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This Time, I Will Get My Divorce, Mr Chapter 543 - 544

Chapter 543 The One Who Bought the Rings

Upon entering his wardrobe, Toby headed straight for the display case where he kept his watches, ties, and other designer accessories. Then, he placed the jewelry box into one of the empty compartments.

Having done so, he withdrew his hand and made to leave but stopped when he thought of something. The next second, he opened one of the drawers and took out a black velvet box.

The box was small and fit in his palm. He opened it with one hand to reveal the two rings nestled within. One of the rings was slightly larger than the other; they were matching wedding bands—specifically made for him and Sonia all those years ago.

He stared at the rings, his gaze darkening as he picked up one of them and began to turn it, inspecting the Fuller Family crest engraved beneath the band. The barest hint of a smile curled on his lips.

Sonia had always believed that she paid for their wedding bands, but in actuality, Toby had been the one who bought them while she was kept in the dark, hence the Fuller Family crest on the inside of the bands.

Six years ago, following his agreement to their marriage, Sonia dropped by the Fuller Residence to go over wedding details and the matter of wedding bands. However, Toby had been hypnotized back then, and all he could think about was Tina. He had felt unadulterated spite for Sonia, believing that she was holding him hostage through marriage. Consequently, he couldn't care less about what she wanted for wedding decorations, and he had no interest in the wedding band designs; he had told her to make arrangements on her own and left home after that.

He hadn't wanted to even be in the same room as her. However, he hadn't expected to run into her at the mall that same day.

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She had been standing at the counter of a jewelry store, single-handedly picking out their wedding bands, which turned out to be the same ones he was currently holding.

Back then, she had probably been so overwhelmed by the joy of her upcoming wedding that she never bothered looking into the price of the rings before asking the retail assistant to bag them up.

The rings had been valued at two million, but given how the Reed Family were on the brink of bankruptcy, there was no way Sonia could have forked out the money. Buying the rings would have inevitably crippled her and the rest of the family.

Realizing this, Toby intervened and showed up in the lounge behind the jewelry store. He paid more than a million in secret, then ordered that the Fuller Family crest be engraved on the inside of the wedding bands.

At that point in time, he had been bewildered by his own behavior. He had considered the possibility that he might be insane because there seemed to be no other explanation as to why he would pay for a woman he hated so much.

It was only after he had snapped out of the hypnotism and fallen in love with Sonia again that he understood one thing: she had haunted the back of his mind even while he was hypnotized, but he never realized it.

In the end, Sonia only had to fork out a third of the initial price to buy the rings, and she never found out that he had paid for them too.

Recalling all this, Toby picked up the wedding band that was meant for him and slowly slipped it onto his left ring finger. As soon as he did, his gaze fell upon the ring that would have belonged to Sonia had they actually stayed married and whispered, "Just wait a little while longer. Before you know it, you'll be reunited with your rightful owner."

After that, he closed the lid of the box and placed it back onto the display case, then wheeled himself out of the wardrobe.

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The next day, Sonia arrived at Paradigm Co. and came upon Daphne, who was standing at her usual spot at Sonia's office doorway as she greeted, "Good morning, President Reed."

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"Is everyone ready for the meeting?" Sonia asked as she opened the door.

Daphne nodded. "Most of them."

"And what about Charles?" Sonia asked, opening the floodgates.

Hesitantly, Daphne replied, "President Lane is here as well, but..."

"But what?"

Daphne adjusted her glasses, behind which her eyes lit up with worry. "But something seems off about him. He looks kind of upset."

Upon hearing this, Sonia stopped in her tracks.

Daphne noticed the shift in her demeanor and parted her lips to ask, "President Reed, do you know the reason why President Lane is upset?"

Sonia lowered her gaze pensively. "I guess you could say that." She didn't think Charles would still hold it against her after she broke the conversation last night, but she supposed it was only fair that he did. After all, sentiments would be worth nothing if they dissipated so quickly, let alone those to do with love.

