

Marrying 1011

Chapter 1011 Stay Focused

To Damien, Cherise's plea for him to shave carried great significance. It stirred fear within him that she might vanish the moment he turned away. He had toiled through the night and completed all his tasks in preparation to accompany her in the search for Ian. He was also planning to take her to Shawbury High to attempt to invoke her memories there.

Despite all that, his heart quivered with trepidation when she approached him in tears at dawn. He feared that she couldn't endure his dominance and arrogance any longer. Damien was afraid that she yearned to depart. Since Cherise lost her memory, Damien felt like he'd morphed into a perpetually anxious state. And so, he rebuffed her once more, saying, "I'll do it when you cease crying and throwing

a fuss."

Cherise sighed, her lips pouting as she ultimately sighed and asked, "Are you going to do it?"

Damien's lips pressed together, his brow wrinkled as he stared at her. "How about this-will you shave for me?"

"You want me to... shave for you?" Cherise felt utterly clueless about how to proceed. Although she had shaved for him in her dream, she hadn't the faintest idea how to replicate the act. Not only had she shaved for him in her dream, but she had also helped bathe him and... The vivid recollection sent an abrupt flush of warmth to her cheeks. She pouted, met Damien's gaze, and remarked, "Aren't you afraid I'll accidentally hurt you?"

"No. Observing the blush on her face and the playful tone in her voice, Damien's apprehensions began to melt away gradually. "Even though you've lost your memory, you were previously an exceptional surgeon. I trust you won't make such a rookie mistake

Cherise was speechless. Was I really so incredible? I used to be a surgeon? She had always believed herself to be nothing more than a naïve girl under Damien's protection. With this realization, she found herself lifted from the bed by Damien and carried into the bathroom. A slightly heavy, cold metal razor was placed in her hand, and Damien stood before her, smiling. "Go ahead."

Cherise gazed at the opulent razor in her hand, feeling a surge of panic. She had only suggested Damien shave because she sensed his low spirits and hoped to cheer him up. Pressuring him to was Cherise's clumsy attempt to convey that she no longer condemned him. But now, she found herself in a perplexing predicament. Why am I suddenly tasked with shaving this man's stubble? She has no idea how to proceed!

"Dr. Shaw, stay focused," Damien's low, teasing voice cut through Cherise's swirling thoughts.

Cherise's heart skipped a beat. Is he deliberately calling me "Dr. Shaw" now? Is he intentionally trying to rattle me? Her hand trembled slightly as she held the razor. After a moment of inner turmoil, she decisively set the razor down on the sink firmly and turned to Damien earnestly. "Actually, there's something I need to tell you."

Damien's silent scrutiny intensified, casting a palpable tension over the room. Cherise felt a surge of nervousness under his penetrating gaze. Yet, some conversations couldn't be delayed any longer. She steeled herself. Let's just get it over with!

"Yesterday, Lucy approached me and divulged a lot, Cherise began, taking a deep breath. Meeting

see that I shouldn't have doubted you because of Sebastian's words or those supposed pieces of evidence."

Damien was taken aback and in a daze. Is she truly going to address these matters? In the moments leading up to her confession, he had mentally braced himself for the possibility of her seeking a divorce or a breakup. But... A glimmer of hope subtly flickered across Damien's features. Still, he maintained a composed façade, his expression betraying no hint of emotion. "And?" he prompted calmly.

Chapter 1012 I'm Incredibly Lonely

"And... I want to extend my apologies to you..." Cherise paused, drawing in a deep breath as she regarded Damien earnestly. "After careful consideration, I realize you may have had valid reasons for your previous actions. I can't remember what happened in the past, but I can sense your genuine kindness toward me-it emanates from your heart."

"Hence..." She hesitated, feeling somewhat awkward and timid as she tiptoed shyly, gently kissing his chin. "So, I'm prepared to allow you to assist me in recovering my memories and uncovering the truth about our past. If my memories indeed paint you in a negative light, I'll have no choice but to leave you."

"But if you had legitimate motives..." She sniffled as if reaffirming her decision. "Then I'll owe you an apology and agree to one request from you!"

