

Wedded Bride 181

Chapter 181

Every time Autumn thought of her grandma's condition she would blame herself as to how she could be so naive to believe Wendy after all they had been through together. 'If I hadn't believed what Wendy said, grandma wouldn't have missed the best time for her surgery.'

"Wendy you disgust me! How could you neglect grandma's health..."

"Did you find her? I have thoroughly underestimated you, " Wendy declared. "You are my daughter and Yvonne is your sister. You must take good care of her before I come back, as she is part of your family. Do you understand?"

"Grandma is my only family in the world. I don't have a mother let alone a sister, " Autumn shouted at Wendy, sending the message loud and clear across the phone. "Let me be clear here. I will pay for Yvonne's surgery but it is simply impossible for me to attend to her and be at her beck and call. You better come back right now if you are really concerned about your daughter."

Autumn then abruptly disconnected the call.

Meanwhile, Isla and her parents arrived at Mandy's house. They gathered at the gate. Aron and Mike had come here earlier in the morning to discuss Aron's wedding with Becky.

Mandy had seldom visited her brother John since she got married, and John didn't even know where Mandy lived.

"Isla, does your aunt live here?" Looking at the grand villa, John said with his eyes wide open, "Isla, this villa alone must cost over hundreds of thousands."

"Hundreds of thousands? Are you kidding me?" Jina responded blankly, staring at John. "Your sister approached us two years back. She bragged to the villagers that she had spent several millions buying a house."

Upon hearing the estimate, John affixed his eyes on the grand mansion with his mouth wide open. After recalling the purpose of his visit, he rubbed his hands on his pants and intended to shout his sister's name. Isla grabbed him by his hand in an attempt to stop him and rang the bell. She explained to John, "Dad, this is a doorbell. Once you press this button, a bell will notify the residents of the house that they have a visitor. Now almost all of the people living in the city use it."

With an embarrassed smile John responded, "Well... I see." Within seconds a servant appeared at the gate. After briefly observing the three visitors outside the gate, the servant said with a frown, "What are you doing here? You have come to the wrong place for begging. Leave now!"

John turned red with rage and yelled out, "How dare you talk to us in such a rude manner? Do I look like a pauper to you?" 'It seems Mandy has become more and more overbearing as years went by. Even her servants follow her footsteps, ' thought John angrily.

The servant snorted, "Well I definitely don't think you are guests of my mistress. I have never heard once that she had any poor relatives like you." 'Poverty and destitution must have driven them mad enough to resort to such extreme measures. How dare they pretend to be mistress's relatives to deceive me?' she thought scornfully.

Jina stammered furiously, "You..." Isla walked closer to the gate and said, "You must remember me."

The servant observed her discreetly. Even though Isla hadn't come here for several years, she finally recognized her. After all, she had been working here for decades. With an awkward smile she tried to make amends, she said, "Isla... You should have told me your name the second I came to the door."

However, even after recognizing her, she didn't open the gate.

'Today is an important day for my lady. I cannot let Isla inside as she may stir up some trouble, ' she mused.

"You haven't visited your aunt in a long time. May I know why you have come here after all this time?" continued the servant. "If you have something important to tell the mistress, please let me know. I can forward your message to her."

Isla wasn't bothered by what the staff had just said but she was just embarrassed and felt sorry for her parents. 'They came here after a long and tiring journey, and now after all that trouble they went through, they weren't even allowed to enter the house.

Mandy is going too far this time, ' Isla thought to herself.

Isla was now cold and resolute as she said, "Is this how you have been trained to treat the guests? To just keep them waiting outside after you interrogate their purpose to visit."

The servant responded, "I... You have misunderstood what I am trying to convey. My mistress is currently attending to some important guests. How about you wait here and once she is free I will ask her if she would like to see you today. Will that work for you?"

Isla threatened with a grim expression as her anger was now growing, "I think it would be better if you go to her right now. Otherwise I will be more than happy to tell your neighbors that my father had paid for your mistress's education when she was young, without thinking twice about it, but now she is so ungrateful and selfish that she won't allow her own brother to enter the house. I am sure this way she will be the one getting disgraced..."

