

Wedded Bride 551

Chapter 551 Sue's Ball Encounter

"Charles, I am waiting for you." To set his mind at ease, Gary told Charles, "Chris is being taken care of by Sam. Nancy has been told to take care of her meals and also inform Sam of her caretaker role.

Charles, you can take it easy tonight and not come over." As he spoke, Gary poured out and handed a cup of tea to Charles, who said, "Thanks. I also have something to discuss with you."

Charles wanted to inform Gary that he was going to formalize the relationship between Sheryl and himself.

At their initial meetings and interaction, Sheryl had been cautious while dealing with Charles.

He asked, "Grandpa, do you want to say something about Charlie?" Charles had been brave enough to express his stand on taking charge of Charlie.

Gary replied, "I am fond of Charlie. Why don't you bring Charlie to visit me at home. He will be a comfort to me during Chris' absence and yours."

"Okay, I will arrange for Charlie to visit you later," Charles replied with a small smile and nodded his head as he gave Gary his verbal consent.

"So Charles," Gary started saying. Charles knew at once that he was referring to Leila.

Gary and Chris were supportive of Leila and wanted to give her the recognition of being Charlie's mother.

"What have you thought about Leila? How do you want to treat her?" Gary flung the question to

Charles. In a firm voice he said, "Charlie needs both his parents, a proper family."

Charles said in a subdued voice, "Grandpa, I know how to handle this matter. I will give Charlie a happy and loving home, where Leila shall be included."

Charles' thoughts drifted to Sheryl's beautiful face. He smiled to himself. He told Gary very firmly, "I

never liked Leila and I don't like her now. Even lesser is my willingness to marry her. Please consider these facts."

"Okay, I will respect your decision." Gary sighed and continued, "Charles, though Autumn is still in your heart, you have to be practical and remarry. You need a family of your own. I hope you try to forget that trauma."

He continued trying to soften Charles's heart, "Please let the past go and start afresh!"

"Hmmm. Maybe my soulmate has already walked into my life," Charles said absently as he was lost in

his own sweet thoughts.

"What do you mean by this statement?" Gary was a bit perplexed with Charles's casual remark.

"Nothing... nothing serious." Charles rose and abruptly ended the conversation, "Grandpa, I will take care of my business in my own way. Please do not trouble yourself with it. Get a good rest!"

Charles was excitededly looking forward to his upcoming date with Sheryl the next day.

In the hotel

From the video chat, Sheryl saw that Shirley had put on weight during her absence.

She was greatly touched by Shirley's affection.

Sheryl was surprised to find the resemblance between Charlie and Shirley, owing to the fact that they were spending so much time together.

"Sher, when are you returning to America?" Anthony held Shirley on his lap endearingly as he chatted with Sheryl on video chat.

"I will model at the fashion show next week and then further stay here for two more days. I will be back within ten days," Sheryl replied gently and calmly.

"It has been more than one week since we parted..." Anthony complained to Sheryl mockingly, "I am

eagerly waiting for your return. I am so lonely without you and every single day apart from you is unbearable."

"Anthony, please speak with restraint in the presence of Shirley." Sheryl found it embarrassing to talk to

Anthony with intimacy, though Anthony was her boyfriend and lover.

"Mom, I miss you so much!" said Shirley, all the while playing with her toys.

Sheryl, at that moment, realized that she liked Anthony more as a friend rather than a lover.

But she had grown accustomed to Anthony's company, love and care.

Thus, Sheryl developed confused and mixed feelings toward Anthony.

"It's very late now. I have to be well rested for tomorrow's rehearsal. Anthony, please take good care of Shirley during my absence," Sheryl politely pleaded with him.

Anthony immediately and lovingly said, "Sheryl, do not stand on ceremony. We are after all more than

friends. I want to take you to meet my parents as scheduled. I expect your consent."

"Okay...." Sheryl replied with a subtle smile.

She hung up and reflected on her relationship with Anthony. She was torn by indecision on whether to

meet Anthony's parents.

She knew she was uncertain of marrying Anthony.

At that moment, Sheryl was overcome with her own growing uncertainty and wavering mind.

"No wonder you were absent from the ball, Sheryl. You were busy chatting with your boyfriend and daughter on video chat." Returning from the ball, a drunken Sue muttered as soon as she spied Sheryl hanging up.

Seeing Sue, Sheryl instantly rose from the bed and came swiftly to help Sue sit down. She scolded, "You should not have drunk excessively. You know you cannot hold your drinks."

"I was drinking in high spirits." Sue replied smilingly, "Sheryl, you should have accompanied me to the ball. The most influential and powerful men in Y City were chasing those coquettish models.

By the way, I met Mr. Han's fiancée who looks like," Sue let out a loud burp and continued, "an artificial beauty. I really wonder why Mr. Han considers her as marriage material."

Sue sighed as she whined, "It seems I am not fated to marry any successful man."

"Sue, you are too flirtatious to love a single man," Sheryl admonished as she helped Sue to the bed.

"You are right! Sheryl, you know Anthony is also one of my favorite men." Sue continued casually, "I fell

into love with Anthony at first sight, but he loves you not me..."

Sue, though smiling, was unable to hold back her tears at the realization that Anthony did not love her.

Chapter 552 Sue's Secret

"You know what, Sher? At first, I was really envious of you. But then I got to know you better and found out you were such a good person. You've been very kind to me, and I wanted to treat you the same way."

Taking a deep breath, Sue further added, "I chose to keep my feelings for Anthony to myself because you're my best friend and I couldn't steal your boyfriend." Feeling tipsy, she then hugged Sheryl. "My beloved and my bestie together. Sher, promise me you'll treat Anthony well, or I will hate you," Sue declared, already woozy.

Her confession left Sheryl dumbfounded. She was totally unaware that her confidant felt something for her boyfriend. And if Sue had not gotten drunk, she would never find out about this.

"Mimi! Why didn't you say anything before?" Sheryl implored, feeling like an idiot as soon as she said it.

'If I were in her shoes, I would also keep this a secret, ' she thought.

"What would be the point?" Sue said bitterly. "You and Anthony love each other. I already lost from the

beginning."

Now feeling guilty, Sheryl tried to think about it thoroughly. 'Every time Anthony and I fought, it was always Sue that he leaned on. It must have been hard for her to comfort him.'

"I'm sorry, Mimi..."

Feeling sorry for her friend, Sheryl reached out, taking both of her hands as she apologized.

"Don't say that," Sue told Sheryl while brushing away her tears. Feeling as if it were all a dream, she continued, "As long as you and Anthony are happy, I will also be happy." Before Sheryl could react, she quickly changed the topic.

"I have something to tell you," Sue whispered and gestured for her friend to come closer. "I signed a contract with Mr. Han today," she announced. To indicate she didn't understand anything, Sheryl slightly shook her head.

"What did you say?" she asked. Sensing something wasn't right, Sheryl frowned.

"Mr. Han invited me to join the new modeling agency he is putting up. I accepted his offer and signed a modeling contract with him," Sue answered in detail. Smiling, she added, "When we finish this show, I'm not going back to America anymore. I like it here in Y City." Hesitating, Sue said softly, "I'm staying

here."

Sheryl's eyes widened in surprise. "Are you crazy?" she cried out. She couldn't believe what her friend was saying. "You told me we should stay in America because we had a better chance there. Have you forgotten?"

"Yeah, I said that," Sue replied, with a hint of embarrassment. Then she inhaled deeply before saying, "I still think that's true, but... Anthony is there, too."

Sadly pointing to her heart, she confessed with a pained expression, "I can't bear to see you so in love with each other. It hurts me here."

"You silly girl!" It was all Sheryl could say as she stared at her dear friend, and felt remorseful for the woman.

But Sue never heard what Sheryl said because she had collapsed on the bed, falling in a deep slumber.

Taking care of her drunken friend, Sheryl wet a hand towel and rubbed Sue's face and arms to cool her down before helping her change into clean pajamas. She then took a bath herself before getting in bed.

But despite closing her eyes, she found it hard to fell sleep.

'Would things have been different if I had known Sue's feeling for Anthony earlier?' Sheryl stared at the ceiling as she wondered.

It was very late when she finally slept. The next morning, Sue woke up before Sheryl. Still reeling from drunkenness, she had a splitting headache. Sue tried to think about what she told Sheryl the night before as she massaged her head, but could not recall anything.

It was not long before Sheryl's eyes fluttered open.

"Good morning!" she greeted Sue. Seeing her friend looking terrible with a hangover, she offered, "I'll get you some water."

Sheryl was a light sleeper. The slightest noise would wake her, like Sue tossing and turning in bed. As she rolled over to get up, Sue grabbed her friend's arm.