Raising his brows. Damien felt a wave of relief wash over him, dissipating the worry that had been gnawing at his heart. With a helpless shake of his head, he reached out and affectionately pinched Cherise's cheek. Then you'd better brace yourself to welcome our third child."

Our third child? Cherise's eyes widened in disbelief. "What do you mean?"

You would have had to agree to one of my requests sooner or later." Damien explained with a teasing glint, and I'm requesting you to... He lifted her chin, forcing her to meet his gaze. To give me a third child.

Cherise's cheeks flushed crimson in an instant. She swiftly pushed Damien away. "You... you....

"You silly girl." Damien chuckled, pulling Cherise into a tight embrace. "You scared me there." He admitted that he had nearly let her slip away because he had mistakenly assumed he was the cause of

her tears. He thought she was upset at being imprisoned by him. In truth, he couldn't bear to see her cry. Each tear felt like a stab to his heart, leaving him with a sense of profound guilt.

"Darling," Cherise murmured, nestled in the warmth of his embrace, "may I make a bold request?"

Damien arched his brows. "Of course, he replied, open to her request.

The woman tentatively traced circles on Damien's chest with her fingers. "Can I... ask you to sleep with me every night from now on?" Since Damien encountered Sebastian in the library, he had made a

conscious decision to spend each night in the study. This left Cherise alone in their bedroom, sleeping by herself and waking up to an empty space. The solitude weighed heavily on her.

The reason for her emotional state this morning and her immediate search for Damien upon waking stemmed from her inability to reconcile the intimacy she had experienced with him in her dreams and his absence when she woke up.

After Cherise finished speaking, she sensed Damien's body stiffen slightly beneath her touch. "Actually, if you're busy, it's fine... I just don't want... to wake up alone in the bedroom every morning," she clarified softly. Assuming he was upset, she pouted and added, "I feel incredibly lonely without you..."

Damien pursed his lips, feeling somewhat bewildered by Cherise's helpless and distressed voice. "So..." he began, instinctively enfolding her tightly in his arms. "Was this the reason for your tears?"

Cherise nodded heavily, her head bowed low, "It's... embarrassing and melodramatic," she admitted, her voice barely above a whisper. "I don't know why... Maybe because I've grown accustomed to you holding me every night... Suddenly, being without you feels incredibly difficult..."

"Then perhaps you won't have to get used to being in bed without me, Damien mused, releasing a long breath as relief washed over him. "I promise I'll always be there to accompany you to sleep, no matter what challenges we face in the future."

Marrying the Man in the Dark

Chapter 1013 Be Gentle

"You're neither embarrassing nor melodramatic. I'm grateful you're speaking from your heart, Damien assured Cherise, his hand tenderly stroking her head. "Regardless if you've regained your memories, you'll always be my beloved Cherise. Her personality her endearing quirks, and her reliance on him remained unchanged.

"However," Damien continued, lifting her chin to meet his gaze, "If you want me to commit to sleeping beside you every night in the future, it comes with a condition. You must agree to my condition before I agree to yours."

Cherise's heart clenched. "What is it?" she inquired anxiously.

With a gentle smile, Damien retrieved the razor from the sink and offered it to Cherise. This," he replied cryptically.

Cherise was dumbstruck, her eyes widening in surprise. "Why don't you do this yourself..." she mumbled incredulously. She scrutinized the razor in her hand, her hesitation palpable as she pressed her lips together. Despite her former proficiency as a surgeon, the notion of wielding the razor on Damien's face filled her with trepidation. He was Lenoir Group's president and a prominent figure in Adania.

The possibility of accidentally causing him harm and resulting in a scar that would mar his dignity loomed large in her mind. And the thought of the embarrassment that would ensue if it

known that his wife had inflicted such an injury while shaving him... It was unthinkable, me

With these apprehensions swirling in her thoughts, the razor felt like a red-hot coal in her hand. Cherise hastily threw the razor to the sink.

Moments later, the razor found its way back into Cherise's grasp. Damien's dark, unwavering eyes bore into her, making it impossible for her to refuse. "Mrs. Lenoir, are you declining such a simple request from me?" his voice, firm and unyielding, left no room for negotiation.

Under Damien's unwavering gaze, Cherise reluctantly retrieved the razor. "Don't blame me if I accidentally nick you," she warned.

