

Marrying 781

Chapter 781 The Unusually Anxious

“Damien, Ren, Sera, Syatt, and I. We’re all your friends,” Cherise added.

As she wrote Syatt’s name on the invitation, Cherise remarked, “There you go, already marked for you. Your friends are going to sit at a table at your wedding.”

Lyra bit her lip, understanding that Cherise was doing this for her so that she wouldn’t have to face the embarrassment of having no relatives or friends at her wedding.

“Thank you...”

The wedding was meant to have an auspicious atmosphere for the groom, Zachary, but no specific date had been chosen-it was set for the upcoming weekend in a relaxed manner.

On the day of the wedding, the venue was filled with guests.

Kareen hadn’t anticipated such a massive turnout. The crowd was more than twice the size she had imagined, with many uninvited attendees.

Surveying the sea of faces, Kareen sighed with concern. She had assumed that inviting everyone Damien had recommended would be enough. She hadn’t planned for the wedding to become a lavish event.

Firstly, the fact that Zachary in a coma wasn’t exactly a reason to celebrate.

Secondly, after being expelled from the Miles family, she was working with limited funds. She needed to save as much as possible for Zachary’s future medical expenses.

But why were there so many unfamiliar faces?

Syatt, yawning, offered a casual explanation, "Perhaps they're just here for the spectacle. Your brother, after all, is the bigwig of the Miles Group. These people might just be curious to see the esteemed Miles patriarch getting married while comatose."

Kareen clenched her fists. "Damn them all," she spat, a silent vow simmering in her eyes.

Shooting Syatt a withering look, Cherise moved towards Kareen and said, "Maybe they're just concerned about your brother. Not all of them have bad intentions."

After saying that, she glanced at Lyra, stunning in her white wedding gown but with a pale countenance. Cherise was concerned, "Is everything okay?"

Lyra nervously watched people filing into the hall from the second floor. To her surprise, she spotted some familiar faces. Those were her older brothers-first, second, and third.

The Quinell family had shown up! Were they here to drag her back home, mock her for marrying a comatose guy, or sabotage the wedding?

Everything was ready, all that remained was the ceremony. Damien and Cherise had planned a post-wedding announcement. What if they ruined her wedding?

Lyra was so anxious that she didn't know what to do but didn't dare tell Cherise and Kareen that the unexpected guests were her family.

"Is that Patricia? She's quite attractive. Oblivious to Lyra's distress, Syatt leaned against the railing on the second floor, yawning as he checked out the middle-aged woman in a purple dress downstairs.

Cherise teased. "Planning a secret rendezvous with her tonight?"

Syatt quickly shook his head. "You're joking, right? I'm a hotshot in my twenties. Maybe in another thirty years. I might find her interesting But, seriously, who knows how she'll look in thirty years?"

Cherise shook her head in exasperation. Turning, she noticed Lyra's hands tightly clutching the railing. her eyebrows furrowed in worry.

Lyra's reaction was strangely intense. She should be excited today, not nervous. They had been preparing for a week, and Lyra had been enthusiastic the whole time.

Why did she suddenly become nervous with only two hours until the wedding? Cherise asked, "Still nervous?"

Chapter 782 The Quinell Had Come

"Hmm." Lyra responded half-heartedly, her expression somewhat awkward and restless.

Take Lyra to the third floor,' Damien's message suddenly appeared on Cherise's phone.

Cherise furrowed her brows, 'Why?'

Just half an hour ago, Damien had left to pick up Beckham, Soren, and Serafina from the airport, so he was likely still on the road. Why would he ask her to escort Lyra to the third floor in his absence?

Someone wants to meet her. I've convinced her family to attend her wedding,' Damien explained in his message.

Cherise's eyes widened in surprise. What? Lyra's family is here!!

Who would have thought Damien would take the initiative to convince Lyra's family?

While drafting the invitations earlier, she had asked Lyra if her family should be included, and the latter responded that she had grown distant from her family and they wouldn't be concerned about her, so Cherise didn't inquire further.

Sciting down her phone, Cherise glanced at the still pale Lyra, "Come on, follow me."

Lyra nodded, gathered up her skirt, and trailed behind Cherise. She was so anxious that she forgot to ask Cherise about their destination. Cherise guided her to the door of the reception room on the third floor and swung it open.

