

Marrying 221

Chapter 221 Lennon's Baby

"Alright."

A light smile spread across the man's cheeks. He caressed her silky hair until her breathing became even.

"Mr. Lenoir."

Cherise had just drifted off to sleep when Greg knocked on the door. "There's a video circulating online. I saw it, and it's not pleasant news about Mrs. Lenoir. Should we do something about it?"

Damien frowned and gently lay Cherise on the bed. He put on some clothes and went out to the corridor. "What video?"

The butler handed his phone over to Damien.

The first thing that popped out at Damien was the title: 'Wealthy Man Sleeps With Close Friend's Wife, Assaults Doctor After Miscarriage.'

"Lennon went and beat up Ian?"

He returned the phone to the butler without watching the video.

"Yes."

The butler furrowed his eyebrows. "The video is circulating on a lot of platforms. I suspect some unknown forces are pushing it behind the scenes.

The man walked slowly to the end of the corridor. His eyes were fixed on the sky as he chuckled. "Let's make a show of blocking it first. Let them think I'm intimidated by this."

The video of Lennon's assault was trending in one night.

Wealthy man sleeps with close friend's wife, assaults doctor after miscarriage.

Every part of the title was enough gossip for the month!

Early the following day, Damien was feeding Cherise oatmeal in bed when Peter called.

Cherise glanced at the phone's screen and gave Damien a puzzled look. "Did you tell Grandpa about my miscarriage?" she asked in a low voice.

He shook his head. "No."

Cherise pursed her lips, relieved. She answered the call.

But when the call went through, Damien snatched the phone from her.

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"Eat a bit more. I'll talk to him."

"Ah." Before Cherise could react, he was already walking out the door with the phone.

She leaned back against the headboard, eating her food while listening to their conversation.

“She’s at the hospital now. She’s a patient. Come here yourself if you want to see her. I won’t bring her to you?”

I suggest you watch your words as an elder. She did not lose your great-grandchild. No one knows that better than I do.”

Fine, you can come over. I’ll be waiting.

Do not say anything thoughtless.”

Cherise frowned, perplexed.

He didn’t even explain why I’m in the hospital. Why does it look like Grandpa knows the reason?

And why did he mention that the baby lost in the miscarriage is not Grandpa’s biological great-grandson?

Does Grandpa suspect me?

Moments later, Damien ended the call and came back.

She raised her head, looking at him with bewilderment. “What did Grandpa say?”

“He’ll come visit later.”

He passed the phone to her and sat down smoothly in the chair. He picked up the bowl. “Have a bit more.”

She shook her head.

"I'm full. I can't eat anymore. Is Grandpa actually coming?"

She pursed her lips sheepishly. "I haven't visited him in a while. Yet now he wants to come see me..."

Damien scoffed. "You don't need to feel sorry for him. He's here to reprimand you."

She jolted and looked up at him with astonishment. "Why?"

Why does Grandpa want to reprimand me?

"Because of this."

The man sighed and pulled out his phone. He played the video circulating all over the web.

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Chapter 222 Completely Different Person

What a joke! She got pregnant six months ago. She didn't even know who Lennon was six months ago!

"Who started this ridiculous rumor?"

"Jan"

"First, from what I know about Lennon's personality, he wouldn't ask his people to take videos. He would rather make them team up to fight against Ian," Damien explained, his face devoid of any

emotion.

Cherise was rendered speechless by Damien's analysis.

Lennon was indeed someone who would do something like this..

"Secondly, the video was taken from afar. The person who took this video must have taken the video from within the woods. This doesn't suit Lennon's personality."

Cherise nodded. "So this video could only be Ian's doing... No, it has to be someone on Ian's side. who took the video."

"That's right."

Damien's eyes softened with relief as he looked at Cherise. "As for this title..."

"No one in Adania knows of my relationship with Lennon other than the Belcourt family and my close acquaintances."

"Even the Lenoir family doesn't know, so how did this blogger know Lennon and I are good. friends?"

“If it wasn’t for Ian, how would this blogger, Ms. Shaw, know about my relationship with Lennon?”

