

## **Wedded Bride 1351**

### Chapter 1351 Missing

"Okay. Let's ask Dad to come with us next time," Sheryl promised as she held Clark's and Shirley's hands to lead them to the park gate. Suddenly, Clark stopped walking and shook Sheryl's hand.

"What's wrong, Clark?" she asked with concern.

"Mom, I want to go to the bathroom."

"Mom, me too," Shirley chimed in. With all that had been going on, Shirley seemed to have forgotten about even going to the bathroom before Clark brought it up.

As Sheryl wondered how she would manage to take them to separate bathrooms on her own, Leila seemed to understand what she was thinking and offered to help.

"Sheryl, I can take Clark to the bathroom while you take Shirley," she suggested. Though she spoke casually, she was thinking about the evil plan she was about to carry out. She would have someone kidnap Shirley on their way back from the bathroom and she was expecting to see that Shirley's missing would trigger some kind of breakdown in Sheryl.

Meanwhile, Sheryl was oblivious. Nodding at Leila, she turned to her son and said, "Clark, Aunt Leila will bring you to the bathroom. You two have to wait for me here after, okay?"

"Okay," he replied obediently. With that, he followed Leila as she led him to the bathroom. Meanwhile,

Shirley held onto her mother's hand as they followed behind.

Since the park bathrooms were a little far from the front gate, they had to walk past a small bamboo grove area. Because it was already evening, most of the visitors had already left, and there weren't many people around the bathroom area.

Everything was going well until Sheryl led her daughter out of the bathroom and began walking back to the front gate. Suddenly, a masked man struck her from behind, and she fell to the ground in an instant.

Scared out of her mind, Shirley screamed as hard as she could. The man covered her mouth immediately and picked her up to take her away.

Meanwhile, Melissa and Leila waited at the front gate for over ten minutes. Not seeing Sheryl or Shirley return, they were assured that their plan had been carried out successfully. Though the two were glad that everything went as planned, they knew they had to pretend to be worried because Clark was still with them.

The boy, who was genuinely concerned about his mother and sister, stared at the bathroom area in

worry, waiting for them to come into sight—he was so anxious that he kept trying to drag Melissa to the bathroom.

"Where are they? Let's go to the bathroom in case something's wrong," Leila suggested finally. Then they rushed to the bathroom, only to find Sheryl lying unconscious on the ground.

Clark went into a panic. Tears streamed down his face the moment he saw his mom on the ground.

Apprehension and fear filled his heavy heart.

Running to her as fast as he could, he shouted her name and tried to shake her awake.

"Mom! Mom! Wake up! What happened? Where's Shirley? Wake up, Mom!" he cried over and over.

Meanwhile, Melissa and Leila, who knew exactly what had happened, could only smile under their skin, but wore the appropriate worried look on their faces. Rushing to Sheryl, they helped her sit up beside Clark.

Slowly, Sheryl started coming back to herself as she heard Clark's voice. The stinging pain on the back of her head came rushing immediately. Still feeling woozy, she didn't realize what had just happened.

When she opened her eyes, Clark's face came into view, already bathed in tears. Scanning the area, she found Melissa staring at her with a grim look on her face.

Before Sheryl was able to get her head straight completely, Melissa began questioning her. "What happened? Why were you lying there? Where is Shirley? Did you lose her?"

Knowing it would break Sheryl's heart, Melissa spoke as if it was her fault Shirley was missing.

Though her head still hurt badly, Sheryl began to recall what happened as she heard her daughter's name.

"Shirley? Where is Shirley?" she murmured to herself. In an instant, she pushed herself to stand up and looked around in worry. She began to realize that Shirley was kidnapped. Still in a slight daze, she was ready to run around to see if she could find her daughter on her own.

However, Melissa stopped her before she could even make a step. "Sheryl Xia, don't tell me that you've lost Shirley! Where is she?" Melissa demanded harshly.

Sheryl's face growing more and more pallid. She began sobbing without control. 'Where is Shirley?!' she shouted to herself inwardly. Consumed by her worry, she seemed unable to breathe. As the fact that Shirley was missing sank in, Sheryl could feel the ache of her heart breaking.

At that moment, Sheryl nearly went mad as she recalled what had happened. Sadness overcame her

as the tears continued to stream down her face. Taking deep breaths, she tried to use her voice, but she couldn't utter a word. Finally, she pushed Melissa away and ran ahead, getting anyone's attention she could to find her daughter.

Reaching out to stop the first passer-by, she asked urgently, "Have you seen a little girl? About this tall in a blue dress."

It was obvious that she was nearing a complete breakdown as she animatedly described her daughter.

"Sorry, I...I don't think I've seen her."

Disappointed and frustrated, Sheryl went from stranger to stranger, asking if they had seen her daughter.

"No, I haven't seen her."

"No..."

Again and again, she received only negative answers. When she went to the park's management office to ask for help, the staff broadcasted Shirley's disappearance. Still, no one reported any sighting of her.

Though it had only been ten minutes since Sheryl woke up, it felt like a century had already passed.

For every second that went by, she could feel the burden of guilt for losing Shirley—the fear of her

daughter being gone forever began eating her up.

Immediately after the incident, Melissa called up Charles to give him the news.

"Charles, Shirley is missing! Sheryl lost her!" she shouted into the phone. The woman could hardly wait to blame everything on Sheryl.

"What are you talking about? Shirley is missing? Where are you now? I'm coming!" Charles asked a string of questions in worry. Upon hearing what had happened, Charles couldn't sit still. He was too afraid that something terrible had happened to his daughter.

"We're at the gate of the amusement park! How could Sheryl be so irresponsible? How could she lose her? Shirley is such a little girl. I'm so worried, and so sorry she has such a lousy mother," Melissa added in her best sobbing voice. It was clear that she was doing all she could to blame everything on Sheryl.

Hearing such accusations, Charles lost his patience. Instead of placing blame, he knew that their priority should be finding the kid.

Without bothering to respond to her, he hung up on Melissa and ran to get the first car he saw in the

garage to drive to the amusement park.

When he arrived, he ran to the gate the minute he got out of the car.

There were only a handful of people around the gate, so Charles found Melissa easily.

Before he was even close enough, Melissa began complaining once again. "Charles, you're here! What should we do? My poor Shirley...If only Sheryl had taken good care of her, she wouldn't have been missing!" she sobbed, grabbing Charles' arm as he approached.

"Mom, stop blaming Sheryl. We don't even know what happened yet. Our priority is to find her!" he replied urgently.

Annoyed at Melissa taking every opportunity to speak ill of Sheryl, Charles shrugged off her hands and ran up to Clark.

"Dad!" the boy cried as tears rolled down his cheeks. Unable to control himself, he threw himself into Charles' arms and burst into more helpless sobs.

Shirley's disappearance was too much for him. Because his mom was out looking for Shirley, he had to wait for her, feeling so alone and scared. The fear overwhelmed him to a point where he was at a loss what to do.

Seeing Charles was a great comfort for him—he believed that his father would be able to find Shirley

and have the family back together in no time. 'Shirley...

Come back to us!' he shouted deep in his heart.

"Don't worry, Clark. You're strong. You don't have to be scared. I'll find Shirley and bring her back!"

Charles said gently but firmly, assuring the boy.

With that, he picked Clark up and glanced around to look for his wife.

"Mom, where is Sher? I don't see her," he asked in worry. It was important for him to ask her directly

about what really had happened before Shirley went missing.

Chapter 1352 Where Are You, Shirley

"God knows where she is. She must be hiding from us after making such a huge mistake! What a

disgraceful woman!"

Melissa said in fury.

Standing next to Melissa, Clark couldn't believe that his grandmother would say such slanderous

things. His grandmother always put blame on his mother when things went out of hand. He couldn't

help but get annoyed because he knew that his mother had gone looking for his sister. She was not



hiding from them!

Furious as Melissa's words, Clark desperately grabbed Charles' sleeve and defended his mother by saying, "Dad, Grandma is wrong. Mom has gone to look for Shirley. Can we join her and find Shirley?"

It was rare for the little boy to look so vulnerable. Being tough was Clark's asset. Even as a kid, he barely cried and never gave up facing difficulties. But now, his eyes were filled with tears with too much concern.