Inside the reception room, her parents, uncle, aunt, grandparents, and three brothers were all present. Lyra instantly spun around and attempted to flee.

“Hold on, Lyra!” A deep voice of a middle-aged man resonated from within the room, “You’re getting married today. Where do you think you’re going? Cold feet at the altar, are you?”

Lyra’s steps faltered.

She turned around with a pale face to face her family members, “I... Zac and I are already married. Legally. Paperwork and everything. Even if this wedding falls apart, it doesn’t change that. I’m his wife. And I’ll be there for him, whatever happens.”

A tear escaped, tracing a path down her cheek. “And... if you think I’m a disgrace, or this wedding is a mistake...you can disown me. I understand.”

Mrs. Quinell’s voice, filled with playful affection, cut through the wedding-day tension as she wiped away the tears from Lyra’s eyes.

“Why the tears, on what should be the happiest day of your life? Only one wedding in a lifetime, my darling girl, and you’re already turning the ceremony into a mascara parade? The photos will be a disaster, and your unconscious prince will probably find it hilarious when he wakes up.”

Lyra, still sobbing, managed a surprised snort. “Mom? You... you’re not angry?”

Mrs. Quinell shrugged, a knowing smile appearing at the corners of her eyes. “You’ve made your choice, and resenting you would just give me wrinkles. But speaking of choices, not informing us about the wedding? That, my dear, was a bit inconsiderate. Your brothers are furious like bulls in tutus, and your father nearly choked on his cigar when Mr. Lenoir played peacemaker.”

Lyra's eyes widened in surprise, "Mr. Lenoir?"

She glanced at Cherise, a wave of gratitude washing over her. "Oh, no... thank you, Mrs. Lenoir!"

Cherise, equally surprised by the revelation, offered a sheepish smile. "Uh... no worries," she mumbled, feeling the heat of unexpected attention.

A soft, curious voice broke the silence. "What did you call her?"

"She's Mr. Lenoir's wife, so I called her Mrs. Lenoir..." Lyra mumbled.

Mrs. Quinell's gaze lingered on Cherise for a moment, then shifted back to Lyra, a mischievous glint sparkling in her eyes. "Well, sweetheart, forget the formalities. Mrs. Lenoir is actually your cousin."

The room erupted in a surprised gasp, leaving Lyra and Cherise speechless. In her pristine gown, Lyra looked like a picture of bewildered beauty.

"What do you mean...?" she stammered, her voice barely a whisper.

Chapter 783 Charisa Neller? Priscilla Neller??

Mrs. Quinell, known to many as Priscilla Neller, announced with a gentle smile as she clasped Cherise's hand, "Cherry, your mother, Charisa... she was my sister. She was séparated from us when she was young, a missing sister I've been searching for years."

Cherise's jaw dropped. "Wait, you're... you're my aunt?!"

The revelation hit Cherise like a wave,, washing away years of unanswered questions. She stared at her aunt, seeing a reflection of her features, a family resemblance she hadn't known existed.

Priscilla continued, her voice cracking with a mix of joy and sadness. "It was only recently, thanks to Mr. Lenoir, that I discovered her story and that she had changed her name to Charisa Miles. No wonder I couldn't find her all these years."

She continued, "Your mother... she loved you fiercely, that much I know. And while I can't replace her, I can offer you the same warmth and unwavering love. Don't let a difficult sister on your father's side cloud the warmth of your family."

Taking Cherise's hand, Priscilla led her through introductions, "This is your uncle, a towering man. He is your eldest cousin, a bit of a recluse, bless his quirky soul. The second cousin was a talented charmer, though prone to wandering. The third cousin is a ball of energy with a temper to match, so keep your distance if you know what I mean."

Her eyes twinkled as she reached the last one, she gestured towards Lyra, "And this is the bride, our runaway princess! Five years chasing after Zachary, and here she is, finally tying the knot, without a word to the family! Though I must say, this silly girl has caused the family too much trouble!"

Priscilla darted a playful and resentful glance at Lyra. "You ungrateful child! Your brother flew in medical experts to treat your husband, and you thought we were just here to disrupt the festivities? You deserve a good spanking, at least!"

Tears glistening in her eyes, Lyra melted into Priscilla's warm embrace.

Meanwhile, Priscilla squeezed Cherise's hand. "You've found yourself a keeper, Cherry. If it weren't for Damien, I wouldn't have known this little runaway was getting married here, let alone that you two had become friends by some twist of fate."