Cherise felt a chill run down her spine.

Ian has transformed into a completely different person.

She had never met anyone like him before.

In high school, he was the model student everyone looked up to.

After starting work, he has changed drastically, even going to such an extent to commit nefarious deeds.

She always thought Ian misunderstood Damien but never imagined such a misunderstanding could lead to him setting up this scheme against her.

Lennon wanted to help her get revenge on Ian, but he decided to use such a despicable method

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to retaliate

I told you this because this matter now involves more than just the three of us.”

Damien slowly put away their utensils and gently rubbed Cherise’s temple. “The rumors couldn’t have spread this far with a mere blogger behind them.”

“There must be someone else behind this.”

Cherise pursed her lips, her mind racing with thoughts about the situation. She knew Damien's analysis had to be correct.

He must be right.

"Who is the one making a mess out of this?"

Damien's lips curled up at her response. "Grandpa doesn't use the internet."

"Even you didn't know about the rumor. How could Grandpa, who doesn't even go online, know about it?"

Cherise's eyes lit up as she realized something. "So it must be Uncle Raymond and Tristan?"

"As expected of the top student. Brilliant deduction."

He leaned forward and kissed her cheek. "Grandpa might say unpleasant things when he's here."

Cherise nodded. "I don't mind. Grandpa doesn't know the whole truth, so I won't take it to heart."

With her gentle and trusting demeanor, she looked like a soft and cuddly bunny.

"Are you busy? If so, go ahead. I'll explain to Grandpa."

"I'm busy enough taking care of you. How could I find time for anything else?"

Damien chuckled softly as he continued to rub her temples. "Just focus on taking care of yourself during this time. I'll take care of everything else."

“I’ll be on your side no matter what happens.”

He gripped her hands tightly and reassured her, “You’re my
last hope.”

Chapter 223 Show Me Proof

“They can target me all they want, but I will do anything to keep you safe.”

It’s time to set things straight.

Cherise nodded, her eyes flashing with determination. “I know.”

She knew about the feud between Damien and Raymond, as Lennon had mentioned it to her over drinks.

She mustn’t add fuel to the fire, as their opponent is Raymond Lenoir.

Old Mr. Lenoir arrived in Cherise’s room with Wanda, coincidentally while Damien was away on a call.

Cherise was watching a Korean drama when she heard the door open. She looked up and greeted them,
“Grandpa, Aunt Wanda.”

Old Mr. Lenoir glared at her. “Hmph!”

Wanda immediately snickered. “Who are you calling Grandpa?”

“Do you think an easy wench like you could become Mrs. Lenoir?”

Cherise furrowed her brows and looked up at Wanda. “Aunt Wanda, what do you mean?”

“What do I mean?”

“Everyone knows about your relationship with the Belcourts’ adopted son. Do you think you can fool us?”

“What do you hope to achieve by playing innocent in front of us? You’re dragging the Lenoir family’s reputation through the mud, even though you call Grandpa so affectionately. If you really cared about Grandpa, would you have done what you did with that bastard?”

Cherise’s knuckles turned white from gripping the blanket.

Despite the accusations, she remained composed and smiled at Old Mr. Lenoir. “Grandpa, don’t you trust me?”

Old Mr. Lenoir’s eyes grew cold with anger. He grunted and sat down on the couch. “If you want me to believe you, show me proof that the baby you aborted was a Lenoir!”

Cherise bit her lip and explained, “Grandpa, would you believe me if I said I only met Lennon last.

week?”

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Old Mr. Lenoir’s forehead scrunched up, and he stared directly at Cherise. “Are you serious?”

“Yes, I am.”

“What a bluff!”

Wanda coldly snickered. “The video of that bastard beating up the doctor for you is spreading like wildfire. And now the Lenoir family is a laughingstock in front of all of Adania.”

“Do you think your claims of ‘I only met him last week’ will make us believe you?”

Cherise pressed her lips together tightly. “Can you tell me what kind of response you expect from me?”

“You’re adamant in your belief that I’m in the wrong, and you won’t accept any of my answers. What do you want me to do? Do I need to bring my child back to life and have a DNA test with Lennon?”