The father felt pity and regret for Clark, so he held him in his arms. As his son asked, he went to look for Sheryl. Seeing this, Melissa and Leila followed him. No one uttered a word, except Clark, who was sobbing.

Although Charles looked calm, his mind was in chaos. Her little girl was Shirley, the charm of his life.

He couldn't imagine how his life would be if he would lose her.

Being the chine of the family, Charles remained silent and firm. If he panicked, the whole family would go out of control. Therefore, he must suppress his sentiments from bursting out and calm down.

After a few minutes of seeking, they saw Sheryl. With disheveled hair and clothes, tears kept rolling down from her cheek, she eagerly asked every passerby about her dear daughter.

At the sight of Sheryl's situation, Charles' heart was tore into pieces. Why did he leave her alone? She must have been hurting as much as he did. Shirley was also her daughter.

"Sher..." He couldn't utter more words.

Recognizing his husband's voice, Sheryl slowly turned her head at him, her tears welled up even more.

Like a lost kid, Sheryl ran into Charles' arms. She cried so hard that her voice echoed in the air, making every passerby look at them.

With his small arms, Clark hugged his parents. Containing himself to cry, he bit his lips and buried his face in his father's thigh. 'Crying would only make Mom even sadder, ' he silently thought.

"This is all my fault, Charles. Shirley got lost because I was not paying attention. I should have been more careful. It's because of me. What should I do? I don't know what I can do if we lose her. My poor daughter, where are you? Charles, we must find Shirley as soon as possible. Our daughter is waiting for us. It will become dangerous for her, so we need to find her now!"

Tears also welled up in Charles' eyes too. He tried his best to control his outburst to comfort Sheryl.

"Sher, please don't worry too much. There are CCTV cameras everywhere. I am sure we can find

Shirley soon. Please stop crying."

"Shirley is so afraid of the darkness, so she must be crying without us around her. She must be so scared right now as it's getting darker now."

Sheryl wept even more until she could barely catch her breath. She felt something squeezing her heart.

"It's no use crying over spilled milk. Why didn't you become careful at the very beginning? Your regret is worthless! Our Shirley won't be missing if you have been more cautious!"

Melissa wiped off tears from her cheek and scolded Sheryl, stirring up more trouble, and making the situation worse and messier.

"Mom, stop it!"

Charles yelled at his mother.

Melissa could see Charles' face being gloomy. She knew that he was mad, so she shut her mouth reluctantly.

Anxiety lingered Charles too, but he couldn't react as much as others did. Tapping Sheryl's back gently, he comforted her from his mother's harsh words. "Don't listen to Mom. It's the kidnapper's fault, not yours. And Shirley is going to be fine because I've called someone to find her. Then, she will be found

and be with us soon."

Enviousness lured Leila, so she walked to Sheryl and patted on her shoulder. Charles had no choice but to back off. Leila said softly, "Sheryl, please don't be sad. The most important thing now is to find Shirley. You need to stay strong and calm yourself down. You can't panic. Shirley is waiting for you."

However, Melissa murmured at Leila, "Leila, leave Sheryl alone. Why bother talking to that woman? All of this mess is because of her fault. Shame on her to act like that."

Charles was concerned about Shirley's safety, as he still had no update from the group he sent to look for her. On the verge of collapsing, Charles could not help but to keep his temper. And yet Melissa was so clueless that she couldn't see that Charles was annoyed, as she added fuel to the flames. He was going to lose his temper and sanity.

On the other hand, Sheryl immersed herself in sorrow. She could hear nobody. All she was thinking about now was Shirley. Just thinking about her daughter's situation saddened her. Her grief was immense and her tears were endless. Her eyes were swollen.

Leila saw Charles' face and she thought that he was mad at Melissa. So she stepped forward, trying to

calm Melissa down.

"Aunt Melissa, please don't say that. Charles is right. I am sure that Sheryl couldn't expect such things happen. It was an accident and it surely wasn't her fault. Right now, we need to unite, support each other, and try our best to find Shirley."

Leila comforting Melissa surprised Charles. It was even more unexpected for her to side with Sheryl than Melissa. He took a glance at her. He was exhausted now and had no mood to deal with Melissa's drama.

Leila noticed Charles' glance. She knew that her words worked, so she continued, "Aunt Melissa, I believe that Sheryl is the most worried person among us. She cares about Shirley so much. Everyone makes mistakes, right? There will be good news soon. I'm sure the people that Charles hired are competent. We shouldn't blame it all on Sheryl. No, we should stop blaming each other. Please stop pressuring Sheryl, Aunt Melissa," Leila said softly as if she was an angel sent from above.

Finally, Leila calmed Melissa down and persuaded her to stop blaming and scolding Sheryl. Her fake sympathy was conveyed and concealed successfully.

In the Dream Garden, they decided to take a rest.

It had been a tough day for everyone. But they still didn't hear any news about Shirley. The search team sent by Charles couldn't find any trace at all. What was worse, they were too afraid to call the police, worrying that it would piss the kidnappers off. Charles and Sheryl were the most terrified with this news, as they couldn't afford to lose Shirley.

Every second was slashes of torture to Sheryl. She grew lots of grey hair overnight. She looked extremely pale, like a walking corpse. She felt hopeless and anxious.

"Sher, please eat something. You haven't eaten even a single bite. You're going to be sick. I'm worried about you. Please stop torturing yourself. Shirley needs us, so we should be strong," Charles pleaded.

He lost his appetite seeing his wife like this. The only thing he could do now was keep persuading and comforting her.

Insomnia attacked Sheryl because of endless thoughts. She couldn't eat or sleep. She sat on Shirley's crib all day long while hugging her bear doll. She comforted herself to think that the bear was her Shirley, her dear little baby.

Chapter 1353 Sheryl's Nightmare

"Are you even doing your job? I paid you, but you've made no progress!" Charles shouted into the

phone. He began pacing back and forth anxiously in his study. Though Shirley was still missing, he managed to contain his worry and stay as calm as he could. After sending his men out to search for her, he tried to breathe and wait for good news. Getting no results at all, he reached his limit, and anger finally surfaced from deep down, directing it at the man on the other end of the line.

"Mr. Lu, I'm so sorry. We will try harder. No! We will get it done! Rest assured that once we get any lead, we'll report it to you at once," the man replied nervously after a moment of tense silence. Not knowing how to deal with Charles' sudden wrath, he was at a loss for words. Luckily, his experience allowed him to make a promise to Charles without too much of a stammer.

Though he was expecting the incident to be a typical missing person's case, to his dismay, no trace of Shirley could be found—it might not have been as simple as he initially thought. From the looks of it, he judged the incident to have been a meticulously planned kidnapping, squeaky clean and untraceable leads.

Working without sleep, the team entrusted with the case still couldn't find any significant results.

Everything about the kidnapping was still more of a blur than anything, and they had to deal with too many setbacks to finish the job.

Before he completely ran out of air, Charles hung up, his mind still in a complete mess—he urgently felt the need to rest. Taking a seat back in his chair, Charles shut his eyes to try and quiet his mind. Images of Shirley started to rush back into his mind out of control, making it impossible for him to rest.

As Shining Company's CEO with all the executive powers, he never failed to handle any hurdle his company had to face. But at the moment, he was no longer a CEO—he was a full-time father who feared for his child just as any other parent would. His daughter's absence left him feeling helpless and anxious.

At the very least, because of his experience as an excellent executive who always needed to behave rationally at work, he managed to keep himself from spiraling down into insanity. After a few moments, he settled himself down.

Without any concrete sign of Shirley's whereabouts, Sheryl couldn't settle down. She spent the entire night with Clark. When she saw Charles approach, her swollen red eyes welled up with tears in an instant, and she burst into a noiseless sob.

Gently stroking her head, Charles brought Sheryl tissue, piece after piece, remaining silent. After some



moments, Sheryl's crying ceased, and she raised her gaze up to Charles' with hopeful eyes.

"Charles, any leads?" she asked imploringly. Though he didn't want to disappoint her, Charles knew he couldn't just lie. Slowly and rather indecisively, Charles shook his head.

The motion made Sheryl's heart sink, and she could only turn her eyes away from him as they turned grim. Unconsciously, she put her hand on the bed sheet and began scratching deep lines into it with her fingertips.

With a wistful smile, she sighed, "Where is she?

Is she playing hide-and-seek with us? She must be! We'll find her soon, won't we?"

