

8. CORNERED

The Fashion Corner is in a strip mall only a couple of miles from the Anchor. Stevie took it over from the last owner. At first, she hopes to sell her own designs. She is successful with a few items. But her clientele just isn't as hip as she had hoped.. Instead she is able to create a more mundane customer base by catering to the tastes of the many. She reconciles herself to her suburban locale.

Stevie is staring at boxes that she has to empty and shelve. There are pile of clothes that need to be put on hangars.

“What do I want a bar for?” she wonders out loud. “I have enough trouble with one business.”

“The Anchor almost runs itself. You know that,” Cheryl tries to remind her.”

“I'm not thinking too well to make sense of much of anything.”

Cheryl offers to help, “I can put some of that stuff up for you.”

“I wish I knew where to put half of it myself.”

Stevie ends up accepting the help. Cheryl helps move things along more efficiently.

Stevie asks her, “You have one job already. Where do you find the time to help me too?”

“You could use some perspective. I just though I'd come for a visit and help you get things in order.”

Stevie laments, “I wish that my private life could be remedied so easily.”

Stevie pauses as she listens to Cheryl, “ We all admire you. How you're able to balance your own business and your relationship with Josh.”

“I don't think that I'm balancing anything. I just feel myself falling over.”

The cars whiz on by just outside the window. It is a world that Stevie feels is ignoring her.

“Josh is a great guy.”

Cheryl wants to believe that so badly. She wants to make Stevie believe it so badly. But in her heart she knows the lie. She knows Josh isn't any stellar example of virtue. She also know what Stevie would say if Cheryl came clean.

“You're just envious of what I have. You hate your life, and you want someone to blame.”

But it's not just that. Cheryl has Josh dead to rights. She wishes that she could tell Stevie about the fact that he came on to her. She knows that Stevie will believe Josh first. She'll figure that Cheryl made sexual advances on him. She even remembers a conversation that they had a while back.

“Cheryl, I've seen you like that before. You see a guy that you like, and nothing will stop you from going after him.”

Cheryl defends herself, “I'm not like that.”

“You don't see it. Your charm is like this firestorm. It heats up everything that's around you. And you're just blind to it. It's terrible to admit.”

And so Stevie fears that even she will be consumed in the heat. So she stays comfortably immune from even her own life.

Down deep she knows something is very wrong. But she won't keep still long enough to

let it catch up with her. One night she is on the verge of confronting Josh. In the midst of a pitched battle, she decides her only course is to retreat. To head off to the Anchor so that she can hang with her girls.

Josh is almost ready to confess, “You’re not going out.”

Stevie gives him his out. “I have to get away.”

“Where are you going? To hang out with your Anchor Girls?” he asks bitterly.

She could make that her bone of contention. Instead, she takes it as her lone concession. She leaves Josh to his own wiles. It’s better not to know. She’s already teetering on that edge. She wants something to hang on to.

As Cheryl continues arranging things around the shop, she can detect that same resignation in Stevie. All the girls have seen it. But then Stevie has the perfect life. Stevie is the model for all of them. No one wants to bring down that shining star. Even Sara’s contest is a further boon to Stevie’s success. Her victory would be a tribute to what the group represents. A testimony to their independence and drive.

If Stevie keeps moving, then she’ll never take a direct hit. She wants no tear. She knows that it’s harder to bring down a moving target

Stevie often feels on the verge, “Some day I feel that I just want to cry for no reason.”

“That’s not the kind of face that we want to put on for the world.”

“That’s just it, Cheryl. I’m tired of putting on. It’s not like I’m a fashion model. I don’t have to smile for the camera.”

Cheryl doesn’t want to believe in the down side of marriage. Perhaps that’s another reason that she never told Stevie about Josh. She wants to keep the fairy tale going. In her heart, Cheryl knows for a fact that she’s not the only one. And if Cheryl had gone along Josh wouldn’t have stopped. But as long as nothing’s been said, the girls can keep up the pretense that it’s all great.

Stevie states it succinctly, “I guess that’s what a marriage is. I’m learning. You love what you have. To have nothing would be fatal.”

Cheryl doesn’t want to admit that sounds like a prison sentence. She’s seen Josh and Stevie have their good times. Over and over again, it just seems like she turns a blind eye on what’s really going on.

“You grow into a marriage. What you can’t change, you just have to ignore. That’s why it helps to get out with all of us. I can’t ask the world from one man. He’s not God.”

