

Wedded Bride 811

Chapter 811 She's Not Here

Andy gave a wry smile and continued, "If Ferry comes back, he might target Sheryl again. We have to stay vigilant and keep her protected. Unfortunately my people have lost track of him. We have no idea where he is or what he's planning."

Charles' face was somber as he smoked his cigarette in silence. He only spoke to Andy after it was finished. "Well, this sounds like a huge inconvenience."

He paused and continued, "On the positive side, if he tries to strike again, there'll be no escape for him this time. He caused so much trouble three years ago, hurting Sher so badly and tearing me away from her. I have a huge score to settle with him. No mercy for him, he's not getting away with it."

Even though Andy knew that Charles was a man of his words, and perfectly capable of making it happen, he still couldn't chase away the worry deep in his heart. After all, Ferry was now in the shadows and they were in plain sight, making them easy targets for him.

He looked at Charles and told him, "If there's anything I can do to help, just let me know."

"Of course," Charles replied with a nod. He looked inside the house, watching Sheryl chatting and joking with her family. The happiness on her face warmed his heart, but also brought a combination of

guilt and concern. He couldn't let anything destroy her new-found happiness. He turned to Andy and

said, "Andy, I don't want Sher to know about this. Would you mind keeping it secret for a while?"

"Don't worry. I'm not going to tell them," Andy agreed. "It's better if we're the only ones who know about

this. I don't want them to worry, either."

Charles smiled with relief and went back in to join the family. He chatted with Sheryl for a while, acting

as if nothing had happened. Then he got up and told her, "It's getting late. I hate to leave but I really

should go home and get some rest. Don't forget about the new product launch tomorrow, Sher. Have a

good rest and sleep in tomorrow morning. You don't need to be at the rehearsal. Just attend the show

in the afternoon."

"Got it, boss." Sheryl smiled and nodded obediently. Then she walked Charles out and watched him

leave. Afterwards she immediately retired to her room and went to bed.

She tossed and turned for a while, going over her plan again. As soon as the launch event ended, she

was going to look for a suitable house to move into. She didn't feel comfortable staying at the Zhao

family house.

Even though this was her own family who welcomed her with open arms, she still felt that it was a little inappropriate for her to be staying there.

After all, she was already married and had her own children. It wasn't proper for them to be staying there.

The new product launch took place at a hotel in downtown Y City. Sheryl had heard that Charles invited a well-known star as a special guest.

But when she caught sight of the star backstage, she was taken aback. 'Is that Roger?' she asked herself.

"Mrs. Lu?" In the past three years, Roger had put in a lot of hard work and effort, and it had all paid off.

He was now an A-list celebrity and a popular household name.

His good looks and squeaky clean, scandal-free image had also helped a lot in his rise to becoming one of the most popular heartthrobs.

Roger might have played dirty at the beginning when he was just starting out, but he had never forgotten those who had helped him get there. When Charles asked him to attend the show, he

immediately agreed without a second thought.

The reason was simple. He wanted to repay the favor that Sheryl had done for him all those years ago.

Much to his surprise, the woman presumed missing for the past three years was there in the flesh right before his eyes.

Initially, he had thought he was mistaken, but when Sheryl turned around to face him, he was sure that it was indeed Autumn.

Overjoyed, he quickly made his way over to Sheryl. "Hi! What are you doing here?" he asked excitedly.

"Do you remember me? Roger Han."

He didn't know that Sheryl had recognized him the moment she had seen him. She just hadn't acknowledged him.

In the first place, they had barely known each other. It was true that she had given him a hand before, but at the end of the day, they had only been making use of each other.

And now, Roger was a famous celebrity and she was just some unknown model. She hadn't expected Roger to remember her and didn't want to look like a desperate suck up if she approached him first.

She was surprised that Roger had not only come over to talk to her, he also seemed genuinely

enthusiastic to see her.

"Don't you remember me, Mrs. Lu? When I was still a rookie, you helped me out, remember?" Roger

hastily introduced himself, seeing Sheryl remain silent.

In his nervousness, he unconsciously grabbed Sheryl's arm. Sheryl winced slightly and gently pushed

his hand away. She took a small step back and looked away briefly while she gathered herself. Then

she looked up at him and answered, "Yes, I remember you. What are you doing here?"

"Well, Mr. Lu invited me to the show and I accepted his invitation," Roger answered with a big smile.

Suddenly, he realized that the dress that Sheryl was wearing was one of the latest designs from

Shining Company. "Mrs Lu, why are you..." he began, puzzled.

"It's a long story," Sheryl cut him short, with a bitter smile on her face. "I have to get to work. We'll talk

about it some other time."

"Wait!" Roger stopped Sheryl as she turned to leave. "I'm having a party tomorrow night and I'd like to

invite you. To be honest, since you disappeared, I've been asking people to help me find you. Now that

you're back, I don't want to waste this opportunity. Will you do me the honor of attending my party?"

Roger asked, looking at her hopefully.

"Sure," Sheryl responded, smiling gently at his excitement.

Making a new friend was much better than adding more foes.

News of Roger's attendance had spread far and wide, attracting many young girls to the event. Despite the good turnout, the director was fuming. "Don't you models have an ounce of professionalism? This huge event is about to start, and yet one of you still hasn't shown up yet. Where is she!? Why can't any of you call her?"

"Director, it's gone to voicemail..." a crew member replied timidly.

"Keep calling until she picks up!" the director barked. "I really don't understand how she managed to become a model with this kind of attitude. I tell you, I will never ever work her again after this event," he continued ranting.

"What's going on?" Sheryl whispered to the model beside her. "Why is the director so angry?"

"You don't know?" The model looked at Sheryl in surprise. Then she said lightly, "Since you're close with her, you'd better give her a call and ask her to get here as soon as possible. This is an important event, it's inexcusable to be this late. If she doesn't show up, she's going to damage her modeling

career. No one will want hire her after this."

"You mean... Sue isn't here yet?" Sheryl was dumbfounded. The work for the models was carefully distributed and one less model meant less clothes were going to be displayed. Sue had been in the industry for a few years now and it was impossible that she did not know this yet. There had to be some kind of emergency that was causing her to be late.

Sheryl suddenly remembered the phone conversation that she had overheard the day before. 'Could anything have happened to Sue?' she wondered anxiously.

Chapter 812 Tattoo

Suddenly, Sheryl's mind was plagued with worry. Just as she was about to head out and find Sue,

Charles rushed towards her as he saw her in a hurry to leave. "What's going on? Why are you in a hurry?"

"Something happened." Sheryl's face looked almost blank, but her voice was clearly anxious. "Sue hasn't come yet. I'm afraid..."

The tension in Charles' shoulders dropped in relief. He smiled and reassured her, "Oh... that. You don't have to worry. Even if she doesn't come, the press conference will push through. Don't go anywhere,

okay? The press conference will start soon."

"But..." She kept looking anxiously at the door. She was torn because, on the one hand, she was worried about Charles' press conference, and on the other hand, she was worried about Sue's safety.

"Don't worry, everything will be okay," Charles assured her and patted her on the shoulder. "Don't think about it. You can go get your makeup done first."

Since Charles asked, she figured she should get ready. As soon as she turned around, the director burst the door open and started yelling, "Do you have any idea what time it is? Do you know how important today's event is? How can you be so relaxed? Don't you care about this conference at all? And here I thought you were capable of being professional. Where the hell have you been?"

Sheryl realized his eyes were trained on something behind her, so she turned around and found Sue apologizing to him. "I'm sorry director. something really important came up earlier. I didn't mean to be late, really."

"You've got better things to do?" he sneered in response. "So if everyone here tells me that they have something else to do, I'm just going to have to move the conference, is that it?" He was furious.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry..." Sue was still apologizing when Sheryl came to her side. "Director, we're already

pretty late. Why don't you scold her after the press conference is over? Let's have her go to makeup first."

Sheryl had a point, and the director stopped himself. He knew the relationship between Sheryl and Sue, so he evened his tone, "Fine. Now that Sheryl has spoken for you, I'll let the matter rest for now. Go get your makeup done. If the press conference is delayed because of you, you're gonna face hell later."

"Yes, director, I know." Sue nodded her head vigorously.