Damien simply smiled and nodded in response. "Go ahead."

"You can't blame me!" Cherise took a deep breath, her brow furrowing in concentration. With hi being significantly taller than her, shaving him would require her to tilt her head back, a prospec found exhausting. She pouted, then suddenly brightened as an idea struck her. "Come here."

Damien watched with amusement as the petite woman fetched a small stool and climbed onto it while holding the razor. His lips curled up at the sight. He obediently moved closer, reaching out to grab her slender waist, mindful of keeping her steady. This time, she stood a few inches taller than him.

Cherise felt her cheeks flush as she instructed, "Look up."

"Yes, ma'am," Damien replied with a faint smile, tilting his head back as requested. "Please be gentle with me, Mrs. Lenoir."

Cherise pursed her lips, switched on the electric razor, and was about to carefully shave his stubble.

Worried I might accidentally nick you?"

"I'm not concerned about that. Since I'm so shameless, I have thick skin," Damien joked. "But I'm more worried about you hurting yourself."

Cherise continued shaving, keeping a steady grip on the electric shaver. She smiled, playfully adding, "I don't think you're shameless." She inwardly felt she was the shameless one, having been the one to initiate the argument and now being the first to make amends. She had been the one to regard him as an adversary initially, yet she was now the one requesting his presence in bed. Cherise couldn't help but feel somewhat indecisive, shameless, and melodramatic.

The man offered a faint smile. In your presence, I'll always be shameless."

Cherise's face flushed a crimson red. She gently patted him. "Stop making me laugh, I'm going to start now.

The man nodded, his expression serious as Cherise started shaving his stubble.

Chapter 1014 Exhaustion Takes Over

The strands of hair framing Cherise's ears were soft and silky, catching the morning sunlight and emitting a golden sheen, much like her gentle and captivating aura. Bushing faintly, she meticulously trimmed Damien's stubble, ensuring each contour was perfect, before tenderly wiping his face with a towel. Finally, she breathed a sigh of relief. "Mission accomplished," she announced.

"Hmm, much better now," Damien remarked, turning to assess his reflection in the mirror. A grin spread across his face. "You're certainly talented, Mrs. Lenoir. It looks like I can rely on you for my shaving needs from now on."

Cherise's response came swiftly. "To be sure," she protested with a touch of playful defiance.

"Resistance is futile," Damien teased as he leaned in, pressing his forehead against Cherise's. "Feeling hungry? What are you craving? I'll ship it up for you," Cherise pouted, her hand caressing her stomach, realizing she did feel quite hungry.

"Does a sandwich sound good?" Damien suggested, already predicting Cherise's response from her gestures. Without waiting for her reply, he swept her up and swiftly carried her downstairs. Setting Cherise gently into a chair at the dining table, he planted a tender kiss on her forehead. "Hang tight. I'll be back in a jiffy." With that, Damien's tall, imposing figure vanished into the kitchen.

In the kitchen, Frances bustled about, her eyebrows raised at Damien's unexpected return. "Mr. Lenoir, weren't you off to get some rest? What brings you back?" As Damien stepped into the kitchen, Frances swiftly redirected him. "Are you hungry? What tickles your taste buds? I'll whip something up for you. Forget about doing it on your own. You've been burning the midnight oil. Go catch some shut-eye. Aren't you supposed to whisk Mrs. Lenoir away to the countryside today?"

Damien's towering frame obscured Cherise from Frances' view. "You... didn't get any shut-eye last night?" Cherise asked worriedly. Frances' remarks had stirred a flutter of concern in Cherise's chest. Rising from her seat, she hurried over to Damien's side. "I thought..." She had assumed he'd risen early,

like her.

Frances' words jogged her memory. Someone had whispered promises in her ear last night that he'd handle company affairs before joining her for their countryside adventure. So he'd slept at all.

The realization that this man had sacrificed his rest for her, coaxing and worrying about her a sleepless night, weighed heavily on Cherise. "Please, go and rest," she urged, gently clasping "I can handle the cooking."

"I have time to spare, Damien replied, turning to her with a tender smile. "I'm thrilled that we make amends today, Mrs. Lenoir. Let me make you a sandwich"

"You can make me a sandwich any time, Cherise insisted, pouting and halting him. "You need to rest first."