Looking at Sheryl in understanding, Charles gave her a faint smile before his face turned stern with determination.

"Yes, Sher. Shirley is out there waiting for us to find her. Before you do, you need to eat well and stay healthy. If you exhaust yourself to the point of getting sick, how will we ever find her together? Come, let me tuck you into bed."

A bit confused, Sheryl simply nodded her head. At that moment, she felt like a helpless child in front of her father.

When midnight struck, Sheryl was already lying in bed. Although her eyes were shut, they began to quiver, and her frown deepened before she opened her eyes wide.

Suddenly, she jerked herself upright. Her eyes turned glassy until they were full of tears, and her breathing turned into short gasps of air.

Shirley was still lost, and Sheryl was completely haunted by the fact. No matter how much she tried to close her eyes and empty her mind, nightmares struck her before she could even fall into a deep sleep.

In her dream, old memories from years ago rushed back into her mind. As it turned out, she had a vivid recollection of many details of such old moments. The thought that Leila once stole Clark from her began playing like a slideshow in her head. Suddenly, a thought came to her— 'Did Leila kidnap my child again?'

Suddenly, everything was clear in her mind. With that thought, she urgently looked to Charles and pulled him out of his dreams. When he opened his bleary eyes, he found Sheryl looking at him in alarm. "Listen!" she started. "Charles! I know who took our daughter. Let's go and catch them!"

Drowsiness disappeared without a trace when he heard Sheryl's words. Skeptically, he asked, "Who

did it?"

'Since they got back from the park, Sher had been drowning in sorrow. I haven't seen her step outside the house. How did she find out who the culprit was, then?

In her dreams?' he thought. Assuming that she just missed Shirley so much that she began believing in delusion, he didn't want to take her too seriously.

"It was Leila. Trust me. She has something to do with Shirley's disappearance. She was the one who suggested that the kids go to the amusement park where it was convenient to have Shirley go missing!

Doesn't that make you wonder? Haven't you noticed that Leila has never even tried to play with the kids? Her recent behavior doesn't make any sense. Let's take her down and get Shirley back!"

Sheryl's determined words took Charles by surprise. Still, he couldn't agree to her claim that Leila had anything to do with the kidnapping. He knew how Sheryl always held a grudge against her, and how

she always had reservations about having Leila stay in Dream Garden. It sounded like Sheryl was smearing Leila's name on purpose because the claim came out of nowhere. Since Leila stayed by their

side the whole time, he couldn't turn her into a suspect. There couldn't have even been a chance for her to set up the kidnapping.

In spite of Sheryl's excitement about catching the bad guy, Charles had no doubt about Leila. Instead, he could only begin to fear for Sheryl's mental state. In his eyes, she seemed to have almost completely fallen off the edge, her mind stuck in chaos.

"Sher, please stop thinking too much. Take a good rest, instead. We don't have any evidence to prove that she's responsible. We can't arrest her just because we're suspicious of her, right? You should sleep, now. Perhaps we'll get some good news once we wake up tomorrow," Charles reasoned in a deep, reassuring voice.

In the dim bedroom filled with the night breeze, his voice emitted comfort like it was casting some kind of spell on Sheryl.

However, Sheryl frantically shook her head, trying to convey to him her seriousness. In her mind, she thought, almost helplessly, 'Why must he always distrust me about these things? The idea didn't come out of nowhere! Shirley is my daughter. It's my duty to pull her out of danger. This is about our daughter's safety...and her life! I would never make a reckless decision without fully thinking it through!'

Charles' disbelief brought her to tears. Wiping her eyes, she begged, "Let's look for Shirley and catch

the kidnapper now, Charles. I can't sleep. I won't be able to until I find her—I only have nightmares about her suffering and crying, crying out for me, asking how we could leave her alone in such a place..."

Grabbing onto his clothes, she gave him an alarmed look, unable to stop her sobs. "Did you know? In the dream, I saw our dear Shirley getting tortured by evil men. They abused her, beat her, and deprived her of food. She was so scared and couldn't stop crying. I can't bear to wait! I have to get her back!"

As she cried and yelled, Sheryl tried to get out of bed. With her unruly hair and hysteric demeanor, she seemed to have fully collapsed into madness.

Stunned by her behavior, Charles acted quickly and grabbed her by the hand. "Sher, cool down! I know how much you worry about Sheryl because so do I! But we have to act rationally. There's an investigation going on. We must be patient. We can't do anything rash, which would only mess things up. It won't do us any good!"

Leaning in close to her, Charles cupped her face in his hands, gazing into her eyes fiercely as he patiently waited for her to calm down.

But the more he tried, the more stubborn she became. She struggled to pull away from him as her eyes

were filled with hatred for Leila. At that moment, all she wanted to do was find the woman and demand that she hand over her daughter.

Even then, she couldn't figure out why Leila wanted to cause her life so much trouble—it certainly wasn't the first time that Leila had laid her hands on Sheryl's kids. The woman's drive to take her down freaked her out. Still, she could only wish the best for her daughter as she prayed for Leila's mercy. If she was willing to release Shirley upon Sheryl's request, she was ready to even kneel before Leila. So long as Leila promised not to bring harm to her daughter, Sheryl was ready to do anything.

In desperation, Sheryl pulled away from Charles' grip. Only one thought filled her mind—'I will find Leila and get Shirley back.' At that point, no one could stop her, not even her husband.

#### Chapter 1354 The Kidnapping

Noticing that Sheryl was pushing him away harder and was struggling out of his arms, Charles held her tighter to comfort her.

"Sher, Shirley will be fine, so don't worry about it. You shouldn't sulk here by yourself. Listen to me.

Take a deep breath to calm down. We can't suspect anyone if we don't have any convincing evidence. I

know you worry about Shirley, and I do too. I have already sent my fellows to find her. Trust me, I will

press them harder to find more clues."

"Charles, let me go! Shirley is waiting for me. I need to find our daughter. She is my life. What about you? Do you really love her?" Sheryl cried aloud, biting on Charles' arm to free herself. She was on the verge of breaking down. Tears streamed down her cheeks and dropped on his arms. Charles could even feel the heat of each teardrop.

Although he was feeling a sharp pain on his arm, Charles still held Sheryl tightly in his arms. He couldn't imagine what she would do if he let her go. Finding it out might not be the best idea.

Pushing Sheryl's head away with his other hand, Charles continued to persuade her. "Sher, don't be silly. You need to calm down so we can come up with a plan."

Obviously, Sheryl didn't hear what Charles had said. The only thing she wanted to do was rush out of the door to find Shirley.

Despite her complaining eyes, Charles still tried to stop her with all his strength. However, Sheryl's childish behavior finally worn out his patience. Out of impulse, he slapped Sheryl heavily across her face.

The contact made a very clear smacking sound. It was so hard that Sheryl started to question why

Charles dared to hurt her. Her eyes were red, full of hatred and pain.

'This is the time I need him the most, but look at what he has done to me! He slapped me for Leila.' It was difficult for Sheryl to believe that Charles would hurt her for another woman. 'The only thing he wants to do is protect Leila. Shirley and I mean nothing to him, ' Sheryl thought. More than her throbbing cheek, the pain inside her heart made her speechless.

Charles was at a loss. He had never expected he would hit his lover one day.

"Sher, I'm sorry. I..." Charles apologized tensely. He intended to explain, but words failed him. Sheryl, who desperately closed her eyes, didn't want to listen to him anymore.

Sheryl felt dead inside. She knew she had no chance to leave this room because Charles would never let her go. So she finally gave up, walked towards the bed and intended to forget the pain by sleeping.

Charles followed her and sat on the side of the bed. Looking at Sheryl with concern, he said, "Sher, I'm really sorry. I truly didn't mean it. It was my fault. Please, forgive me."

But no matter what he said, Sheryl didn't respond to him anymore. She burrowed her face into a pillow to shut him out.



The day was long, but who would've thought the night would be longer.

A sudden ring of the phone broke the dead silence around midnight. Charles, who kept awake all the time, found it was a stranger calling. He had a strong feeling that the call was about Shirley.

Without any hesitation, Charles picked up the phone. "Hello. Who are you?"

A sullen voice rang into Charles' ears. "Mr. Lu, you don't need to know who I am. The only thing you need to know is that I have your precious daughter. Are you afraid now?"