Sheryl pulled Sue into the dressing room and got her changed. Sue looked a little dazed as she let Sheryl take care of everything.

When they were done, Sheryl sat her down and put her hand on her shoulder. "Sue, what happened to you? Why were you late today?"

"I'm fine." Sue merely shook her head. She smiled weakly, looking fatigued. "It's nearly starting. Why don't you go prepare?"

"Sue..." Sheryl looked at her anxiously. She didn't want to leave her in such a state. "If there's

something wrong, tell me, okay?"

"Yes, I will." She curled her lips up into a smile, almost like she had to squeeze it out. When she put on her backless dress and saw herself in the mirror, her face turned melancholic.

The previous night when she returned, Peggy and Allen showed no mercy. They beat her up without warning, without a word. That morning, it took her everything to stand up and make it outside.

The dress did nothing to cover her bruised back. She was a model. If she walked out like that, the media wouldn't let the matter go.

She didn't expect Sheryl to come in that moment. The bruise was clear as day, and it made Sheryl frown. She walked over to her and handed her some kind of sheet.

"Paste this on." "This is..." Sue knitted her eyebrows.

"Don't worry, it's just a tattoo sticker. It'll come off after you wash it." They were originally for Shirley, but

Sheryl bought some extras because she thought they looked good and that they'd come in handy.

Sue looked at Sheryl, eyes glistening with gratitude. She didn't know what she would've done if it hadn't been for Sheryl's thoughtful kindness.

"Thank you," was all she could say.

The tattoo masked the bruise nicely. Relief washed over Sue, and she finally felt she could relax a bit.

Showtime was close, and Sheryl couldn't ask much more about the bruise. The press conference went on smoothly, and the orders came in flocks. The two girls could feel glad about it.

There was an evening cocktail party to celebrate the success of the conference. Sheryl wasn't planning on going. Sue, who normally liked that kind of party, felt rather off that day and didn't feel like attending it either.

She kept glancing at the door impatiently, as if she was in a hurry to go deal with something more important.

Sheryl brought her a glass of wine. "Sue, what's wrong? Did something happen to you?"

"No, I'm okay. Nothing happened." She smiled at Sheryl. "Oh, I wasn't able to properly thank you for today. If it hadn't been for you, I would've made a fool of myself, so thank you. Really."

"It was nothing." Sheryl shook it off. "Anyone would've done it." She smiled back at Sue. She knew that something must have happened, but wasn't sure how she should approach the matter.

After a few more moments of hesitation, she decided that she just had to ask again. "Mimi, we used to

be best friends. I don't want to see you like this. I don't know what you're going through, but if you're in trouble, I want you to know that you can tell me. You can tell me anything, and I'll do what I can to help you."

"I..." Sue trailed off, her smile turning bitter. She felt deep regret about how things turned out, all because of a man. Luckily, Sheryl didn't care about all that.

She could see that her old friend was being sincere, and considered telling her everything. After considering it, though, she was afraid that she would get Sheryl tangled up in the mess of her family.

"I'm fine, really." With a gentle tone, she said, "Sher, I know you're being kind, and you want to help. I really appreciate what you've done for me. I've wronged you too many times before, and I really don't have the right to call myself your friend anymore."

"Sue..." It only concerned her further. Sheryl still couldn't read what was going on in Sue's head, but she knew deep down that she was saying such things to keep her out of her business.

The thought made her angry, and she had to make something clear. "Sue, you don't have to hide it from me. I overheard you on the phone yesterday. It was your family, wasn't it?"

Her words made Sue's face turn pale. She bowed her head low to hide the emotions surfacing. "No, it was not like that. Don't worry about me, I'm okay."

"What are you afraid of, Sue? Why are you still trying to hide it? Do you really think I'm clueless?" She looked at Sue pointedly. "Look at the wound on your back. What good is it for you to hide like this?"

"I..." Embarrassment started creeping up Sue's face. She looked at Sheryl briefly. "That's enough."

Chapter 813 An Invitation From Roger

Sue didn't want to reveal all the stories of her family drama. She was ashamed, more than anything, to ever talk about it, especially to Sheryl. If she did, it would be inevitable that she'd get Sheryl into another mess, and she thought she'd done enough to cause her suffering.

She cast an indifferent gaze at Sheryl, and her tone suddenly became cold. "We're not friends anymore, Sheryl. Have you forgotten? I was the third wheel between you and your boyfriend. I destroyed your relationship with him. Why are you still acting so concerned about me? Shouldn't you hate me by now?"

The more kindness and care Sheryl gave her, the more uncomfortable Sue felt. She couldn't wrap her head around it.

Sue once thought she could've drawn a final line between Sheryl and herself, and they'd never have anything to do with each other again. It was futile, to her surprise. Sheryl didn't act resentful, or irritated.

Instead, she said flatly, "The thing with you and Anthony... I've never thought about blaming you. Not for a second. But if you really don't want me to intervene, then I won't do anything about it."

She paused for a moment. "I just want to tell you that if there's anything, anything at all, that I can help with, then let me know. Please. Even if you forget everything else that happened between us, just keep this in mind, alright?"

"That's enough! I don't need your pity! I don't need it. Not from you, not from anyone!" She sneered as she said the words. "It's getting late. I'm going home now." She simply turned around and left.

None of Sue's outbursts and resistance made Sheryl's worry fade. Sheryl didn't want the conversation to end like that. "I know you're a person of high self-esteem. I'm not surprised you don't want to talk to me, that's fine. I can't blame you. But Sue, you're not alone now. You've got a boyfriend to support you. If anything becomes too much, you can always ask Anthony for help. He'll help you, I know it."

As she said it, Sue didn't turn around once. She only sped up her pace when Sheryl finished talking.

As soon as she was out of sight, Charles came over. He walked over to Sheryl. She was in a daze, her face looking a little blank as she stared at the door. "What happened, dear? Are you bored?" he asked curiously.

He frowned, and tried to look into her eyes and lighten up her mood. "Wait a second. I'll bring you home after I finish sending off my business partners."

"Thanks, but there's no need. It's fine." She wanted Charles to stay, and he knew it. He was fully aware that such a social occasion wasn't her cup of tea. What he offered wasn't possible, anyway, and she knew it. The absence of a semi-famous model wasn't a big deal, but Charles, ever the outstanding figure, couldn't just disappear from an important party. The consequences wouldn't be worth it.

He was the leading man of the occasion. The party itself might not be so significant, but the number of potential business partners made it crucial to his network. She didn't want to cause any trouble for Charles' business.

She put on a smile and did her best to look like she was in a light-hearted mood. "I'm okay, Charles.

Don't worry about it. I can stay here."

"You look pale, though. Are you sure?" Unconvinced, he looked anxious about leaving her there. "Why do you look so worried? Is it too tiring for you?"

As he said it, his hand found its way to Sheryl's forehead. He wanted to check her temperature, but Sheryl moved out of his reach.

At the event, there was no doubt that Charles was under the spotlight. All the attendants had their eyes on him. Sheryl, however, wanted to avoid becoming a topic of gossip because of their relationship, so she kept away at a safe distance to avoid any rumors going around.

Feeling Charles' worry, she smiled again, rather tightly. "I'm really alright, Charles. I'm just a little bit concerned about Sue."

"Sue?" He frowned upon hearing her name. As someone who liked being in control, he had another model in place, in case anything happened. Even if she didn't show up, his conference wouldn't have been affected.

"Why are you worrying about her?" he asked.

"You don't understand," replied Sheryl. She was hesitating about telling him what had happened between her and Sue. Sue didn't even want Sheryl to know what happened to her, let alone Charles. It

would be inappropriate for her to tell him any details. "Nothing, it's something personal. I was just worried about her."

Before he could prod further, his name boomed through the speakers as the emcee called him to the stage. With a worried glance at Sheryl, he said, "I have to go first. Wait for me for a while, please. I'll be back as soon as I finish the speech."

Sheryl nodded. "Alright, I'll stay here."

He looked like a different person on stage. Up on a platform, he looked radiant and confident. His movements and expressions were full of charm, and Sheryl was in awe.

She couldn't stop herself from smiling at the sight. His charm was a little addicting.