Damien smiled ruefully. "No need. I insist on making a sandwich for you first... Before he could finish, he staggered sideways. Cherise acted swiftly, catching him to prevent him from falling. Frances also hurried over to support Damien from the other side.

the doorway, declining assistance from the two women. "But it seems I could really use some rest.

"Mr. Hampson!" Cherise called out promptly. Shortly after, Mr. Hampson arrived with other servants, and they supported Damien to the upstairs bedroom.

"Mr. Lenoir is utterly exhausted, the family doctor remarked an hour later, removing his stethoscope. "In my professional opinion, Mr. Lenoir hasn't had a decent night's sleep in a week."

Chapter 1015 You're Not Invincible

"Now that he's finally sleeping soundly, his biggest problem must have been resolved, the doctor remarked, glancing at Cherise. "Mrs. Lenoir, you must take good care of Mr. Lenoir and make sure he sleeps during this time. He's too neglectful of his own well-being."

Cherise listened intently to the doctor's concerns about Damien. She also took note of Mr. Hampson's account of Damien's recent sleep patterns. It seemed that... he hadn't been able to rest properly since she lost her memory. He managed only three to four hours of sleep a day, consumed by fear that something might happen to her. He was afraid she would lose all her memories after some time due to amnesia.

Consequently, he worked tirelessly, handling the company's affairs and overseeing his subordinates. Since Sebastian had informed her of their past, Damien had been sleeping only one or two hours a night, spending late hours in the study to carve out more time to be with her.

"Mr. Lenoir hasn't been getting enough rest lately..." Mr. Hords struck Cherise deeply.

causing a pang in her heart. Tears welled up in her eyes and silently rolled down her cheeks. "You always call me a fool, she murmured, reaching out to stroke the man's cold, stoic face tenderly, "But aren't you the real fool?" –

He silently endured so much for her without ever revealing the extent of his sacrifices. He would rather bear her resentment and misunderstanding than burden her with explanations. If it hadn't been for Lucy's words yesterday or if Mr. Hampson hadn't disclosed Damien's recent sleeplessness... Would I still persist in misunderstanding him? Would I still engage in endless arguments with him?

"I'm not a fool," the man murmured, slowly opening his eyes and gently wiping away the tears from the corners of her eyes. "Please don't cry. It pains me to see you like this."

Cherise's tears finally spilled over. She threw herself into his embrace. "If you don't want me to cry, then stop putting yourself through this torment."

"I'm fine," the man smiled faintly, reaching to caress her head. "I'm a man. I'll be alright."

"You're a man, but you're not invincible!" Cherise bit her lip as she lay against him, feeling the warmth of his body. Her voice caught in her throat. "If you keep pushing yourself like this, you'll be gone before I regain my memory!"

"That won't happen," the man's voice remained faint. It's just a matter of not getting enough rest. It's nothing major."

"Insufficient rest can lead to serious health issues, the doctor added, concerned by Damien's disregard for his well-being. "Continuing to subject yourself to this level of strain could overwhelm even the strongest physiques."

“Did you hear that?” Cherise sniffled, her gaze fixed on Damien’s face with a touch of frustration. “The doctor clearly stated that even the strongest body can’t endure this pressure!” She drew in a deep breath. I’ve made a decision. You’re not permitted to do anything today. Just stay home to rest and sleep!”

“Silly girl,” Damien sighed softly. “There’s still so much to do today. How can I possibly sleep? I

“I’m not going!” Cherise sniffled, her tone resolute. “Even if you refuse to rest, I won’t go to Shawbury today. And even if I go, I won’t dwell on the past unless you take care of yourself!”

Damien frowned, studying her worried expression. After a moment, he managed a forced smile. “It seems I’ll have to heed your advice today and prioritize my rest.”

“That’s right! Set everything else aside for now,” Cherise affirmed. “You must take good care of yourself today! I don’t want to regain my memories only to lose my husband!”

Chapter 1016 Damien’s Password

She spoke confidently and assertively, yet Damien sensed a tenderness within her. He offered Cherise a rueful smile. “But I’ve already arranged so much...” The fatigue in Damien’s eyes was evident, his voice barely above a whisper.