"I'm not thirsty, Sher," she said. To hide her embarrassment, Sue scowled and stammered, "Sher... did I get very drunk last night?"

Sheryl nodded and replied, "Oh yeah! You were a total mess, my friend."

Knowing her friend very well, Sheryl said nothing about her confession. 'Once she finds out what she

said last night, she would be very ashamed of herself. So, it's best to pretend that nothing happened, ' she decided.

She valued their friendship and resolved to ignore what she learned last night.

"Do you know how tiring it was to take care of you last night? And you didn't fall asleep until midnight!"

she pretended to whine. Sheryl rubbed her sore shoulder to demonstrate her condition.

Embarrassed laughter was all Sue could give. Then she hesitated before asking, "Uhhmm. Did I say anything weird?"

Her friend paused as if thinking, and then shook her head. "Nope," Sheryl replied. Suddenly Sheryl remembered something. "Oh, you said you signed a contract with Mr. Han and that you wanted to stay in Y City. What's that about, Mimi?"

She stared at Sue before prodding, "Why did you make such a sudden decision like that?"

"I... ah, said that?" Sue faltered, trying to remember. At the back of her mind, she felt a bit relieved.

'The terms Mr. Han offered were good. What's more, I was still more comfortable here in China after living abroad for several years. But more importantly, it means staying away from Anthony, ' Sue

thought. She was momentarily lost in thought.

Feeling restless, Sheryl bombarded her with more questions. "What kind of contract is it? Why did you sign it without telling me?" she asked. She gripped Sue's hand and looked straight into the other woman's eyes. "We promised to work in the same place," Sheryl said, sounding distraught. "You even said you would be my bridesmaid. Have you forgotten all these?" she continued.

Sue bowed her head. "No, I remember all of that," she answered. Pausing to look at her friend, she brightened and said, "When you and Anthony get married, I'll still be your bridesmaid. I promise."

Masking her nervousness, Sue looked away to avoid Sheryl's gaze. "Mr. Han's conditions were quite good, that's why I accepted," she explained. Her hangover forgotten, she stood up and urged her friend, "Let's go. There isn't much time. We still have rehearsals today."

Her best friend just gave one reason for signing the contract, Sheryl thought.

Watching her friend walk away, she again felt sorry for Sue.

She was also heartbroken at the thought that her friend was sacrificing for her sake and suffering alone.

During rehearsals, Sheryl's mind was preoccupied and kept losing her focus. Director Ang noticed this

and scolded her several times. He didn't stop until George came to her rescue.

George took her to a nearby coffee shop and chose a table near the window. After the waitress brought their orders, George started making small talk, smiling at her. "The coffee here is excellent. Go ahead, try it," he offered.

Sheryl was fidgeting in her seat. "Thank you, Mr. Han," she said politely. She had no idea why George had brought her there.

Her nerves showed as she kept rubbing the coffee cup with both hands.

George noticed and assured her, "Take it easy. I just wanted to have a chat with you."

He cleared his throat and asked, "Miss Xia, I heard you have a daughter. Is that right?"

"Yes, that's right," Sheryl replied, taken aback by the question. Her mind was working overtime, wondering about the inquiry.

"Have you chosen a kindergarten for her?" he asked curiously. Sheryl frowned a little before answering, "I've checked out two schools in America. But, I'm still considering which one to choose," she said truthfully. What Sheryl preferred more was to find a school in Y City for her daughter. She was

thinking it would be better suited for Shirley with regard to the same nationality and skin, as well as language. And this way, her child could make friends more easily and enjoy school life.

While she thought about all this, it crossed her mind that they still might have to stay in America.

Suddenly, George spoke up.

"Tell me. What do you think of this school?"

he asked, casually handing her a school brochure.

Chapter 553 A Difficult Decision

A perplexed Sheryl started to read the information about Pigeon Double Fish Kindergarten. According to its brochure, the school had full facilities, a comfortable environment, and excellent teachers. And while its admission fees were quite expensive, the kindergarten's location was favorable — Y City.

She laid down the document and with a confused look asked, "Mr. Han, why are you showing me this?"

In her mind, Sheryl was trying to figure out what the man's motive was. 'Why is he concerned about a kindergarten for my child?' she wondered.

"Please don't get me wrong. You were not present in yesterday's ball, so I wanted to discuss with you this matter in private," George started to explain. Smiling, he continued, "I made an official statement before all the models present yesterday that BM Corporation is planning to establish a modeling

agency here in Y City. Most of the models agreed to stay in Y City and signed contracts, including your good friend, Sue."

He further continued, "After signing contracts, they're eligible for long-term opportunities with the company."

Sheryl didn't feel comfortable talking to George about this and decided to be very careful to avoid any sinister plans.

Without uttering a single word, she looked at George suspiciously. However, the man sensed this and proceeded to reassure Sheryl.

"Please, there is no need to be suspicious. You were all selected based on merit, with Director Ang giving his input. As you can see, the director was first hard on you, but eventually treated you fairly."

He smiled broadly and declared, "You're going to make me a huge fortune."

"Mr. Han, you're kidding me. But I am greatly flattered," she said, taken aback. She composed herself before continuing, "I am fully aware of my status as a single mother, so I didn't expect to be selected. I also thought my age would be to my disadvantage. That's why I am in your debt for accepting me as a

temporary model."

George shook his head in disbelief. "Miss Xia, you are more elegant and well-rounded than the rest of the models."

He then quickly added, "You know why? Because you're older and you've been married."

The woman was quite embarrassed by the man's remark. Sheryl suddenly felt the statement reduced her to an object of flirtation.

Sensing her discomfort, George quickly apologized. "Miss Xia, I do not speak English very fluently.

Please, do not take my casual remarks to heart."

He offered a smile and then continued, "All I want is to express how impressed I am by you and to convince you to accept my offer.

The kindergarten was intended to sweeten the offer. If you accept, your daughter will be admitted to the school immediately."

George paused, waiting for a reaction. "Of course, there is room for negotiations with regards to your annual salary."

Sheryl was overwhelmed by everything he said. "Mr. Han, I am a single mother and I don't deserve all the effort and time you're giving me!"

Still, she was aware, having been on her own for a while, that there could be something deceitful behind the man's enthusiasm to hire her.

"Oh, you deserve it. Definitely, you do," he said, flashing his smile again. "My long business experience tells me your potential success will be to my advantage. I am ready to invest in you, give you the salary you desire, and provide you with an eighty-square meter flat for you and your daughter. So, I hope you will accept my offer."

The impassioned speech made Sheryl think.

"Mr. Han, please give me time to consider the offer," she requested.

"Of course! Think about it, please," he agreed. Nodding in approval, he admitted, "Miss Xia, I know you may decline my offer. But I am hoping you accept it. I will do everything to convince you to be my contract model."

Before leaving, he offered her a smile again. "Miss Xia, I will wait for your answer. Think it over very well," he advised. This time, Sheryl smiled in response.

"Of course I will give it the due consideration," she promised. Hesitantly, she asked if she could bring the kindergarten information for review. He pushed it towards her enthusiastically.

"Please feel free to do that!" he urged. She stood up and bowed slightly in gratitude.

"I will go ahead now. Thank you again," she said. On her way back to the hotel, Sheryl kept thinking about the offer. For her, the most appealing part was the opportunity for Shirley to study in that kindergarten.

She wanted her daughter to go to school in China, for she didn't want Shirley to know nothing about her country.

They were Chinese and they should be proud of it.

"Sheryl! You're back!" Sue cried out enthusiastically. After doing her daily exercise, Sue arrived to find her friend sitting by the window, looking worried while holding a document in her hand.

She peered at the paper in Sheryl's hand and frowned. Her friend said nothing, so she finally asked, "Sheryl, do you want to resettle in Y City?"

"Definitely not!" the young mother blurted out. Sheryl had to talk some sense into Sue and said, "I was

just looking over the information Mr. Han gave me."

"Oh yeah?" Sue said, with a hint of curiosity. She took the papers from Sheryl and examined them.

"Wow, Mr. Han seems to be doing everything to convince you to work here in Y City."

"What are you talking about?" Sheryl asked. Sheryl still had her doubts.

"That's what you get for missing the ball," Sue admonished her.

"You missed out on the details. Mr. Han's fiancée showed up that night asking about your condition.

Fortunately, I was able to appease her. Then, she requested Mr. Han to interview you for the modeling contract."

Sue wrinkled her brows before continuing, "It seemed to me Mr. Han's fiancée has these strange ideas about you."

Sue had her doubts but let it pass.

But Sheryl found it strange for Holley to ask about her condition or to be close to her.

