital first for a check-up? You've skipped a major step. What if my current health condition isn't suitable for egg retrieval or IVF at all?"

Alissa frowned. "What nonsense. You've already had two children. Your body is clearly fit for it. As for the check-up, we'll handle that. Just come with us quietly, and you won't suffer."

Linsey ignored the threat in her voice and responded coolly, "Alissa, it sounds like this plan was thrown together on the plane. You didn't have time to study the details of IVF, did you?"

Alissa faltered, her confidence slipping for a moment. She couldn't argue. The truth was, IVF wasn't as simple as they had made it sound. It required careful planning, tests, and timing. Since landing, they had scrambled to pull strings and contact a team, desperate to make it work.

Still, Alissa quickly pushed the doubt aside. Her gaze turned sharp. “Do you think we’re fools? IVF is just a few simple steps. The doctors will handle the details. You’re just trying to stall us. But I see right through you.”

IVF had seen countless successes in the medical field, and they had hired an expert team. That’s why Alissa believed failure wasn’t even an option.

She sneered, clearly confident in her plan’s success. “Linsey, you’re clever, but this time, we’ve done our homework. You’ll end up having Gorman’s child, whether you like it or not. So don’t try any tricks.”

Bart stepped in, his eyes dark with menace. “If you’re thinking of resisting, we’re prepared for that too. The phone signals are already blocked. You can’t call or message anyone. No matter how powerful your friends are, they won’t get through.”

He turned to Collin, his voice low and threatening. “I hear you’re quite the fighter. But I’d like to see if you alone can take on hundreds of our trained men.”

Linsey’s heart skipped a beat at those words. Without thinking, she reached for Collin’s hand. The warmth of his skin helped her breathe a little easier.

She knew one thing for sure—Collin would never let Alissa and Bart drag her away for IVF. She didn’t want that either.

Still, Linsey couldn’t let him take any unnecessary risks.

“Why the rush? We’re not foolish enough to go against your men on our own,” she said, her voice calm and steady.

Bart let out a smug smile. “Glad you understand.”

Linsey’s tone softened slightly. “Bart, Alissa, let’s sit and talk this through. There’s no need for all this tension. Gorman’s death is tied to me, and I do feel responsible. If there’s a way to make things right, I’m willing to cooperate.”