"Mrs. Lu," she heard from behind her, and it pulled her out of her indulging day dream. When she turned around, she was surprised to see that it was Roger. Noticing that people were giving her glances, she hurriedly corrected him. "My name is Sheryl Xia now."

"Sheryl Xia?" It caught him by surprise. He had known her as Autumn Zhao. After going missing for three years, she became "Sheryl Xia"?

"Miss Xia," he addressed her again. It didn't take much for him to accept the change. He was rather used to strange things happening when it came to Autumn, or Sheryl then. From the moment he met her, he could tell that she had a chest full of secrets.

Seeing her face, he felt a sense of joy. It was the kind of joy that one would feel when something missing for too long was finally found. "I can't believe I'm seeing you right now after three whole years.

Your performance was great. You're practically a professional model now. Congratulations!"

She smiled back politely without really replying to his comments. "You've become so different now, Mr. Han, compared to the young and inexperienced man you were three years ago. You stand out in any crowd you're in, so attractive."

He chuckled. "I'm flattered, Miss Xia." He smiled wryly and continued, "I wouldn't have become the person I am today without you. You helped me. I'll never forget what you've done for me. If you ever need anything that I could help with, please never hesitate to tell me. I'll do anything I can for you.

Please don't reject it. I'm just trying to give something in return for all you've done over the years."

She gave a grin in return. "Thank you, Roger. I won't trouble you. I helped you because we had a deal.

It wasn't just out of kindness. You should only really be saying 'thank you' to yourself. You are who you

are today because of your own efforts, not mine. In fact, you've already paid me back by lending me a helping hand three years ago. You don't have to worry about it anymore."

Her words and tone were perfectly polite, but it was still a rejection. It upset him to see that she had become so distant.

Nevertheless, he continued to offer, "Still, whatever you say, I'll never forget your kindness and help.

Just know that I'm here for you, alright? If you ever need me in the future."

Before she could respond, he switched the topic. "I'll ask my people to send you a formal invitation to the party tomorrow. It would be our honor to have you there."

"Rest assured. I've already agreed to it and I'll definitely be there," she replied plainly.

"Party? What party?" As soon as she ended her sentence, Charles appeared, almost as if out of

nowhere. If eyes could kill, Roger would've been dead for a thousand times. Back on stage, Charles

could see Roger trying to flirt with Sheryl in the corner of his eye. The jealousy overtook him, so much

that he wrapped up his speech shorter than what was appropriate, and made his way towards Sheryl in

a hurry. He managed to hear the bit about Roger inviting her to some party, and it made his jaw clench.

His eyes still on Roger, he took a step in front of Sheryl, as if to shield her.

"Roger was inviting me to..." "I'm asking Mr. Han," Charles interrupted her as he glared at Roger.

She pursed her lips. Clearly, Charles' tone was angry, and she thought better than to do anything to rile him up more. She sighed quietly to herself instead.

Chapter 814 An Unexpected Kiss

As a man, Roger could absolutely understand the reason behind Charles' hostility towards him. He grinned and replied to Charles, "I want to invite Miss Xia to my party tomorrow."

"Really?" Charles raised his eyebrows and asked. He tried to bring a smile on his face but failed to hide his state of mind. "I'm wondering, if I can have the honor to be invited, too?" he said.

"You?" Roger blurted out in surprise. He didn't expect this to come from Charles. Evidently, it made him a little embarrassed. However, he made it up with a smile and added, "Of course! It's my honor to have you as my guest, Mr. Lu. I was only skeptical thinking that you were too busy to make time for it. I didn't want to push you if..."

"Mr. Han, I owe you a favor today. You helped me so much. The party is important for me. I'll definitely make time for it no matter what happens tomorrow. Well of course... Unless, you don't want me to be there." Charles' politeness in his speech did not match with his eyes as he spoke. And Roger was not a

fool who would not be able to read his eyes.

Charles happened to be one of the most influential people in Y City. Roger was very clear in his mind that he couldn't be so successful without Charles' help. Even though Sheryl was the person who helped him directly, Charles' influence played a very important role.

Roger recalled the stories of Rachel. Prominent as she was, she got brought down overnight so easily.

He knew it very well that if he displeased Charles, it would bring about death bolt to his career.

"I'm flattered. I can't tell you how fortunate I feel, Mr. Lu. It's truly an honor for me. I'll send an invitation

later," Roger said to Charles with smile. "I'm looking forward to meeting both of you tomorrow, Miss Xia and Mr. Lu. I am scheduled to have a shooting after a while, so I need to take my leave now. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" Charles bid a farewell to him with a polite smile. After Roger had walked up to a distance, he turned to Sheryl and asked, "Do you know him well? Why did you accept his invitation to the party?"

There was concern in Charles' voice as he spoke with Sheryl.

"Why? Is there any problem?" Sheryl was stunned to see Charles being so speculative. She couldn't

understand why Charles' attitude changed so drastically in a matter of just a few moments.

He was so gentle and nice when Roger was there. Then, why did he become so angry the moment

Roger left? Sheryl looked at him with a confused face.

Charles maintained a somber expression and stared at her silently. Sheryl started to think hard -- if she

had done something wrong. She somehow felt guilty in front of him. She said, "Since he invited me, I

couldn't find a reason to refuse him. What's more, we have experienced something together. So I

thought attending a party would not be a big deal. Did I do anything wrong?"

"Experienced something together!" Charles' eyes popped out as he blurted. Then he narrowed his eyes

and gave an extremely rough look that frightened Sheryl. "Sheryl, do you want to drive me mad?" he

added.

"Of course not! I never..." Sheryl stammered. She stared at Charles anxiously, and then all of a sudden

she paused as she realized something.

She came closer to Charles and looked carefully at Charles' face as if trying to find a proof.

Initially, Charles was startled when her face suddenly came close. He dodged slightly and asked, "What

are you doing?"

"Hmmm. I can actually smell something burning. I just want to know whether you are jealous!" Then

she turned his face with her hands from one side to another and asked, "Mr. Lu, are you jealous?"

Sheryl's face broke into a wide smile. She captured a hint of embarrassment flashing on Charles' face

as she spoke, therefore she was confirmed.

She then burst into a hearty laughter just like a little girl. 'The serious CEO, Charles Lu could be jealous

to a handsome young man!' The more she thought about it, the more it tickled her funny bones.

"You! Stop laughing at me! Stop it! Or I'll punish you if you keep laughing!" Charles made a fierce face

and threatened Sheryl. Sheryl's face had turned red from laughing.

It was indeed a rare sight to see Charles jealous. Sheryl knew it was enough and she shouldn't overdo

it. She waved her hands and promised, "No laughing any more. I promise!"

Charles stared at her beautiful face marking the redness on her cheeks and her bright eyes that got an

extra spark when she was laughing so heartily. His heart melted at the sight of her face. However, he

still remained serious and said, "Keep distance from that Roger."

He invited Roger here because he was a famous star. But when he noticed Roger's eyes towards

Sheryl, he regretted his decision immediately. He felt that he had brought trouble for himself!

The way Roger looked at Sheryl, there were surprise, appreciation, happiness and above all admiration in his eyes.

Every time Roger looked at Sheryl and interacted with her with utter politeness, their camaraderie hit him like a thunder bolt. He didn't like anyone to look at his woman like that.

Sheryl looked at him and spoke with a reassuring smile, "Take it easy! We are only common friends, nothing more than that."

She sized him up and continued, "I accepted his invitation only because he had helped me years ago. I didn't think much about it. If I had known you would dislike it, I would have turned him down."

"Really?" Charles was finally pleased by her answer. He heaved a sigh of great relief and a soothing smile appeared on his face which made Sheryl feel so peaceful. He stared at Sheryl and said, "That's more like it!"

After the feast got over, Charles drove Sheryl to her home. When they arrived, Sheryl unfastened the seat belt and said goodbye to Charles, "Thanks for driving me home. Be safe. Goodnight!"

"Goodnight!" Charles nodded and looked at her as he rested his head at the back of his seat.

"So... I'm leaving now!" As Sheryl looked at his face, her heart skipped a beat. Somehow she was unwilling to part with him.

She shook her head, trying to drive away this ridiculous feeling from her head.