Wanda rolled her eyes. “That would be great.”

“Wanda!” Old Mr. Lenoir furrowed his brows to stop Wanda from going overboard.

Wanda pursed her lips, realizing she had crossed the line with her attitude. “Anyway, I won’t let this go easily. The Lenoir family is noble. How can we salvage our reputation after you drop this bomb on us?”

Old Mr. Lenoir sighed heavily and looked at Cherise. “Now that things have gone this far, you must at least give us a proper explanation.

“We were never well-acquainted with the Belcourt family before. In fact, we were at odds with them recently.”

“Even if you claim the baby was Damien’s, it doesn’t make sense for Lennon to stand up for him.”

“Exactly.”

Wanda crossed her arms. “The Belcourt family is still reeling from the Violet incident.”

Wanda trailed off, thinking about the infamous incident.

“Anyway, the Belcourt family and our family don’t have the best relationship. It doesn’t make sense why Lennon would go so far as to beat up the doctor who aborted. your child.”

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Chapter 224 The Man From the Video!

“The bad blood between the Belcourt and Lenoir families has nothing to do with my relationship. with Lennon.”

Damien’s low voice rang through the room just as Wanda curtly accused Cherise.

Cherise’s gaze snapped to the source of the gravelly voice.

Damien and Lennon stood by the door, exuding an assertive and unwavering aura.

Wanda’s eyes widened in surprise when she saw that Damien was not in a wheelchair.

She scoffed and turned to look at Old Mr. Lenoir behind her. “Dad, did you notice something different about Damien?”

“His eyes were cured recently.”

Old Mr. Lenoir squinted at Damien, his composed voice layered with surprise. "His eyes are cured?"

"Yes."

Wanda curled her lips. "I only found out yesterday afternoon. I thought Damien would come home to share the good news with everyone, but..."

"If we hadn't come to find him, he might have forgotten all about his grandpa and uncle!"

Old Mr. Lenoir's face fell slightly. "It is my fault."

Damien's lips curled into a cold sneer. He slowly made his way towards Cherise and sat down beside her. "I should have made a phone call after I announced to the public about my eyes."

The man picked up the apple on the side table and began to peel it for Cherise. "But Cherise was distraught yesterday after the abortion. I had to care for her, so I completely forgot about it."

Old Mr. Lenoir's face turned ashen at Damien's comment.

Wanda rolled her eyes, disbelieving. "Are you suggesting your wife is more important than the Lenoir family?"

Damien lowered his head and continued to gracefully peel the apple in his hands. "I have nothing else to explain if that's what Aunt Wanda thinks."

Wanda's face twisted with exasperation in an instant.

She was upset with Damien for not informing his family about his recovery, but he dared to respond that Cherise was more important to him than his family!

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He was clearly defying her!

He's so obnoxious now that he can finally see after ten years!

She's always been critical of him, but he never dared to speak up against her.

She scoffed at him. "Unfortunately, she still got pregnant with someone else's child despite having your affections."

"Mrs. Lenoir, you must be accountable for your words."

Lennon icily emphasized through gritted teeth; his forehead creased with annoyance.

Only then did Wanda notice the stranger standing by the door: Lennon Belcourt, the man from the video!

Wanda chuckled menacingly. "How dare you come here?"

"My buddy's girl is at the hospital. Why would I be ashamed of coming here?"

Lennon walked into the room and marched over to a chair, where he sat down and stared coldly at Wanda. "Damien knows about my relationship with Cherise. There's no need for you to drive at wedge between us."

Wanda spat derisively, "You!"

Old Mr. Lenoir raised his head and fixed his eyes on Damien, who was engrossed in peeling an apple for Cherise. "What are your plans now that things have gotten so big?"

Damien remained silent, continuing to peel the apple.

Old Mr. Lenoir tapped his walking stick on the ground. "This is no small matter! It will damage the Lenoir family's reputation!"

"We're a noble family who've kept our reputation clean for over a hundred years! I won't tolerate such disgraceful rumors!"

