

Marrying 481

Chapter 481 A Fool Not To Accept

Gwen Tanner descended the spiral staircase with a smile on her lips. "Cherise is her own person. Maybe she doesn't even want to be the second lady of the Tanner family?"

Cherise pursed her lips.

While she knew Gwen did not bear any ill will towards her, Cherise didn't exactly like her.

But what she said was true.

If she had to choose between staying in the Shaw family village or returning with the Tanner family as their second lady, she wouldn't choose the Tanner family.

"Cherise."

Grandpa Tanner glared at Gwen. "I know you can make your own decisions, but as a family, there are some things we need to consider."

"Your father wants to make a public statement telling everyone you're a daughter of the Tanner family. That means you have to change your name to Charlotte Tanner."

"And you need to understand the situation with the Lenoirs."

"Damien's sister and uncle are both urging for a go at you. We can protect you while we're here, but once we're gone, they might pose as obstacles for you."

"The best way to deter them is to announce your identity as a Tanner."

“Otherwise...”

Grandpa Tanner sighed. “They’ll find any reason to get in your way.”

“For instance, you were almost taken to the police station when we arrived.”

“Did you really think Danielle didn’t know who you were?”

Cherise stumbled backward in shock.

“She might not have known you were a Tanner, but she knew you are Cherise’s daughter.”

“But how dare she treat you that way while knowing you were Cherise’s daughter?”

“Because she knew who Cherise was and that Cherise couldn’t let people know you were her daughter.”

“And if somewhere in the future, Cherise were to be prosecuted, she could say you were completely unaware.”

“Which is why, to ensure Danielle never tries to hurt you...”

“The best way is to change your name to Charlotte Tanner and announce to everyone that you are a daughter of the Tanner family. I’ll get her to give up any ideas of giving you a hard time in the future.”

1/2

Cherise bit her lip.

She looked into Grandpa Tanner's worried eyes.

He told her the truth of the current situation. She would be a fool not to accept the lifeline he was offering her.

But...

Did she really need to change her name?

She had already grown apart from her uncle and aunt.

If she changed her name...

There might be no way back..

"Grandpa, if Cherise doesn't want to do it, don't pressure her to."

Gwen popped a grape into her mouth as she lounged against the couch. "She has her own ideas. Maybe she feels that her adopted parents are more important than you and her father?"

Gwen hit the nail on the head.

It also echoed what Grandpa Tanner was thinking.

He frowned and glared at Gwen. "Go back to your room!"

"This is Cherise's and Damien's home!"

"You're eating their food and drinking their water. Stop yapping!"

Gwen rolled her eyes. "I just want to help Cherise solve her problem."

"You're trying to stir up some trouble! Just keep

cating your grapes and stop talking!"

Grandpa Tanner turned back to Cherise. "Cherise, I don't want to put you in a tough spot. Take your time and think it over."

"You don't need to take the Tanner name if you don't want to. Neller is fine, too. Then we can say you've taken your mother's name."

Chapter 482 Which Should I Choose?

Cherise pursed her lips, contemplating her options. She simply wanted to remain Cherise Shaw, but it seemed unlikely. With a sad smile, she said, "Okay, Grandpa. Give me some time." She turned and made her way upstairs.

As she ascended, she overheard Gwen's laughter. "I envy you. You have the privilege of choosing your

surname."

"As for me, I don't even know where my parents are. I have no choice but to be a Tanner. The adopted, unloved daughter of the Tanner family."

Cherise's heart tightened, but she continued on her way.

That night, after dinner, Cherise pretended to feel unwell and retired early. She lay on the bed staring up at the ceiling without blinking.

She understood the challenges faced by everyone around her.

Her aunt didn't want to see her because she had moved on with her new husband and wanted to leave the past behind.

Her uncle didn't want to maintain frequent contact because he hadn't fulfilled his promise to return Cherise to her mother. Moreover, he now worked under her mother and couldn't have a friendly relationship with his master's daughter.

Her grandfather wanted her to change her name, hoping she would embrace her lineage and receive the protection that only the Tanners could provide.

Each of them had valid reasons for their actions.

But what about Cherise?