“I don’t care about your plans. Today, you need to rest in bed!” Cherise insisted gently, casing him back onto the bed. “Delay the tasks that can wait. As for the urgent tasks...” She paused, chewing on her lip. “I’ll handle them!”

He managed a faint smile, his eyes betraying his exhaustion as he looked up at her in exasperation. You may not be able to manage it all.

“How dare you say that?” Cherise countered, tucking his arms back under the covers. I’ll prove it to you today! Even if I’ve lost my memory. I’m still your steadfast ally, fully capable of supporting you!”

Damien glanced at her, a touch of surprise flickering in his eyes. He remembered when Cherise had expressed her eagerness to assist at the company, mentioning her aspiration to become his right-hand woman. "Alright," he agreed after a brief pause, a smile forming on his lips. "Today, I'll lean on you, Mrs.

Lenoir.

"Okay!" Cherise nodded confidently. "You get some rest!"

"Mm. Only then did Damien exhale a sigh of relief, sinking into the covers and finally closing his eyes in peace. Cherise lingered by Damien's side until his breathing steadied, then quietly slipped away.

Upon her departure. Cherise seized Damien's phone. She had left explicit instructions for Mr. Hampson to keep a vigilant eye on Damien. "If Damien stirs, make him go back to bed. And if he makes a fuss,

don't hesitate to contact me! she commanded. Mr. Hampson settled into a chair beside Damien dutifully, his gaze unwavering as he observed the sleeping figure.

Meanwhile, in the quiet of the study. Cherise unlocked Damien's phone to discover a message awaiting her. Jan's requests have been sent to your email. Please check it promptly and respond. A frown creased her forehead as she mulled over the name. Jan... The single person she had recollections of

Ian emerged as a paragon of virtue in the corridors of Cherise's memories. He was gentle, kind, and intellectually astute. He was Shawbury High's shining star, revered by all.

Ian's support was a beacon during Cherise's academic journey. He had provided her with study materials for her SATs and encouraged her to strive for excellence. In those moments, she had harbored aspirations of emulating his path, envisioning herself attending a prestigious university to pursue a medical career.

The events that followed remained shrouded in the mist of Cherise's memory. Yet, Damien had hinted at her exceptional prowess as a surgeon. Thus, her past self must have been driven by ambition, scaling heights of accomplishment. With these musings swirling in her mind, Cherise turned her attention to Damien's computer.

An obstacle presented itself in the form of a password-protected email account. Cherise's brow furrowed in concentration as she attempted various combinations-birthdates, personal details-all to no avail. Even their wedding anniversary date failed to grant her access.

Frustration tinged her efforts. She was reluctant to disturb Damien's slumber and aware that the household staff wouldn't know their boss' password. Eventually, she surrendered to defeat, casually inputting a password she frequently employed. To her astonishment, it worked.

Cherise's eyes widened in disbelief. This... this password wasn't a significant date or a unique symbol. It was simply... a password she often used. Could it be that Damien had set his email password to match my frequently utilized password? Was he concerned I might face difficulty accessing his email? A wry smile tugged at

Cherise's lips. This man... he must certainly love me deeply

Chapter 1017 Ian's Requests

Unfortunately, their shared history still eluded her. Steeling herself, Cherise took a deep breath and opened the email marked 'Ian's requests.' The contents within made Cherise's jaw drop in shock. The email starkly outlined Ian's demands.

In addition to the initial two million, Ian had reconsidered his stance. He gathered that returning to Shawbury to help Cherise recover her memory would be a prolonged endeavor. Hence, he requested an additional three million from Damien, bringing the total to five million.

Another one of Ian's requests conveyed his desire to procure a residence in Shawbury, expressing discomfort with the prospect of an extended hotel stay upon his return to the town. He believed having a place to call home during his stay was equitable.

Ian also asserted that he couldn't forget Damien's past actions. Despite a prior verbal apology from post of no Damien, Ian deemed it insufficient. He insisted that Damien compose a lengthy Twitter fewer than 500 words on his personal account, affirming Ian's virtuous character and acknowledging his past transgressions.

Perched in Damien's chair, Cherise squinted at the words on the screen, her eyes burning as she rubbed them vigorously. Doubt gnawed at her. She thought that she had misinterpreted the email.