"What have you done to Shirley? Where are you now?" Charles asked the mystery caller urgently.

Sheryl didn't fall asleep at all, and she immediately got up as soon as she heard her daughter's name.

She ran over to Charles and snatched the phone from his hand.

"Where is Shirley? Give my Shirley back to me!" Sheryl screamed out towards the mystery man.

However, a few seconds after, she continued in a calm voice, completely different from her initial reaction.

"What do you want in exchange for my daughter's freedom? Tell me what you want. I will give you anything that you want, as long as you give my daughter back."

"Mrs. Lu, you are a clever woman. What I want is simple. I believe it will be easy for you to fulfill my

needs." As a result of voice changer, the voice of the kidnapper sounded cold like metal, lacking any emotions.

Sheryl knew Charles was born for negotiations, so she decided to forgive him for a while. She handed the phone back to him and looked at him with trusting eyes. Her thick eyelashes blinked at him like butterfly wings.

Charles accepted the phone, and held Sheryl's hand as he began to talk.

"How can I be sure that you have my daughter? What if you are lying to me? You are not the only one who knows my daughter is missing. I can't trust you unless you show me my daughter through video."

Looking into each other's eyes nervously, Charles and Sheryl carefully listened to the sound coming from the phone.

After quite a while of silence, the mystery man looked at Shirley with hesitation. He was not sure if he should take a video for Charles because all his previous efforts would be useless once Charles recognized where he was.

After looking around the entire room, he finally set his heart at ease. 'He can't recognize where we are.

It's just a normal concrete room, ' he thought. But to ensure a 100% success, he refused to open the phone video.

"So you don't believe me?" The kidnapper walked towards Shirley and roughly tore off the tape that covered her mouth. Shirley was awakened by the sudden pain. Looking into the stranger's eyes, she was so scared that she could not control her tears.

As Shirley was about to cry out, the kidnapper patted her face and warned her with a serious look,

"Don't cry."

The man intimidated Shirley, and she could only hold back her tears as he commanded. Her eyes were now full of tears, like an overflowing lake. She was so afraid and wondered why she was there. "Where is my mom and dad?" she finally blurted between sobs. She missed them so much.

"Is that Shirley? Please don't hurt her! We will give you whatever you want!" Sheryl begged the man loudly when she heard Shirley's voice. Her heart and Charles' both thumped harder with mixed emotions.

"Mr. and Mrs. Lu, I'm sorry I can't show you your daughter, but you can hear her, right? I believe it will dispel your doubts. Now we can discuss what I need.

Come on, say something." The kidnapper moved the phone closer to Shirley's mouth.

Unaware that her parents were listening, Shirley looked at the phone with confusion. She wasn't sure what the kidnapper exactly wanted from her.

"Can't you hear me?" the kidnapper shouted at Shirley impatiently.

Chapter 1355 A Little Request

"Don't yell. Don't yell at the kid. We believe you." The kidnapper's booming voice scared Sheryl. She worried that he might truly do something to hurt Shirley, so she said that anxiously, in an attempt to calm him down.

"Okay, I will stop yelling at her," the kidnapper replied. He then smiled viciously at Shirley, like a demon.

He stared at her like a lion staring at his prey, which made Shirley shiver.

"Your parents are listening from the other end of the line. Don't you want to say hi to them? Ah, what do

they call you? Shirley, is that right?" the kidnapper whispered in Shirley's ear, scaring her.

After Shirley knew that her parents could hear her, her fear finally burst out. Tears fell down her cheeks endlessly.

"Mommy, Daddy, please come and save me. I am so scared! It's so dark here and there is a..." The

kidnapper didn't let Shirley finish. "Enough! Shut the fuck up!" he interrupted.

When Charles and Sheryl heard Shirley's familiar sweet voice, their eyes welled up immediately.

"Don't worry, Shirley. We are coming to save you." Charles sobbed.

Sheryl sighed in relief when she heard Shirley. At least, her daughter was still alive. Sheryl lost all her strength and leaned on Charles' shoulder. She bit his clothes and dared not to make any sound, afraid that she would piss the kidnapper off.

"So, Mr. and Mrs. Lu, do you believe me now? Your dear little princess is with me," the kidnapper said, a broader smile on his face.

"We believe you. Please don't hurt our kid. No matter what you ask for, we will meet your requirements.

We promise we will do whatever you ask us to do," Charles said anxiously. His back was now soaked in sweat. It wasn't a business negotiation. He could always start over if he lost a business negotiation.

But this was different. He couldn't afford to lose Shirley. The stakes were too high.

If he lost in this negotiation, he might lose his dear baby forever. He would live in regret and sadness for the rest of his life. He couldn't forgive himself if he made such a mistake.

"Well then, I appreciate your frankness, Mr. Lu. Listen, you need to pay ten million ransom the day after tomorrow. I will tell you the place later. Of course, do not call the cops. If you follow my instructions, I promise you that I will give Shirley back safe and sound. However, if you break your promise and call the cops, then be ready to say goodbye to your daughter forever. I swear, you will receive a dead body instead."

"I promise that we won't call the police, as long as you don't hurt our daughter. Otherwise, I swear to God, I will hunt you down the four corners of the earth and make you pay for what you have done,"

Charles responded in a determined tone, not sounding as threatened at all.

"Sure, if you listen to me, I will keep my end of the bargain."

The kidnapper glanced at Shirley and smiled silently. Looking around, he realized how dusty the place was.

"Mr. Lu, it's settled then. Please keep your word. Or I can assure you that you will never see your daughter again and regret it for the rest of your life. I will text you the place later. Bring the money and meet me there at ten in the evening the day after tomorrow. I will return your daughter to you as soon as I get my money."

"Okay, I promise. Can you let me talk to Shirley for a few minutes, please?" Charles asked anxiously

before the kidnapper could hang up. He sounded nervous and worried, but it was worth a shot.

The kidnapper was thrilled upon hearing Charles' voice, as even an elite businessman like Charles had

to beg on him. What a great satisfaction! He felt all powerful.

But he hadn't expected that things would go so smoothly today. He didn't know that this little girl was so

priceless. Earlier today, he was only thinking about doing Leila a favor and returning the kid later

without anyone noticing. But with how things were going, he decided to change his mind.

It was easy money. Why would he give it up?

Thinking about the ten million ransom, the kidnapper got very excited. He had never seen so much

money in his life. He even started to plan how he would be spending his money. With such amount, he

could live lavishly in the world of wine and women. More importantly, he could finally prove himself to

those who looked down on him.

So when Charles asked him, he immediately agreed his little request.

"Sure, a few words won't hurt. Why not?" He gave the phone to Shirley.

Shirley blinked, as if she couldn't believe the bad man standing in front of her. But she heard her parents on the other end of the line, her attention focused on the phone.

"Shirley, honey," Charles started. "Daddy and Mommy will be there to pick you up the day after tomorrow. Before that day, please don't be scared, okay? And please stop crying. Remember we are with you all the time. When you come home, Daddy and Mommy will give you a big surprise, okay?"

Charles tried his best to comfort his daughter. He didn't want Shirley to be traumatized. He only wanted her to be happy forever. She was so young, her little angel. He would try his best to keep all the darkness and evil in the world away from her.

"Okay. I will wait for Daddy and Mommy to come and pick me up. I miss all of you. I miss Clark too."

Shirley held back her tears and sobbed, trying her best to be strong.

Sheryl's heart broke into pieces when she heard Shirley's cry. Shirley had always been the optimistic one. Her smile was like a sunflower brightening their days. She kept bringing happiness to people around her. She had never heard her cry this hard.

How Sheryl wished she was the one who got kidnapped. She wanted to take the bullet for her daughter. She didn't want Shirley to go through all this.



But just as Sheryl was about to say something to Shirley, the kidnapper hung up the phone abruptly.

Sheryl was startled and shocked. She stood frozen and speechless.

Chapter 1356 Did You Do It

Charles wrapped his arms around Sheryl. They stood in the darkness for a long time and weren't in the

mood to sleep. They wished the bright stars in the sky could banish the gloom from Shirley's mind and

make her feel less afraid.

"Sher, did you hear? Shirley will come back soon. Don't worry. You should try and get some sleep."

Charles pecked Sheryl on the cheek and reassured her gently.