Had everyone forgotten that she, too, was an individual with her own emotions and desires?

Had she been too considerate of their feelings that they had overlooked her own thoughts and feelings?

"What's on your mind?" Damien unbuttoned his shirt and climbed into bed, pulling her close to him.

Cherise was completely different from this morning when they went to try on wedding gowns.

Damien gently poked her cheek. "Did you not like the dresses you tried on today?"

"Or is your mother giving you a hard time?"

"It's neither."

Cherise kissed him on the cheek and looked deeply into his eyes. "Darling, if..."

"I mean, if. If you had to choose between doing what you believe is right and letting go of something you hold dear."

1/2

"Which would you choose?"

"I would choose not to let go."

Damien held her tenderly and planted a kiss on her lips. "People can make mistakes, but they cannot ignore the desires of their hearts."

"One choice is based on reality, and the other is your dream."

"It's only natural to hold onto your dream, isn't it?"

Cherise felt a surge of warmth.

This man was undoubtedly the one she wanted to spend her life with.

He hit the nail on the head.

Taking a deep breath, Cherise leaned in closer and shared the events of the day with him. "Sweetheart, which option would you choose if you were in my position?"

Damien chuckled and placed her phone in her hands. "I would choose the third option."

“What?”

“I would confide all my worries to Zachary.”

Cherise frowned. “Zachary?”

“Is Zachary good at giving advice?”

Damien shook his head. “But he has another ability.”

The ability to convey everything to Charisa Miles.

After comforting Cherise, Damien returned to work.

Cherise stared at her phone, hesitating to contact Zachary, when he called her. “Bunny, Aunt Charisa wants to know if you’re free for lunch tomorrow.”

“She wants to know your favorite foods.”

Cherise pursed her lips and carefully listed her preferences, considering the question.

2/2

Chapter 483 Tanner Or Shaw

“Okay, I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Zachary was about to hang up.

“Wait a second.”

Cherise took a deep breath, “I need to ask you something.”

Zachary was surprised.

There was a moment of silence before he spoke, “What is it?”

Cherise took another breath to steady herself before sharing with him how her grandfather wanted her to change her name.

“I... I don’t really want to change my name.”

“I’ve been Cherise Shaw for nineteen years.”

“Besides... I don’t have a good relationship with my aunt and uncle. If I change my name...”

She would be distancing herself more and more from them.

Soon, they would become strangers.

But she still owed them so much for taking care of her for nineteen years.

“Sure.”

Zachary chuckled, “I understand.”

“Bunny, don’t be upset. There’s always a way.”

His deep, comforting voice warmed her heart.

“Thank you.” Cherise bit her lip.

“Don’t worry about it. We’re about to become a family.”

Zachary hung up.

Cherise stared at her phone for a while. She felt somewhat sad.

It was almost bedtime when Frances knocked on the door. She brought Cherise a warm soup to calm

her nerves. “Mr. Lenoir had me prepare this for you. He said you might have trouble sleeping tonight.”

Cherise eyed the soup and asked, “Where is he?”

“He’s in the study

1/2

Cherise bit her lip, “Thank you, Frances. You may leave.”

“I’ll drink the soup after it cools down.”

Cherise sighed when Frances left. Shrugging on a cardigan, she headed to the study.

“Cherise isn’t changing her name. There’s nothing to discuss.”

Cherise overheard Damien's voice from the study. "Damien, do you understand why we want her to change her name?"

"The Tanner name will be her protection."

"If not, I don't feel safe leaving her here."

Damien lowered his head and chuckled, "Uncle Tanner, I understand your concerns."

"But have you considered how Cherise feels?"

"Have you ever thought about whether she wants to change her name? Does she want to completely cut out her past? And if she wants to accept this new identity?"

"She's willing."

Beckham Tanner frowned. "Cherise has never rejected us as her family

after all. I think she's more than happy to be a Tanner."

We are her biological family,

Sitting on his chair, Damien was filled with frustration towards the self-assured man before him.

"Uncle Tanner, you don't understand Cherise at all."

"She doesn't know how to say no to people. As long as she believes they have good intentions, she will wholeheartedly accept them."