They both smile. Stevie never talked like this when she first got married. It still hasn’t been all that long. But the first luster has faded fast. What remains is Stevie’s resilience. She’s not going to call it quits. She’s not going to admit that she’s failed.

“You know what, Cheryl, we don’t do daytimes well. That’s why we made it so fun at the Anchor. We always tried to hang out for that last drink. That last ounce of a good time before the daytime reality set in. We were like kids who never had to go to bed.”

“Don’t tell me that it’s finally caught up to us.”

“Nothing like that. But we still don’t know how to do the tough stuff of daytime. That’s how I feel about Josh. Like I can just walk out. I’ve stayed married to him. But there’s still this something that I’ve held back.”

“We all have to protect ourselves Stevie.”

Stevie stares blankly at the traffic going by.

“That’s not it, Cheryl. I feel like I can just walk out of the whole thing. I’m not that much different from the days before I got married.”

Cheryl asks, “You don’t have designs on someone else?”

“Nothing of the sort. I’m just not going to put up with his crap.”

“You shouldn’t have to.”

Cheryl really wonders if Stevie has something specific in mind. Can she really figure it out without someone telling her?

“There’s a point in some marriages where you stop giving. Where the well dries up. I don’t want it to get like that. Even when Josh really pisses me off, there’s still that glow in his eye that reminds me why I married him. That the hope keep us alive.”

Stevie is giving herself the pep talk that she needs to take her out of these doldrums.

“Are you going out tonight?”

“I better not. Not while I feel like this. I’m just too ready to make a mountain out of a mole hill. I need to cool down.”

“But can you really be alone at your place.”

“More than you think. That’s the frightening part.”

In the back of her mind, she can taste that first drink. It’s just enough to make her consider getting out for the evening.

She voices her interest.

“Maybe I could use a little while away. Things are getting a little crazy.”

She is thinking again of the moment where she walked away from a battle royale. She snuck in that night, and nothing was said the next morning. She doesn’t want to admit that was a point of no return. That’s why things were better left unsaid. They’d still been making love since then. But not as regularly. Something really lacked passion.

“Maybe you need to talk to someone, Stevie. You don’t want to let something happen that will force you to act. You need to sort it all out in your head.”

“I know you’re right. But part of it is just letting off a little steam. It’s the stress more than anything. Nothing so complex that I need a shrink to tell me what to do.”

“It might just help to talk to someone.”

That ends up being the topic at the Anchor that night.

“Cheryl thinks that I need a marriage counselor.”

“I didn’t exactly say that. I just thought it might be good to air some things with a disinterested party.”

Trish adds, “I’m always willing to listen. This has always proved the best therapy for me.” She has a glass in her hand.

Diane surprises everyone with her insight, “That may be our problem. We’re always too quick to wash away what troubles us. Sometimes you have to face it head on.”

“It’s not like Josh and I are fighting. I’m just getting a little bored. Maybe I’ve missed too many session with you girls.”

“Yeah, Stevie,” Trish is not about to let down. Not tonight.

Cheryl offers a voice of moderation, “It’s not just Stevie. I think we’ve all got in this routine.”

At first, Stevie needed the commentary from Trish. But now there is a storm brewing between Trish and Stevie. Cheryl tries to deflect it, but she doesn't do much good.

Diane went out with Drew for almost a month. They'd meet at the park for roller-blading. They'd head out for weekends on the beach. They really got on well. She couldn't make a go of it because of her schedule at the hospital. It never really worked out. Tonight, he's hiding in the corner with a couple of his buddies. Diane doesn't even notice him. She's distracted by the flavor of the moment. Trish and Diane are competing hard to attract his attention. Trish has some tricks up her sleeve. But Trish can't maintain her strategic position when the excess of beer forces her to make the inevitable pit stop. She says hello to Drew as she heads to the toilet.

Matt is now alone with Diane. She is in the catbird's seat. She's all gleeful until she gets a phone call.

"I've got to take this."

She is struggling with poor reception. When Trish comes back from the bathroom, Diane is nowhere to be seen. Trish is able to take over where she left off with Matt.

When Diane comes back, she's spitting blood. She tries to interest Matt, but he's already touching Trish in rather provocative places. Oops!

She finally finds Drew.

"Were you here all the time?" She stares right at him.

"Of course I was." He has no idea what is going on.

"But you called me Drew."