Charles burst into a smile when he saw her cute behavior. Suddenly he called her in a soft voice,

"Autumn."

"What?" Sheryl replied looking rather surprised.

It had been such a long time that anybody had called her by that name. It had been so long that she had almost forgotten this name.

"Why do you call me Autumn now?" Sheryl looked confused as she asked Charles.

"Because..." As he spoke, Charles suddenly leaned towards her. Before Sheryl could even guess what was in his mind, the distance between them became closer and closer. Sheryl couldn't help moving backwards. However, the little space in the front seat of the car did not provide much room for her to move. In no time, Sheryl found herself tightly pressed to her own seat with Charles leaning on her completely.

He was so close that their breathes collided with each other.

He was so close that she could even count his eyelashes and feel his warm breath. She looked into his eyes as he set them firm on her eyes.

She was very nervous. She could feel her heart beating against her chest as if it would come out of her mouth. In fact, she could even hear Charles' heart beat.

She swallowed and took a few breaths. She moved her hands to push Charles away but he grasped them tightly. His warm hands embracing her, his warm breathes falling on her face -- she felt as if she was starting to melt in his arms.

She panicked and blushed. She looked just like a vulnerable little girl. She urged him, "What... what are you doing? Let go of me!" She could not recognize her voice as she spoke. The more stern she tried to sound, the softer and sweeter she sounded.

"And what if I don't?" Charles' voice became heavy as he gave a wicked smile.

"You are..." Sheryl frowned at him. Not knowing what to do, she could only ask him, "What do you want to do?"

Charles laughed aloud. He replied, "I called you Autumn just now because Autumn is my wife. And I don't need to ask for my wife's permission if I want to kiss my wife, right?"

Sheryl just froze on her seat. She stared at Charles in a state shock. Before she could even retaliate to what he said, her lips were sealed by Charles' own lips.

Suddenly Sheryl found herself trapped in his strong embrace and her unfinished words were swallowed in their loving kisses.

His tongue slipped into her mouth, explored every corner of it aggressively and tasted her smell greedily.

Years later they found each other once again. At this very moment, the world around them ceased to exist. It was just the two of them as they lost themselves in the passionate embrace of each other forgetting everything around them.

Chapter 815 A Good Beating

Charles was losing himself in the lingering scent that came from Sheryl. His breath became quicker and searing. Sheryl, who was in shock and amazement just a moment ago, was gradually immersed in a deep and passionate kiss.

Charles' kiss deepened and became hungrier. After a good while, he realized that he had an erection.

"Damn!" he cursed angrily and released Sheryl from his arms.

Sheryl blushed. She cast a furtive glance at Charles, but had no idea how to deal with such a situation.

"I... I'll go now," she whispered, embarrassed and shy.

Then she immediately opened the door and pretty much ran away.

Charles struggled to get back his breath as he fixed his eyes on Sheryl from the car window. A smile of satisfaction broke on his lips. From the kiss, he was sure that Sheryl could not only get intimate with him but even enjoyed it.

This made his heart spring with joy.

Since the time Sheryl flung open the car door and escaped, she did not look back even for once. She ran straight back to her bedroom, rushed to the bathroom, and stood in front of the mirror.

She had a myriads of conflicting emotions colliding on one another. She should have been angry, or at least surprised, at the unexpected kiss, but the woman in the mirror was just flushed with shyness and showed no other expression. She tried to blame herself but her heart defied her with all its might. It just wanted to sing a happy song. She could not stop smiling. She tried to look strict but her face defied. It

sported a sense of completeness and bliss that it had been missing for years.

She squeezed her cheek and scolded herself, "Sheryl, what's wrong with you? Get sober."

Then she took a shower to calm herself down. As the water fell on her face and glided over her lips,

she could not stop herself from closing eyes and feeling the warmth of Charles' lips on hers once

again. She had just sat down in bed after the shower when her cell phone rang. It was a short text from

Charles, saying, "Good night."

Holding her phone in both hands, Sheryl stared at the text message and giggled for a while.

Sue didn't go straight home after she left the party. Her house that once gave her a sense of security

had been acquired by people who would do everything to deny the slightest peace of mind for her. After

walking along the street for a long time and feeling the wind on her face, Sue realized that she had to

go back to her house even though she didn't want to.

Where else could she go? Her brain prompted her to move towards her house while her feet refused to

take a single step in that direction.

'There is no place for me in such a big city. How ridiculous!' she thought, feeling deeply aggrieved.

Even after reaching her apartment, she stood downstairs for a long time. She wanted to stay away as

long as she could. She did not move upstairs till the time she could not stand the mosquitoes.

As soon as she opened the door of her apartment, she became all the more depressed. A sudden gloom fell upon her making her feel absolutely dark inside her mind. She had only been away for a day, and her clean house had become a pigsty. Sunflower seed shells, empty drink bottles and instant noodle boxes littered the floor. Crumpled clothes and shoes lay about on the couch, chairs and the floor.

The room was in such a mess that Sue hardly had any space to put her feet and walk.

She knew Peggy was dealing her a head-on blow.

A stiff frown settled on her face as she watched her apartment from one side to another. She thought to herself, 'God knows when the dark days would come to an end?'

But now she had to clean up the house as soon as possible, or she would not be able to rest tonight.

Sue gave a heavy and weary sigh and began to tidy up the house silently. She took a glance on Peggy and Allen who were sleeping comfortably.

Peggy was sleeping on Sue's bed while Allen was fast asleep on the couch. Sue was amazed at the

extent of their insensitiveness. Out of resentment, she made a loud noise when she picked up the bottles on the floor. Peggy came out of the bedroom angrily, pointed at Sue's nose and scolded, "Can't you be a little quieter? I'm going to skin you alive if you make any more noise."

After that, Peggy returned to the bedroom and slammed the door shut behind her. Looking at the closed door, Sue was almost on the verge of crying. She felt so sad and helpless. After all, she was just a twenty-something girl who deserved some love and care from her family.

Many girls of her age are adored and indulged by their seniors. They are still the apple of their seniors' eyes. Take Sheryl for example. She was now a mother of two children, but in her family's eyes she was still a little girl who needed to be cared for. Sue's heart broke as she compared her state with Sheryl.

She thought of Sheryl's family. How refined and cultured they all were.

Unfortunately, Sue didn't have a happy family. She was forced to learn to be independent and strong at an early age. She even had thought countless number of times that why her family didn't just give her away.

"Stop it!" Allen yawned as he sat up and stretched. "What's the use of all this? Even if you clean it up, it's going to be as messy as a pigsty tomorrow." He gave a disregardful glance at Sue as he spoke this

in a sleepy voice.

"You..." Sue got furious at Allen and dropped her broom out of anger. "What do you want?" she demanded in a cold and hushed voice.

No sooner did Peggy and Allen reached, Peggy started her physical and verbal abuses on her. Last night she punched Sue. But neither Allen nor Peggy mentioned what they came for. Sue knew that the punch was just the beginning and that life would only get worse for her.

Sue was tired of her family. She was really fed up of being haunted by her mother and brother like this.

Now she was desperate to break up with them.

It was actually been a long journey for her now and she wanted it to end at any cost. Whatever life would throw at her in the future, she would be content as long as she could just get rid of Peggy and

Allen. "Sh! Quiet..." Allen hushed her as he moved closer to her. "Behave yourself." Allen stared aggressively at Sue and sneered, "If mom wakes up one more time because of you, she is going to beat the shit out of you." Then he gave a very wicked and dirty smile.

Sue felt very bitter towards Allen's scoundrel manner. She felt miserable and frustrated thinking about

her own family.

'This is my family. This is one place under the sun where good sense can never prevail. And these are the people closest to me. They drag me down and plot against me all the time. Why do I have such a terrible family?' The more she thought about it, the heavier her heart started to feel.

Sue brought a cold smile on her face and spoke in a stern voice, "Allen, mom does spoil you all the time. But don't you dare expect me to tolerate your nonsense. I'm telling you, I'm not the girl I used to be three years ago. If you still treat me like you did three years ago, I will absolutely..."

Before Sue could finish, Allen literally plunged on her from the couch and grabbed her by the neck. He spoke with a grimace of rage in an extremely cold and intimidating voice.