Cherise remained still, her heart fluttering with bursts of excitement and warmth.

She had been busy helping Lyra with wedding preparations, thinking Damien was caught up in business matters.

How could she have known that this quiet man was orchestrating a symphony of surprises behind the scenes, with each note a testament to his unwavering love?

Now, the urge to find him, to melt into his embrace, was overwhelming, and Cherise, true to form, followed her heart's impulsive beat.

After a tearful reunion with Lyra and her family on the third floor, Lyra took out her phone and called Damien directly, "Where are you?"

"Downstairs. Sera and Ren are here, posing with the balloons. I'm here playing chaperone to these two troublemakers."

Serafina's indignant voice piped up. "Daddy, who are you calling 'troublemakers'?"

Soren's serious tone followed. "I said we only call him Daddy after they get married!"

Serafina's protest was immediate. "But Grandpa says it's a done deal! He told me to start now; get used to it!"

Soren countered, "Grandpa's just teasing you!"

The little devil, however, wouldn't be swayed. "No, no, no! I listen to Grandpa! Right, Daddy?"

Cherise held the phone close, a smile tugging at her lips as the playful banter continued. She quickened her pace, eager to join the chaos downstairs.

Chapter 784 Damien's Secretive Effort

"Why the sudden silence?" Damien held his phone with a knowing smile, watching the children bicker playfully. However, the question was quickly forgotten as a blur of motion dashed toward him.

His teasing was abruptly interrupted by a whirlwind.

Cherise, with her arms outstretched like a joyous bird, crashed into his embrace. He effortlessly caught her, his strong frame easily absorbing her momentum. So, what's got you buzzing like a hummingbird on sugar water? Something tells me your reunion with Aunt Priscilla went well."

Cherise nestled in Damien's arms, finding comfort in his familiar scent. "Mm-hmm," she confirmed, a contented sigh escaping her lips.

"Happy?" he asked.

"Very," she mumbled, her arms tightening around his waist. "But how did you manage all this?"

A hint of guilt colored his voice as he confessed, "Because I wanted to give you another wedding. Five years ago, ours turned into a nightmare. I've never forgiven myself for that."

He gently traced her arm with his fingers, sending shivers down her spine. "Seeing you plan Lyra's wedding with such joy, I realized maybe... maybe we deserved another chance. Not as adversaries, but as husband and wife. A chance to clear my father's name, to set the record straight about your mother. A chance to finally lay all these troubles to rest."

"And maybe," he added with a playful wink, "our two little ones could be the flower bearers."

He paused, a question lingering in his eyes. "And by the way, I couldn't help but overhear you asking about Lyra's family the other day..."

Damien's voice, filled with amusement, filled the air. So, under the alias of Charisa Neller, I tracked down your mom's lost relatives. And guess who I stumbled upon? The Quinells – Lyra's own family, can you believe it?"

He playfully pinched her nose, his eyes twinkling. "No wonder you two hit it off all those years ago. Naive birds of a feather, always charging into things headfirst.

Cherise's lips curved into a playful pout. "Naive? Me?"

Damien chuckled, a low rumble that sent shivers down her spine. "Mm-hmm, hopelessly so."

But the teasing banter quickly melted away. "No, you're the one!" she retorted, burying her face in his chest, her voice muffled with laughter.

"You find a woman who needs your help with everything, drives you crazy with worry, and you just grin and bear it. Tell me, who's the naive one?"

Despite the playful banter, her heart brimmed with gratitude. Damien had been her constant, her anchor in the storm. Five years ago, he had guided her to her parents; five years later, he had gifted her Aunt Priscilla and cousin Lyra.

Without him, she shuddered to think where she would be-maybe trapped and vulnerable if she had ended up with Isaac.

"Thank you," she whispered, her voice raw with emotion, clinging to him tighter.

Damien's laughter rumbled in his chest. "We've settled this, Cherry. Your thanks are unnecessary."

With a mischievous glint in her eyes, she surprised Damien by rising on her toes and peppering his lips with a kiss.

Five years apart, the reunion had been bittersweet, a dance around memories and uncertainties.

But today, surrounded by family and hearing Aunt Priscilla's endless praise for him, her reservations melted away.

He hadn't changed. Nothing had. He was still the Damien who offered her a slice of the sky, a sturdy shelter, and a love that promised forever.