"No, Trish came by and asked to use my phone. She was standing in front of the bathroom. Then she called me over and told me that you were on the phone. I just assumed that you called, and she answered."

Diane is fuming even more. "I had to go outside just to hear. She pretended to be you and was mumbling into the phone. When I went outside, she handed it back to you and the reception was crystal clear.

"Diane, I didn't even know that you were here."

"How could you miss me. I was sitting in the middle of the bar."

From her vantage point, Diane realizes how crowded it is. She can hardly see, but what she does notice is enough to drive a stake through her heart. Matt is already kissing Trish.

"What a bitch!" yells Diane. If it was Drew or Dusty, she'd rush over there to give Trish a piece of her mind. But she has no claims on Matt. Once more all's fair in love and war! Trish realizes how devious she's been. But she can't stop now. She has to follow through just for points. She not going to cry when Matt shows her what's the world made of.

Even though Drew's an innocent party in the little scheme, she's not going to hang around the table and experience the humiliation. She goes to find Cheryl.

"Cheryl, Trish really pulled a fast one on me."

Diane relates her story.

"Trish has been a little over the edge lately. Haven't the two of you been getting into it over a few guys."

"I think we're both feeling a little desperate."

Cheryl adds her observation, "I hope it's not that stupid contest. It's been a while since

we even bothered about that.”

“I think that Sara was just trying to remind us of something that we need to do for ourselves.”

Cheryl is a little more inquisitive, “What really happened between you and Drew.”

“It was perfect for a while. Too perfect. And I told myself that I was too busy at the hospital. But I never felt right about it. I felt that he was using something about my past against me.”

“He’s over there now.”

“I was just there. But we don’t belong together. I always feel that his friends are looking down at me.”

Cheryl defends Diane, “They’re not that special to get a complex. You’ve been with a lot better guys than that. Aren’t there any more doctors at the hospital?”

“I’m over doctors. They all think that they know some secret about you. That’s why I come here. It’s just my own thing.”

“That’s why we all come here. Maybe we’re making ourselves unavailable.”

Cheryl hates to think that. But it just seems harder and harder to meet the right kind of guy. And she keeps wondering what will he think of her friends.

In a way, Trish has learned from Cheryl’s experience. Even though Gregg seems really interested in her, she’s not going to give up her freedom for him. She takes him for granted. But if she didn’t, she feels like she’d be vulnerable the way that Cheryl was with Robert. She doesn’t want to find herself all alone at home waiting for Gregg to call. And if an opportunity like Matt comes up, she’s not going to waste it. The practice only makes her prepared for the inevitable heartache.

Cheryl has actually avoided being alone with Josh. She respects Stevie and doesn’t want to place herself in a compromising position. But she also knows that she can’t say anything to her. After a while, she starts to dismiss it all as a misunderstanding on her own part. Things only get a little tricky after the friends decide to throw an engagement party for Stevie. It turns into a get together at a nearby restaurant.

Trish decides not to invite Gregg. They are still going through a rough period. Diane and Cheryl both come alone. But Josh is invited. Cheryl figures that the rest of her friends will run interference during the meal.

In fact, everything seems to be going OK. Josh hardly looks at her. Perhaps, he feels a little guilty. Stevie is overjoyed. Everyone is having a great time.

Cheryl excuses herself to go to the washroom. On the way back to the table, she runs into Josh.

“Stevie really appreciates you doing this for her.”

Cheryl tries to be polite, “It is a great night for both of you. I can only look forward to the wedding.”

“I’m glad that you all made it.”

“Of course, we’d all be here. We’re her friends.”

Josh seems a little sheepish, “I’m sorry what might have gone on between us.”

“Apology accepted,” Cheryl is very abrupt. She doesn’t want to give the opportunity to say anything more.

“Cheryl, I really meant those things that I said to you. I knew you thought that I was drunk. But I’d like to get together. I can be very discreet. I know you and Stevie are friends. But I won’t say anything.”

She pushes him out of the way and goes back to the table. When Josh returns, he is all smiles for Stevie. He acts as if nothing has occurred. Cheryl hardly thinks that Trish can understand the situation. And she isn’t going to say anything to Stevie. Late in the night, she is alone with Diane.

“Josh has been coming on to me.”

Diane tries to dismiss it, “I think it’s just the jitters. Guys get that way when they’re going to get married.”

“Has he come on to you, Diane.”

“Not really. But he does look at me strange.”