"But just because she has difficulty refusing people doesn't mean she doesn't have her own thoughts

and ideas.”

“Accepting her identity as a Tanner doesn’t mean she’s willing to change everything about herself for them.”

“In her eyes, the Tanners and the Shaws are her family.”

“By asking her to change her name, you’re forcing her to choose between her adoptive parents and her biological father.”

“You’re putting her in a difficult position.”

Damien’s voice was filled with tenderness and concern for Cherise.

2/2

Chapter 484 A Good Husband

Cherise stood outside the door wearing only pajamas and a cardigan.

It was autumn, and the nights were growing colder.

But Damien’s concern for her warmed her heart.

No one... No one understood her better than he did. No one loved her more than him.

He comprehended her conflicting emotions and her hesitation.

He advocated for her in front of the Tanners and revealed everything she didn't dare to.

This was Damien Lenoir. Her husband. The man she vowed to spend the rest of her life with.

He understood her, cared for her, and fought for her....

She was a fortunate woman.

Even if they couldn't have the wedding of her dreams, Cherise felt like the happiest woman on earth.

Because she had encountered the sweetest, kindest man on earth.

"Cherise?"

The door to the study opened while she was still lost in thought.

Beckham was surprised to see the young woman standing outside. "Are you still awake?"

"Yes."

Cherise shook her head.

"Did you hear everything we said?"

She nodded.

Beckham looked at her. "Is what he's saying what you're thinking? Or are they just his assumptions?"

Cherise clenched her hands into fists.

She looked up at him, "Dad."

"When you and Mom were together, could you tell what she was thinking"

Cherise was trying to convey that they were in synch

She believed that if she and Damien were like that. Beckham and Charisa would be too

However..

1/2

Beckham laughed bitterly, "I thought I knew her."

"Later on, I realized I never truly understood her."

Cherise froze. She realized she had misspoke.

Not every married couple was like her and Damien, knowing what the other was thinking.

"I'm sorry..."

Beckham smiled and tousled her hair. "You didn't mean it."

He glanced at Damien and then back at Cherise, "I think I understand what you mean."

"Congratulations on finding a husband who understands you, loves you, spoils you, and fights for you."

“He is a good husband.”

He closed his eyes. He saw a younger version of himself and Charisa’s innocent and pure face.

Back then, when he was still with Charisa, she was adorable and sweet, just like Cherise was now,

But... He wasn’t a good husband.

He never truly comprehended her. He did what he believed was best for her, but in the end...

He was the one who needed protection.

Beckham sighed and tousled Cherise’s hair. “Treasure this.”

Cherise nodded.

“I’m going to bed.”

Beckham chuckled, “You guys should go to sleep soon too.”

“You youngsters shouldn’t stay up too late.”

He turned on his heel and left.

Cherise blushed.

She knew Beckham was just trying to get her to go to bed early.

But...

Why was she having impure thoughts?

Had they been spending too much time together that she was starting to have inappropriate thoughts?

“What are you thinking about?”

Damien chuckled as Cherise tried to cool her flushed cheeks “Und le just told us not to stay up late”

2/2

Chapter 485 You Are Too Tense

“What were you thinking about?” Damien asked.

Cherise remained silent, her thoughts in turmoil.

“You have such a dirty mind.” He smiled wryly, effortlessly lifting her. “What brings you to the study?”

Enfolded in his arms, Cherise’s heart raced, her cheeks flushing deeper. Biting her lip, she asked, “I... wanted to know when you plan to sleep?”

“Ahh... Can’t sleep without me?” His deep voice held a trace of amusement, setting Cherise’s senses on edge.

Her cheeks turned a deeper shade of crimson, her pulse quickening. She chided herself for her lack of control, even after years of marriage.

Before she could finish reproaching herself, he had laid her on the bed, pinning her down. She watched his face drawing closer, feeling her heartbeat quicken further. His kiss finally landed, throwing her into a whirlwind of sensations. Her body and soul swirled in a tempest of emotions, caught in his intense passion.

Helpless, she whimpered and pleaded for a break, but the more vulnerable she appeared, the more he seemed to enjoy teasing her.