Unaware of Damien's past misdeeds that had provoked Ian's demand for an apology, Cherise remained steadfast in her belief that even if Damien had indeed wronged Ian... Damien had requested that Ian join her on the journey back to Shawbury to jog her memory. Ian's requests seemed utterly absurd. The Ian in the email appeared to be opportunistic and solely driven by self-interest.

Yet, the Ian embedded in her memory was the epitome of nobility and integrity. He was the very pride of Shawbury High, the embodiment of inspiration. Ian was a boy who had commanded the admiration

of all the girls in school. Before her SATS, he had generously provided her with old study materials, words of encouragement, and heartfelt smiles.

Despite her efforts, Cherise couldn't reconcile the Ian described in the email with the one etched in her memories. As she was feeling perplexed, the ringing of Damien's phone interrupted the silence again.

"Mr. Lenoir, Ian is causing a scene at the hotel and insists on your immediate agreement to his terms." It was a call from someone named "Otto Walkins." "Otherwise, he's threatening to besmirch your reputation in Mrs. Lenoir's presence."

"Ian asserts that Mrs. Lenoir only recalls him now and will undeniably believe whatever he says." There was a brief pause on the other end of the line before Otto continued, "Should you reject his demands, he'll approach Sebastian. Consequently, Mrs. Lenoir will have a low regard for you. He maintains that someone as intelligent as him can concoct a detailed array of lies to sow resentment and discord towards you in your wife."

Cherise's grip on the phone tightened as she struggled to absorb the shocking revelation. After a momentary pause to compose herself, she steadied her voice. "Did... Ian really say that?" she inquired, her tone laced with disbelief.

Otto was momentarily silenced by Cherise's gentle inquiry. After some time, his voice deepened. "Are you Mrs. Lenoir?" he countered.

Cherise pursed her lips. "Yes, I am," she answered firmly.

"Where's Mr. Lenoir?" Otto pressed.

"He's resting," Cherise replied tersely.

"In that case, I shall wait for Mr. Lenoir to awaken before..." Otto's sentence trailed off, leaving the remainder of his words hanging in the air.

Cherise drew in a deep breath, her voice resolute. "I'll take care of everything on his behalf today."

On the other end of the line, Otto remained silent for a prolonged moment, visibly taken aback. "Um..."

"Has Damien agreed?" Before Otto could respond, another male voice boomed arrogantly on his end. "Haven't you made the stakes clear to Damien? That's enough! Stop calling and instruct him to come speak with me in person!"

Otto hesitated, his lips pursed in uncertainty. "Uh..." he trailed off, his voice tinged with apprehension. "Did you hear that?"

Chapter 1018 Behind A Screen

Cherise pursed her lips. "I did," she affirmed quietly. The arrogant voice Cherise had just heard aligned with what she could remember of Ian's voice. Yet, neither the current Cherise nor her past self could have fathomed that this voice she had once pined for would say such things with such arrogance and disdain.

Before Cherise could respond, Ian resumed his tirade on the other end. "Ensure Damien knows who holds the real power now!" he bellowed.

Cherise remained silent momentarily, her mind grappling with Ian's words, which seemed out of character. Taking a deep breath to steady herself, she addressed Otto calmly over the phone. "Get ready and send me the address. I'll be there shortly."

"Are you sure about this?" Otto interjected, his lips pressed together in concern. "You..." His voice trailed off as he moved to a quieter location. "Mr. Lenoir would never agree."

"Today, you're going to follow my lead," Cherise reassured him with a smile. "Don't worry. If anything goes wrong, I'll take full responsibility. Damien won't hold you accountable."

With his boss' wife reassuring him, Otto found himself unable to refuse Cherise. He nodded silently. "Okay. I'll get everything arranged right away."

After hanging up, Cherise retreated to the dressing room. She selected a plaid skirt reminiscent of what she used to wear in high school. She tied her hair up into a high ponytail, a style she recalled donning every time she met Ian.

Once dressed, she received an address from Otto. Damien had indeed made courteous arrangements for Ian, securing him accommodation at one of Adania's highly rated, five-star hotels. When Cherise

arrived at the hotel, Otto was already waiting.