"I give you three days to come up with an answer that satisfies me, or I won't let you off easily!"

Old Mr. Lenoir scoffed as he stood up.

Behind him, Damien gently passed the peeled apple to Cherise. "If Mr. Lenoir thinks I don't deserve to be part of the Lenoir family, you can erase my name from our family tree."

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Chapter 225 Do You Have Any Evidence?

"After all, I have never gained anything from the noble reputation of this family."

As soon as his words left his mouth, Lennon furrowed his brows. "Damien!"

Old Mr. Lenoir's face twisted in contempt and condescension.

He turned around and glared at Damien. "Are you admitting that Cherise had an affair with someone else, and that's why you want your name erased from our family tree."

"That's not what I meant."

Damien chuckled softly. "I have investigated the source of the video uploaded last night. It was a publicity stunt created by a media company called Baymedia, which is affiliated with Uncle Raymond's company, Raetec Group."

"The Lenoir family would go to such lengths to spread false rumors about my wife and intend to punish me for bringing shame to our family's name."

"I don't see a reason to keep my name under our family tree."

"I could even help Uncle Raymond save some money from sparing him the financial burdens of prolonging a publicity stunt."

Wanda's face immediately fell when she heard Raymond's name being mentioned.

"Damien, how could you taint your uncle's name? Is your uncle someone who would do something like this?"

Damien curled his lips into a smirk as he stared at her without saying a word.

Old Mr. Lenoir furrowed his brow and glanced at Wanda. "Which of you two is telling the truth?"

Wanda gritted her teeth, her heart pounding in her chest.

How did Damien find out about Baymedia?

She was the one who asked Baymedia to keep it under wraps so no one would figure out their plans.

However, Damien discovered that Baymedia was behind the incident and even revealed their relationship with the Raetec Group.

Was he aware of this all along? Or did he really have such great connections?

Despite getting caught, she maintained her calm and composed demeanor as she stared at Old Mr. Lenoir. "Dad, Damien must be mistaken."

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There's no way Raymond would do something like this,"

"Damien is a member of the Lenoir family. If Damien's reputation is tarnished, it will impact all of us greatly."

Old Mr. Lenoir's brows were furrowed as he pondered how much truth there was in her words.

He turned his head towards Damien. "How can you accuse your uncle of scheming against you? Do you have any evidence?"

"Of course."

Lennon, who was watching the scene unfold from the side, smiled amusedly. He passed the documents in his hands to Old Mr. Lenoir. "You can see for yourself."

These documents detailed the shareholdings of each shareholder and the steps involved in the preceding day's publicity stunt.

Old Mr. Lenoir's face grew grimmer as he flipped through the pages. In the end, his brows knitted into a tight knot as he stared coldly at Wanda. "You're the biggest shareholder of Baymedia?"

The edges of Wanda's face tensed up at the sudden announcement.

Wanda hurriedly leaned closer to read through the contents of the documents.

Her face flushed red.

How did Lennon get his hands on these documents?

Lennon gave her a smug smile in return as if he had seen through the confusion on her face. "Mrs. Lenoir should know that I handle high-stakes projects overseas."

"If I can't even investigate such a small matter, how do you think I'll survive in that industry?"

Wanda fell silent.

There was nothing she could say to defend herself now that the evidence was crystal clear.

"Hmph!" Old Mr. Lenoir threw the documents to the ground and spat. "No wonder you were eager to share this news with me this morning. This was all part of your plan!"

Wanda gritted her teeth, her eyes welling up with tears. "Dad, you can't blame me for this."

"You were the one who chose Cherise for Damien. If I didn't involve the public, you would've forgiven her immediately."

Chapter 226 Fractured Bonds

"I did this for the sake of my late brother and sister-in-law. I didn't want them looking down from above, seemg Damien, a lonely man stuck with a wife who cuckolded him. And all of you were so kind... Wanda said, her voice filled with regret.

"It was unfair to Damien," someone murmured sympathetically.

Damien's face hardened, then a bitter smile curved, and he laughed disdainfully. "Well, I must really thank Aunt Wanda for her concern."