"What happened to him, President Reed?" Daphne pressed out of concern, clenching her fists as she eyed Sonia pleadingly and waited for an answer.

Sonia knew about Daphne's feelings for Charles, and she did not keep the girl in suspense as she explained, "Charles and I got into a disagreement."

"Oh, I see," Daphne replied numbly, with an unreadable look in her eyes. That makes sense. Given President Lane's sharp sense of humor and rapier wit, it's rare to see him upset, and there are less than a handful of people who could bring his spirits down, other than President Reed, of course. She's the only one who could affect him in any way at all.

She should have known that Sonia had something to do with Charles' sour mood this morning.

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Presently, Sonia clapped a hand on Daphne's shoulder and said comfortingly, "Come on, there's no use dwelling on this. Let's go for the meeting, and as for Charles, I'll talk to him. If I can't get through to him, then I'll have to let you take a shot at cheering him up."

Taken aback, Daphne stammered, "M-Me?"

"Yes," Sonia confirmed with a gentle nod.

"No, I can't do it." Daphne began to shake her head vehemently, flapping her hands to dismiss Sonia's suggestion.

Sonia burst into laughter. "Give yourself more credit. I'm sure you'll make for the perfect shoulder to cry on if you believe in yourself. Maybe the romance you've always dreamed of will happen if you just take a leap of faith."

When she heard the last part of Sonia's encouragement, Daphne blanched and stared at her with wide eyes. "President Reed, do you—" Do you know about my feelings for Charles?

As if reading her mind, Sonia grinned and said good-naturedly, "Give it your best shot!"

So she does know. Daphne gaped at Sonia, and it took a while for her to recover from her shock as she asked slowly, "Aren't you angry, President Reed?"

"Why would I be?" Sonia countered, somewhat confused.

Wringing the hem of her shirt nervously, Daphne swallowed and elaborated, "Well, because I... have feelings for President Lane."

A light chuckle escaped Sonia. "Why would I be angry about that? If you like Charles, or anyone else, that's your business. I don't get a say in who you choose to have feelings for, and in this context, Charles and I are just friends, so no, I'm not angry."

Daphne relaxed after hearing this, and the anxiousness that had overcome her started to wane. She was grateful that Sonia was open-minded, because she had had experiences with women who hated seeing their male best friend—whom they had no intention of dating—getting attention from other women.

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As of now, Sonia said seriously, "Bottom line is, you won't get what you want without trying. Just know that if you and Charles ever start dating, you have my full support. You're pretty compatible with him, in case you don't know that."

She truly wished Daphne and Charles could end up together. Sonia couldn't reciprocate Charles' feelings for her, and if the sentiments had been allowed to continue, then they would both end up getting hurt in the long run.

All the reasons added up was why she was elated to know that someone was romantically interested in Charles. If the right person came along and managed to catch Charles' attention, then he would no longer have anything more than platonic feelings for me.

If that came to pass, Sonia would be free from such unwanted pursuits, and Charles would find his own happiness as well. From how she looked at it, this was a win-win situation.

She was aware of how selfish she was being, and admittedly, she was taking advantage of Daphne. However, seeing as Daphne already had feelings for Charles, all Sonia would be doing was helping the girl achieve her dreams.

That being said, she would make sure to compensate Daphne for this.

Compatible with him. These words reverberated in Daphne's mind, and she blushed crimson as she said weakly, "You've got to be kidding, President Reed."

"I'm certainly not! I'm telling the truth. Look, you can always sleep on this and make a decision in your own time, but right now, we have a meeting to get to," Sonia prompted with a smile as she took up the documents on her desk and sauntered out the door.

Daphne snapped out of her daze and hurried to catch up.

Having arrived at the conference room, Sonia saw that the attendance was nearly full, but she could not escape Asher's snide attack as she walked over to her seat. "My, my, our dear Vice President Reed has finally made her grand entrance. Being so fashionably late even after the rest of us showed up on time. You certainly know how to keep us old men on our toes, don't you? What, do you think you're too good for us?"