'We hardly knew each other, ' Sheryl thought.

In fact, Holley was a stranger to her.

Sue broke into her thoughts. "Sheryl, do you want to accept the offer?"

She heard the concern in her friend's tone.

"I haven't made a decision yet," Sheryl admitted. Shaking her head and shrugging her shoulders as a gesture of uncertainty, she groaned a little. "Now, I am torn by indecision."

Sheryl told Sue about the preferential treatment George promised. She paused to consider. "I know nothing good comes easily. But I'm finding it hard to decline his offer," she admitted.

Sue did her best to convince her friend to accept the offer. "There is no harm in accepting, once you consider all his favorable conditions and terms. Besides, that means Shirley will study in a comfortable and healthy environment."

She continued to argue, "And she will learn Chinese culture. That's what you want, right?"

Sue then took Sheryl's hand and squeezed it. "But best of all, if you settle in Y City, you, Shirley and I will be living here together happily!" she said excitedly.

"You really want me to settle down here?"

Sheryl wasn't very sure about Sue's real intentions.

"Of course, I do. We're best friends and we deserve to live and work together."

Somehow, Sue sensed Sheryl's uneasiness.

But then her friend's face lit up with Sue's honesty and sincerity.

Chapter 554 What Are You Implying

Sue had too much to drink last night. In her drunkenness, she confessed about her deep feelings for

Anthony. Sheryl realized that Sue was heartbroken every time she saw her and Anthony together. So

her decision to sign with George and stay in Y City was understandable. But that was Sue. Now, when

she was struggling about George's offer, Sue didn't even try to prevent her from staying in Y City. If she

stayed, Sue would still be jealous and frustrated about her relationship with Anthony, and suffer over

time. But it shamed her how Sue cared more about her friend's happiness than her own. So Sheryl

vowed to cherish their friendship even more.

"I will consider it carefully," Sheryl assured her friend. As she remembered what happened before she

left for America, Sheryl frowned. After passing the interview and telling Anthony about her trip to China,

he was furious. He was against her traveling to Y City. So Sheryl promised that after the show, she

would leave and never return. If Anthony found out that she was considering staying and bringing

Shirley with her, they would argue again. Breaking her promise might even result in him ending their

relationship.

Now, she felt torn between leaving or staying in Y City. Deciding which was more important in her life confused Sheryl now. Did she want to earn more money so she and her daughter would have a better life? Or was it best to give Anthony peace of mind to keep their relationship intact? Seeing her friend struggling with a decision, Sue proposed, "Sheryl, I think you'd better discuss this with Anthony. When you first told him you were coming to Y City, he strongly objected and became furious. But he'll be more than furious if he learns you're considering to stay. You're a couple. So you need to talk about it before making a final decision." Sue knew fully well why Anthony was against Sheryl's coming to Y City.

Shirley's father lived there. And Anthony worried the two would get back together if the man found Sheryl. So, she understood Anthony's anxiety.

"Yes, you're right." Sheryl nodded in agreement, looking gratefully at Sue. She had long been used to making decisions alone. Fortunately, her friend reminded her that she was not alone anymore. Anthony was her boyfriend. Before making any final decision, she had to consult him. It was the right way to show her respect for him.

Before either one could speak, Sheryl's cellphone rang. She didn't recognize the caller, except that the

number was from Y City.

She wondered, 'Charlie is the only resident in Y City that I know. Who else would be calling me?'

Although the number was unfamiliar, something urged Sheryl to answer and kept telling her to pick up the phone.

The woman hesitated briefly but finally answered. She was surprised to hear a deep and powerful male voice. "Is that Miss Xia?" she heard him say. "This is Charles Lu, Charlie's father," the caller said, introducing himself.

"Oh hello, Mr. Lu. Why are you calling?"

As she heaved a sigh of relief, she was happy to learn it was Charlie's father who called her. Sheryl was initially worried that someone she did not know had dialed her number.

"Miss Xia, have you finished your work? Charlie and I are heading to a restaurant not far from your hotel. The boy is craving for Szechuan food. I was wondering if you might want to have dinner with us?" Charles laughed nervously but spoke persuasively. "If you're not busy now, please have dinner with us. Charlie is dying to see you."

"Uhhmm," Sheryl responded reluctantly. She was struggling again. Charles was polite and knew

exactly how to convince Sheryl to say yes. It seemed as if he chose that particular restaurant to make it more convenient to drop by her hotel if she agreed to join them. But he spoke casually and politely that it would be rude to refuse his invitation. Maybe in her heart, she was eager to meet Charlie and didn't mind eating with him and his father. Sheryl had long admitted she liked the little boy very much and was fond of him.

"All right. I'll join you," she replied softly. She brushed her forehead with her hand in relief and stood up to change.

"Are you going out?" Sue inquired. As Sheryl headed straight to her closet after hanging up, she got busy deciding what to wear. Sue was curious about Sheryl's caller. The woman was not usually particular about clothes. Now, she was deliberate while going through her wardrobe. Since Anthony was not with them, Sue felt it her duty to remind Sheryl to be loyal and not date anyone while in Y City.

"Yes, I promised Charlie I would take him to an amusement park tonight," she replied. Sheryl didn't think it was necessary to lie to Sue. She was fond of the pretty little boy, and it was not a big deal to go out with him.

"Sheryl, aren't you becoming too close to that boy? Wouldn't his parents get mad at you? They may be worried about your intentions," Sue warned. She frowned a little as she glanced at her friend. She knew Sheryl had a natural affection for children. She was, after all, a mother herself. And when she met a pretty boy the same age as her daughter, it was understandable that she would show her fondness for him.

But Charlie had parents. And if Sheryl continued seeing him, sooner or later his parents might be suspicious of her intentions. Sue was becoming uncomfortable with their constant meetings.

"His father will be with us," she replied casually. Sheryl was still concentrating on choosing the right clothes for their meeting and did not see Sue's gloomy face.

But she heard the concern in her voice. "You said he didn't have a father, didn't you?"

"It's a long story. I'll tell you when I get back," Sheryl responded. She suddenly felt light and happy.

Eager to see the boy, Sheryl didn't want to waste time explaining the whole story to Sue.

She then stopped and thought about her behavior. 'I'm just meeting Charlie, so why do I need to dress up? Why was that my spontaneous reaction?'

She mumbled, "Perhaps I just want to look my best when I meet Charlie's father."

Instead of Chinese food, Charles decided to bring Sheryl and Charlie to the best French restaurant in Y City. A waitress led them to a table. Charles pulled out Sheryl's chair and helped her be seated. He never asked about what she liked or disliked. They had been married for years, and he knew what Sheryl preferred, so he ordered for her.

Before Sheryl lost her memory, she was known as Autumn. She was Charles's wife. They had been at that restaurant before. It might have been scheming to bring her there, but it could be a way to help Sheryl recall her past life. Charles hoped it would work. It was torture for him to treat his beloved wife like a stranger. He was heartbroken that she didn't recognize him, so he vowed to pursue her again.

The man was confident he would succeed sooner than later. Her decision to join them for dinner was a good start.

It took a great deal of effort to pretend he was calm and natural in front of Sheryl. Charles asked casually, "Miss Xia, are you married?" He realized it was not an appropriate question, but he was eager to find out about her status. If she were married, things would be more difficult. Charles was not ready to compete with a rival in love but was somehow assured because he and Sheryl were still legally

husband and wife.

"I suppose no," Sheryl forced a smile as she answered. She knew her answer was vague. But the truth was she didn't know her actual status and had never been curious about it.

Charles sat up and repeated, "Suppose?"

Sheryl realized what she said and quickly explained, "I mean I don't know for a fact whether I'm married or not. I have a daughter. Her birthday is coming up in a few days. But, I'm not sure if I'm married or not."

Without thinking, she began to tell Charles her story. For some reason, she trusted him enough to relate what she knew about her life. And she was willing to answer all his questions. She took a deep breath before continuing, "My boyfriend said I was seriously ill three years ago. When I regained my health, I lost my memory. So I don't quite know about my past."

Charles clenched his hand as he was asking Sheryl while looking at her almost without blinking. "Did you ever think about looking for your child's father?" he inquired.

He was getting closer to the truth, and his heart beat faster with excitement.

Sheryl hesitated and shook her head. "I thought about it, but I finally gave up."

"But why?" There was an urgency in Charles' voice. He couldn't understand why she gave up looking for her husband. Charles thought, 'We loved each other very much. Now, here she is sitting opposite me but having no idea who I am. Why does she seem so unreal? She can vanish into thin air any time again.'

With eyes taking on a look of steel, Sheryl said, "If my husband truly loved me, he should have searched for my baby and me. Why did I have to do the searching?"