“Honey...” With teary eyes, Cherise looked at Damien, who was kissing her, “Please, stop... I feel uneasy.”

“Hush.” He playfully nibbled her ear as he continued. “Dad and Grandpa are in the next room. Dad warned you about fooling around late. If you make a sound, they’ll know how naughty you are.”

His words immediately stirred anxiety within her; her bodily reaction was barely under control.

Damien winced as she clenched a little too tightly onto him. Trying to comfort her, Damien whispered, “Relax, darling. It will be uncomfortable if you’re too tense.”

Cherise stared at him with teary eyes. She found it ironic that he purposely brought up her grandfather and father being nearby and then reproached her for her anxiety that was precisely stirred up by the possibility of their family overhearing their activities.

She bit her lip hard. Outside of the bedroom, Damien was attentive and caring. Still, in bed, the devious yet alluring man took control, and she had no other choice than to comply.

“Cursing me again in your mind? Naughty girl. He kissed her forehead, “Let me think, how should I discipline you...”

Cherise mumbled, “Honey, I was just admiring your exceptional qualities How could I curse you

“Really?”

He chuckled softly

“Of course, it’s true” Softly, she continued. “My incredible extraordinary husband

1/2

“If that’s the truth. He smiled, his lips close to her ear, “Let me remind you how remarkable your husband is

“Ahh Cherise yelped as he surprised her.

Exhausted, Cherise slept deeply, awakening well past nine in the morning.

At half-past nine, Zachary’s call roused her, “Hey, sleepyhead, I’m outside. Freshen up and join me; Aunt Charisa is looking for you.”

Yawning, Cherise checked the time. I just woke up. Give me a moment.”

She hadn’t forgotten; Zachary had organized dinner with Charisa for today.

212

Chapter 486 Country Food

After ending the call, Cherise quickly changed her clothes, freshened up, and appeared before Zachary with a smile. “So, where are we going to eat today?”

Zachary shrugged. “Aunt Charisa suddenly had a craving for something organic, so we’re heading to the countryside for some home-style food.”

“Eating country food?” Cherise was surprised. She had spent eighteen out of the past nineteen years eating country food, as she had stayed in the countryside. While she enjoyed it, the idea of Charisa, an elegant woman, going for country food felt unexpected. Besides, Cherise was sure rustic bread would not be Charisa’s first choice, given her usual refined palate.

“Can’t we reconsider this? I’m fine with whatever; there’s no need to...”

“The place has already been reserved,” Zachary interrupted before she could finish her sentence, opening the car door as he spoke. “Let’s go.”

“Alright.” Cherise rolled her eyes and got into the car.

Zachary glanced at her, surprised that despite her troubles, Cherise still considered others’ feelings.

Zachary drove Cherise to a small village a good distance from Adania. As Cherise sat in the passenger seat, the surroundings felt familiar. When they finally reached their destination, she realized this country

food spot was none other than Clover Gardens, the place Damien had purchased when Mandy still had her chip intact. It brought back the memory of the day when they had lunch here after returning from the Tanners, an unforgettable day due to the amount of alcohol they consumed.

As they approached the entrance, she couldn’t believe how the place had transformed into a farmhouse-style restaurant. What surprised her was that Charisa had coincidentally selected this spot for their meal.

“This way, to our table.” Zachary guided her to a room on the east side.

The room was decorated in a rustic farmhouse style, with many decorative elements reminiscent of those at Cherise’s aunt’s home.

Once seated, Zachary stood up. “I’ll go and get Aunt Charisa, they haven’t arrived yet.”

“Sure, I’ll check out the menu while you’re gone,” Cherise replied while scanning the menu.

After Zachary left, the door swung open, revealing a slim teenager of about sixteen or seventeen holding a notebook. “Ready to order, Miss?”

The boy’s voice immediately caught Cherise’s attention. She gripped the menu tightly in her hand, lifting her head quickly

“Sky” she blurted out

In front of her stood Sky Shaw, the eldest son of Elvis and Sarah whom she hadn’t seen a long time

“Cherry?”

1/2

Seeing Cherise, Sky was thrilled. “How did you end up here?”