Spotting Damien's car pulling up, Otto hurried over. He had previously served Damien in Europe and was reassigned due to Mr. Kolson's absence, stepping into Mr. Kolson's former position.

Otto had only heard of Cherise. He had never caught a glimpse of her in person. In his mind, a woman worthy of marriage to his boss must have exuded elegance, maturity, and poise—a wealthy young lady of undeniable means. Cherise's articulate manner over the phone further reinforced this image in Otto's mind.

However, as the car door swung open, Otto's expectations were defied. Instead of the poised figure he had envisioned, a woman emerged dressed like she was still in high school, her hair pulled back in a youthful ponytail. Her bare face radiated a natural, sweet charm. Otto couldn't help but press his lips together, privately sneaking a second glance at Cherise.

Cherise was well aware of Otto's unspoken thoughts. She understood that her attire today hinted at a desire to appear younger. Yet, she was here to reconnect with her former high school friend and wanted to gauge whether Ian remembered their shared past. Flashing a sweet smile at Otto, she quipped, "Yes, it's me-the one you just spoke to on the phone!"

Otto's astonishment was palpable, clearly not anticipating that the woman before him was Mrs. Lenoir. Moreover, he hadn't anticipated how effortlessly approachable she would be. After a brief moment of

Lenoir, this way, please," he croaked, his voice betraying a hint of nervousness.

With an awkward shuffle, Otto passed a small voice-changing microphone to Cherise. He avoided eye contact as he hastily turned away and led her forward "I settled Ian in and informed him that Mr. Lenoir will meet with him soon but prefers not to see him face-to-face. You can converse with Ian behind a screen later."

Cherise acknowledged his instructions thoughtfully. "Mm." Realization dawned on her shortly. "Won't he be able to discern that my voice differs from my husband's?" she inquired, a note of concern creeping into her voice.

Chapter 1019 Meeting Ian

Otto's smile was reassuring. "Ian doesn't know Mr. Lenoir all that well, and his interest lies solely in Mr. Lenoir's financial resources. He won't notice the differences in your voices." His explanation left Cherise momentarily stunned.

They continued walking in silence for a while more before Cherise felt compelled to counter. "The Ian I knew was different," she asserted. He was attentive, compassionate, and acutely aware of her family's financial struggles, generously offering her his old study materials when she couldn't afford new ones. He even noticed when she wasn't feeling well and expressed genuine concern.

In Cherise's memory, the Ian from the past was a paragon of gentleness and perfection, which attracted others to him. However, the Ian that Otto had portrayed seemed like a profit-driven opportunist. This stark contrast troubled her deeply. She couldn't reconcile the Ian she remembered with Otto's

portrayal. Even after she had heard Ian's voice on the phone, she was still in disbelief. She needed to witness these purported changes in Ian firsthand before conceding.

"Change is inevitable, Mrs. Lenoir," Otto sighed softly, his voice slightly resigned. "But during my interactions with Ian over the past few days, I never thought he was an intellectual."

Cherise couldn't help but let out a chuckle at his words. She turned to Otto, her gaze curious. "So, what qualities define a true intellectual?" she inquired.

Otto's steps faltered momentarily before he responded with a smile, "In my opinion, intellectuals should possess traits akin to yours, Mrs. Lenoir-being elegant and approachable."

Cherise was momentarily surprised by his compliment but soon returned the smile. "You're the first to describe me in that manner," she remarked. Otto found himself momentarily distracted and captivated by her smile.

As Otto's footsteps stopped, Cherise's brows wrinkled looking up at him with concern. "Is something wrong? Did I say something peculiar?" she asked, her tone laced with worry.

"No, everything's fine," Otto replied, clearing his throat lightly. "We've reached our destination."

It was only then that Cherise realized they stood before the door of a room in the hotel. Otto unlocked it and gestured for Cherise to enter. The room was spacious, divided by a large screen. Cherise stood on one side, bathed in the sunlight from behind her, while a man sat in a chair on the other side, eating and listening to music lazily.

Although Cherise couldn't see the man's expression, his relaxed demeanor made her imagine his unkempt appearance. She found it impossible to reconcile this figure with her memory of Ian, even without seeing him.