Cheryl tells Diane, “Stevie likes him so much. He’s helped her get the store. So we really can’t say anything. But I don’t think that he’s right for her.

Diane is uncertain, “I thought her Dad helped her get the store.”

“He helped a lot. Stevie had some money saved. But I know that Josh put up a little.”

Diane senses trouble, “She can’t let that stay like that.”

“I think if the store does well that she’ll try to buy him out. But for now, she needs his money.”

For all the appeal of Stevie’s life, she is hovering around a nest of bees. She has such an even personality that she should be able to make her way through any crisis. But if everything caves in at once, the most balanced type might end going down with her weakened supports. All Cheryl can do is hold her breath and keep her mouth shut. She is already too deep in the whole mess.

Cheryl needs to get away from all the craziness that has been whirling around her. She decides to visit her mother in Montgomery. Her parents separated after Cheryl finished college, and her mother moved back to be closer to her family. Cheryl can only make it over there occasionally. Now seems like the perfect time.

Her mother doesn’t work. She spends most of her time reading romance novels. She had dreams of being a writer herself. But she could never follow through on her dream. The divorce seemed like the last straw for her. She still has an upbeat attitude. Cheryl resents the fact that she has none of Cheryl’s ambition.

“Mom, I’ll take you out to dinner.”

Cheryl’s mother is not a great cook. No one wants to remind her of that fact. Cheryl likes to take her mother to the Laurel Tea Room when she is in Montgomery. Her mother loves the chicken paprika.

“You and Robert broke up.”

“That was a while ago, Mother.”

Her mother asks, “Do you have a new boy?”

Cheryl pauses and takes a bite of her salad.

“I’m hardly thinking about men right now. I’m just trying to do my job and stay sane.”

Her mother favors Robert, “I only met Robert that one time that I drove down to Atlanta. I really liked him.”

“He had a way of making a great first impression. I just don’t think that he could follow through.”

Cheryl has difficulties explaining the intricacies of her situation to her mother. It is all too complex for words. But the meal is wholesome. She enjoys her mother’s concern. It is a real change from the nights of lunacy at the Anchor.

Cheryl feels suffocated by the maze of antiques and trinkets that fill her mother’s small house. Little bears and deformed unicorns. The claustrophobia is overwhelming. She can barely sleep the only night that she is there. She is drowning in the old world of debutantes and cotillions, curtsies and dainty tea sets. For Cheryl, the china tea sets shatter against the hard realities of city life. Meanwhile, her mother will wait in eternity for her man to return. All the while, her ex-husband lives an untouched life with his new wife in Tampa, Florida.

When Cheryl comes back to Atlanta, she again faces the same nightmare. She can hardly say anything to Stevie. But Josh is out of control. When he crashes, he will bring everyone down with him. For the time being, Cheryl just finds it easier to let things stay as they are. She just needs to avoid Josh. At the same time, she has only realized how little is settled in her own life.

What follows only adds to the troubles of the girls and highlights their collective difficulties. One night Diane begs off the entreaties of Cheryl and Trish to come home with them. She keeps drinking with some guy that she’s met that night. He doesn’t seem all that unusual. Your average sports geek. Hardly suave. But he has his own style.

By the time that Diane makes it to Tony’s house, she is completely zoned out. She can barely stand. This could be her undoing, But she is oblivious to it all. Part of her is going along with whatever is happening. She acts as if she’s done this before. But she’s also about to pass out. She almost becomes someone else and she is ready to be led in any direction by the first comer. Tony certainly has his intentions. And if she knew what was going on, she might be more suspicious of him. As it is, she just finds herself going along with his plans.

Diane is staring into space as he leads her from the car. A touch, a suggestion could turn her on to his game. He still is a little cautious. He doesn’t want to reveal himself as long as she has a chance to get away.

If she only could see what is going on, she’d be racing for home. But her daze makes her more susceptible to the moment. She has given herself over to the anonymous lead. Tony is on the verge of trying almost anything. Under the circumstances that is frightening enough. She has seldom been this far gone. But she has found a perverse appeal in this danger. Under most circumstances, she would beat a retreat. On these rare moments, she is surrendering to this awesome power that is both inside and outside of her. Even in her imagination, she could not anticipate giving herself up to someone like Tony.

Diane has tried to explain situations like this to Cheryl. Cheryl can hardly understand such a loss of control. Even Diane shies away from this side of herself. On the other hand, there are moments when she’s seeking this sort of abandon. She claims that she’s a little entranced by that monster inside. But now she is facing a demon much worse than anything that she knows. At a tense moment like this, she would welcome the intervention of any of her friends.