"How dare you mention what happened three years ago? That was the time when you created your own death!" Allen gritted his teeth and looked fiercely at Sue. "Three years ago, you escaped and got your freedom. Did you ever think of me?" As he spoke, he mercilessly tightened his grip on Sue's neck.

"That bitch took my money and ran away. The man you were supposed to get married to demanded his money from me. But where would I get the money? He almost maimed me. Open your eyes and look at my leg! Look! I'm still not able to walk properly. It was all because of you. All your fault!" Allen

thundered.

Sue was choking under Allen's tight grip. She gasped and struggled desperately to loosen his grip. He let out another dirty smile and continued in a cold and hissing voice, "So, you owe me. Do you understand? Don't play tricks with me, or else you will have to repent."

After the threat, Allen threw Sue back on the ground as he released her. Sue coughed and recovered from choking. After catching a few breaths she felt better. Then she looked up at Allen and spoke in a croaked voice that happened due to the prolonged pressing on her vocal chord. "You brought this on yourself. How could you even think of selling me for money just because you wanted to get married? I tell you, if it happens again, I will still run away and this time you will not be able to find me."

Sue glared at Allen with hatred and blurted her heart out. Evidently, she had no niceties to share with her brother. She then laughed angrily as she continued with bitterness in her voice, "Rest assured. If you are really disabled, I will support you by all means. After all, you are my brother." She looked at Allen with pity.

"You bitch, how dare you curse me..." Allen's face was flushed with fury. He flung onto Sue and started

hitting her. He kept taking out all his frustration on her with every blow and did not stop until he saw Sue lying on the floor almost on the verge of death.

He left her on the ground bleeding and wreathing in pain. Of course, he wouldn't beat his sister to death. After all, he and his mother came to Sue with a purpose, and Sue was useful to them till the time they achieved their purpose.

Chapter 816 Peggy's Make-believe

Sue was lying on the ground. Her eyes glared with total defiance at Allen. Though she struggled for breath, she was invulnerable. She could no longer feel the excruciating pain that was tormenting her whole being. After taking her time to gather her thoughts, she then steeled herself; holding Allen's gaze, she cried, "Why don't you kill me? So we can end this entirely!"

"There is no use for you to challenge me!" Allen yelled at her. He tentatively took a step and turned his back away from her. He quickly retired into the couch. Leaning forward slightly, he glanced at Sue contemptuously and hissed menacingly, "This is not yet the perfect day to kill you! We will get there.

Don't worry!"

Sue, who was in a trance, slowly forced a smile as the cold realization set in. She knew that more suffering would come her way.

She continued to stare at the wall facing her till her eyes grew heavy. But how could she sleep when her mind was still fully awake? Thinking of the possible ordeal waiting for her the next day, she forced herself to get some sleep. She would need all the energy she could get to survive the day tomorrow.

Peggy was too absorbed in satisfying her vainglory. She was oblivious to what was happening outside Sue's bedroom. She was stretching her whole body comfortably in Sue's Simmons bed. Her face was bearing a smug look as her eyes carefully roam around the room afraid to miss even the slightest detail. When her gaze landed on Sue's closet, she began to rummage the neat pile of clothing. After finding a beautiful set of Sue's pajamas, she hastily slipped it on and happily admired her reflection in the mirror. With a satisfying grin on her lips, she finally sprawled herself on the bed and slept soundly.

The next day, Peggy woke up with a start. She reluctantly got up. After relieving herself in the bathroom, she then headed out to find Sue still sleeping. Peggy deliberately roused her and demanded her to prepare some breakfast.

Sue was startled and bolted upright immediately when Peggy's voice rang in her ears. She had to shrug off the lingering sleepiness in her head. Closing her eyes for a brief moment as if she was

drawing in her inner strength, she then sluggishly made her way to the kitchen and started cooking with whatever available in her apartment's refrigerator.

Several minutes passed when she had finally readied the table. When Allen walked in, his face showed annoyance. He was not satisfied with the meal that Sue had painstakingly prepared. He sharply criticized her, "Sue, how can you treat Mom and me like this? We have come a long way. And we endured so much of the difficulties of travel in going here. We deserve your hospitality!"

"Then don't eat and just leave!" Sue haughtily replied in a tone laced with displeasure.

"How rude! Try saying it again and I will certainly let you see what you are looking for!" Allen's initial impulse was to argue with Sue. However, Peggy intervened when she sensed the trouble looming over.

She immediately coaxed Allen to pacify him, "Stop quarreling! Let us share the meal, okay?"

Hearing his mother's plea, Allen became lenient and relented easily. Peggy was so pleased to see

Allen enjoying his meal. The food, after all, was not that bad at all.

Sue felt depressingly sad seeing the way Peggy and Allen interacted with each other. It only showed how much Peggy valued Allen over her.

Done with their breakfast, Sue took care of the housekeeping. Peggy and Allen were sitting on the

couch. And They were too engrossed on watching TV, paying little attention to Sue.

Sue was exhausted after getting all the chores done by herself alone. When she caught a glimpse of the two lounging at her couch, Sue's anger simmered. She marched angrily towards them. After turning off the TV, Sue confronted Peggy and Allen.

Realizing what Sue had done, Peggy approached Sue with curses and cried, "Sue, where are your manners? Why are you so disrespectful?"

Sue looked at Peggy squarely and indifferently and then said, "Peggy Li, what are you scheming about behind all this? What kind of trouble are you brewing for me this time?"

Sue watched the two of them closely while she appeared very calm and collected when she said, "Tell me your true intentions or leave this place right now!"

Sue wanted to know their ulterior motive. She wouldn't hesitate to chase them out of her apartment even if they were blood-related.

"What are you saying? Do you want to throw us out of here?" Allen felt agitated and snapped at her.

Then he took a step towards Sue threatening to beat her again.

"How dare you?" Sue hurled back harshly. And in a firm and steady voice, she continued, "I will make you suffer tenfold if you beat me again!"

A sudden fear gripped Allen's guts when he saw Sue acting bold and determined. Her resolute demeanor intimidated him.

Peggy acted smart when she felt Sue's hostility. She instinctively drew Allen back and mediated, "Allen, how can you challenge your elder sister like this? Calm down."

Peggy patted Allen's back meaningfully and said, "Do not forget that it is your elder sister who supports us financially. She deserves our due respect!"

"Mom...." Allen stammered. Allen wore a baffling expression. He was confused about his mother's unexpected change of attitude.

But Sue was not the least affected. She knew Peggy well. She was fully aware of Peggy's old trick to soften her heart.

She disdainfully detested such trick. It did nothing but weakened the family ties.

Peggy eyed Allen meaningfully and said calmly, "Allen, please go to your elder sister's bedroom for a while and rest. I have something to talk over with her."

"But Mom...." Allen mumbled as he protested indignantly. He was still hesitant to leave the scene. He kept glancing at his mother's eyes searching for some hint.

"Go ahead! Get some sleep. It's comfortable there." Peggy looked at his son affectionately as she urged him to take a good rest on the comfortable and luxurious bed.

His mother's gentle persuasion melted his resolve and Allen conceded. Seeing Allen heading towards the room, Peggy waved Sue to sit beside her.

Sue almost rolled her eyes out while she watched the way the duo acted. It irked her. But when Peggy motioned her to sit beside her, Sue was way more mentally prepared for Peggy's trick disguised by tenderness.

Sue, who maintained her calm and collected composure, slowly steered herself towards the couch but chose to sit afar from Peggy.

She looked at Peggy indifferently and quickly said, "Blurt it out. Get down to business and quit beating around the bush!"

Peggy, sensing Sue's irritation, edged her way toward Sue to facilitate the talk. She ignored the

scowling expression plastered in Sue's pretty face.

Sue was getting impatient. She immediately opened her mouth and talked to Peggy in a frank manner,

"Peggy Li, spare yourself the trouble of this make-believe, which nearly drove me to marry that old

wifeless man. Now... I won't be taken in! Not anymore."

Sue had recalled all the memories in her mind. But she had no slightest sadness in reviving her painful

past.

She was a survivor. And she had been accustomed to living in pain.