"What about you?" Sheryl asked.

"I'll get David to check that telephone number. Maybe we can find some clue from it," Charles

answered.

"Well, tell me if you find anything out," Sheryl said anxiously.

The next second, she couldn't help blurting out what she had been holding back. "Charles, do you

believe me? I'm sure Leila is the person behind the kidnapping. At the thought of Shirley suffering at

the hands of the kidnapper, my heart is broken. Leila must know where Shirley is. Why don't we ask

her the whereabouts of Shirley tomorrow?"

Sheryl's eyes lit up with hope. However, Charles didn't answer her question. He asked her to go to bed and get some rest, then went to the study.

Charles was worried, and he didn't notice that it was already in the early hours of the morning. He called David from the study.

The phone rang for a while before David picked it up. David wasn't expecting a call so late, so he assumed that it must be a prank call and didn't want to answer. However, as his cell phone kept on ringing, he picked it up and looked sleepily at the screen. When he found it was Charles who was calling, he was completely sober.

"Hello, Mr. Lu!" He was aware that Charles' daughter was missing. 'Why did Mr. Lu call me so late?

Does he want me to do something for him?' he wondered.

"The kidnapper called just now. I want you to run a check on this number and let me know as soon as you get any clue," Charles ordered.

"Okay." David immediately began to track the cell phone number after hanging up.

Five minutes later, he called back.

"Mr. Lu, the signal disappeared when I tracked the phone number, so I failed to lock its user's location,"

he reported.

Charles knew that the kidnapper would have made some preparations, but when he heard the news

from David, his heart sank.

"I understand. You can go to sleep," Charles said in a low voice that sounded like a long sigh in the

darkness.

He walked out onto the balcony and sat alone in the cold darkness for a long time, staring into oblivion.

He seemed to have gradually calmed down from the chaos of thoughts that were running through his

mind.

He thought of what Sheryl had said. She wasn't a malevolent person. Maybe what she had said was

reasonable.

He looked down and sighed, lost in thought.

The next morning, Sheryl woke up early and ran straight into Leila's room with a pale face. Charles was

awakened by the sound of a slamming door and realized what was going on.

When Leila heard someone knocking at her door, she was a little confused.

The moment she opened the door and saw Sheryl, her heart skipped a beat. 'Did Sheryl discover my secret? No, that's impossible! From the beginning, I had been meticulous. I haven't given her any signs that I know anything about the kidnapping so that Sheryl wouldn't have picked any holes.'

Thinking about this, she calmed down and immediately changed her expression from surprise to confusion. She looked at Sheryl and asked, "Sheryl, what happened? Have you found Shirley?" Leila looked so worried as if she really cared about Shirley.

Sheryl glared at Leila as if she wanted to tear her apart. Under her gaze, Leila was a little scared.

"Sheryl, are you okay? Are you having trouble sleeping because you're worried about Shirley? Try to relax. Don't worry too much. Everything will be all right." Leila persuaded Sheryl, pretending to be kind to her.

Sheryl didn't shift her eyes from Leila and suddenly roared, "Did you do it? Give Shirley back to me!"

Then she waved her hands and rushed toward Leila.

Leila was taken aback. She quickly moved aside to dodge the attack and then explained, "I don't know what you're talking about! I don't know where Shirley is at all. There must be some misunderstanding

between us, Sheryl."

Sheryl remembered how much Shirley had cried the night before because she was so scared of the dark. It tortured Sheryl when she thought of how her daughter must be suffering alone in the hands of the kidnapper. It made her sick to the stomach, and she couldn't stop worrying about it.

Her motherly instincts had kicked in, and a vicious determination flashed in her eyes. She would do anything to protect her daughter. Sheryl could put up with Leila's bullying, but if Leila dared lay one finger on Shirley, she would make Leila regret it.

While Leila was desperately trying to dodge Sheryl, Charles had walked in just when Sheryl was about to grab her. Leila quickly cowered behind Charles pretending to be surprised and scared.

"Sheryl, what's wrong with you? I'm trying to comfort you out of concern. Why are you trying to hurt me?" Leila peered from behind Charles and asked angrily.

Sheryl wanted to get to Leila and bumped into Charles while trying to grab at her again. However,

Charles stopped her by holding her in his arms so she couldn't reach Leila at all.

Charles looked at Sheryl with a complicated expression.

"Sheryl, Stop! Are you crazy? Don't make matters worse! I'm hurting just as much as you are. Can you please just calm down?" Charles had never been so harsh toward Sheryl before, and Leila secretly began to laugh inside. She didn't need to defend herself anymore because it seemed that in Charles' opinion, everything Sheryl was doing was unreasonable.

'I should use this situation to my advantage and show Charles what a generous and understanding woman I am, ' she thought. Leila was sure that it wasn't going to be long before Charles broke up with Sheryl and she didn't want to miss this golden opportunity.

Charles' words had cut Sheryl like a knife. It seemed like he was going against her during this most difficult time in her life. Tears streamed down her cheeks, and she was filled with so much heartache and pain that she nearly collapsed.

'It hurts so badly. Why does it hurt so much?' she wondered. In tears, she looked at her beloved Charles through bleary eyes and felt like she was losing him as well.

At the sight of the hurt and disappointment in Sheryl's eyes, Charles' heart broke. He wanted to hold her in his arms and comfort her. He wished that he had never uttered those words.

"I..." Charles was about to explain, but in the end, he swallowed his words and turned his head, calling

Nancy to come.

Chapter 1357 So Pathetic

"Nancy, can you please take Sheryl to her bedroom? I don't think it's a good idea to let her stay here.

She's not in her sound mind so she needs some rest," Charles said impatiently.

Sheryl was still lost in her own world full of shock and distress. Her expression showed absolute indifference to the surroundings. When Nancy walked towards her and held her arm, she exuded a faceless look. She was more like a human puppet without a soul.

When Nancy touched Sheryl's hand, she felt a chilling sensation, like a jolt of electric current, flowed from her body to hers. Nancy felt sorry as well as astounded for her physical temperature. She tightened her grip on Sheryl's hand, trying to give her as much warmth as possible. 'Apart from her cold flesh, her heart may be frozen too. This is not good. She needs help now more than ever!' Nancy thought.

"Sheryl, be at ease! Shirley is a good girl. God always favors and blesses good girls. Bad things will never find their ways to harm her! She will be kept away from danger. You should stop thinking of the worst scenario. Mr. Lu was too anxious just like you but he hadn't put his utterance into second

thoughts. You don't have to be too serious about what he has said. Look at you, you haven't eaten anything for the past two days! Let me make you something to eat, okay?" Nancy offered. She managed to look optimistic. But her heart was aching to see her hostess so miserable. Sheryl's pale face and her tottering figure almost brought Nancy to tears.

Still, Sheryl remained silent. When Nancy brought her into her bedroom, her face showed no familiarity.

It was as if she was a stranger in her own room. Nancy stopped walking ahead when she reached the side of the bed, but Sheryl didn't. She continued to walk at her original pace and almost bumped into the bed. Afraid that Sheryl might trip, Nancy wasted no time to run to her and hold her arm.

She felt anxious about Sheryl's current condition. In an attempt to pull Sheryl off her daze, Nancy frantically shook her arm, as she called out her name, "Sheryl?" Nancy appeared to be in a complete mess. A wave of fear rose up over her heart. Nancy thought, 'Sheryl is completely unwell! It makes me more worried about her. Even if Shirley comes back, I don't think she might be able to survive to see her.'

To her delight, Sheryl snapped out of her daze. But her face was still covered with distress. Acting absent-mindedly, she forced a faint smile. Nancy could not catch a hint of happiness from her smile,



instead, she only detected a heavy blue cast on her mind.

"I am fine, Nancy. You don't have to worry about me. I know Shirley will be okay. I am just as convinced as you of that. My dear Shirley is a good girl, and God will keep her safe!" Sheryl prayed. With her hollow look, Nancy was actually confused whether Sheryl was praying or talking to her.

With a beam, Nancy echoed, "Sure, God must bless our Shirley!" She stayed with Sheryl in the bedroom. Seeing her in such a terrible state, Nancy couldn't bear to leave her alone. However, drowned in sorrow, Sheryl was not in the mood to share her feelings with Nancy. She was eager to vent her sadness by crying out. She didn't want Nancy to be affected by her negative mood.