As he draws her into his house, she is still confused. Part of her welcomes his touch. A kiss and she would melt in a mass of flesh. He is still very cautious about revealing his hand. He

can sense the fragile creature that is under his control.

Despite his rather vile intent, he is still under the impression that the night is entirely consensual. This gives him the cover to push things to the limit. If she screamed now, no one would notice. Even this late, the cries would not reach the nearest neighbors who might mistake them for a cat's wails.

It is amazing with the degree of her intoxication, that she can still appear to be effecting anything resembling desire. That is how he interprets her flailing and groping. She seems to give him enough of a sign so that he believes his interpretation. Even as he touches her, he can feel her yield to his tenderness. He senses that she wants more. He just has to find the right occasion to let loose her wildness.

It may be already too late for her to stop anything from happening. This often is how she makes the best of things. She can hardly regret previous indiscretions when she has so much riding on these experiences. In some respects, this time is different.

As he hesitates, he wonders if he really is all that reprehensible. Would she try to stop him if she was sober? He hardly thinks about that too much. But he is not his usually efficient self. He wants her to like him as he expects from other women in similar situations. And he knows how likely they are to blame themselves. They never really claim that he is overly aggressive. He just takes advantage of bad situations.

He'd never do anything obviously illegal such as spike someone's drink. However, the results are often the same. That is all the more reason for Diane to question her presence in his apartment.

He excuses himself to use the washroom. She is sprawled on his living room couch. Diane manages to muster enough of will to call Cheryl.

"Where are you dear?"

She lets out a yell, "I don't know where the hell I am."

He comes out of the bathroom. He needs to act fast. He wants to get Diane off the phone. He realizes that he better act fast. It is getting out of control.

He tries to grab the phone from her.

"I'll take you home," he tells her.

She reacts by screaming louder. Cheryl is on the other hand trying to help.

"Diane, where are you? Diane, Diane, can you hear me? Do I need to call the police."

He can hardly hear Cheryl. But he just believes that she says police. He knows that he is walking a thin line.

"You're Diane's friend."

"Is she OK?"

He relents, "She's had a little too much to drink. You better come get her."

He's never let it get this far before. That's what he believes. He doesn't want trouble. He gives Cheryl directions. She rushes over.

As he waits, he feels that this is his last chance. He moves in for the kill. Diane is actually making out with him before she passes out. A few minutes later, Cheryl arrives. Everything seems to have happened so quickly.

He tries to cover himself. But it is obvious to Cheryl that no good has gone on her. She sees little that she can do.

“Did you give her something?”

He realizes what Cheryl is asking. “I don’t do that sort of thing.”

Cheryl asks skeptically, “What do you do?” She sees that Diane’s blouse is open in a compromising way. Diane is still murmuring as Cheryl stands her out. Cheryl can’t even look at Tony. He helps Cheryl with Diane. Cheryl is reluctant to have him touch Diane, but she needs his help.

When Cheryl drives away, she feels lucky to have arrived in time.

“Diane, I’m sorry that we left you.”

Diane mumbles something incomprehensible. Cheryl takes her back to her place and has her sleep in the living room. It’s turned into one crazy night.

Cheryl keep wondering if there is anything that they can do to Tony. The next day Diane accepts all the blame.

“I was looking for an adventure and things got out of control.

She feels like they always do. That is what she has to deal with. Cheryl is hardly envious of that lifestyle. But Diane will not be swayed. She needs the rush. Under other circumstances, her behavior might be more risky. She is clearly fortunate never to have run into someone more dastardly than Tony. But he certainly sent a shiver through her.

After dropping Diane off at her house, Cheryl goes to the gym. She reasons that the exercise will give her what she needs to distance herself from a terrible night. On the other hand, Diane is oblivious to what she’s gone through. The alcohol obscured much of the reality. She could never appreciate the ominous overtones of her encounter.

Diane stays in that night. Cheryl talks to Trish in the hope that she might get a better understanding of what happened.

“I hate to admit it, Cheryl, but things like that happen because we’re afraid of sex.”

Cheryl intensely disagrees, “Tony was a freak!”

“I know. But it’s about that balancing act. Getting messed up enough that our bodies are on automatic. We’re ready to try anything. Things that sound perverse when you whisper them to your girlfriends.”