Wanda raised her chin defiantly. "You're welcome!"

She did pick up on the sarcasm in Damien's voice, but at this point, she had no choice but to swallow her pride and agree.

"Spreading baseless rumors with a baffling video without investigating the truth... Aunt Wanda's affection for me truly knows no bounds," Damien sneered, casually wiping the apple juice from Cherise's lips with his hand. "Oh, speaking of which, were you too busy to contact me?"

"Is it really that difficult to confirm the situation with a simple phone call?"

As the anger boiled up inside Wanda, her face grew even darker.

Old Mr. Lenoir raised his hand. "Enough, everyone, stop arguing!"

He glanced at Wanda, "Make sure your people behave. Have that Baymedia company shut down!"

Then, he turned his gaze to Damien and said sternly, "And if this is just a rumor, why didn't you explain yourself?"

"I don't care how you do it, but resolve this matter for me within three days!" he commanded.

Old Mr. Lenoir then gestured dismissively. "Everyone, leave. I need to talk to Cherry alone."

Wanda rolled her eyes and scoffed. "Imagine having a conversation with someone so devoid of decency. What could one possibly discuss with such a person?"

Old Mr. Lenoir shot her a sharp glaring look, and Wanda left begrudgingly.

"No harsh words."

Damien shot a cautionary glance at Old Mr. Lenoir before leaving the room with Lennon.

The hospital room door closed behind them, leaving only Cherise and Old Mr. Lenoir inside.

"Grandpa."

Cherise leaned against the bed and said softly, "Is there something you want to talk to me about?"

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"I've troubled you, he shut his eyes and sighed, his voice filled with remorse.

Old Mr. Lenoir sat in his chair, leaning on his cane, and shook his head helplessly. "I've already figured out what's happening"

"Unfortunately, I've grown old and can't handle it anymore.

He sighed, leaned back in his chair, and continued, "I can't handle it, and I don't have the right. Seventeen years ago, I didn't handle it, and now... I have even less of a right to handle it."

Cherise listened, feeling a bit perplexed. "Grandpa, I don't understand what you mean

"You don't have to," he said meekly.

Old Mr. Lenoir sighed. "Cherise, I chose you because of your simplicity and optimistic approach to life.

In the days to come... I'm leaving Damien in your hands," he muttered.

"He's been alone for years, without anyone. I kept my distance to avoid causing him any problems."

"But deep down, I know you still care for him as your grandson, Grandpa," Cherise said earnestly.

Cherise pursed her lips and spoke with utmost clarity, "If you truly didn't care for him, you wouldn't have intervened in his love life."

Her innocent eyes filled with determination, and she continued, "You arranged his first three engagements, Grandpa. I am the fourth."

"I have witnessed many elders in the countryside who seem disinterested in their descendants' lives, including their marital status."

"And certainly not... like you, who insist I bear him a child within two years."

The Old Mr. Lenoir was briefly taken aback, but a smile crept onto his face. "Well, well, I didn't anticipate your astuteness, my dear."

Speaking of kids...

Chapter 227 Despair and Deject

Cherise lowered her head, "But Grandpa, I'm so sorry."

"I was already pregnant, but I... I was young and naive; I didn't even realize I was pregnant initially."

"That's how I was taken advantaged of-by someone drugging me....."

Tears welled as she looked up at Old Mr. Lenoir and said determinedly. "But Grandpa, I swear. I will try harder in the future to have a child with Damien as soon as possible!"

Old Mr. Lenoir nodded slowly.

"So, you're saying the doctor drugged you without your knowledge?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied.

Cherise bit her lip, recounting the entire incident to Old Mr. Lenoir. "It's my fault, Grandpa. I trusted him too much because I thought he was a person of good character and excellence..."

"Being willing to trust others isn't a flaw," Old Mr. Lenoir sighed and shook his head. "I'll take care of this person."

Cherise widened her eyes in surprise. "Grandpa..."

Hadn't he just said he was too old to meddle with children's matters?

Yet, now, he seemed determined to confront Ian.

"I really cannot manage this," he clarified.