Cherise was elated and stood up, embracing Sky. “It’s been ages since we met! What brings you here? Where’s Aunt Sarah?”

Sky eagerly explained, “My mom started this farmhouse restaurant! Tay and I are helping out during the summer break!”

The young lad beamed with excitement as he continued, “Cherry, how did you find your way here? Did you come all the way to visit us knowing this is our place?”

“...” Cherise bit her lip, “Someone invited me for a meal here.”

She took a deep breath before she added, “Aunt Sarah didn’t tell me where you were, so I had no idea. If it weren’t for this invitation...” She wouldn’t have known that her aunt had opened a restaurant.

Chapter 487 You Are Not Welcome

“Your friend must be quite the foodie,” Sky said, grinning as he handed the menu to Cherise. “Our restaurant is thriving, but it’s mostly thanks to the elite city clientele who know about us through word of mouth. Average folks don’t just stumble upon this remote spot.”

Cherise was taken aback and suddenly realized something. She called Zachary, “Did you arrange this restaurant for us, or was it... her?”

Zachary had visited Adania before and had made friends, while Cherise was visiting for the first time. How could she have known about this renowned eatery in Adania?

“Aunt Charisa made the reservation,” Zachary chuckled. “Isn’t it impressive? The truly impressive part is yet to come, Little Bunny. Aunt Charisa is bringing a bodyguard today, and guess who it is? It’s Elvis!”

Cherise’s mind swirled. Suddenly, she felt disconnected, as if Zachary’s voice was coming from miles away.

Zachary continued, “There’s still a lot you don’t know. I’ll fill you in later.”

After ending the call with Zachary, Cherise felt a jolt, as if her blood was flowing backward. So, all of this was orchestrated by her... Cherise thought, finding it hard to believe the extent of Charisa’s effort.

“Cherry.” Sky interrupted Cherise’s thoughts, “My mom doesn’t know you and your friend are today’s guests yet. You better order quickly. If she checks and finds out you’re here, she might ask you to leave.”

“Would Aunt really kick me out?” Cherise asked.

“Absolutely!” Sky leaned in and whispered, “Mom said if you and your pals show up, she will kick you out without service!”

Cherise winced, feeling a pang in her heart. Quickly, she looked through the menu. The listed dishes were the special ones her aunt used to prepare back in Shaw’s Village. Looking at the menu, Cherise vividly remembered the taste of these dishes.

She ordered some of the dishes she loved in the past, then waved Sky away.

Sky took Cherise’s order menu to the kitchen.

In the kitchen, Sarah was elated about the extensive order for the day.

When Sky handed her the order menu, Sarah’s brow furrowed immediately. She noticed that the order completely matched Cherise’s preferences.

Sarah frowned deeply, giving Sky a sharp look. “Do you know today’s guest?”

Sky was startled and hastily shook his head. “No, I... I don’t know...”

“People who visit us are from the city; how could I recognize them?”

His response only deepened Sarah’s suspicions. Frowning, she nudged Sky aside and stormed towards the private dining room.

1/2

The door was pushed open abruptly with a thud.

As Cherise looked up, she was met with Sarah's cold, slightly angry gaze.

"Cherise, you're not welcome here! I've made it clear-I won't attend your wedding or have any association with you!"

Cherise bit her lip, staring straight at Sarah. Even though she understood Sarah's intentions to sever their ties to the past so that she could get back to her birth parents, Sarah's tone and stare still tugged at her heart.

Pursing her lips, she gazed at Sarah with eyes full of anguish. "Aunt Sarah, do you really dislike me that much?"

Chapter 488 A New Addition To The Family

Sarah rolled her eyes. "Yes!"

"But.." Cherise bit her lip, speaking humbly. "Aunt Sarah, you and Uncle Elvis have been there for me for the past nineteen years. If you truly disliked me, it would have been evident from the start. But you've never shown hatred. Instead, you've spent these nineteen years happily with me. Please, don't speak to me like this. It's painful."

The genuine sentiment and words from the girl momentarily stopped Sarah in her tracks. She bit her lip, turning her face away. "If you're upset, just don't come here! You're not welcome here!"