The servant got angry upon hearing the open-ended threat and stuttered, "You..." "Isla, don't forget who you are. I treated you with respect only because you're my mistress's niece. That is all you are. How dare you threaten me like this?"

"I am sparing you five minutes of my time beyond what you have already wasted in this futile conversation. If Mandy refuses to see us in five minutes, I will leave the premise immediately. But before leaving, I will surely like to discuss with the neighbors about the woman living next to them. After that you can tell whether I dare to blurt or not."

The servant could not take such a risk to put her job and her mistress's reputation at stake; so she walked right into the house and sought to speak with Mandy.

John looked at Isla with a concerned expression and said, "Isla, do you think it was really necessary to threaten her like this?"

Jina berated as she patted John's shoulder, "What are you talking about? Your sister bullied us since the second we got onto the property. She spent all of your money without uttering one grateful word. Now she has stooped down to the level of keeping us waiting outside after thinking we were beggars. How could she treat us like this?"

John could not conjure up one word to utter.

Within the next five minutes, the servant opened up the gate and took them to the hall.

Mandy greeted John and Jina enthusiastically, "Nice to see you! Why didn't give me a call before your visit? I could have gotten you picked up. Isla, my dear, why didn't tell me in advance?"

In the end she just snubbed the blame on Isla.

Isla did not respond but Jina was impatient. She retorted with a snort, "Now you live in such a grand house. How could you spare your time to pick us up? You know what? Your servant didn't even let us into the house, assuming that we were beggars."

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"The wedding date has been fixed, and that's about it then. I will ask Aron to offer Becky the Bride Price in a couple of days. Does that sound good to you?" Mike asked with a poker face. Aron had finally agreed to marry Becky and Mike should have been happy about this progress. However, as Joanna still lay unconscious in the hospital, Mike was so worried that he was unable to force even the meekest of smiles.

Becky was just very excited to get married to Aron. She lowered her head as she was shy and blushing with happiness with the thought of spending her life with Aron. Mandy smiled and addressed Mike, "We are okay with that. We are so happy that Becky and Aron have decided to get married after all these years. We want nothing anymore and just want them to be happy. Becky is our beloved daughter and we just seek her well-being."

"Please rest assured. Becky and Aron will have a grand wedding for sure which will mark the beginning of their happy marriage. You know Joanna is still in hospital and we are not in the right frame of mind to prepare for the wedding. If you have any complaints please let us know." Mike requested with humility and sincerity.

Becky stole a glance at Aron with her blushed pink face. Although he maintained a straight face, he did not take exception to what Mike said. Believing he had finally accepted her, Becky was thrilled. She didn't care whether they would have a grand wedding or not. As long as she can marry Aron, she would be content even if it was a simple and small ceremony.

She stole glances at his face from time to time. She still couldn't believe that he would be her husband soon.

"Becky, Mike is talking to you. What are you thinking about?" Mandy turned to Mike and explained, "What a silly girl! She must be so immersed in happiness that she can't even utter a single word."

"Mom..." Becky was annoyed with Mandy for expressing her thoughts too bluntly.

Becky turned to Mike and spoke in a soft tone, "Grandpa, I am not a picky person. The wedding affairs are all up to Aron and you."

"Good girl..." Mike nodded in approval after hearing her answer. He then turned to Aron who had a long face, and scolded, "Say something. You have been sitting still for a long time without uttering even a single word. Do you have any idea for your wedding?"

Becky's face suddenly turned pale as fear and insecurity gripped her. She was afraid that Aron would refuse to marry her. Invitations had already been sent out. If Aron refused, she would become the joke of the town!

"I think it is too late to add my opinions as all the arrangements have been made. Please maintain that and do it that way." Aron said indifferently, "If you are done discussing matters here, I will leave now. I have some work to finish."

Aron didn't struggle or hesitate about the wedding. Becky was overjoyed and believed that he had moved on and accepted her.

Aron stood up and was about to leave but Mike stopped him and scolded, "Why are you being so indifferent? This your wedding too. You should take it seriously. If you keep acting in this manner I won't spare you."

Mike stared coldly at Aron and demanded, "You must behave yourself in the wedding. It is high time you stopped thinking about other woman and concentrated on Becky!"