The kiss, unexpected but welcome, caught Damien off guard. Then, a smile bloomed across his face. He cupped her head, deepening the kiss, their laughter mingling with the sweet taste of rediscovery.

Chapter 785 Gwenn, Again!

Click!

The sharp sound of the camera snapping broke the spell, followed by Serafina's eager voice. "Ren, let me see! Did you get the picture?"

Cherise's initial blush quickly turned into understanding. Their children must have captured the lingering kiss between her and Damien. Flustered, she tried to pull away, but his arms remained firmly around her.

Helplessly, she pleaded with her eyes – the kids were still there!

Unfazed, Damien leaned in and whispered, "They know what's going on, sweetheart. And besides, getting used to such scenes wouldn't be a bad thing. I promised Sera she wouldn't be the baby for long."

A shiver of foreboding ran down Cherise's spine. "What... what do you mean?"

His warm-hand settled gently on her abdomen. "I plan on planting some more seeds in this fertile garden." Cherise's jaw dropped. "Oh no! Objection!"

"Objection overruled!" Damien sputtered and shared another passionate kiss with her.

"Oh," came a voice dripping with sarcasm. "Haven't you two been married for, what, five years now? PDA at the entrance of someone else's wedding? Anyone who didn't know better would have thought you were the ones tying the knot."

Cherise finally managed to pull away from Damien. Her frown was etched deep.

Dressed in revealing attire and wearing a smug smile, Gwenn stood before her, her eyes radiating disdain even through her sunglasses.

Cherise's face turned pale, her smile faltering as she gazed at Gwenn.

Gwenn's dress was revealing, barely covering the essentials. Cherise couldn't help but express her disapproval, "I can't believe you would wear such a revealing dress to someone else's wedding. Even if I were thick-skinned, I wouldn't wear a bikini like you."

Turning to Beckham with a hopeful smile, Cherise sought support, "Dad, can't you say something to Gwenn? It's a formal occasion, not a beach vacation."

Beckham furrowed his brow, finally noticing the extent of Gwenn's revealing attire.

Her dress exposed her upper chest, back, and long legs through a high slit. Despite their recent meeting, Beckham had grown accustomed to Gwenn's 'sexy' style and saw no issue with her choice of clothing.

Chapter 786 Cherise Teasing Gwenn

Beckham sighed in frustration at Cherise's words, his hand hitting his forehead. Turning to Gwenn, his voice carried a hint of annoyance. "Gwenn, you've gone too far this time. This is Zac and Lyra's wedding, not a nightclub! Even if this is your usual style, an event like this requires more decorum. Your dress is... inappropriate, to say the least. Please, go and change immediately."

Gwenn clenched her jaw. "Dad, come on, it's not that bad."

She never adhered to dress codes, not even for funerals, let alone weddings. Flaunting her assets was her personal style, and what was wrong with that?

Always the epitome of angelic sweetness, Cherise chimed in, "Yeah, Dad has a point. Maybe a wardrobe change is in order. Did you bring anything less, shall we say, 'eye-catching'?"

Gwenn was about to retort, but Cherise interrupted her with the timing of a seasoned comedian. "Oh, silly me! You wouldn't fit into my clothes anyway, not with your... curves. But Aunt Priscilla's place isn't far. Her wardrobe, now that could work."

Gwenn's cheeks turned emerald green. Men like Beckham and Damien wouldn't catch the veiled insult, but Gwenn understood it loud and clear.

Fat Aunt Priscilla, a middle-aged woman, was her body double? How audacious!

The tension in the air was palpable, ready to explode. But Beckham's confused expression cut through the charged atmosphere. "Aunt Priscilla? Cherry, who are you talking about? Since when do you have an aunt?",

Charisa Neller, Cherise's mother, was believed to be an orphan.

"She's Mom's sister," Cherise smiled at Beckham, softening her tone.

"Dame and I are usually very affectionate and mushy behind closed doors. But we make a point of maintaining decorum in public. I just got a little carried away; I couldn't help myself with the kiss and hug."

Her smile brightened as she continued, "Turns out, Dame found a long-lost family for me. Mom isn't an orphan after all, and she has a whole family she got separated from when she was little. Dame tracked them down."

Beckham took a moment to process the information.

He jumped up, eyes wide with excitement, and grabbed Cherise's hand. "Are you serious? You found Ari's family?"