She thought that if her daughter's father came to find her, she might consider persuading the child to accept him. But if he didn't appear, she would rather forget the man. In her heart, Sheryl felt that her past was unhappy and preferred the status quo. After pausing, she went on, "I've been thinking about what kind of person he is, I mean my daughter's father. He could be gentle, handsome, and successful. Or he could be poor and bad. As time went by, I stopped imagining what he was. My daughter and I now live a happy life. I have a faithful boyfriend, who loves and cares for me. But most importantly, he treats my daughter like his own. So, I should be grateful for what I have."

"From your description, your boyfriend must be a wonderful man. And he is lucky to have won your

heart," Charles offered. He spoke as calmly as he could but felt his veins throbbing as he listened to Sheryl's story.

Deep inside he was miserable. He thought, 'Three years have passed. You forgot me, and you're now with another man living happily. You're even open to letting my child call that man father. I should be furious with you now. But I can't tell you the truth yet. I will pursue you and wait until you say yes. Your memory will come back sooner or later. And when that time comes, I will talk to you about your life with another man, and how you should make it up to me.'

"He is an ordinary man, not quite like you," Sheryl said humbly. When she smiled, her eyes sparkled and her face looked even softer under warm lights.

Charlie sat quietly at the table. He never disturbed their conversation. If Sheryl became his mother, he would be ecstatic. The boy knew his purpose in this meeting. Charlie muttered to himself, "Sheryl would have refused my father's invitation if I did not come along. But since she likes me, she was more willing to join us. Even if I'm the third wheel, I will try my best so they don't notice me."

Charles was offended by Sheryl's statement about her husband. So, in defense, he said, "Miss Xia, have you ever thought that there was a chance your husband would have been eager to find you but

couldn't?"

While he accepted that Sheryl had forgotten him, Charles could not bear accepting the blame for their being apart. She had no idea how desperate he had been to find her. 'Ungrateful woman!' he screamed silently.

"Mr. Lu, I feel you mean something other than what you are saying. What are you implying?" she pointed out. Sheryl was looking at him curiously. When their eyes met, his intense gaze made her feel anxious and uncomfortable. She thought, 'Why is he looking at me that way? I am not his wife. So, how can he stare at me with affection?'

"Don't worry, Miss Xia. I was only citing one possibility about what could have happened," he told her.

Charles masked his feelings with laughter and comforted Sheryl. It made him feel better to see her nervous. Perhaps, it wouldn't be so hard to win her back. He took a deep breath and kept talking. "Take Charlie and me for example, I never knew about his existence until recently. It was impossible for me to look for my son. Does that mean I was at fault?"

"Your situation is unusual," she admitted. The woman didn't bother to reveal the rest of her thoughts.

After all, they were still strangers. And it would be impolite to comment on his personal affairs.

In her mind, Sheryl was thinking, 'If you're a responsible man, how could you not know about Charlie's existence? The child is three years old, at least. You would have had a long time to look for him.'

As she wondered, uncomfortable thoughts filled her head. 'If you loved Charlie's mother, why didn't you look for her? And if you didn't love her, why did you get her pregnant? My conclusion, sadly, is that you're not a responsible man at all.'

Chapter 555 Ferris Wheel Ride

As she continued to ponder, she had another thought. 'But why would they even sleep together if they didn't love each other?'

There were so many questions she wanted to ask. But since she had only met Charles, Sheryl decided it was best to keep her doubts to herself.

Unsure how to respond, Charles did note a hint of discontent in the woman's eyes and assumed she was busy thinking. But he didn't want to destroy the pleasant atmosphere, so he finally dropped the subject.

"It doesn't matter. We have lots of time in the future to discuss this," he told himself.

He was convinced this misunderstanding between them will eventually be settled.

It was already 8:00 pm when the three arrived at the amusement park. Both adults and children crowded the place. Sheryl might be a mother herself, but the park remained to be an obsession.

They tried out as many as possible of Charlie's favorite entertainment activities. When Sheryl walked past the Ferris wheel, she paused and stared at it longingly.

Noting her expression, Charles went straight to the ticket booth to secretly purchase three tickets. He then grabbed her hand and pulled her. "Follow me. We're riding that!" he exclaimed, pointing to the Ferris wheel.

"Oh, no..." Sheryl replied, as she tried to pull her hand from his grasp. "We should let Charlie decide what he wants to do," she argued weakly. Her expression, however, showed she wanted to get on that ride.

"I already bought the tickets. We can't get a refund," Charles retorted. "Besides, Charlie told me he wanted to go on a Ferris Wheel ride, right son?" he added.

Father winked at son, and the boy immediately understood what he had to do next. He moved beside Sheryl and took her other hand. "Sher, I love the Ferris wheel and I would love to have a ride. Will you

please come with me?" he asked sweetly.

Looking at Charlie's eyes full of excitement, she found it hard to deny his request so she eventually agreed. Besides, she truly wanted to get on the Ferris wheel, too. "Okay then. Let's try it out," she turned to Charles.

Charles initially thought the passenger car could only carry three people. But with so many tourists who wanted a ride, the guide squeezed in two more with them. Sheryl was forced to a corner and felt a bit awkward.

To prevent the other passengers from bumping into Charlie and Sheryl, Charles stretched his arms to cordon them off. Charlie wasn't a fan of the Ferris wheel, thinking it was only for timid girls. But as they began to ascend and the panoramic view of Y City unfolded before his eyes, he was in awe. Woman and boy laid their hands on the window, and together they looked down at the city with enchanted expressions. Charles felt a lump in his throat as he watched the two looking so thrilled.

Sheryl was intently observing the evening landscape, oblivious that for someone else's eyes, she had become the view.

Even as it took a great effort to keep the two other people in the car from getting close to Sheryl,

Charles still managed to stare at her affectionately.

As he watched Sheryl with admiration, Charles had an impulse to gather the woman in his arms, but through sheer will remained at a polite distance. To Charles, it still didn't seem real to have his beloved standing next to him. What felt more real was the fear that Sheryl could again disappear in an instant.

On the other hand, Sheryl enjoyed the ride tremendously. Each time she found the landscape fascinating, she would turn around to share it with Charles. Shocked to see the affection in the man's eyes, Sheryl quickly averted her gaze. Composing herself, she turned to look at Charles again. "Miss Xia, I never expected you to be so interested in the Ferris wheel," he said with a charming smile. The affection and eagerness in his eyes were slowly vanishing.

"Most girls dream of being in a romantic atmosphere like this," she said simply. More quietly, but with a dreamy look in her eyes, Sheryl added, "I do, too."

Suddenly, she remembered Charles' affectionate look earlier. She gathered courage and boldly stared at the man's eyes. She saw nothing.

She berated herself, 'I must really think too much.'

Sighing, she thought, 'How can a man I just met feel so much longing for me?'

Sheryl shook herself mentally to get rid of the ridiculous thoughts running inside her head.

She glanced at Charles, who was standing behind her and asked, "Mr. Lu, do you believe in legends?"

"Legends?" Charles repeated, wondering what made her ask. He was never interested in fantastic legends. To his mind, they were only created to fool innocent girls. But looking at Sheryl's eyes, he noted expectation and didn't have the heart to disappoint her. So he smiled and asked, "Do you mean the legend about the Ferris wheel?"

"That's exactly what I was thinking." Sheryl nodded at him. "Well, this is what I know about it," she began. "Each car of the Ferris wheel ride is supposed to be filled with happiness. When we look up at the Ferris wheel, we're supposedly looking into our happiness. The higher the car goes, the happier we will be. When we anticipate happiness but are frustrated because it did not happen, we can take the Ferris wheel. We sit inside waiting for it to go up. Then we can overlook everything once it reaches the top." She paused for effect, watching Charles. "According to the legend, the Ferris wheel exists for couples in love. Once it finishes one round, there will be a new couple who kiss each other," Sheryl finished, her voice almost a whisper but her eyes sparkling with excitement.

"Is that so?" Charles asked simply. He didn't subscribe to lies that business people spread to make a profit. However, Charles was almost willing to believe anything said by his beloved wife.

As their car reached the top, Sheryl closed her eyes with an earnest expression. She put her palms together and made a wish. Surprised with her action, Charles asked curiously, "What are you doing?"

"I'm making a wish," she replied. Sheryl noted the man looked confounded, so she explained, "When we get on the Ferris wheel, happiness is within our grasp. As it turns and rises, we find that we become disconnected from the outside world. We only feel a connection with the people inside this cramped space. And we also feel like we're getting closer to God." She continued, "Once your Ferris wheel car is on top, you can earnestly wish for something. And since it's way on top, God can hear our wishes. If you are good enough and deserve it, your wish will come true."