"Aunt Sarah..." Cherise bit her lip, stood up, went to the door, and grasped Sarah's hand. "Please, don't do this to me..."

"What else am I supposed to do, huh?" Sarah took a deep breath, locking eyes with Cherise. "Because of you, my husband can't even come home. What else should I do? Should I go back to liking you and pampering you like before? Let me tell you, Cherise, that's not possible!"

"If your husband comes home, will you still treat Cherise like this?" A clear, strong male voice came from outside the door.

Sarah furrowed her brow, pivoted, and glanced at the closed door. "My husband won't just stroll back home so easily! If he does, I wouldn't treat Cherise so badly. But there's no way he can be back."

"Of course, he can." Zachary chuckled lightly, "He not only can return but also bring you an addition to your family."

As Zachary concluded, the door to Clover Gardens was swung open from outside.

There stood a poised, confident Elvis.

Behind Elvis was a middle-aged woman bearing an uncanny resemblance to Cherise.

The woman exuded an aura of undeniable significance.

Sarah bit her lip, her frame trembling in disbelief as she took in the scene before her, "Is this..."

"I'm back." Elvis grinned at Sarah, opening his arms toward her.

In that instant, all the grievances she suffered vanished. Sarah rushed to Elvis, throwing herself into his embrace, tears streaming down her face.

"Alright, alright." Elvis comforted her, patting her head. "I'm here, aren't I? Plus, I've brought a new member to our family."

Sarah looked up, her eyebrows raised, "A new family member?"

"Yes" Elvis took a deep breath before he continued, "This is Charisa, the head of the Miles Family. She's here today to officially join our family registry, changing her family name to Shaw. She'll be my god

sister.

1/2

Sarah gazed at Elvis in shock. "Changing her family name? Taking her in as your god sister?"

"Yes." Elvis replied, staring at Sarah warmly. This way, Cherry can keep her first name."

Equally stunned, Cherise looked at Elvis and Charisa in disbelief, unable to comprehend that her birth mother would willingly change her last name and take her beloved Uncle Elvis as a godbrother.

"Hey, knock knock?" Zachary leaned in, nudging Cherise with his shoulder as he whispered softly. "Feeling touched?"

"Yesterday, after you told me everything. I spoke to Aunt Charisa. Aunt Charisa said it was not a problem. If you prefer being called Shaw, she'll change her surname instead, as long as you're happy."

At that moment, Cherise's heart swelled with warmth. She looked up at the woman standing at the door.

Chapter 489 Death Is Inevitable

The early autumn weather brought a chill to the air. Charisa wore a slim-fit, moon-white dress adorned with embroidered flowers. Her hair cascaded elegantly, and her whole demeanor exuded a proud and aloof temperament.

Despite her usual cold and distant expression, she was willing to accommodate Cherise's wish to keep the surname she had grown up with.

"Let's head in for dinner!" Elvis called out, taking Sarah's hand and leading the way to the dining room. "Is the meal ready?"

Embarrassed, Sarah shook her head. "Not yet... I noticed Sky was taking Cherise's order, so I hurried out without preparing anything.

"Come on, I'll help you. Where's the kitchen?" Elvis took the lead and swiftly led Sarah to the kitchen.

Outside, Charisa stood at the door. Meanwhile, Cherise was by the dining room entrance, and Zachary stood next to Cherise.

"Shall we, ladies?" Zachary quipped, playfully opening the door. "Why don't we head inside? The sun is quite strong; I wouldn't want anyone getting tanned, especially someone who will be a bride in a few days!"

Cherise blushed and turned away.

Just before entering the dining room, Cherise paused, remembering something. She turned back, offering a slight smile to Charisa. "Mom, come in."

A glimmer of warmth flashed in Charisa's typically serene eyes. Without a word, she calmly walked through the doorway and followed Cherise into the room.

The dining room carried a traditional, rustic charm. Sarah was an industrious woman. Apart from the existing furnishings, the room was decorated with many handmade pieces, like cross-stitch and embroidered flowers.

Seated, Charisa surveyed the room with a composed gaze. "Did you live in a place like this?"