With an imploring look, she said, "Nancy, please leave me alone. You have your own business to take care of. Don't waste your time on me." Sheryl tried her best to finish her sentence in a calm voice, as she was on the verge of tears. And she didn't want to cry in front of Nancy.

Obedying Sheryl's request, Nancy gave her one last look before she left. As soon as the door shut closed, Sheryl lost all control and burst into tears.

Meanwhile, Charles was standing behind Leila at the corridor.

"Leila, I am so sorry. I want to apologize about Sheryl's violent reaction earlier. It must have freaked you out. I hope you understand that she is a little out of her mind since Shirley has been missing. She is really not herself lately." Charles made sincere apologies, on behalf of his wife.

Leila felt flattered. She was too shocked to keep her composure and her sanity. Clearly, Charles' sudden change of attitude took her off-guard. Before, Charles had always shown her indifference, complete neglect and even disdain. In a heartbeat, she felt her heart quickened, as if it was placed in boiling water.

In quick response, she nodded her head repeatedly. "I understand. I know she doesn't mean it. She is just too worried about Shirley. And I can't blame her." Leila gave him a sincere reply, yet she didn't turn her back to face Charles.

"Thanks for your understanding. I just hope Sheryl can see things as clearly as you do. Her caprice is really putting me in trouble lately," Charles sighed, with a wistful expression. His words were full of discontentment about his wife.

Leila couldn't be more delighted. She was aware that she finally succeeded to win Charles' attention.

She even left a favorable impression on him. She failed to keep her joy to herself, as her lips curled into

a contented smile.

In her mind, she sneered, 'Poor Sheryl, don't blame your suffering on me. It's all your fault! After so much effort, Charles finally talked to me, and even gave me a compliment. I am confident that he will change his mood towards me from now on. And I can't feel happier about that!'

At noon, lunchtime was supposed to be prepared. After sorting up the kitchen tools, Nancy was in a good mood as she was ready to take a rest. Yet, she didn't catch sight of Sheryl walking past the lunch table. The old servant frowned at the thought of Sheryl. 'Did she not eat again? How many days has she been like this? How can her body bear that? I have to do something.'

Nancy quietly went upstairs and stopped in front of the door into Sheryl's bedroom. She carefully knocked and quickly put her ear against the door to hear what Sheryl was doing inside. However, she could hear no sound. There was an ominous silence from the room that made Nancy panic. In a flash, Nancy snapped herself out of hesitation and swung the door open with all her might.

Standing from the doorway, Nancy directly pointed her eyesight to the bed. To her relief, she found Sheryl sleeping soundly. Nancy sighed in relief. She was about to leave when she caught a glance of

Sheryl's face which shocked her even more.

Sheryl's cheeks exuded no trace of red glow. Her lips looked white and pale. At the corner of her mouth, scaly pieces of the skin curled up obviously. Below her two eyes, there seemed to be livid bruises. Feeling worried, Nancy rushed over to her bedside, and called Sheryl out by her pet name as she frantically shook her, trying to wake her up.

"Sher! Sher! Are you okay?" Nancy's voice grew louder and louder. Out of breath, she kept her eyes on Sheryl. Slowly, Sheryl finally opened her eyes. She blinked blankly, and then her eyes stayed half-closed. Confusion could be read from her hollow look. Sheryl didn't even have a clue where she was. A few moments later, the weak girl came back to her senses, wearing the same curious look.

"What's wrong, Nancy?" she asked. She wasn't sure why Nancy looked so anxious and worried.

Seeing Sheryl still had the energy to ask her, Nancy was relieved. She didn't respond. Instead, she put her palm over Sheryl's forehead and checked her temperature. Soon, Nancy's face hardened.

"You ignorant girl! Don't you even feel it. You are burning with fever! I know you are too tired to care about anything except Shirley. But you still should keep an eye on your own health! How can you just ignore your body condition? Now, tell me when you get so ill?" Nancy demanded.

"Is that so? Then that explains why I feel so dizzy lately," Sheryl said bluntly, as she gave Nancy a faint smile. It appeared that she didn't find it a big deal, even after she learned she got a fever. Sheryl's expression even appeared happy and optimistic.

Nancy sighed as she shook her head, and then hurriedly fetched a thermometer with a box of antipyretic pills from the drawer. Then she quickly brought a cup of hot water to Sheryl.

"Sheryl, hurry up! Lift your arm so I can put this thermometer on your armpit. Let me check how bad your fever is," Nancy said patiently. Even if it was obvious Sheryl got a fever, she had to accurately measure her temperature.

"Look at you! You are no longer a kid! But you're not acting very much like an adult this way too!"

Nancy whined, as she was carefully dealing with Sheryl's fever. Sheryl couldn't help but be moved.

Tears suddenly welled up in her eyes.

Sheryl entrusted herself to Nancy. She frowned while observing Nancy get all sweaty while busy helping her. In a flash, an image of illusion dawned upon her. She mistook Nancy for her very own mother. At that moment, Sheryl detected motherhood was everywhere around Nancy's figure,

especially her kind face and her warm palm. Nancy made Sheryl feel the warmth of motherhood, which she never had a chance to feel when she was a child.

In a daze, Sheryl was lost in deep thoughts. She began a reverie. 'If Nancy is my mother, I will feel more than happy.' In her old memories, her so-called mother never cared about her. She was left a vague notion about maternal love and the like.

Sheryl was physically abused and mentally insulted by that woman. She only showed Sheryl the most wicked face and words. Not only did that that woman not love her as a daughter, on the contrary, she was averse to her. Sheryl thought it was so pathetic!

#### Chapter 1358 Charles' Cold Attitude

Reminiscing the memories she had when Sheryl was a little kid, she always admired other kids who were cradled and caressed by their mothers. Even though she was too young to understand many things, she knew that those kids were lucky to be so loved and protected. In her desire not to trigger self-pity, she would pretend as if she didn't care. While, in fact, deep inside her, she would always hide in a corner and stare at pictures of mothers and kids from books and magazines, and envied them. Sometimes when she saw them in public, she even wanted to get close to them and steal a little bit of love from these kids.

All her life while growing up she had several questions in mind like, why did her mother dislike her and abandon her? Was it because she was not good enough? She couldn't help thinking about it. However, as time healed everything, she learned to embrace the truth and just move on with her life leaving those questions unanswered.

Now, reminiscing all these memories, she remembered how she wanted to be loved and protected like other kids! How she wanted her mother to return to her! Thus, she worked hard and tried to achieve everything perfectly on her own since she was young, hoping to bring her mother back.

However, when she grew up a little bit, she realized that no matter what she would do, her mother would never take notice of her. Though that fact was frustrating, she learned to accept it gradually, like she always did while growing up. To beat the loneliness and envy, she just comforted herself by being grateful to her grandma who loved her more than anything, which was enough for her. As time went by, she abandoned the idea of winning her mother's love and lived happily with her grandma. During those times, she felt quite contented even without her mother.

However, from that moment on, she had made a decision, a promise to herself that, if she would have

kids in the future, she would give them all the love she had and even protect them with her own life, to make up for her loss during her childhood. She didn't want her kids to suffer the same fate she had endured, for she knew how painful and desolate it felt to be abandoned by your own parents.

However, to her despair, by the way things turned out now, it appeared that she couldn't even protect her babies! Worst was, now she had Shirley missing, and she had no idea where she was or whether she was in a good condition or not. Thinking about these, she realized that she wasn't even a qualified mother like her own mother had been. Loads of thoughts were crossing her minds, and Sheryl closed her eyes miserably.

"Sher, get up and take some pills. These will help you relax," Nancy said softly. All of a sudden, she was pulled back to reality by Nancy's words. Sheryl opened her eyes and saw Nancy blowing cold the hot water in the cup while handing her some pills on the other hand. She couldn't help but feel warmed and touched by Nancy's gesture of kindness.

Determined to stay with her in case she needed her, Nancy didn't notice Sheryl's absent-mindedness. She came over to Sheryl, helped her sit up, and put a pillow under her back to let her lean on the headboard. With her position right now, Sheryl felt much more comfortable. However, Nancy was



bothered that her skin felt warm as she held on her while helping her to get up. Instinctively, she touched the palm of her hands to her forehead to check if she was having a fever. Walking over to the medicine cabinet, Nancy took out a thermometer to take her temperature.