Cherise's smile widened. "Yep. And guess what? The one giving away the bride today is Auntie Priscilla's daughter. Turns out, Aunt Priscilla is Lyra's mom! So, Mom's niece and Zac, whom she practically raised, are getting married!"

Cherise's voice trembled; she could almost imagine Mom looking down from heaven, so proud.

Before Charisa passed away, Cherise, Beckham, and Zachary were her biggest concerns

Now, even though Zachary was still recovering from his coma, Lyra, Mom's niece, was by his side, devoted and loving. It would bring her mother joy; Cherise knew it.

Beckham, mirroring Cherise's excitement, squeezed her hand. "Where are they? Come on, take me! I spent years by Ari's side but never met her family!"

"Let's go," Damien said, a small smile playing on his lips. He picked up Serafina and took Soren's hand.

"I promised Mrs. Quinell I would bring the little ones to meet her. Since Dad is eager too, we might as well make it a family affair."

Chapter 787 Beckham Meeting His Sister-in-law

"Brilliant!" Beckham exclaimed, his excitement palpable as he tightened his grip on Cherise's hand. "Do I look alright? First impressions are important, especially when meeting your aunt, your mom's sister."

"You look fantastic. Absolutely dashing," Cherise assured him, a warm smile spreading across her face.

Seeing Beckham like this, any flicker of resentment that Gwenn had ignited in Cherise's heart sputtered and died.

No matter how he treated her, Cherise knew deep down that Beckham still held her mother dear. Her mother had passed away years ago, yet her father's anxiety about meeting her family was evident. Perhaps his awkward attentiveness was just another layer of grief.

Beckham had barely taken a few steps when he abruptly stopped, spinning around as if he had remembered something. Gwenn remained rooted to the spot, her face unreadable.

Beckham furrowed his brow, a hint of annoyance flashing across his eyes. "Gwenn, come on. Let's meet your mother's relatives."

Gwenn lifted her gaze, her voice monotone. "She was your wife, not my mother."

With that, she shrugged nonchalantly. "I won't intrude on your family reunion. I promised the editor some interesting material, and the camera needs some action."

As Gwenn reached for the doorknob, Beckham's voice cut through the air. "Don't go. Come with us."

He glanced at her outfit, a glittering, barely-there ensemble, with distaste. "Cherry said her aunt has a similar body type. Maybe you can borrow something from her."

Gwenn's face drained of color. "No way! I'll buy my own!"

Being the practical person he was, Beckham gave her a firm nudge towards the stairs. In his mind, Gwenn's fashion sense was a ticking time bomb. What if she showed up in something even more... inappropriate? It would be safer to go upstairs with Gwenn.

Knowing that Cherise's sister was not known for being a party animal, Beckham assumed her wardrobe would be more subdued compared to Gwenn's sequin-filled chaos.

Going upstairs to Priscilla's closet seemed like a strategic move for damage control. With her middle-aged tastes, she wouldn't disappoint Beckham.

But that was just an excuse.

In his heart, Gwenn and Cherise were his daughters, deserving a place at this family gathering.

Ever since Cherise's return, Gwenn had been a distant presence. Beckham longed to bridge the gap, hoping this reunion would mend their fractured bond. He didn't realize that the divide ran deeper than any wardrobe choice.

No matter how hard he pushed, Gwenn couldn't fill the void reserved for Cherise.

Upon reaching the third floor of the Quinell family's guest hall, Lyra sought comfort in Priscilla's arms, sobbing uncontrollably.

Upon seeing Damien and Cherise, accompanied by two children and two strangers, Lyra quickly composed herself, extricated herself from Priscilla's embrace, and greeted, "Hey, Cherry."

Cherise responded softly, then turned to Priscilla and said, "Aunt, let me introduce you. This is my husband, Damien. The two children beside him are ours. The older one is named Soren, and the younger one is Serafina."

"Meet my dad, who was also my late mother Charisa Neller's husband, Beckham. And the woman next to him – my adopted sister, Gwenn."

Gwenn maintained a smile on the surface, but inside, she was seething. Damn it!

With her usual grace and a hint of a smirk, Cherise introduced Gwenn as "curvaceous," the word hanging heavy like an unwelcome guest.

It was a subtle jab that landed with a dull ache, a reminder of the insecurities Cherise always seemed to know how to exploit.