Charlie, who had been listening intently to the legend, followed Sheryl and made a wish. His father stared at his serious expression and felt funny. "Son, what did you wish for?" he asked.

"It's a secret!" Charlie replied. He looked serious again. "I learned it from TV. My wish will never come true if I say it out loud," he explained.

Charles smiled but said nothing. 'There's no need to figure out his wish, ' he thought.

From the car's window, Charlie could see the reflection of Charles' and Sheryl's expressions. The light inside was enough for this. It made him very glad to see his father's bright smile.

His wish was for Charles. The little boy wanted Sheryl and his father to live happily forever.

Sheryl spoke again, this time with sadness in her eyes. "However, not all tales about the Ferris wheel are beautiful," she said, her eyes beginning to darken. With a bitter smile, she continued, "There are also tales that say that there are couples who take a Ferris wheel ride but end up separating from each other."

Pausing to take a deep breath, Sheryl added, "But if the lovers kiss each other as the car reaches the top, they will be happy for the rest of their life."

Charles didn't believe this tale, yet his handsome face had a pained expression that he quickly masked. The man would not let anything awful happen between him and Sheryl.

In his head, he already had a plan. 'I'll bring Sheryl here again so we can ride the Ferris wheel. And when we reach the top, I will kiss her hard.'

When it was time to get off, Sheryl wobbled as they got out of the car, and was about to fall on her side.

Instinctively, Charles reached out one hand to catch her and then wrapped another around her slim waist.

Chapter 556 Holding A Birthday Party For Charlie

"Are you okay?" Charles asked in a mellowed voice. He noticed the sudden change in her behavior.

Sheryl could hardly conceal her feelings. She was standing right in front of Charles; her hands in his hands; her heart beating against her chest; her face red and feeling hot as if she had fever. She always felt like a naive and vulnerable girl in her first love when she was with Charles. She never experienced this kind of a feeling with Anthony.

"I'm fine," Sheryl replied struggling to hide her feelings, as she hurriedly pulled her hands back. She turned her face away from Charles and reprimanded herself, 'How can I be so shameless? I already have a boyfriend and my own child. Why can I flush and my heart beat faster for another man?'

'Enough is enough. I have to keep a distance from him, ' she thought to herself.

Sheryl's hands were as cold as Autumn used to be, which convinced Charles even more. By this time, he was sure that the girl standing in front of him was none other than his own wife. He felt so incredibly peaceful to see her safe and sound.

It was already 10:00 pm, but Charles had no intention of leaving. With Sheryl by his side, he felt time elapsed faster than usual. He had not felt so secured and peaceful in the last three years.

Due to that small accident, Sheryl was in no mood to try out any other entertainment project. With a lot of hesitation, she suggested, "It's getting quite late. How about we... get back?"

Charles looked at Sheryl's face that reminded him of a scared rabbit at the moment. He felt he had been unreasonably rude to her which might be the reason behind her being so scared.

"Okay, then I'll drop you to your hotel," he replied promptly.

"Oh, no, thanks!" Sheryl refused his offer and quickly tried to look away. Her feelings were just beyond her control. What was worse, she was not even being able to stop them from showing on her face. The only way was to get away from Charles as soon as possible. "It's not much of a drive from here to my hotel. I can grab a taxi. You... you and Charlie go home. It's getting late and it's not good for Charlie to be awake too late in the night," she said.

Speaking these words, she just turned around and ran.

She ran with all her might as if she was being pursued by a ghost. As soon as she rushed out of the amusement park, she got into a taxi. In the meantime, Charles and Charlie left the park right after her.

They followed Sheryl's cab secretly and stopped out of the hotel to see that she checked in safely.

Charles waited at a distance to see Sheryl walk into the hotel before he turned the engine on and drove off.

Charlie observed the two of them all this while. Then he turned to his father and asked, "Dad, if you were so worried about her safety, why didn't you just drop her to the hotel instead of following her secretly?"

The innocent heart could not really make out why adults lied even when they loved each other so much. Kids these days have become so observant and sensitive that absolutely nothing escapes their eyes.

"It's complicated, son. Even I explain it to you, you won't understand," Charles replied. He looked at his son with a smile on his face and then turned his face towards the road as he drove ahead.

'It's difficult to explain to others about what happened between me and Sheryl, ' he thought bitterly.

"How did you know?" Charlie retorted. He frowned. "Don't treat me like a child, Dad. Now that you like her, you should let her know," he said in a solemn voice.

Charles marked the seriousness in Charlie's face and could not help feeling awkward.

'Why do the kids know so much? Fortunately he is a boy. I don't need to worry much about him in terms of emotions, ' he thought to himself.

Charles parked his car in front of Leila's apartment building, intending to watch his son head upstairs from his car. However, Leila was already waiting outside. When she caught sight of Charles's car, she strode forward and pulled the door for Charlie. "Where did your dad take you today?" she asked cheekily.

"That's none of your business," Charlie replied in a cold voice. He didn't want Leila to know about Sheryl.

With a quick look at Leila, Charles said coldly, "Well, I've got to go."

"Wait. I need to discuss something with you," Leila said trying to stop Charles from leaving. These days

Charles and Charlie got along very well. The growing bond between the father and son was indeed good news for her. However, Charles being indifferent to her was testing her patience. Charles was still so cold towards her even after knowing that she was the mother of his son.

Leila felt that her plan was working just as she wanted it to. She planned to spend more time with

Charles after he sent Charlie back. And just because of that she came down and waited for them well in advance. But to her dismay, the man even didn't enter her house these days.

He looked rather irritated for being stopped by Leila. 'I've already made myself clear to her that I have nothing to talk to her. Now what?' he thought.

But it was evident that Leila felt otherwise.

She looked at Charles and requested, "It won't take you long. Just a few minutes. It's about Charlie."

Leila was very well aware of Charles' unwillingness to stay or even talk to her. But she was clever enough to use Charlie as an excuse and her plan worked. Charles nodded. He agreed to speak to her.

Even Charlie had a frown on his face at the mention of Leila wanting to talk to Charles. He kept a fixed gaze on his father, trying to signal him to avoid her. Charles looked at his son while still seated in the car and said, "Go upstairs, Charlie. Your mom and I need to talk."

Charlie nodded his head and walked towards the stairs without turning back even for once. He was aware his father would never change his mind no matter what Leila did.

As he climbed up the stairs he gave a crooked smile and pitied Leila who wasted time and energy on

someone she would never get.

Watching Charlie head upstairs, Charles got out of his car. He lit a cigar and took a puff. "Just say.

What is it?" he asked. He did not even look at Leila as he spoke.

Leila maintained a calm look at his face that was turned away from her and spoke in a meek

voice, "Two things." She remembered how much caring and doting Charles used to be when he was

with Autumn. And now that Autumn was nowhere in the picture and Leila had established herself as the

mother of his child, still he was so distant and cold towards her! 'Why couldn't he love me?' she

wondered with a wry smile.

'It doesn't matter. Autumn is dead. Sooner or later Charles will accept my love, ' she comforted herself.

"Charlie needs to go to school. He doesn't like his former school, so I allowed him stay at home. I was

wondering if you can find a better school for Charlie. I... I tried to provide the best I could within my

means," she continued in a meek and hesitant voice. She wanted to put Charlie in the best school, but

she had her constraints.

She felt that being a father, Charles should take the responsibility of Charlie's education.

There was no doubt that it was a matter of concern for both of them. Indeed, Charlie deserved to get

the best of education. Charles nodded at her and said, "Well, I see. I'll keep an eye on it."

Charles kept puffing the cigar which miffed Leila but she decided to say what she had planned to say.

"Charlie has spent his third birthday. I just hope that you can arrange a birthday party for him. The most

I can do is to buy him a cake to celebrate his birthday. But... this year is really very special for him. After

all, he met his father. That's why I wanted you to give him a party. We can sit together and have a meal.

I'm sure he will be happy," she proposed. Leila could not wait any longer to execute the next level of

her plan. Now that Charles had got bonded with Charlie, it was her time to come closer to Charles.

Using Charlie's birthday was a good excuse to achieve her goal.

'Now that Charlie was unwilling to help, I have to help myself, ' she thought.

Charles frowned when he heard Leila say 'We'. The displeasure was right on his face. He never

considered her to be his family. However, as a father, he was responsible for Charlie. There was no

doubt that Charlie deserved a grand birthday party. 'I owe him a lot. Even if I give him the best

everything in the world, I will never be able to compensate for not being there for him in his early years.

This is my chance to host a really special party for him. I will make it a grand one, ' he thought to

himself.