"Oh my goodness, its 38.5 degrees!" Seeing that the temperature reading was high, Nancy screamed as she held on the thermometer. Sheryl had a severe fever. Nancy panicked and told Sheryl to take the pills immediately. Then she rushed out to call Charles over the phone to let him know about Sheryl's condition.

The phone rang for a long time, but nobody answered. After a few tries, Nancy still got no answer, but when Nancy almost gave up, Charles picked up the phone.

"Mr. Lu, it's urgent! Sheryl is seriously sick and has a high fever. Are you available to go home and accompany her?" By heart, Nancy knew that Sheryl got sick because of Shirley's disappearance and Charles' attitude to her. She hoped that Charles could go home to be with Sheryl, which could possibly relieve Sheryl's pain at least to some extent.

Even though Charles had turned the cold shoulder on Sheryl recently, Nancy knew how much they

loved each other as reflected by the passionate way they lived their daily life. Not in her wildest imaginations would she think that Charles would leave Sheryl alone like that after knowing her condition.

On the other end of the line, Charles heard Nancy's words as well as the noise of the mild breeze.

'Maybe she is on the balcony now when she makes the call, ' Charles thought randomly.

Restraining himself, however, he couldn't give her a positive answer, because he knew that he must be tough and shouldn't be softened this time. He must show Sheryl that he could stand not talking to her and lending a deaf ear to her.

Though honestly, Charles' heart skipped a beat as he heard from Nancy that Sheryl was sick. The pain started from his heart and then spread across his limbs as he was soberly worried sick. He was tortured by his love and affection towards Sheryl.

While still holding the phone to his ear, Charles creased his eyebrows and closed his eyes. He bit his lower lip and kept silent. After a while, he gathered enough strength and made the difficult decision to refuse Nancy. He heard his emotionless words echo in the room as he spoke, and the voice was so strange that he could barely recognize that it was his own voice.

"Nancy, I have to deal with my business now, so I can't go home. You just call the family doctor and send for him to check Sheryl up. Sorry but I have to go now." Charles ended the call right away. He was afraid that if he continued speaking to Nancy over the phone, he would expose his real emotions and betray his own front.

However, Charles wasn't able to deal with anything now knowing that Sheryl needed him right now and that he ought to be home with her. Subsequently, he looked at the pile of papers on his desk, lost his head and his heart was occupied by Sheryl's pale face. He was so worried about her that he almost went crazy. Walking back and forth, he couldn't resist the urge to rush home to her.

However, he told himself repeatedly that he must be patient now. The great plan that he had required his forbearance. After about half an hour of torment, he finally managed to focus on his business and put himself at ease.

Meanwhile, at the mansion, Nancy was utterly shocked by Charles' cold remarks. She felt terribly sorry for Sheryl. She knew that aside from the physical pain she was suffering now, the much greater pain was to be left alone by someone whom she trusted the most. Worst was he committed to be with her in

sickness or in health, yet now he was nowhere near.

Living with them for a long time, Nancy had witnessed how Sheryl had been a survivor in life. She knew

clearly how Sheryl suffered for this family. She almost sacrificed her dignity. However, Melissa kept

picking on her. Nancy had thought that Sheryl's sacrifice was worthwhile since Charles loved her so

much. But now it turned out that his love was as unpredictable as a breeze of wind. It just disappeared

all of a sudden. Poor Sheryl! She was failed by this family and her own husband. She didn't deserve it.

Thinking about all these, Nancy felt angry and sad for the injustice that Sheryl suffered. But what else

could she do? Thus, Nancy couldn't help but sigh helplessly. Walking back to Sheryl's room, Nancy

didn't want to hurt Sheryl even more, thus she decided to keep the call a secret.

Engulfing a heap of air, she reminded herself to calm down and pretended as if nothing had happened.

Rummaging through the contact numbers on her phone this time, Nancy called the family doctor and

set up an appointment for checking Sheryl up.

When Nancy returned to Sheryl's bedroom, she had fallen asleep in bed. Nancy was so concerned

about her, and she used a wet cotton swab to moisten Sheryl's dry lips. Though lying calmly and

peacefully, Sheryl still looked ill even at her deep slumber. Her eyebrows were tightly creased and a

frown was drawn on her face. Her hands were clutched to fists and her eyelashes trembled from time to time as if she was in a nightmare.

Looking at her, Nancy could tell that Sheryl was indeed suffering a lot. She wanted to open her eyes, but she was too weak to even lift her eyelids. Even though she was conscious and could hear everything around her, she couldn't move a single part of her body nor even lift a finger. Her body was so numb that it felt like something weighing up to a thousand pounds was pressed against her, making it difficult for her to breath. Fatigue, pain, and desolation swept her all over.

In the darkness of the night, though her eyes were shut closed, she heard light footsteps coming from afar. It was getting closer and closer, like the call of Death. She struggled to open her eyes, but she couldn't do so nor even make a sound. Desperation rose in her mind, then finally she decided to give up and accept whatever was to come to her. In her struggle, she lost her consciousness and was swallowed by darkness.

The family doctor arrived about half an hour later. One minute before Nancy called him, he received a call from Charles requesting him to attend to Sheryl immediately.

On the phone, Charles sounded alarmed and worried as he asked him to go to Dream Garden

immediately because Sheryl got sick. Charles told him briefly that Sheryl had a fever, and that he must

set out as soon as possible. He could tell that Charles was deeply concerned about his wife, for his

voice was even trembling.

Chapter 1359 Things Went Smoothly

Then Ricky received a phone call from Nancy. He didn't dare delay for a second and rushed to Dream

Garden immediately.

"Doctor, please come up to see what has happened to Mrs. Lu. She's a high fever, and now she's in a

coma." When Nancy saw the family doctor, she didn't want to waste time on small talk and directed him

to Sheryl's bedroom immediately.

When Leila and Melissa heard what Nancy said, they smiled at each other with a secret understanding.

Then they rushed into Sheryl's bedroom together. However, they didn't care about how Sheryl was.

Instead, they took pleasure in Sheryl's misfortune.

After a careful diagnosis, Ricky explained that Sheryl's illness had worsened due to a virus caused by

the flu, and in combination with excessive stress, she had fallen into a coma. He thought that her

symptoms were serious enough and made the prompt decision to give her an intravenous injection.

The doctor didn't expect that Sheryl would take a turn for the worse and become so ill. Before he came to Dream Garden, he assumed that she just had a common cold. However, when Charles sounded so urgent over the phone, he brought drugs, injection medicines, and apparatus with him. It turned out that those all helped.

"Nancy, didn't she have a good rest these days because of worry?"

"No, she didn't. She has been so stressed these days. She couldn't eat or sleep. I tried to persuade her, but I failed," Nancy replied as she wiped her tears away.

Nancy's words had reminded the doctor about the latest news of the Lu family's kidnapped daughter, and he immediately understood why Sheryl had become so ill.

"It doesn't help. Her illness is very serious. Mrs. Lu needs plenty of rest, and she must cooperate with me if she wants to recover soon. You need to figure out more ways to persuade her."

Nancy kept nodding her head.

When the cold liquid medicine entered intravenously into Sheryl's body, she woke up immediately.

When she opened her eyes, she found her room was full of people. When she looked around

unconsciously, she felt disappointed when she didn't see Charles there.

Sheryl felt her stomach twist. She smiled bitterly and shook her head. She felt foolish for having had any expectation of Charles. Nancy surely must have told Charles that she had a fever. However, he hadn't shown up, and it was evident to Sheryl how he felt.

Although she knew it clearly, she couldn't help but feel overwhelmingly disappointed and sad.

Her eyes were empty as if she had lost her hope.

When Leila and Melissa saw Sheryl lying in bed weak, they felt delighted, especially Leila. She believed that fate was on her side. Otherwise, how else could everything be going so smoothly beyond her expectations?

She could hardly hide the happiness in her eyes. If it weren't inappropriate, she would have jumped for joy.

"Sheryl, you must take better care of yourself. You gave us all a scare. I feel so sorry for you, but I believe that you will recover soon," Leila said as she pretended to care about Sheryl. She wasn't a good actress, because anyone could see through her facade and hear no sincerity in her words.



Leila thrived on seeing how ill Sheryl looked. She wished that it would make Charles fed up with her.