As if sensing her confusion, Old Mr. Lenoir smiled knowingly. "However, I can arrange for others.

to handle him."

"She'll be more than willing," he added.

He sighed heavily and continued, "The great battle is looming, and it's time for her to return."

Before Cherise could unravel the mystery of the 'she' he referred to, Old Mr. Lenoir rose with the support of his cane. "Take care of yourself. A woman's body is most delicate at this time."

"I... I will," Cherise stammered, still perplexed.

"Grandpa won't keep you any longer," he said, leaving Cherise in a whirlwind of unanswered questions and enigmatic anticipation.

After Old Mr. Lenoir left, Damien and Lennon returned to the hospital room.

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Lennon cagerly picked up a banana from the fruit basket Bernard had sent to Cherise and started eating. "So, what pearls of wisdom did the old man impart? Spent quite a bit of time, didn't he?"

Cherise was about to answer, but Lennon cut her off. "Let me guess!"

He imitated Old Mr. Lenoir, mockingly stroking an imaginary beard, and said in a low, gruff voice, "He probably said, 'You've done a great job! Keep staying by Damien's side!'"

"Damien's been through a lot, you know. You better take good care of him."

“And, of course, he must have told you to rest well and hurry up to give Damien another child”” he added.

He earnestly mimicked Old Mr. Lenoir, making Cherise burst into laughter.

“See, you look so much better when you smile,” he continued, watching how the light returned to her face.

Lennon looked at Cherise and shook his head. “Stop wearing that grim look; no one blames

“That’s right, no one blames you.”

you.

Damien gently sat beside Cherise and held her hand. “Besides these words, what else did he say?” he teased with a playful glint in his eyes.

Cherise furrowed her brow and recalled, “He also mentioned bringing ‘her’ back. I have no idea who this ‘her’ Grandpa was talking about.”

Damien frowned slightly, clearly had no idea of this mysterious ‘her’ as well.

“Who cares? That old man enjoys his mysterious games. It’s not like it’s the first time,” Lennon shrugged nonchalantly, munching on the banana.

Cherise rolled her eyes but was immediately distracted as her phone chimed.

It was a call from Lucy Staber.

“Cherry, you’ve got to get online! Ian’s doing a livestream! It’s driving me crazy!” Lucy’s voice came through the phone urgently.

Cherise blinked in surprise and hastily hung up, clicking on the live-stream link Lucy had sent.

When she clicked on it, she saw Ian sitting on rocks by the seashore, looking utterly despaired and dejected.

“I really have no way out,” he pleaded desperately.

Watching from the phone screen, Ian still had visible bruises from the altercation with Lennon. last night. His face was swollen and discolored, making it hard to recognize him.

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If it weren’t for the frameless glasses he wore on his nose, Cherise might have doubted that it was

Ian.

Chapter 228 Malicious Comments

Lennon was ruthless when beating up Ian

“I got beaten up like this, and no one cared. Tan said in a plaintive voice.

“I was just trying to do a good deed to help a junior who got pregnant, but look what happened,” he continued.

“Their influence is just too great. They came to hit me yesterday, and today, the research lab I work for fired me.” His voice was filled with distress, almost to the point of tears.

Cherise frowned and turned up the volume on the online live broadcast.

"I got him fired from the research institute," Damien said while leaning back in his chair, not bothering to look up, as he sliced an apple for Cherise. "I was the one who got him into that job in the first place. But he did something against my trust, so I requested that the institute terminate his employment. I don't see anything wrong with that."

Cherise pondered momentarily and agreed, "That's fair enough."

It was Cherise who had initially requested Damien's help to secure a job for Ian at the research institute. He had gotten the position solely because of the connections related to his association with Damien. Losing a job essentially handed to him through those connections when those ties were cut wasn't an unexpected outcome. But online netizens had a different perspective.

"Poor guy, don't lose hope, bro!"

"Don't stress, buddy, we've got your back for some sweet revenge!"

"@AdianaOfficial, you just gonna let them get away with this?"

"Lennon, that's cold-hearted!"

"Cherise, that's not cool!"