Chapter 788 Meeting The "Curvaceous" Gwenn

Gwenn's inner fire crackled. "What the hell! Is she blind or something? My body is a symphony of seduction, the kind that takes men's breath away. But in Cherise's eyes, this little viper, I'm suddenly 'fat,' 'plump'? Like some middle-aged frump?"

"So, this is your sister," Priscilla said, curling her lips into a cold smirk. Her gaze was icy as she studied Gwenn for a moment, then she laughed. "This pretend niece, why not say hello to your Aunt Priscilla?"

Priscilla had previously heard about Gwenn from Damien.

When Damien found Priscilla, he informed her that one of the main reasons Cherisa didn't return to the Tanner family after Charisa's death was because of Gwenn.

Firstly, Gwenn and Cherise had always been at odds, so she didn't want to share a roof with Gwenn.

Secondly, Beckham treated Gwenn, his adopted daughter, as equally important as Cherise, his biological daughter. She didn't want to stay in the Tanner family and constantly clashed with Gwenn, causing disappointment and sorrow for Beckham.

Priscilla's brow furrowed with displeasure.

She couldn't understand why Beckham, who had acknowledged Cherise as his own, would let such minor issues drive her away from the Tanner family.

This lingering resentment had cast a long shadow, poisoning her perception of Gwenn even before they had met. Now, face-to-face, Priscilla found her dislike solidifying, a distaste that permeated Gwenn's very being.

"Hello," Gwenn offered, a strained smile gracing her lips. "Look, you're Cherise's aunt, not mine. I'm just Dad's adopted child. No need for all the aunt stuff, right?"

"Why not?" Priscilla countered, her eyes glinting with a challenge. "Beckham is my sister's husband, and his children are obligated to address me properly, whether adopted or by blood."

"You're Beckham's adopted daughter, remember? I don't understand why being adopted gives you the right to disrespect elders. If you want no part of me, it's easy. Just stop being Beckham's adopted daughter. Problem solved."

Gwenn's brow furrowed at Priscilla's barb. She was about to unleash a retort when Beckham's voice boomed, "Gwenn, hurry up and greet your Aunt Priscilla!"

Gwenn wanted to argue, but the stern glint in Beckham's eyes stopped her cold. He rarely looked at her like that, and it was pure fire. She rolled her eyes internally but swallowed her pride. "Aunt Priscilla."

Priscilla's smile was thin. "Hmm, good girl."

She turned to Cherise. "Isn't your sister a ray of sunshine? But why did Damien say she always goes after you?"

Cherise wanted to respond, but Beckham cut her off with a frown. "Gwenn targeting Cherry? What's going on? Maybe Damien's talking about that news article from before?"

"That's right," Priscilla scoffed. "As a sister, Gwenn, you wrote an article about your sister's shady work ethics. I still remember it, and it makes me wonder, who lacks ethics, the sister who exposes it, or the one who does it?"

The room went ice cold.

Even distant Quinell family members started whispering.

"She seems so put-together; wouldn't expect that from her..."

Guess adopted siblings just never get along like the real ones.

Chapter 789 The Adopted Child Refused Aunt Priscilla

"Tsk tsk, Tanner's family took in a stray, now she bites the hand that feeds her. Shameful, really."

Beckham squirmed under the constant murmurs, his face etched with discomfort. He cleared his throat, "Actually, the whole thing's blown out of proportion-

Cherise stood stock-still, a bitter smile on her lips as she watched her father scramble to defend Gwenn. It all made sense now why Damien was determined to stir the pot.

In Beckham's eyes, this was about protecting his family and Gwenn had been a part of it for over twenty years. Her connection, confirmed by a DNA test five years ago, couldn't compete with those shared years. Blood ties weren't everything, she understood.

Gwenn met Priscilla's gaze head-on, her voice firm. "So that's what this is all about. The news article, yes, that was my work."

"However, the details about Cherry's unethical conduct were sent to our supervisor. I had to fulfill a professional obligation, or someone would have anyway."

Gwenn threw Cherise a side-eye, a smirk playing on her lips. "Look, sis, don't hold a grudge against me. If I hadn't handled that news piece myself, who knows what kind of twisted mess it would've been? I did what I could to soften the blow, you know?"