Sheryl glared at Leila viciously and said, "Get out!" She didn't want to say any more to Leila. Sheryl

then closed her eyes, so she didn't have to see this spiteful woman.

"Sheryl, couldn't you be a little more polite? Leila is so kind as to visit you. Why are you so rude? Didn't

your mother teach you any manners?" Melissa took the opportunity to twist the situation around and

have a jab at her to make Sheryl look bad. She intentionally said that because she knew that it would

upset Sheryl.

Everybody was aware that Sheryl had an estranged relationship with her mother. That was the reason

why Melissa chose to mention her, especially when Sheryl was in such a fragile and vulnerable state.

"Mrs. Lu, please. She is very ill. Please show her some mercy, or shall I call Mr. Lu right now?" Nancy

stared at Melissa. She had no other choice but to threaten to call Charles. Otherwise, she didn't know

what Melissa would do next.

When Leila saw Sheryl close her eyes to ignore her intentionally, she didn't feel angry. She took her

phone and dialed Charles' number. She wanted to provoke Sheryl and see how she would react. 'Let's

see if she can act so indifferent and calm as she is now?' She sneered and looked crafty as if she was

brewing some evil plan.

"Hello, Charles!" Leila intentionally spoke loudly in the room. She wanted to make sure that everybody heard that she was speaking with Charles.

"It's me. What can I help you with?" said Charles trying hard to suppress his anger while he thought about his next move.

"Do you know that Sheryl is suffering from a fever? It's very serious, and I can't bear to see her look so weak! Charles, are you coming back to see her? Rest assured that even if you can't come back, I'll take good care of her for you."

As Leila talked on the phone, she spied on Sheryl's expression. She saw Sheryl's eyelids slightly twitching. When she looked further down, she noticed that Sheryl seized the bed sheet with the other hand that was free from the intravenous injection. Without a doubt, Sheryl was anxious. Leila snickered that Sheryl was suffering like this.

Charles felt disgusted by Leila's false show of concern and callousness. The anger and sickness that he felt toward her made him clench his hand into a tight fist with rage and crumple the paper on the

desk as if it were Leila herself.

After a few seconds, Charles composed himself and appeared deep and quiet as usual.

"Is it? It's Sheryl's fault. She didn't take care of her health. I tried to persuade her, but she was too stubborn to listen. Shirley is lost, and it's already a mess. She didn't help by letting herself go and even made matters worse. I don't have the time for her. I don't care, and she can do whatever she wants! It's none of my business!" Charles pretended to sound angry.

Sheryl could hear some of what Charles was saying through the phone. Even the little bit that she did hear was unbearable. It was like someone had twisted a knife into her heart.

Out of the corner of her eye, Leila saw Sheryl's face become even more ashen and she turn her head to the other side in anger. Leila felt content, and her heart was filled with great satisfaction.

"Charles, don't blame Sheryl. It's not all her fault. After all, she feels sad that Shirley is missing. Don't worry though. I'll make sure she gets plenty of rest to regain her health." Leila spoke while strutting around like a proud peacock, showing a goodwill gesture to Charles using all her effort.

Charles sneered because Leila's thoughts had been exposed in front of him. There might be more.

However, he knew that everything would come out soon.

"You're better than Sheryl. Let's talk about something else." Charles' compliment gave Leila a wide smile. She looked extremely pleased.

Charles paused for a moment and continued, "But I'm so worried about Shirley. If something bad happened to her, I don't think I would be able to take it. My only worry is to find Shirley." The sadness in Charles' tone made Leila feel against her conscience.

Chapter 1360 Couldn't Afford The Consequence

After hanging up the phone, Leila condescendingly looked at Sheryl, thinking she was so pathetic. Leila was cold and calculating and showed no sympathy for Sheryl.

Leila was so arrogant and full of herself that she even conjured up an image in her mind of herself holding onto Charles' arm intimately and humiliating Sheryl with a smug look on her face.

Although her perfect image was soon burst when she thought of how sad and worried Charles was about Shirley. She was in love with Charles and couldn't bear the thought of seeing him so grieved. So she decided to change the plan that she had set previously.

With that thought in mind, Leila hastily turned to leave. Before she went, Melissa asked her where she was going, but Leila didn't explain much to her.

She was in a hurry to see the guy that she hired to kidnap Shirley. She was going to ask him to release her.

Leila scurried about with a troubled mind, so she didn't notice that a man was tailing her since the moment she left Dream Garden.

Pulling her cell phone out, she made a call to the guy. However, to her disappointment, she couldn't get through. It was as if he had disappeared off the surface of the earth. Leila suddenly had that sinking feeling in the pit of her stomach that something had gone wrong. She quickly hailed a taxi and went to the place where Shirley was being held captive.

Neither the taxi driver nor Leila had noticed a car following them from a distance.

In the ghetto area of the South Street District, Leila got out of the taxi and dashed toward the house where the man lived. The path leading to the house was uneven and rocky, and Leila stumbled several times after losing her footing because she was wearing a pair of high heels. She didn't care as she was anxious to find the guy as soon as possible.

Finally reaching the house, Leila shoved the rusty hinge wooden door open, and a cloud of fine dust particles wafted into the air. She coughed while waving her arms around to clear the dust.

She entered the house, eager to find the man. However, after she searched through the dilapidated house, he was nowhere to be seen.

Leila stood numb with fear and panic. She racked her brain, trying to think of where that man could have taken Shirley to. 'Where could he be? Did he betray me? Where could he possibly have taken Shirley?'

Her mind was racing at a million miles an hour, making her heart suspend anxiously.

She left the house in a trance and had almost lost her mind with worry. She had the misgiving that there were going to be dire consequences waiting for her.

When she returned to Dream Garden

and entered the house, to her surprise, she found Charles at home. Feeling a little afraid, Leila pretended to be exhausted and was about to make her way to her bedroom when Charles suddenly spoke to her.

"Leila, you look so tired. Where have you been?" Charles sounded as if he was concerned about Leila.

"I... I was out for a stroll. It's a little boring staying in the house." Leila was too fearful to look Charles in

the eye at the moment. Her answer was so lame.

Charles remained quiet. Leila waited a while for him to say something else. When he didn't, she couldn't stand the awkward silence any longer and looked up at him.

When she saw the angry look on Charles' face, Leila was weighed down with fear sensing that something terrible was coming for her.

She asked in a low quivering voice, "Charles, what happened?" Her voice was so light that it vanished in the air instantly.

"Nothing," Charles answered. Contrary to his casual reply, his expression was cold and severe. He looked absent-minded and in a foul mood.

It broke Leila's heart to see Charles, who had always been so invincible, look so down and immersed in sorrow now.

She sat down next to Charles and tried to place her hand on his. Charles frowned subtly and casually moved his hand away.

"Charles, you can tell me what's troubling you. Though I may not be able to help you, I can always keep you company and comfort you," Leila said shyly with her cheeks blushing. She sounded very

determined.

"I met some troubles indeed. Shirley was kidnapped. I received a call from the kidnapper yesterday. He asked me to prepare ten million. That's the only way to get Shirley back," Charles said, gnashing his teeth. His voice was full of hatred.

"Unfortunately, I had just invested in a new project recently. The current capital hasn't got sufficient funds now. The capital chain may become fractured if anything goes wrong," Charles said in a worried tone. He rubbed his temples to relax, and his eyes were full of concern.

Hearing that, Leila panicked. She could feel her heartbeat racing, and she suddenly lost the color in her face because of fear. She hadn't expected that to happen. Everything seemed to be spiraling out of control.

She tried to suppress the panic she felt and said in an unsteady voice, "Well. Charles, I just remember that I have something urgent to deal with. I have to go back to my bedroom now. Don't worry too much. There must be a solution."

"It's all right. Go and finish your business."



Charles noticed that Leila's expression had changed. With that, he confirmed that Leila was responsible for Shirley's kidnapping, which he hadn't expected.

Things had gone out of Leila's control now. Charles thought about everything that had happened, and it was all caused by that malicious woman. Charles was seething and wanted to kill her himself.

However, his hands were tied, and he couldn't risk doing anything just yet. He needed to be patient to find out where Shirley was through Leila.

Leila stumbled into her bedroom as though she had just seen a ghost. She was overwhelmed with panic and fear.