"Lennon, this is unacceptable!"

"Cherise, you should know better!"

A flood of comments filled the live stream.

As netizens rallied behind him, Ian sought to fan the flames of support. He exaggeratedly sighed and remarked, "Hold on, everyone. Cherise probably has her reasons."

"She has her own matters to deal with, after all..."

"But I'm truly at the end of my rope. As someone without power and influence, oppressed by the privileged, what recourse do I have other than contemplating the unthinkable?" His words hung

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heavily in the air, and he stood, peering out at the distant sea as if contemplating a plunge

The live stream feed became a sea of comments – some encouraging him to reconsider others hurling ineults at Cherise and Lennon, and some lamenting the state of society

"Ian!" A young man in white rushed to his side, grabbing Ian's arm. "Don't give up, no matter what Let's figure this out together."

"Look at all the people supporting you online. We'll speak to the head of the institute, and hell surely listen," A girl chimed in, her words resonating with the live chat audience.

"Let's gather at the institute's entrance and make our voices heard together!"

"Let's persuade the director: it'll make a difference!"

Cherise clutched her phone, her eyes scanning the array of comments from netizens. She was taken aback by the malice people could muster. Oblivious to the truth, they refused to investigate, letting a mere brawl video paint her as a promiscuous woman who had an affair with Lennon and was now pregnant. Their words, harsh and defamatory, poured in without remorse

"Stop reading their comments." Damien interjected, shielding her phone with his hand. "I'll handle this"

Cherise closed her eyes, but the hurtful words echoed in her mind. "I want. I want to deal with it myself," she stated, her head held high as she looked at Damien with a determined gaze. "I want to reclaim my reputation and honor on my own."

Damien assured her. "I can protect you."

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Chapter 229 I Need to Grow

Damien knew that there was no deterring her once Cherise had set her mind on something. Yet, as a man, he couldn't bear to witness his beloved facing the deluge of those rumors. He wasn't afraid of trials or the judgment of others. His only fear was seeing her hurt.

"I believe you can and will protect me." Cherise affirmed. She gently pressed her lips together, reached out to encircle his neck, and kissed his lips tenderly. "But, my love, this all began because of me. I can't just sit here and wait for you to resolve everything on my behalf."

Her eyes shimmered as she gazed at him. "You've done so much for me already, but I can't keep sheltering myself behind you. I need to grow."

"I need to be ready for anyone who might wish me harm."

Damien, convinced by her words, could only release a deep sigh. "Alright."

Amid his concern, Damien found solace in witnessing his once young and naive wife transforming into an independent and resilient woman.

"Hey, hey, love is in the air!" Lennon teased, cupping his cheek. "My teeth are about to fall out from all this sweetness."

He snatched his phone and called Jacob. "Jacob, save me! They're drowning me in their love, and I'm here solo!"

Jacob, on the other end, let out a chuckle. "Looks like you're having the time of your life as the third wheel."

Before long, the hospital room door swung open. Jacob, sporting khaki pants and a light blue shirt leaned casually against the door frame. "Another third wheel joining the party! Am I invited?" Jacob teased.

"Of course, welcome!" Cherise chimed in, her cheeks blushing, lying on the hospital bed.

After some playful banter between Lennon and Jacob, the conversation shifted to Ian's predicament.

"I had a feeling he was like that," Jacob remarked, stifling a yawn. "He'd do anything for success. That's why I had to let him go."

Cherise pouted. "You told me you wanted him to go after his dreams."

Jacob rolled his eyes at her. "I wouldn't have been so accommodating if he wasn't your senior. I was nice because of you."

"But..." Jacob's expression darkened. "I heard some netizens are planning to visit the research institute this afternoon to pressure the director into reinstating Ian's job."

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"They even want the institute to award Ian a Good Samaritan Award. The prize could support a less fortunate family for months."

"Damn!" Lennon couldn't help but curse. "So Ian, who harmed a child and spread false rumors, is now making money off it?"

“Essentially,” Jacob said, lifting his eyes to glance at Damien, “Have you decided what to do?”