Otto motioned for Cherise to settle into a chair, then nonchalantly addressed the individual on the other side of the screen. "Mr. Lenoir has arrived. If you want anything else, you may let him know."

Without delay, Ian set aside the apple he had been eating on the other end, straightening his attire as he asked, "Damien's here?"

Cherise's lips flattened. She reached for the voice changer and answered him. "Yes, I'm here," she

As expected, Ian didn't recognize Damien's voice, as Otto had forewarned. It seemed he hadn't even realized that a woman was on the other side of the screen. Clearing his throat, he proceeded to address Damien. "Damien, let's skip the pleasantries," Ian declared. "You're well aware of the terms I outlined earlier, so I'll be direct."

He paused momentarily before clearing his throat and delivering the following statement. "You should be aware that Cherise harbored feelings for me in high school," Ian asserted. "I casually offered her study materials I was about to discard, and she was deeply moved, nearly brought to tears."

"Now, if it's true that she only remembers me," Ian continued, his tone growing more ominous, "it suggests that I'm of greater importance to her than you. Consider this carefully. By rejecting my demands, you may risk losing Cherise forever."

Chapter 1020 Damien's Sacrifices Revealed

Cherise observed Ian's smug portrait from her vantage point across the screen. She subtly tightened her grip on the microphone as she listened to his haughty tone. She asserted confidently, "I'm pretty sure Cherise won't buy into your story."

"Why not?" Ian retorted. "You don't know that country bumpkin well enough," he chuckled. "Back in high school, she was always buried in her books while the rest of us slacked off. Thus, she was constantly ostracized by others. Whenever I showed her the slightest attention or gifted her anything, she'd be so moved that she practically fell in love with me on the spot."

"Damien, I acknowledge that you facilitated my release from the mental hospital, apologized, and even provided financial support. From your perspective, that's a monumental gesture. But let's not overlook the fact that it was your actions that landed me in the mental hospital in the first place, shaping me into who I am today!"

Cherise's heart raced at Ian's revelation. Damien was the reason Ian ended up in the mental hospital? She pressed her lips together. "Is that so? I almost forgot if you hadn't brought it up. Were you admitted. because of me?"

"Obviously! You saw fit to confine me to a mental hospital for the past six years because of that minor incident. And your sister even shattered both my legs back then. If it weren't for my resilience, I'd be a cripple by now!"

"Don't you comprehend the magnitude of your actions?" Cherise gripped the voice-altering microphone tightly. "If it were merely trivial, I wouldn't have resorted to locking you away."

"Yes, I concede!" Ian's jaw clenched. "It was my fault for spreading rumors about Cherise being pregnant with Lennon's child, and I was also wrong to drug her and terminate her pregnancy. But at the

time, your child wasn't even two months old. It was merely the size of a fingernail. Its loss wouldn't have made a difference."

"And didn't I assist you in testing Cherise's loyalty to you?" After uttering those words, Ian seemed to wrestle with guilt, seemingly realizing he was wrong. "Regardless of my past rights and wrongs, you need my help now. You've chosen to release me and even offered me financial assistance for your beloved Cherise..."

"Since you've done so much, an extra three million and a house should be like spare change to you..." On the other side of the screen, Ian grew more excited, oblivious to "Damien's" prolonged silence.

Cherise clenched the voice-altering microphone, her complexion pale. If Ian hadn't spilled the beans, she wouldn't have fathomed what had transpired back then... The high school senior she had once revered deeply was actually such scum... At this moment, she was both furious and distressed.

Damien was someone who desired children greatly. Given how Ian had caused them to lose their first child, Damien must have harbored such hatred for him. How could Damien have put his animosity aside?

However because she could only remember Ian and recall memories related to him, Damien had swallowed his bitterness. Not only did Damien release Ian... but Damien was also willing to provide with financial assistance and even extended an apology...

seized a pair of scissors at her side, and strode forth resolutely to slice through the screen,

On the other end of the screen, Ian's face appeared. Sporting a thick beard, he continued spewing vile, repugnant remarks. It took him a moment to register that something was amiss, and he turned around. "C-Cherise?"

"Yes, it's me," Cherise retorted coldly, advancing toward him and locking gazes. "Hello, Ian. It's been a while."

Ian gawked at her blankly. "Y-yes... It's been a while."