Giving Leila a glance, he said, "Okay, I'll fix this party. I'll inform you the time and place."

Chapter 557 I'm Your Mother!

"Well, I see," Leila replied. A hint of smile crept upon Leila's face. In her mind, she fantasized and depicted a happy and comfortable life after getting married to Charles.

"Is there anything else?" Charles asked impatiently, squinting at Leila. In front of Charles, she hated it when his aloof facial expression would only turn soft whenever the subject of their discussion was about Charlie. Charles maintained a poker face and a considerably annoying distance from her if the topic was not about his son. He repulsed spending even a petty amount of time with her.

"That's... all," Leila stammered in a voice still trying to be sweet with Charles. Charles dropped the cigarette end on the ground, stamped his right foot on it, and rushed back to his nearby car.

Like a true, sensible and doting wife, Leila escorted Charles to his car, bid goodbye then urged him to drive home safely.

However, Charles made no response, closed the car door and haphazardly drove away. Leila stayed at the drive way while staring blankly at the departed car. The mixture of gasoline fume and smoke emitted by Charles' car along with the flying dirt completely swallowed her.

Leila and Charles' conversation only lasted like the time spent in a couple of cigar puffs. It was always very short. And, she even played her Charlie card as an excuse to make Charles pass by and talk to her. Yet still, he was so unwilling to spend more time with her.

Just like the many incidents before, she was again bewildered and clueless on what to do next to make Charles stay longer.

With a growing self-pity, Leila walked back to the house, and then went upstairs. She knocked on Charlie's door and after receiving his permission, she pushed the door open and came in. She found Charlie and noticed he had already taken a bath. He was in clean pajamas and was lying on his bed.

"So, what's up?" Charlie asked, as he looked up at her in contempt. Charlie's condescending facial expression reminded her of Charles' scornful look at her.

Leila dared not snap nor confront Charles whenever he was doing that to her. But, when she had internalized that Charlie treated her the same way, she couldn't help but release the wrath she'd been keeping for so long. Truly irritated, she yelled at the boy hysterically, "Charlie, don't you dare look at me like... I'm... I'm a piece of shit! I'm... your mother and definitely not a nuisance, you brat!"

Actually she had been wanting to tell Charles the same exact words, that she wasn't a nuisance. 'I'm not a pest. Why does he always avoid me as if I were a rat?' she thought bitterly.

Astounded, Charlie knitted his brows and stared at Leila wordlessly.

Since he could remember, Leila never got mad at him like this.

After she vented out her surging emotions, she saw the tensed look at Charlie's innocent face. She instantly succumbed to regrets. Leila sprinted towards Charlie and tried to hug him. However, the boy raised both his hands up at his eye level to stop her from doing it.

Charlie didn't like being physically touched by others. And that was including Leila. Even though she was his mother and the only family he knew, he really couldn't get himself fully comfortable at being too close to her.

"I'm your mother, why don't you let me approach and hug you?" Leila asked, with a mortified expression. She suspected before, it was Charlie's inborn nature. So, she was just cool with his indifference in the past. But recently, she discovered that she was wrong after witnessing his attitude towards his father, Charles.

'In front of Charles, Charlie acts like a normal child. He played with him, laughed, got angry and

sometimes even behaved like a spoiled brat...

I raised him all these years, but why does he remain so distant from me? There was always like an invisible brick wall between us. His guards are up when I am around. With Charles, he is carefree and never gets bored. Is it because they share the same blood?' she wondered and shivered at the thought.

Already recovered from the recent shock, Charlie coolly replied, "You are thinking way too much." The boy couldn't figure out also and thought, 'I don't know why I have this aversion to Leila. Before Charles appeared, she was my only family and companion. Besides, she treats very well and loves me. She has provided me with everything. I actually couldn't ask for more. But I always feel weird each time she touches me, I get goosebumps all over my body and a revolting feeling ensues.'

"Am I?" Leila sneered disappointingly.

Leila suddenly fell on a long and sinister memory lane. 'He and Charles are very much alike in character. Like his father, he won't waste any time or emotions on other people or things they are not affectionate of. When I took him with me, he was just a baby and still very weak. Under my care, he

grew up into a healthy and well-behaved boy. Even though he is the son of the woman I hate most, I love him and have dedicated my whole life to him. I've made tough life choices with him as my top priority, without caring much for myself. I have never been mean to him... not even a bit.

I've done harrowing things in my life. Most of them involved him and his father, in particular. I've pushed

beyond my boundaries for Charles. I've committed sins I can no longer erase. Is this a retribution? If

Charlie learned that I killed his mother, he would never love me back. He will hate me for the rest of his life. No matter how well I've taken care and treated him, he will not forgive me. And... Charles, he won't hesitate to throw me in jail...

If that would be the case, all my efforts and sacrifices will be in vain, ' Leila thought with a disturbed grin. The more she thought about the possible consequences of what she did, the more afraid she became. She clenched her fists and concluded that she must continue to be determined and do whatever it took just to win this game.

"Charlie, I took great pains and sacrifices to raise you up all these years. You know it better than anyone else. You readily and affectionately accepted Charles... even Gary. Then why do you always

shut me out? We've lived together for so many years, but you only acknowledge and pour love on your father. You really think and feel that he is more important than me, don't you?" Leila whined. She continued airing her sentiments.

Then she noticed that Charlie again slowly furrowed his brows, Leila knew she wouldn't get any answers. She gave him a bitter smile and changed the topic. "Well, I won't push you. That topic is over. So, where did you go today?" she asked.

"That's none of your business," Charlie snapped back and added, "I know you like dad very much, but... he... doesn't like you. You should give up on him before it's too late."

"Did your dad tell you that?" Leila asked, looking so displeased. 'He is just a kid. He can't think of these words on his own, ' she pondered.

She was pretty sure that Charles taught him those words.

'To get rid of me, Charles would even use his own son, ' she thought angrily.

And, she longed for the thought that Charlie would side with her.

"No, he didn't," the boy answered, shaking his head. "I'm not an idiot. You mean nothing to him. Why not just let him go?" he said persuasively.

In fact, Charlie said those words only for Leila's sake.

Before meeting Charles, Charlie was very uncertain about Leila and Charles' relationship. But now, he was fully sure that his father would never fall in love with her.

Charlie observed that when Charles was faced with a woman he was attracted to, he became gentle and considerate. He would smile happily or put on a scowling face when annoyed. His emotions were so obvious just like what he visibly noticed when they were with Sheryl.

But, whenever he was with Leila, a stark contrast of aversion and indifference dominated his face.

The boy was sure that he was the only reason Charles didn't refuse to meet Leila.

'Even I can see, Charles will never accept Leila, but she still dreams of marrying him,' he said to himself.

Although Leila was a single mother and had a son, many suitors of her level pursued her in the past.

She was young and without a doubt, beautiful after all. However, Leila turned down all of them.

She was an ambitious woman. In her eyes, only Charles deserved her.

"Charles must have told you to give me this advice, huh? Just to get rid of me, he would push for such

a dirty plan. I'm impressed," Leila said with a cold smile.

'I used Charlie to get to Charles. But now, Charles used him to get rid of me. How ironic!' she thought.

Charlie quickly corrected Leila and with a frown uttered, "I just said, Charles had nothing to do with this.

I am trying to give you my own advice. It's for your own good."

Chapter 558 Something Has Changed

Charlie instinctively did not mention Sheryl to Leila. His gut told him that if Leila knew about Sheryl

there would be hell to pay. Thus, he kept his secret.

"Enough!" Leila cried out loudly with a frown on her face. 'This is the boy who I have been raising for

years. He's only known Charles for a few days. However, his loyalty is for his father instead of me. How

ridiculous and pathetic!' she thought bitterly with anger and sorrow.

She sneered and said in a cold voice, "It's late. You should go to bed."

Saying this, she stood up and left Charlie's room. She didn't want to argue with Charlie about these

things anymore.

Back in her room she took a shower and tried to calm down. As she lay in bed, Charlie's words kept

running through her mind. 'If Charles really hates me, nothing I do will matter, ' she thought to herself

secretly.

She had even employed the age-old trick of producing a son even before he could work out if he had ever had sex with her. But still Charles refused to accept her. She pondered on this and tried to figure out what she should do next.

Suddenly, she remembered Chris. Chris was most likely to be her only ally in that house. She would surely help Leila.

This thought cheered her up and Leila breathed a sigh of relief. She snuggled into the bed to make herself more comfortable. Although Chris had just given birth and should not be bothered, Leila knew she had no other choice. So she was determined to ask Chris for help the next day.

At the hotel

Ever since Sheryl got back to her room she just lay in bed. She neither undressed nor went for a bath.