Damien reclined in his chair, maintaining his composed demeanor as he peeled grapes for Cherise. “Let them make a fuss. I doubt they’ll manage to get his job back.”

“And,” he added coldly, “that Good Samaritan Award? I’m the sponsor. They’ll need my approval to present the award.”

“Any award Ian desires,” Damien continued, “he’ll have to face me personally and clarify his good deeds.”

Lennon frowned. “So you’re not taking any action?”

“Most likely not,” Damien replied nonchalantly, feeding another grape to Cherise. “What’s your take?”

“I’m going to confront him,” Cherise declared. She swallowed the grape and met Damien’s gaze. “If Ian has the audacity to seek not only his job but also the award, I want to confront him directly about why he thinks he deserves it.”

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Chapter 230 Life’s Regret and Unexpected Pursuits

“Alright,” Damien gently reached out and tousled her hair, his affectionate smile warming the moment. “Let’s have a meal first, and then we’ll head over to the research institute. Does that sound good to you?”

“Yes!” Cherise nodded in enthusiastic agreement. With fan’s potential quest to regain his position and claim the prize money, the afternoon when the netizens gathered was an optimal window of opportunity. They would be there, ready and waiting for him at the research institute.

Following a delightful lunch, Damien personally chauffeured Cherise to the research institute. A few dedicated netizens had already gathered outside, their presence a testament to the brewing digital storm.

Cherise and Damien, keen to avoid the commotion, discreetly entered through the institute's back door.

Welcome, Mr. and Mrs. Lenoir!" Upon their arrival through the back entrance, a chorus of warm greetings resonated through the research institute. All the researchers had lined up, applauding and cheering enthusiastically to welcome them.

A headache began to creep in. The reception felt all too reminiscent of the grand event Bernard had orchestrated during Cherise's visit to the Shaw Group for an inspection.

As an unsettling feeling gnawed at her, she heard a familiar voice, "Ms. Shaw! Surprise!

Bernard's large face appeared at the end of the line. "Why are you here?" Cherise asked, taken aback by his sudden appearance.

"Because our group sponsors this medical research institute!" Bernard's innocent blink and wide eyes radiated his pride. "The director called me a while ago and said you were coming for an inspection. Since they didn't know what kind of welcome ceremony you'd like, I came to give them some guidance."

Bernard was clearly basking in his achievement. "Aren't you surprised? You didn't expect to see me here, did you?"

Cherise stumbled over her words, "Yes, I'm genuinely surprised."

Soon enough, Cherise learned that the entire medical research institute indeed fell under the sponsorship of the Shaw Group. It suddenly made sense why Damien treated this place like his backyard.

Nevertheless, a question lingered: Why did Damien sponsor a medical research institute years ago?

“Because of my sister,” Damien shared, his arm still affectionately wrapped around Cherise’s waist as they made their way to the director’s office. “When I was thirteen, our family villa caught fire.”

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“In an attempt to save me, my sister sustained severe burns, disfiguring herself and causing extensive internal organ damage.”

Damien let out a soft sigh. “During that time, medical science simply couldn’t save her, so my grandfather arranged for a team of burn specialists from abroad to urgently transfer her to a different medical facility.”

“She passed away on the plane before reaching the destination.”

As Damien recounted this painful chapter of his life, his eyes reflected a deep sorrow. “So, when Lennon mentioned that a doctor he knew was planning to establish a medical research institute dedicated to rare diseases, I didn’t hesitate to provide my sponsorship.”

He sighed again, leaving the topic there.

Cherise pursed her lips and held his hand with a firm grip. “I can understand how that feels.”

Having witnessed her grandmother’s struggles with heart disease, she had been motivated to become a skilled cardiovascular surgeon. Often, life’s regrets drive people toward unexpected pursuits.

With that, they finally arrived at the director’s office. Acknowledging Cherise’s recent miscarriage and her less-than-optimal condition, the director had thoughtfully arranged the most comfortable hospital bed for her to rest on within the office.

“Thank you, Director,” Cherise expressed, feeling somewhat self-conscious yet genuinely appreciative.