"Sue, it is I who failed you..." Peggy gently said as she reached out grasping Sue's hands. And then

she succumbed to tears. Seeing Peggy in that state only aroused Sue's sarcasm even more.

Sue knew if Peggy was to be an actress, she could be able to grab the best actress award.

"Stop your pretension! It only sickens me!" Sue cut in on Peggy's impressive act. "I have seen through

you. You prized Allen over me. And I am nothing short of a tool you leverage to serve your end. I least

expect your maternal love and affection!"

Chapter 817 Stop Wasting Your Breath

After Sue had finished talking, the awkwardness on Peggy's face was obvious. She looked at Sue and

asked, "Sue, do you really need to speak to your mother in a such a hurtful manner? I know I haven't

been a good mother. I realize now that I've made so, so many mistakes. If I could turn back time, I would never do any of those terrible things to you. I have truly realized the error of my ways. Could you please forgive me? Give your mother a second chance, would you?"

"Forgive you?" Sue scoffed. "Do you really think it's that simple? If 'sorry' could fix anything, we wouldn't need any policemen or any sort of justice system in the world!"

Peggy looked uneasy. She had known from the start that this visit was not going to go smoothly and already prepared herself mentally for every single situation she could imagine. No, she could not give up so easily. If she had to face these words from her daughter, she was willing to do it.

Sue looked at Peggy and asked coolly, "So, what do you want this time? Just get straight to the point, before I ask you to leave."

A look of viciousness flashed across Peggy's face as her daughter's words triggered her anger and hatred. Somehow, she managed to regain control of her emotions just in time. She faked a caring, motherly tone as she asked, "Sue, you've been on your own for the past few years. How have you been?"

"I'm sure you can see for yourself," Sue shot back. She then continued with a scornful look, "I've been surviving on my own ever since I moved out as a teen, remember? Everything that I have today is a result of my own blood, sweat and tears. I never once mentioned my miseries, sorrow and pain to you. I never even wanted you to find out. To be honest, I actually think my life would have been much better without you and Allen."

"I know, honey. I know life hasn't been easy for you." Peggy faked an understanding smile. "Sue, I believe that you've been living quite comfortably these past few years, right? You must have had the opportunity to save up some money, am I right?"

"What do you mean by that?" Sue asked sharply, recognizing the look of greed on her mother's face.

"What in the world do you want from me exactly? Why are you even here?"

"Oh, calm down. I don't mean anything," Peggy chuckled. She tried to rephrase herself, "I couldn't help noticing that your house is well-furnished and you have designer clothes in your wardrobe. All those don't come cheap. So I just made an educated guess, that you're doing quite well for yourself. Aren't you?"

"So you turned my house upside down yesterday just to check if I've been living a decent life. Good to

know," Sue answered sarcastically. Actually Peggy made a mental note to check everything in her house, to check if all her valuables were still in their hiding places.

"I'm so proud and happy to see my daughter surviving so well on her own." Peggy forced herself to feign another smile as she looked at her daughter.

Sue kept quiet and Peggy took it as an invitation to continue talking. "Here you've been living such a good life, but your brother hasn't been so fortunate. After you ran away, he got beaten up so severely that his leg was badly injured. It never fully recovered and until today, he still can't walk properly..."

"Are you saying that's my fault?" Sue laughed disbelievingly. "I sent back so much of my hard-earned money every month, because you said that Allen couldn't work properly because of his leg. You told me that as the elder sibling, it was my duty to make life easier for him. Fine, I heeded your words. If I had saved up all the money that I sent back home to you, I would be having a much better life than this.

Instead, I suffered. I rented a room so small I could hardly move around without knocking everything over. I bought the cheapest meals. I basically survived on salted vegetables. I wanted him to have some money so he can do some much needed upgrades at home. At least his potential bride won't run

away when she sees his living conditions."

Sue gave a bitter laugh and continued, "I worked so hard all these years and finally managed to save some money. And guess how your stupid son repaid me? He lost all the money by gambling!"

"What the hell are you talking about?" Peggy shouted. She had finally reached her limit, triggered by Sue's criticism on her beloved son. Anger was etched in every line of her face.

"What's the matter? Can't accept the fact that your perfect son is not so perfect after all? Am I not allowed to point that out?" Sue jeered.

Fearing that Sue would refuse to help them, Peggy was forced to put aside her anger and softened her tone, "No, it's not that. I just feel that..."

Peggy took a deep breath and forced a smile onto her face. "Yes, I admit your brother was wrong. But why keep looking back at the past? Allen has realized the error of his ways and has turned over a new leaf. He doesn't gamble anymore. Isn't it a virtue to forgive and forget, especially when it comes to family? Why don't you give him a second chance?"

"Turned over a new leaf?" Sue couldn't help laughing ironically. She told her mother in a cold, sarcastic tone, "You're right, he has stopped gambling. But he just replaced that bad habit with another one. He

became a womanizer and ended up falling in love with a filthy gold digger. But he thought it was true love, and was willing to anything to marry her."

She scoffed and continued, "I won't deny there's nothing wrong with marriage -- it's a beautiful thing in

life. But this greedy woman asked for a huge dowry and he agreed even though he knew there was no

way we could afford it! And what was his solution? To marry me off so he could get a huge sum of

money from my future husband for him to marry that woman! Marriage is a big deal, and I will make my

own choice on my own life partner. I have to be responsible for my own life. I will not let you arrange my

marriage as you did last time!"

She gave Peggy a determined look. It was clear that she had firmly made up her mind on this issue.

"I have sacrificed so much for this family. And Allen? What has he done?" Sue paused to let her point

sink in and continued, "I'm not going to give in, no matter what you say. I'm not going to sacrifice my life

just so he can enjoy his. Yes, he was beaten up and was crippled, but this was all his fault. He only had

himself to blame. He had to face the consequences. That was the price he had to pay for putting my life

on the line as well."

"Sue, you better watch your limits! Don't go overboard!" Peggy snapped. She couldn't bear to hear Sue speaking bad of her beloved son, her precious son whom she deemed perfect and flawless, that could do no wrong.

Glaring at Sue with hatred, she spat, "That's enough out of you! How can you be so inconsiderate? This is your own younger brother, who shares flesh and blood with you! How could you say such things?"

"Oh I see. So you want me to stop bad-mouthing him, mother dearest?" Sue questioned sarcastically.

"You were there yesterday when he hit me, right? Why didn't you stop him then?"

"What's the difference between these two situations?" Dissatisfied, Peggy argued, "You can't compare yourself with Allen! You are a woman. When you get married, you become a part of your husband's family. Allen is different. He is a man, the only man in our family. Since your father is gone, we need him to pass down the Wang bloodline. You have to understand that."

Red with anger, Sue scoffed incredulously, "So since he is a male, everything he does is right while everything I do is wrong, is that it? Is that the difference between male and female children?"

"You are his older sister. How can you be so calculative?" Peggy was furious.

Realizing she still needed Sue's help, she tried to smoothen things. "I'm not here to argue with you."

"Mom, why are you still wasting your breath on her?" Allen's voice shouted suddenly. Even though he had gone into his room, he had glued his ear to the door the whole time, desperate to know what his mother and his sister were saying. He had heard every single insult Sue had said about him and could no longer tolerate it. He rushed out and reminded Peggy, "Mom, don't forget the reason why we are here. Hurry up and get it over with."

"Go back inside, honey." Peggy pushed Allen back into the room and told him, "Don't worry. Your mom has everything under control. Just stay in the room and wait for the good news."

Chapter 818 An Arranged Marriage

Peggy asked Allen to go back to the room and then turned to Sue. She looked at her in the most generous manner and said, "Sue, please consider the family ties between you and Allen. Why not make things a little easy for him?"

"Do you mean to say that Allen is suffering a lot?" Sue's lips curved into a sarcastic smile as she spoke in an utterly cold voice, "Peggy Li, it is I who had to overcome untold sufferings and struggle in order to survive in the city. And what about Allen? He has been living a life of comfort and solace under your

protection!"

She looked at Peggy coldly and continued, "Peggy Li, did it ever occur to you about sparing a bit of love and care for me, at least a fraction of the indulgence that you shower on Allen."