When Sue came back after a midnight feast with the other models, she found the room dark. She thought Sheryl hadn't returned. As a result, when she turned on the light, she got a fright at the sight of Sheryl in bed.

"God, you freaked me out," Sue exclaimed, placing her hand over her racing heart. "I thought you

weren't back yet. Why did you lying in the dark?" she frowningly asked.

Sheryl made no reply and remained motionless in bed. It was as if she hadn't heard her friend at all.

What Sue did not know was that Sheryl had an issue raging in her mind. Sheryl was perplexed about why she hadn't experienced any attraction in all the years she had been with Anthony, but today, she had been strongly attracted to a strange man.

This curious reality left her both confused and ashamed.

It was as if she had done something wrong to Anthony.

"What's wrong, Sher?" Sue asked as she sensed something was majorly troubling Sheryl. She went up to the bed and placed her hand on Sheryl's forehead. She muttered, "No fever, are you... "

"I'm fine," Sheryl interrupted weakly. Sue stared at her doubtfully. She was sure that Sheryl was upset about something. After a moment of hesitation, she said softly, "Sher, I'm your best friend. In the past you have always confided in me. Why has this changed since our arrival in Y City?"

Sheryl gaped at Sue's innocent question.

She thought sadly to herself, 'Why has it changed?

When did the change begin? From the moment Sue got drunk and told me she liked Anthony or from

the moment Charles showed up?

She couldn't find the right answer to these questions, but she was sure something had changed between her and Sue.

Sheryl forced a smile on her face as she did not want to worry Sue. "I'm all right, really," she assured Sue. "I'm just extremely tired. It is nothing more than that. So don't worry about me."

"Okay... if you say so," Sue said in a doubtful voice. She would not force Sheryl if she did not want to talk. "Oh Sher, why didn't you answer Anthony's phone call? He called me when he was unable to get through to you."

Sheryl turned on her phone. She found it was on silent mode and that there were innumerable missed calls from Anthony.

"You better call him back immediately," Sue was quick to remind her. "I told him you were unwell and resting at the hotel."

Sue had lied to Anthony mostly because she did not want him to get worried. Besides, how could she tell Anthony that Sheryl had gone to the playground with a little boy she had just met, and the boy's

father. It was just too weird.

Sheryl gave a small nod. At this, Sue sensibly walked away to the bathroom to shower. She wanted to give Sheryl some privacy to talk to Anthony.

As soon as Sheryl dialled Anthony's number, he answered. "Sher, are you all right? I have been trying to contact you all night. You were not answering my calls," Anthony's worried voice came over the phone.

"I'm sorry," Sheryl said in a soft, low voice. She didn't know herself, if she was apologizing for not answering Anthony's calls or for her attraction to Charles.

"Sher, why are you apologizing? I'm not blaming you. I am just concerned about you," Anthony gently said. He could sense something strange in his girlfriend's tone. However, he was unable to understand what it was.

"Well," Sheryl explained, "I felt a little sick after dinner. So I returned to my room to rest and put my cell phone on silent. I didn't expect to fall asleep and that took for so long. If Mimi hadn't woken me up, I might still be sleeping."

Sheryl held her phone tightly as she lied. She stuck to the story that Sue had told Anthony about her. It

was the first time she had lied to Anthony. She had a strong feeling that it would not be the last lie she would be telling him.

"You were not well? Oh God! Tell me Sher, what's wrong with you?" Forgetting his anger at Sheryl for not answering the phone, Anthony began to worry about her health. "I shouldn't have let you go to Y City without me. I'm really worried about you," he said, his voice full of concern for Sheryl.

The more Anthony worried about her, the more Sheryl felt guilty about what she had done. Her guilt drove her to irritation and she snapped in a waspish tone, "Can you stop being so nice to me?"

She thought to herself, 'Your kindness only increases my guilt.'

Sheryl didn't dare voice this to Anthony.

Anthony was startled by her sudden anger. He asked tentatively, "Sher, my love, what's wrong? What has happened to you? Your behavior is worrisome."

"Nothing...nothing is wrong. I don't know why I am so stressed," Sheryl responded dryly. She then tried to compose herself and changed the subject. "Is Shirley asleep?" she asked gently.

"Yes dear, she has been asleep for sometime now," Anthony replied in a sad voice. "She was asking to

video chat with you before she went to bed. She remembered that her birthday is coming soon. She was eager to ask you whether you would be back by then to celebrate it with her. She is really excited about it, you know."

Sheryl felt a wave of regret. She had always celebrated Shirley's birthday with her. Unfortunately, this year her daughter's birthday fell on the same day as the show of BM Corporation.

Sheryl knitted her brows and said, "Anthony, please comfort her for me. Will you tell her that I'll make it up to her when I get back. I will celebrate her birthday again at that time."

Anthony replied, "Okay Sher. I will make her understand this. Don't you worry. Just take care of yourself and come back soon." Then he told Sheryl to rest. "It must be rather late in Y City. Go to bed. Don't wear yourself out."

"I know, I'll take care of myself." Finally, Sheryl cheered up a little. "Anthony, I am not a kid. Stop talking to me like you talk to Shirley," she teased in a laughing voice.

Chapter 559 Holley's Real Identity

With a smile, Anthony replied lovingly, "In my eyes, you will always be my little girl."

Sheryl felt no happiness when she heard the sweet words from her boyfriend. Instead, she felt heavy in her heart. She thanked him, said bye and hung up the hotel phone.

"You're so lucky. Your boyfriend regularly calls you every night. Look at me, I'm alone and no one cares about me," Sue sighed while walking out of the bathroom, toweling her wet hair.

"Are you sure?" Sheryl asked while looking at her friend. She walked to Sue and put her arm around her neck. "You still have me. I always care about you," she grinned.

"I'm serious," Sue responded. The two women laughed and joked while lying head to head on the bed.

After a short while, they were silent. Sheryl asked abruptly, "Mimi, how does it feel to be in love?"

"Seriously? You are the one with a boyfriend. Why ask your single friend that question? Are you kidding me? "Are you trying to be smart with me?" Sue pouted her lips, grumbling.

"Don't get me wrong. I just feel.. confused," Sheryl explained. 'Since I lost my memory, Anthony has always been by my side. But, do I really love him?' she questioned herself inside.

Sheryl couldn't figure out her true feelings towards Anthony. Perhaps, she just got used to having him around. She couldn't delineate companionship from love anymore.

The feeling was totally different when Charles held her hand. She found herself blushed and her heart pounded fast. She wasn't sure if that was love. But, she was sure she never felt the same way with

Anthony.

"Mimi, since I lost my memory, Anthony has always been with me. The first time I regained consciousness he was there. He told me that he was my boyfriend, but... I never felt that there was a deep chemistry between us. I just feel secure to have him around. I don't think the feeling I harbor for him is love. I'm confused," Sheryl blurted out her thoughts.

While she looked at the ceiling, her eyes narrowed. 'Perhaps, I've already regarded him as my elder brother, ' she thought.

"Do you have any idea what you are talking about?" Sue scowled at her best friend. "Now listen to me.

Love is a luxury not everyone can afford. People like us should find someone who will marry us and treat us very well. We can't be hopeless romantics because true love only appears in dramas or novels.

Anthony and you are meant for each other. He will be a good husband. Don't think too much dear," Sue lectured with so much emotion.

Sue already noticed Sheryl's weird behavior just recently.

When they were in America, Sheryl never raised questions like these. Sue assumed that something happened to her. Whatever that "something" was, it definitely changed her.

Out of concern, Sue rolled over and asked, "Sher, what's up? Did something happen to you?"

"Nothing... at all," Sheryl replied, avoiding Sue's suspicious gaze. "I just feel something is missing between me and Anthony. I'm wondering... if I really love him," Sheryl said.

"No girl, you're lying," Sue retorted firmly, staring at her friend. "You must be hiding something from me."

"No, I'm not," Sheryl replied nervously, staring back at Sue. As for her acquaintances with Charles, she intended to keep her confidant in the dark. She didn't want Sue to misinterpret her relationship with Charles.

Besides, she hadn't figured out her feelings for Charlie's father yet.

"Is that so?" Sue asked in disbelief. "Sher, you said you would never keep secrets from me." she narrowed her eyes and looked over at Sheryl.

"Yeah, I said so. You're such a good observant, how could I fool you?" Sheryl joked with an impish smile. "Go dry your hair now. I'm gonna take a shower," she urged.

She had no intention of confiding her feelings towards Charles to anyone.

In a presidential suite of a hotel at the twenty-second floor, the heavy breathing and deep moans of a man and a woman's voices resounded inside. After a fierce lovemaking, George felt exhausted and rested his naked, sweaty and muscular body on top of a very unfamiliar-looking woman.