Sonia put down her documents and took her seat at the table, after which she shot Asher a withering look as she retorted, "Well, what can I say? I am the largest shareholder of

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Paradigm Co., and I think that gives me the privilege to be fashionably late, don't you think? It's not my fault that none of you have enough shares to lord over my head in the first place."

This Time, I Will Get My Divorce, Mr Chapter 544

Chapter 544 Breaking the Ice

"You—"

Asher and his supporters grew so incensed at her words that their faces turned the color of beetroot, but they couldn't retort against her. She was right; she might be the vice president now, but the fact remained that she was the largest shareholder of the company, and that meant she enjoyed privileges they did not. As unhappy as they were, they had neither the means nor standing to retaliate against her.

At the sight of the scowls on their faces, Sonia smirked and refrained from snorting in contempt. I can't believe they're still trying to pick a bone with me at this point. How petty. Stoically, she withdrew her gaze and glanced in the direction of Charles' seat.

He had his head down, so she couldn't quite see the look on his face, but she felt how distant he was all the same. She sighed quietly as she settled into her chair and announced, "Alright, let's start the meeting."

"Yes, ma'am," the whole table chorused as everyone opened up the folder in front of them.

The meeting went on for two hours before it came to a conclusion. Asher and his supporters were the first to leave the room, but Sonia stayed unmoving in her seat. She didn't keep her things or seem like she was about to rise to her feet and walk out of the room any time soon.

Instead, she leaned into her seat and rested her head against the back of her chair, staring at Charles.

Presently, Charles was keeping his things, and when he was done, he stood up to leave.

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Seeing this, Sonia quickly called out, "Charles, wait."

He stopped in his tracks and turned to look at her, his expression devoid of the warmth and humor she was used to seeing. He looked almost impassive as he asked flatly, "What is it?"

Sure enough, he was sticking to his promise and had dropped the term of endearment. In the past, he would have added 'baby' to that statement.

Sonia was composed as she rose from her seat and eyed him steadily. "How about you and I have a talk?"

"About what?" he asked, his gaze on her indifferent and distant.

She didn't answer him immediately. She was watching the others who had yet to file out of the conference room; they were all ears, trying to pick up on gossip.

As though sensing her gaze, they looked down at their shoes guiltily and hurried out the doors. Soon, the large conference room was empty, save for Sonia and Charles.

She kept her eyes on him and said matter-of-factly, "About how you're still holding a grudge against me after our conversation last night."

Charles parted his lips, but he offered no retort because he really was still holding a grudge against her for their dispute last night.

The resentment he felt was not only due to the fact that he knew she would never choose him as a romantic partner, but also the way she had gone about things.

Even if they would never work out as a couple, they still had over twenty years of friendship between them, but all it had taken was Toby's unhappy remark for Sonia to come up to Charles and ask him to drop the nickname he had been calling her all this while.

How am I supposed to just let that go, Sonia?

Upon seeing the sullen look on Charles' face, Sonia sighed wearily and said, "I'm sorry, Charles. I know I should have been more considerate of your feelings instead of springing the conversation up on you like that, but I don't think I was wrong to do that. You like me, don't you, Charles?"

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His eyes widened in disbelief as he gaped at her. "How... How did you know?" He had been in love with her for more than a decade, and she was the one thing on his mind ever since he learned the ways of the world. He had wanted to confess his feelings for her on countless occasions, but his lack of courage kept him from doing so.

Alas, she found out anyway, much to his surprise.

She lowered her gaze and explained, "I didn't know it at first, but after what you said last night, I figured it out. Why else would you have reacted the way you did? This brings me back to why I said I did the right thing, because I don't like you the same way, and I can't ever reciprocate your feelings for me. What I've done, at best, was to make you give up hope that we might ever stand a chance; think of it as a wake-up call, Charles, because if your feelings for me deepen over the years, then you'd only end up getting hurt, and I'd be riddled with guilt."