She sighed, a flicker of regret crossing her face. "But yeah, it still got out, and I'm truly sorry for that. I didn't mean to air your dirty laundry to the whole world, even if I was trying to clean things up."

Gwenn's eyes glinted with a hidden edge as she added, her voice soft but firm, "It's been so long already. But if you're still upset with me, then I apologize again. I'm truly sorry for what happened."

Gwenn's words were a masterclass in deflection. She played the martyr, the regretful accomplice, and even the concerned sister.

It was enough to fool some, like Beckham, who cooed, "Let bygones be bygones. Cherry would never hold a grudge against you, Gwenn."

But Damien saw through the charade. "Why shouldn't she hold grudges?" he scoffed, pulling Cherise close.

"If someone slandered my wife, I wouldn't rest until they faced the consequences."

His gaze, cold and unforgiving, met Gwenn's. "You claimed to care about Cherry," he said, his words dripping with ice.

"But did you even bother contacting her before writing that hatchet job? You had the Tanner family's information, for God's sake! Why didn't you give her a chance to defend herself?"

Gwenn's mask slipped. The truth, laid bare by Damien's unwavering gaze, was a damning indictment. Without a single conversation with Cherise, she had condemned her based on whispers and shadows.

Chapter 790 Damien Defended Cherise

Damien's voice reverberated through the room, cutting through the tense silence like a sharp knife.

"So, this is Ms. Tanner's journalistic code? Expose, slander, and then claim the moral high ground?" Gwenn's carefully constructed facade crumbled under his gaze. Damien was a man of quiet power, his words few but impactful.

"I... I avoid my family to protect them," she stammered, her voice feeble and unconvincing. "As Cherise's sister, I only wanted what's best." But the defiance in her eyes was a flickering flame, extinguishing in the face of Damien's unwavering conviction.

"Best for her?" Damien's smile was a chilling thing, devoid of warmth.

You dragged her through the mud, portrayed her as a villain, and then pretended to be her savior? I find such hypocrisy distasteful. And I spoke with a source at the SumTimes who presents a rather different account of events."

Gwenn's breath caught. The weight of his words pressed down on her, suffocating and damning. Damien had exposed the truth, the ugly truth that lay beneath her carefully crafted narrative.

Damien's voice, a low rumble that resonated through the room, shattered the wedding's facade of merriment. "My sources at the SumTimes informed me of a journalistic protocol. Before publishing any exposé, the journalist must reach out to both parties involved. Even a single interview, a glimpse of the other side, is their minimum standard before unleashing such... accusations."

He paused, a flicker of amusement dancing in his eyes. "The funny thing is, my conversations with the individual who submitted the news draft to you, along with the esteemed Dean of Lermille Hospital, painted a rather distinct picture. On the night you received this information, you didn't bother to contact a single person, least of all Cherise. Instead, you rushed to your keyboard, words spilling like a burst dam."

Gwenn's face twisted in shock.

Attending this wedding had been a terrible mistake. Armed with meticulous research and unwavering resolve, Damien had come to expose her.

He dissected her public image, revealing the shallowness beneath the carefully constructed facade.

Every attempt to divert the conversation was met with his gentle, yet relentless, return to the truth. Damien was a predator, and Gwenn, his prey, was ensnared in the trap of his logic.

Seeing the tension rise, Beckham furrowed his brow. He tried to steer the conversation away, but Priscilla shot him a steely glare. "Let the kids settle their squabbles!" she snapped.

Beckham, accustomed to deferring to the late Charisa, fell silent. Even with Charisa gone, facing her sister still triggered the old reflex. As Damien and Gwenn exchanged verbal jabs, whispers began to swirl around them.

"A foster child, always a foster child," someone sighed.

"Raised by the Tanners, yet still possesses such a rotten character. It makes you think, doesn't it? Better stick to your own blood, I say..."

The gossip buzzed like a swarm of flies. The murmurs grew louder. Gwenn, scoffing, turned to Cherise and Damien. "This is why you brought me up here, isn't it? Time for public humiliation?"

Moments ago, she had been content to stay hidden away and have nothing to do with them. Now, they were dragging her into the depths of their past. She was certain it was intentional.

Damien's smile, a flicker of amusement, softened the sharpness of his words. "For me, perhaps," he conceded. "But not for Cherise."

He reached out, a hint of tenderness in his touch as he playfully pinched Cherise's nose. "This silly one just wanted you to change into something more comfortable."