Cherise, momentarily caught off guard, nodded quickly. "Yes. It wasn't as well-maintained as it is now, but the setting is quite similar."

"It must have been tough for you." Charisa looked at her, speaking with a poised tone.

Cherise was surprised. "No, not at all!"

"I enjoyed living in the countryside with its fresh air and scenic landscape. Growing vegetables and being self-reliant... It was quite delightful."

"Is that so?" Charisa raised her teacup, taking a sip. "Before I pass on, I should spend some time in the countryside."

Then, she turned to gaze outside at the mountains, waters, and blue sky. "In reality, it wouldn't be a bad

1/2

place to die."

"Aunt Charisa!" Zachary frowned, interjecting sternly. "What are you talking about? Cherry might get the wrong idea if you keep talking about such things."

Charisa was slightly taken aback, turning to smile faintly at Zachary, "You're right. Let's not discuss such matters at the table." She glanced at Cherise. "And what did you just call me?"

Cherise hesitated before speaking, "I called you... Mom." She looked a bit pale, staring at Charisa. "What did you mean by what you said earlier?"

"It was just a passing thought." Charisa calmly placed down her teacup. "I was just contemplating the idea of passing away in a serene place, should the opportunity arise."

She smiled at Cherise. "After all, death is inevitable, isn't it?"

"

Cherise bit her lip, feeling uneasy and apprehensive. The idea of contemplating death in such peaceful atmosphere didn't sit well with her.

"After dinner tonight, when we return, let Beckham know that I have officially changed my last name to Shaw and that you plan to take your mother's surname. Whatever the Tanners your identity, just let it be. It doesn't matter."

say about

Cherise felt warmth in her heart once again. She bit her lip, looking up at Charisa earnestly. "Are you sure about changing your surname?"

"Absolutely."

Charisa smiled. "The surname Miles wasn't my original one. I adopted it after marrying someone with that name. Everyone knows that Miles is not my true family name. If I declare that my original name is Charisa Shaw, there won't be any doubts."

Grateful for the sentiment, Cherise responded sincerely, "Thank you... Mom."

"Hearing you call me 'Mom' makes the name change worth it." Charisa placed a hand over her heart while her other hand casually fiddled with her phone, seemingly sending something. "Zach mentioned that you were quite worried about Elvis's safety. Earlier, you and Elvis's wife... well. now she's my sister-in-law. From your conversation with her, I sensed that you were concerned about his safety when he was with me. Is that true?"

Cherise pursed her lips but remained silent.

Zachary sighed softly beside her. "Both of you have misunderstood Aunt Charisa all along. Aunt Charisa sent me to Adania to locate Uncle Elvis because the Tanners had begun searching for you. We had to expedite our plans. And about the intention to bring Uncle Elvis back for punishment, it was because, at that time, Uncle Elvis was accused by Maeve and taken into custody. If we stated we wanted to save

him, Maeve would have imposed conditions. However, by stating we aimed to bring Uncle Elvis back for punishment, it wouldn't provoke any further retaliation."

"As for why Uncle Elvis remained by Aunt Charisa's side as a bodyguard... Zachary sighed softly, "There were two reasons. One was that when Uncle Elvis took you away, he was given an advanced five years' worth of salary but hadn't returned to work. The other reason is... having Uncle Elvis around would make it easier for you to accept Aunt Charisa."

"I'm not as foolish as the Tanners." Charisa glanced briefly at Cherise. "If I were to disclose everything about your origins abruptly, it would only frighten you. But you trust Elvis. When he reveals it, you'll find it more acceptable."

Cherise appeared taken aback as she looked at Charisa. "So you mean..." Cherise had just realized that from when Zachary followed her back to Adania, Charisa had planned to reunite with her. It was clear from the beginning that she had no intention to harm her uncle and only used him as a means for their reunion.

"Yes," Charisa confirmed as she calmly raised her teacup and took a sip. "Now that we've found each other, there's no need for me to continue associating with Elvis. If he's willing to remain as my bodyguard, he's welcome to do so. If not, staying here and running this little shop with his wife is just as good."

The woman smiled faintly. "Perhaps as I near the end, I could come and live with them."

"After all, I'm now a part of the Shaws."