"No, I won't—"

"Yes, you will!" Sonia cut him off, pleading for him to see her point. "I don't know when you started having feelings for me, but I reckon it's been a long time. That just goes to show that you're sentimental enough to hold on to the idea of us, and if that were to go on, then you'd fall too deep to save yourself from inevitable heartbreak. I don't want to see you end up that way, Charles. You're my best friend, and the last thing I want to do is to hurt you, so please just let go of your feelings for me, even if it means changing the way you address me."

She was setting boundaries when she asked him to stop calling her 'baby', and her stance was clear: the both of them would never work out as a couple. She hoped she had put that point out emphatically enough to make him understand how important it was for him to let go of a relationship that never could be.

Naturally, Charles heard the underlying meaning of her words. As his eyes grew red with anger, he clenched his fists and accused her angrily, "So you're warning me to drop all those affectionate nicknames for you and to stop being all chummy with you, and you want me to completely stop deluding myself that we might stand a chance. Is that it?"

She shook her head. "No, I'm not warning you. I wouldn't do that to you. I'm merely trying to make you see my point here. I don't love you more than just a friend, so romance is definitely off the table for us, which is why I need to make things clear. I need you to understand that we aren't going to work out, so you won't keep pining over me."

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Sonia knew she was being harsh, but it was the only way he would snap out of his fantasy and let things go. She didn't have a choice but to be blunt with her words.

Charles, on the other hand, finally understood how death by a thousand cuts felt like. Her words stabbed through his heart mercilessly; they took all the air from his lungs and left him bleeding. He bit out woundedly, "So you're cutting me off?"

"That's not what I meant. I just like us better when we're friends without all these other underlying sentiments," Sonia replied.

He looked down and chuckled bitterly. "I get it now. You just want us to be friends and nothing more, so you're asking me to let go of my feelings for you."

"Yes," she confirmed solemnly, nodding once.

He dug his nails into his palms. "Okay, fine. I'll just keep these feelings aside, and I won't ask for anything more. As for the whole being-friends thing, I'm sorry, but I don't think I can be just your friend until I've completely let you go."

With that, he turned to leave with a self-deprecating, hollow smile on his face. How pathetic. I've loved a girl for over ten years, and I got rejected before I could even confess my feelings for her. The love story he had hoped for was written off before he even got to the prologue.

Meanwhile, Sonia was rooted in the same spot as she stared after Charles' retreating figure. She parted her lips to call out for him but caught herself and watched him leave. What's the point of calling out for him? He might just take it the wrong way and start having false hopes again.

She refused to let that happen. She could never reciprocate his feelings for her, and this hurt that she was causing him now would only be temporary. He would get over it eventually and come to see that she was doing this with his best interests at heart.

If she had been afraid of hurting him and decided to string him along, then the damage that might come from this would be insurmountable.

That being said, she had to agree with him on the last part of his statement. They would never truly be friends until he had let go of her entirely. If they were to carry on as though nothing had happened, then they would simply be turning a blind eye to the cracks in their

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friendship; they would no longer be as close, and worst of all, they might even become awkward around each other.

She would be better off waiting until he had let go of her entirely, and once he did, they could start afresh.

At the thought of this, Sonia closed her eyes and let out a long sigh.

Just then, Daphne hurried into the conference room, sounding unmistakably anxious as she asked, "President Reed, what happened to President Lane? I ran into him just now, and his eyes were red, like he's been crying, and he—"

"Go look for him," Sonia cut her off gently, forcing out a smile.

Daphne froze. "Look for him?"

"Yes. We had a long talk just now, and he's probably really upset now. I'm worried about him. Do you think you could keep an eye on him and make sure he doesn't do anything rash? It would also help if you could try to cheer him up a bit," Sonia elaborated, pinching the space between her brows tiredly.

"But—"

"No more buts. Just go, or you won't catch up to him. I wouldn't want him to drive and get into trouble just because he was upset," Sonia urged, interrupting the girl once more and dismissing her secretary with a wave of her hand.

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