"Shut up!" Peggy blurted. The very mention of her love for her son completely changed her facial expression from being generous to absolutely defensive. "I have every reason to love Allen more than you!" she added in a defiant manner.

Peggy treated Sue as someone absolutely insignificant and irrelevant.

It never occurred to her that her words could even hurt Sue. She spoke her mind without any hesitation, caring least about how Sue would feel, "The fact that I gave birth to Allen uplifted my position in our family, while your birth was a bane to me. Don't you know villagers prefer boys to girls? If a woman gives birth to a girl, she will be cursed while a boy child brings respect for the mother." A glow came to her face as she justified the reason to be more devouring towards a son instead of a daughter.

"How could you say that?" Sue forced a smile and said, "Peggy Li, don't you know a woman should be duly respected?"

"A woman?" Peggy stared at Sue as if she had uttered something absolutely obnoxious. Peggy

sneered at her and continued, "I have completed every duty since the day I stepped into this family after my marriage according to my father's wish. The betrothal gifts obtained from my marriage was used in establishing a house for my brother. You father was gone without regrets because I have lived up to his expectation."

Peggy put a satisfying smile on her face and continued, "It is the duty of a woman to assist her husband, bring up her children and remain occupied with household chores."

She looked at Sue coldly and continued, "I am fully aware of your new ideas that are developed by social undertaking these years. But you have to take the responsibility of assisting your younger brother. Can you make any sense out of it?"

"The responsibility?" Sue could not help but laugh coldly and asked, "What is my inherent responsibility?"

"You must do something to help your younger brother get married and settle down. And then marry a good man to live peacefully." Peggy continued her argument in a calm and gentle voice, "Let go of your wishful thinking and turn towards your inherent responsibility."

She looked at Sue coldly and said, "Your good looks can only trigger beastly courage of a man. It is not something that you are meant for."

"Stop nonsense!" Sue blurted out at Peggy. Her thoughts turned to Anthony and her abortive romance.

Suddenly she felt as if Peggy had touched upon her sore point. She flared up and sneered, "Have you come here to persuade me to marry someone to serve your purpose?"

"Mind your language, Sue!" Peggy frowned and continued, "Born in a village, we are destined to marry someone and live an ordinary life."

Sue did not have words to curse her misfortune to have been born to this woman. There was a mixture of pain and frustration on her face. She sneered and said, "I would rather be adopted by someone than be raised by you!"

"Definitely! I did think of that!" Peggy sneered and continued, "But since you were a grown up girl, it prevented me from doing so. Now it is your duty to pay for my pains in bringing you up! Do you understand?"

Hearing Peggy's unapologetic confession, Sue became absolutely quiet. She did not need another word to prove the fact that she meant nothing more to her mother than just a scapegoat who could be

sacrificed for the benefit of the son of the house. Had Peggy not been her blood mother, she would have slapped her right across her face to vent out her anger.

Seeing Sue rendered speechless, Peggy tried to persuade her to accept the arranged marriage. "The family has a very respectable reputation in our village and has promised to give us handsome betrothal gifts that would be enough for your younger brother to marry a good woman upon your acceptance into the family."

Peggy looked at Sue meaningfully and continued her persuasion, "Born a woman, you have to accept your destiny. And you will marry a good man, so will your younger brother -- both of you will be happily settled in respective lives."

"Are you referring to the son of Li family head in our village?" Sue took a guess of the possible bridegroom and replied in a cold voice.

"Yes..." Peggy was a little surprised at Sue's correct assumption. After a moment of silence she continued, "The family has sent us the betrothal gifts and promised to renovate our house later.

Besides they are ready to cover the wholesale expenses of wedding. Such opportunity knocks but

once! You must seize it!" Peggy looked at Sue with persuasive eyes expecting her to give in after such a long and eloquent discussion.

Sue sneered and looked at Peggy helplessly. "Peggy Li, by no means would I marry into the family no matter what you tell me."

She forced a sarcastic smile as she realized Peggy's unscrupulous ways to make things easy for Allen.

"Despite my absence in the village for so many years, I know that the man is an idiot. My acceptance into the family would mean untold sufferings!" Sue could no longer tolerate the nonsense and illogical bantering of the uneducated woman. She felt immensely wronged and said, "Since you have developed an illicit relationship with the idiot's father, why not solemnize that?."

Sue had hardly finished her sentence when Peggy's rough palm landed on her cheek. Sue covered her cheek with her hand and caressed it gently.

Peggy stared at Sue and said, "Sue, just stop your nonsense or be prepared to suffer the consequence!"

"I am telling the truth!" Sue let off a cold smile and said, "Your scandal has been known to one and all in the village!"

"I am telling you for the last time, I will make you suffer a lot if you continue speaking nonsense in front of me!" Peggy was so humiliated and angered that she pulled Sue's hair and scowled, "Your disrespect towards me does injustice to my painstaking efforts in raising you!"

Peggy could not hold back her temper and pointed at Sue menacingly. "Today I must teach you a good lesson or you always remain discourteous to your seniors."

Peggy was a strong woman, the strength of her arms to be attributed to her heavy manual labor. Sue knew that she had to protect herself.

As Peggy caught Sue in her strong arms, Sue shielded her face as it was the important thing for her job.

Chapter 819 Peggy's True Intentions

Peggy held back no effort or energy in the several minutes in which she proceeded to beat on Sue.

She had actually tired herself out because the emotion she felt was just that strong in that moment. As

she made her way to the couch, she spoke very harshly to Sue, "This matter is settled. You better go back for the marriage or I promise you I will make you regret it."

"I won't, under any circumstance, do something like that!" Sue flashed an unapologetic smile and

remained steadfast, despite Peggy's unbridled rage.

"You..." Peggy's eyes gleamed with a raging fire of discord. Words could not express the magnitude of the sheer indignation Peggy felt in that instant. Just as quickly as it had occurred, she regained her composure, and attempted to pacify Sue with kind words, "You are my daughter, after all. If you remain unwilling to marry, there is some room."

Sue grew suspicious of Peggy's motives and became increasingly aware of the fact that her words seemed kind, but there was an eerie undertone that could only be perceived as contention.

She glanced at Peggy, who said, "Sue, now you are living in comfort and luxury, however, Allen and I are dwelling in the backcountry. There are grounds for me to take it from you."

Peggy smiled coldly and said, "Now, I've decided that Allen and I will live here. And you should simply transfer the ownership of this apartment to Allen, who will then be able to experience the privilege of an

urban dweller and who has the opportunity to facilitate his marriage, which is sure to follow soon ."

Sue smiled coldly as she realized Peggy's true intentions regarding the seizure of her apartment.

Sue felt very happy with the fact that her busy schedule had rendered her apartment unregistered.

Peggy's previous efforts to find the paperwork to show the ownership of her house had turned out to be quite futile.

Sue looked at Peggy indifferently and calmly said, "This apartment is not mine. It doesn't belong to me."

"How could that be?" Peggy got up from where she had been sitting to bombard Sue with curses and cried out, "As far as I am concerned, you have made a big fortune during these last few years' social undertakings. You would be wise to transfer the ownership to your younger brother. And I know that you are lying to me!"

Peggy let out a cold scowl and then said, "But I am not stupid and I will not be fooled by you!"

"I am not lying to you!" Sue replied firmly. "I suppose you still have not found what you were searching for yesterday!"

Peggy was confused by her statement, and looked at Sue with sheer suspicion. "You must have hidden it to keep it from me!"

She sneered and said, "Now hand it over to me or I make you pay immensely!"

"This house is not mine! How could I sell or give you something that I don't own?" Sue replied

satirically. "I actually have not made a fortune these years, if you must know. Besides, I have to support you financially every month. Thus, I don't have the capability to buy myself a house."

She smiled wryly and said, "Considering that Y City is highly prosperous, my lifelong struggle would not mean the affordability of a local house. So don't you think your claim is ridiculous?"

"That is quite enough of your pretension!" Peggy allowed a cold smile to appear on her. "I have been informed that you are indeed the owner of this apartment."

"This house is nothing but my dormitory, offered by my company," Sue replied calmly and gently. "And only my colleagues are entitled to such an apartment."

Seeing the logic of Sue's defense, Peggy became upset as she gradually abandoned her hope.