Smiling, he pinched the woman's waist lightly. "Babe, how am I supposed to live without you? Promise you will never leave me," he whispered in a seductive voice.

"I promise," Holley replied bashfully. A dash of unnoticeable aversion flashed through her eyes as she spoke.

George was the owner of BM Corporation, an operator of a chain of shopping centers. He was a dashing young man with an athletic body. Although he was already her fiancée, she had no love for him.

He was just a tool she would use for revenge.

Holley pushed George aside. "I'm going to take a bath," she said.

She came into the bathroom and immediately went inside the shower booth. Standing under the spray of warm water, she rubbed her body hard with a towel, as if, trying to wash away all the marks George had left on her body.

George, who followed Holly, pushed the bathroom door open. His eyes fell on Holley's wet curvaceous body. "Babe, let me help you," he offered obsessively.

He was an energetic young man. In front of him was a seductive woman's naked body. He again succumbed to lust. He pounced on the beautiful Holly and wrapped his arms around her waist. Fully aware of George's intentions, Holley held his hands already on her waist. "Babe, I'm so tired. Just let me finish bathing this time," the woman pleaded in a cute voice.

She was too exhausted to follow George's advances again.

George withdrew his hands reluctantly. He got out of the shower and only wore a bath towel around his waist. When Holley walked out of the bathroom, George already prepared a bottle of wine. "Do you want some?" he asked, handing a wine goblet to the woman.

Holley took the glass. She was accustomed to drinking before sleeping. That was the only way to help her fall asleep at night. Suddenly, she recalled the time when she was bailed out by Ferry. After she fled prison, he had kept her in a small room. In her eyes, the place where she had been imprisoned into was no better place than jail.

In fact, she led a more miserable life there than in prison.

She lived like a whore. Once gangsters who worked for Ferry came to her, she must serve them with a smiling face.

If she cried, frowned or refused, she would be beaten up.

Ferry was also one of her 'clients'.

She stayed at that place for half a month. During that period, she had slept with thirty five men. When she lost hope and tried to kill herself, Ferry took her to Korea.

Ferry left her there totally wasted and almost dead. Then, he disappeared from her life. She chose to have a plastic surgery for she couldn't bear to look at her former face anymore. That face kept reminding her of her miserable past.

When she met George, she was just a clerk in a shopping mall. With no one to depend on, she had to work to survive.

Since the department store belonged to George's family, an idea to seduce the young, wealthy man occurred to Holley Ye: Yvonne Gu's new identity.

When she was trapped as Ferry's whore, she had learnt one thing.

That was how to entertain and tame men. Once she behaved obediently, the men would treat her tenderly.

Otherwise, she would be stricken and maltreated.

She tried all means to win George's affection including sleeping with him frequently and her plan worked. To be with her, George even had several fights with his family.

One day, Holley told George her decision to go back to Y City for an important, unfinished matter she had to do.

Chapter 560 Women's Countless Cunning

Holley tearfully narrated all the hardships she had been through her whole life. She had never spoken about any of this before and doing so caused a wide release of emotions. She started talking about the violent death her mother had suffered and then went on to her stint in jail, due to Autumn's wrongdoing.

She carefully avoided talking about the miserable days she had served as a whore. Those days had been unbearable and she had no desire to relive painful memories.

George, on the other hand, maintained a singular focus on the prosperous Y City. He was determined to fulfill his ambitions overseas and also have a fresh beginning with Holley. They deserved a new life.

When George went for the job interview, he was in for a nasty shock. He caught sight of Sheryl who resembled Autumn in the photo greatly. He rushed back to inform Holley of his discovery, which set off a series of consequences.

The torment that had resulted from that miserable days had transformed pitiful Yvonne Gu into an unscrupulous avenger, Holley Ye.

However, she remained calm and collected and determined to reach her goals.

"I have given the contract to Sheryl to weigh the pros and cons and come to a decision," George started,"but she seemed hesitant to give in."

Upon hearing his words, Holley expressed her vexation,"By hook or by crook, you have to get Sheryl to sign the contract or we will be in trouble."

Only when Sheryl stayed in Y City could Holley carry out her plan.

Holley was determined to get back at Autumn completely and absolutely for everything the latter had done to the former. Holley was intent on revenge.

Holley felt extremely superior at the thought of gaining victory but there was a long way to go.

George found it hard to reconcile this supercilious, arrogant version of Holley with her ordinary, sweet one. Every time Sheryl was merely mentioned, Holley seemingly transformed into a whole new person.

George frowned and continued, "You can rest assured. I will honor my promise, but..." He left his sentence unfinished.

During the short period of time he had spent with Sheryl, he had grown to like her. She was sweet, caring and a good woman. She was nothing like Holley had described.

"Since Sheryl has had amnesia, I saw no point in pressing the matter in your desire for vengeance.

She is totally clueless," George tried to talk Holley into aborting her pointless and cruel scheme against Sheryl.

Upon hearing George speak in favor of Sheryl, Holley flew into a fury. "George, how dare you defend that horrible woman? I thought you were on my side. Why don't you stop helping me instead?"

"Holley, dear, you misunderstand..." George frowned but continued hesitantly, "I don't think there is justification for your continued attempts to attack Sheryl, who has forgotten all the events of the past, both the good ones and the bad ones. For God's sake, the poor woman has amnesia!"

"Loss of memory? Ha! That's likely," Holley sneered. "Sheryl can pretend that she doesn't remember

driving my mother to her death and putting me in jail, but I will stop at no end until I get my vengeance and am satisfied."

Holley looked down at George haughtily, "Your role in this plan has ended."

"Holley, dear, you misunderstand me again..." George, sensing Holley's coldness, lost no time in proving his affection with a hug. He whispered his reassurance, "You may rest your mind for a while.

Have no doubt that I will serve you till your goal is accomplished."

Pacified by his words, Holley shifted her focus to her evil scheme against Autumn, as her other enemy, Ferry, remained out of contact.

Holley cuddled up and talked to George in a tone of grievance, "George, please put in some effort to understand my hardships and ordeals arising from Sheryl's actions. Now my sworn enemy is living comfortably in oblivion and having conveniently forgotten all her wrongdoings but I am spending every day still recovering from the hardship I have been through."

Holley passed herself off as an innocent girl before George, "It pains me to recall my suffering, especially my mother's violent death."

"Well, I fully sympathize with you. Please stop crying, I'm here for you." George felt pity for Holley and said, "From now on, I will cater to your every whim and treat you as my queen."

"Really?" Holley looked up at George with an expression that conveyed how touched she was.

"George, I would have met my end three years ago if it were not for God's will that we met. Now I am merely living to get even with Sheryl and love you. To miss out on either would make my life unlivable."

"Babe, you are absolutely forbidden to take death so lightly!" George reprimanded Holley firmly. He did not want to imagine a life without her. "Please rest peacefully. I will lend you my fullest support and assistance for whatever you want to do."

"Thank you very much, my darling," Holley said to George shyly, slightly surprised by his devotion to her.

Holley pretended to be a delicate and loving woman to sweet-talk George into helping her. He was an integral part of her plan.

Without Gu family to rely on, Holley had no option but to make the best of BM Corporation's resources to carry out her plan.

In another part of the city, Sheryl remained peacefully oblivious of the approaching danger. She was

still thinking about how to deal with Charles.

The next morning, Charles called Sheryl again, in an attempt to woo her. He was rejected though.

Sheryl believed it was necessary to destroy her relationship with Charles to avoid every possible trouble.

When the rehearsal concluded, Sheryl caught sight of Holley standing before her at the backstage.

With a bottle of water in hand, she expressed her compliments. "Sheryl, your performance was amazing. The way you were just moving was so gracefully and elegantly that both the men and women were admiring you."

Holley was speaking to Sheryl loudly purposely, in order to attract the attention of models present, which embarrassed Sheryl to no end. However, Sheryl did not object. Pressing forth, Holley continued, "Sheryl, I am coming to negotiate with you on particular terms and conditions of the contract.

George and I wanted to let you know that we are willing to even grant you concessions as long as they are reasonable."

Upon hearing the conversation, the passing-by models stared at Sheryl with growing jealousy.

'Why is Sheryl receiving special treatment? Nothing justifies her superiority, as she's even older and has a daughter, ' the jealous models wondered.

Holley's plan seemed to be working perfectly, with everything falling into place. All the models present started becoming hostile after witnessing the conversation. Their hostility arose from the indignation that came only from being ignored unfairly.

Sheryl, sensing the change in her colleague's attitudes, grabbed Holley's arm to continue their conversation elsewhere.