Cheryl asserts, “I don’t think that I could let go like that.”

Trish is doing everything that she can to make the point.

“That’s exactly how it works. It’s not something that we plan. But if it works out right, it’s such a charge. It makes us forget about the heartache. Just wash away the pain.”

Cheryl’s not buying it, “That is the heartache. Realizing that you’ve got that messed up.”

“I don’t know how to explain it any differently. It’s just giving in to your animal instincts. That’s who we really are.”

“I want to think that I’m different.”

“But Robert humiliated you. And guys do that to me all the time. That’s why I don’t take shit from Gregg. I’ll find someone else to be with. I learned my lesson. Diane taught me well.”

“That’s no lesson. I dropped Robert because he was a dick. I’m not going to take up with someone who’s worse. What happened last night speaks of all the dangers of that kind of thing.”

“That’s the extreme. It usually turns out much better than that.”

“You’re throwing caution to the wind, Trish. You never know.”

Trish doesn't want to dwell on it. She gets up to get another drink. At the bar, a guy approaches. She is smiling as he puts the moves on her.

Cheryl turns to see it all. She wishes that she could do something. She can't. The DJ plays "The Glamorous Life." Cheryl dances as if nothing has happened. She knows differently. This isn't the same bar that she's grown to love. There's a darker side to this place, and now she's seen it first hand.

Tonight, she feels that she wants nothing to do with men. She sits at the table and waits for Trish to bring her another drink.

"Who was that guy?" asks Cheryl.

"He's kind of cute."

"You don't know him,"

Trish answers, "Not at all. But I wouldn't mind."

"I thought that you're with Gregg."

"I'm doing my own thing. If Gregg's with me, great. Otherwise, I can't worry about it"

Cheryl finds Trish a little too cavalier. Maybe Cheryl needs to let go. She has another drink and falls into the darkness.

The Anchor Girls are losing their grip. That's how Cheryl sees it. She has watched both Trish and Diane give in to rather perilous moments. And Stevie is living this illusion that Josh is the ideal man. They're all too deep for Cheryl to do much to help. Sunday morning, she goes for a long run. She hopes that can help her put away the little disasters. That may not be enough for her anymore. What could lift her from the doldrums?

She thinks about calling Trish for a late brunch.

"I need to do some recovering. I'll see you about 3," Trish replies.

They order their drinks and then look over at the buffet table.

"I'm not ready to eat," claims Trish. "Where did you go? I turned around, and you were gone."

"I was gone before you turned around. I needed to get home. Just some sanity."

Trish tells her, "I didn't stay out much longer. That one guy wanted me to go home with him. I ended up giving him the wrong phone number. He looked great and all. I loved the way that he moved. But no way!"

"That was good. The one night thing could come back to haunt all of us."

Trish asks Cheryl, "That's not your style Cheryl, is it?"

"It's tempting for about a second. Then I think about this psycho wandering around my apartment."

"That's what we're all worried about. But it does have an air of magic when I feel a little psycho too."

Cheryl gets some smoked salmon and rice. Trish opts for the waffles and maple syrup.

Cheryl offers some advice, "I'm starting to feel like the typical suburban mom. You girls are way too much for me," she says it all with an air of humor.

Trish smiles, "Stevie is pretty sane."

Cheryl has promised herself to say nothing about Josh's antics.

"I guess that's one good thing."

"It's not like Diane and I are killing people."

“Just yourselves.”

“Shut up, Cheryl,” Trish says in jest.

Trish orders another mimosa. She needs the pick up.

“Trish, I already went running.”

“I’m not really a runner. I’m going to lie by the pool when I leave here. Do you want to come?”

“I’ve had enough of the outdoors. I want to get things ready for work tomorrow.”

When Cheryl gets home, she breathes a sigh of relief. It’s already been too much for her. And it has little to do with her own life. Sara’s contest is still holding the girls together for this artificial quest. But deep inside, it is all more trouble than it’s worth.

Cheryl likes the solitary life. She feels that she is missing something. But she’s in no hurry. She can’t let anything force her to be in a hurry. Not a biological clock. Not a contest. Not her own insecurities.

Maybe she should take some time off of going out. She’s done it before. It’s a busy week. She seen her friends get caught up in their own lives. She needs to step back and breathe.

Cheryl makes herself some tea and curls up with a mystery novel. This will be enough for her on this Sunday, her day of rest!