She glanced at Sue and confirmed her claim, "Are you telling the truth?"

"Definitely!" Sue nodded and replied. "I don't have enough money to be able to afford it!"

She looked at Peggy helplessly and analyzed the situation. "Peggy Li, I have given you a considerable amount of money over these years. But please take a moment and think about this: Yes, the Li family head promised to give you a considerable amount of betrothal gifts. But then?"

She looked at Peggy meaningfully and continued, "My being accepted into the family would mean my having to concede to their demands and I would not be permitted to continue to provide the money I have been giving to you and Allen."

"What are you saying? I just want to make sure that I am clear." Peggy tried to gain a further understanding from the words that Sue had just spoken.

"I am making this as clear as I can for you!" Sue replied calmly, "My sustained efforts in Y City are beneficial to your financial support, while my return to our village and marrying into that family would render you financially unsupported. I highly doubt that they would continue to support you the way that I have been."

Peggy did see the merit in Sue's analysis but hardly resigned herself to the defeat.

She glanced at Sue and asked, "So what do you suggest I do? Feel free to speak your mind!"

"I suggest..." Sue paused briefly and then continued, "You come back with Allen and I give you an extra 1,000 on a monthly basis. Doesn't that sound like a solution that you can live with?"

"Definitely not!" Peggy remained adamant. "Allen is developing a romantic relationship with a girl, who

requests nothing but an urban house in which to marry him. Besides, the girl is expecting a child and the wedding shall be put together rather urgently. The expenses of wedding shall be solely provided by you. Last but not least, you must find and provide a house for them."

"That is preposterous!" Sue was appalled by Peggy's complete disregard for anything she had said and complained, "Peggy Li, how could you expect so much of me? Right now, I am financially incapable to do that!"

"That sounds like a personal problem!" Peggy smiled a malicious smile and replied, "Considering the severity and urgency of the current situation, Allen and I will be living here so that we can rectify it."

Chapter 820 Life Is Not A Bed Of Roses

Peggy paused for a few seconds, and then continued, "As for the wedding, the girl's family prefers it to be held in Y City. The venue has already been established. We met with the event planner a few days ago and asked for a budget. We will need about 200, 000 dollars. So you have to get the money ready.

Oh, and yes, you need to keep 100, 000 more on reserve in case they decide to start a family right away."

Without even consulting Sue on her thoughts, Peggy stated, "So it's settled then."

As soon as she finished saying that, Peggy glanced around the house and added, "You know, this

house is a little small but it's enough for your brother and his wife to live in. After the baby is born, I can sleep on the couch and help them take care of their child."

Fed up, Sue began arguing, "Is that how it is, huh? You came here just for taking away my apartment!

To convince me to marry the idiot! And betrothal gifts... They're all a means to your real end, aren't they?!"

Peggy was not about to back down from that argument. "What's the point of holding onto these things?

Just go get the money ready. We only have 15 days left till the wedding. You don't have much time."

"What makes you think I will pay for his wedding?" retaliated Sue. She was slowly falling into despair

thinking about the entire situation. After all, she was only another regular person living day by day.

Frustrated by Peggy's ridiculous requests, she tried to get her to be rational. "Where do you want me to

get all this money from? Are you trying to ruin me?

Even this apartment is given to me by my company. If you all move here, what about me? What shall I

do then?"

"Easy. Go find another place to live by yourself," Peggy answered impatiently. "You were financially on

your own at an early age. You'll figure out a way, won't you? Worst-case scenario... You can borrow money from your friends. I'm sure you'll manage," she added.

Exasperated, Sue shouted, "How can you be so... ugh! Can't you see the situation you're putting me in?"

"Stop exaggerating!" Peggy commanded. She then sighed, in an effort to compose herself. She paced over to the window and, on a lower tone, asserted, "I have called Doris, your brother's girlfriend. She will come tomorrow. Make sure your house is spotless. Then go get some groceries because tomorrow you're cooking, right before you take me to the station to pick her up."

Peggy assumed a straight, confident posture as she spoke. Her chin was slightly elevated, eyebrows raised and eyes squinted, indicating no room for negotiation. She had everything arranged and didn't need Sue's consent.

As she walked into the bedroom, Allen stepped forward and asked, "Mom, how did it go? Did she agree?"

"Don't worry. She can't say 'no' to me," confirmed Peggy. She gave him a brief smile and then insisted,

"Now get your stuff together. Doris is coming tomorrow and I don't want her to feel uncomfortable."

Listening to their conversation, Sue turned anxious.

She wasn't sure what else to do. Reaching out to Sheryl was her first thought. She did say that Sue could ask for her help no matter what.

Sue took out her phone to call Sheryl, but right before pressing the dial button she hesitated.

After staring at the screen for a few seconds, she convinced herself not to make the call.

She still couldn't afford the 300, 000 dollars, and would never let them live in that house. So she had to find a way to get out of that conundrum.

If Sue allowed Peggy to get what she was asking for, then she would have more demands coming later on.

It all had to end and soon.

Sue choked down her anger and decided to play along at that moment. She cleaned up the house and bought some groceries, preparing to meet Doris the following day.

A woman like her, who could charm both her mom and brother with just a few words, was definitely not someone to be underestimated.

At Roger's villa

Roger was holding his party at his villa, where various stars could be seen everywhere, including famous politicians and businessmen. Sheryl and Charles showed up a bit late.

Her entire purple dress that evening was an accent piece. It made her stand out among all the dignitaries there.

The soft velvet trail at the bottom, her back cutout, and the figure-hugging shape of the dress began turning heads as soon as she came in.

In response to all that threatening attention, Charles wrapped his arm around Sheryl's waist, pulling her closer. He wanted everyone to know that she was already taken.

Roger was making small talk and greeting everyone when he suddenly saw Sheryl by the entrance door. Awestruck, he lost his train of thought and couldn't take his eyes off of her anymore.

Even Charles, who was right next to Sheryl, seemed invisible to him.

Sheryl was oblivious to all the commotion she had been causing and to Charles' jealousy. She took a glance around the villa and, upon noticing Roger, she walked over to greet him.

He was the host of the party after all, so it was only proper to greet him first.

"You look amazing today, Miss Xia," Roger remarked. That compliment came out of nowhere. Charles didn't expect it. He also wasn't too thrilled with the way Roger looked at Sheryl. But Sheryl smiled and gently diverted the topic, "Thank you. Charles actually got me this dress. I have to say, I trust his taste more than mine. He never ceases to impress me."

Charles' face brightened up at her words. He reciprocated the smile and modestly took the compliment, "It's my pleasure. Everything looks good on you, so you make it easy."

Their cheesy conversation made Roger feel awkward. They were also acting as if he were not even there. So he excused himself, "That's beautiful. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'll go greet the newly arrived guests. Please enjoy the party."

Sheryl had always disliked these kinds of parties. Charles was constantly running into people he knew.

So she found a corner and started munching on some fruits by herself.

"Is it really boring?" A soft, close-by voice startled her. She raised her head and, upon recognizing

Roger's face, she replied, "No, I just... don't like these events very much."

"Neither do I," he mentioned. Smiling, Roger sat down beside her and explained, "I have no choice,

though. Being in this industry, people expect these things from you. All these celebrities and dignitaries are also here because that's what is expected of them. Sure, they enjoy socializing to a point, but how much of that is real, I couldn't tell you."

Sheryl glanced sideways at Roger. She hadn't seen him for three years. He had changed quite a bit.

Trying to escape the silence, Roger quickly changed the subject, "You know what? Today is my birthday." He let out a deflated laugh and continued, "The brokerage company told me that I'd better hold a party to celebrate the occasion. But I know it's all for their own benefit. Look at that fat man over there. That's the director of my next play and, over there, the producer. All these are people I need to butter up and please."

Puzzled by his confession, Sheryl turned her full body to face him. She then asked, "So you're not enjoying yourself? This doesn't make you happy?"

"Happy?" he replied with a surprised tone. He looked her deeply in the eyes and began answering with a serious face, "It's impossible to be happy if you're part of this industry. The gossip and rumors that you hear within these social circles only show the tip of the iceberg. The reality is much darker. If you want to survive in this world, you have to claw your way above them."