Aron frowned but didn't say anything yet again. His silence started to annoy the others and give an impression that he was uninterested.

Mandy sighed as she addressed Mike, "Let me apologize on behalf of Isla, Mike. After all, she is my brother's daughter. My brother did me the great favor by pooling together all possible resources to pay for my education. I know Isla did something wrong, but her father is my benefactor and I must intercede for her. Mike, could you please do me a favor and just spare her?"

Mandy supposed that Aron would speak in Isla's favor. If she took the initiative and said it aloud in front of him, he might owe a debt of gratitude to her and be nice to Becky.

Mike sighed after hearing that. He knew Aron well and he knew that if he insisted on holding Isla accountable, Aron would not go ahead and marry Becky.

Mike had made up his mind and he wouldn't allow Aron to be with that woman under any circumstance.

"Mike, I know I shouldn't have asked you to forgive Isla, but..." Before Mandy could finish her sentence and influence Aron, Mike interrupted and said, "I forgive her. As long as Becky and Aron are happy together, I will not hold her accountable."

"Thank you for your kindness, Mike." Mandy said with a grateful smile.

Becky tugged on Aron's sleeve and said in a soft voice, "Aron, you can rest assured about the wedding. I will be responsible and will ensure it will be a perfect one. But can I make a really small request to you?"

"What is it?" Aron asked in confusion. He didn't shake off Becky's hand nor ignored her which elated her. She looked at him in the eye and said, "It's not a big deal. But I just want Isla to be my bridesmaid as she is my cousin."

"No!" Before Aron could even consider it, Mike retorted without wasting a second, "Becky, are you out of your mind? How can you even think of asking her to be your bridesmaid? What if she ruins your wedding?"

"She won't, Grandpa, please rest assured of it." Becky immediately explained to Mike, "Isla is a good girl. She just acted stupid and out of turn this once. There has been some sort of misunderstanding between us and I want to take this opportunity to clear the air. After all we are first cousins. If she hold a grudge against me all the time, my mother and her father would be left in an awkward position."

"But..." Mike was concerned as he couldn't comprehend why Becky wanted that wretched woman to be her bridesmaid.

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Mandy also got Becky's point quickly, and with a bitter smile, said to Aron standing in front of her, "Aron, do you still love Isla? Perhaps it is time for you to come around. You are getting married to Becky soon. And we have already sent wedding invitations to our friends and relatives. It is now written in stone and nothing can change that. So don't bother with your struggles. Forget that woman and don't do anything to hurt my daughter for I assure you that I will never let you go!"

"Mom, don't talk to Aron like that. Be kind." Becky cunningly glanced at Mandy, and pretended to side with Aron like an understanding wife. "I have known him for many years and I know exactly what kind of man he is. Now that he has chosen to marry to me, he will be responsible for the rest of my life. Right, Aron?"

Aron kept a straight face all throughout. Then he laughed scornfully as she finished talking. "Well, that's okay. She can be the bridesmaid if you have her agreement. It is all up to you. I don't care, " replied Aron with a cold tone.

Overcome with joy, Becky's eyes flickered. "Aron, you are so understanding. Thank you."

Stepping forward, Becky took Aron's hands. All of her doubts about his real purpose to marry her have vanished. "Mom, could you ask Isla to come in right now? I want to share this good news with her. I am sure she will be glad to share this happiness with me, " said Becky cheerfully.

Aron's brow furrowed into a deep crease. Becky must not suspect a thing. He didn't withdraw his hands, allowing her to hold his hands tightly.

Mandy proudly went out to the yard and brought Isla as well as her parents back to the living room. She did not tell them the reason why she brought them in. As soon as they entered the room, John asked, "Mandy, do you know what brought us here today? We came here for the sake of my daughter, Isla."

John paused but then continued, "Isla is my daughter and I know her well. She is a kind girl, and she never offends others, let alone hurts people. I am able to understand why others don't believe her. But you are her aunt. Why don't you believe her either? We are family. Do you really think she is a girl who would hurt people deliberately?"

"Brother, don't be so anxious. Please listen to me first. As for that accident, I have..." Mandy had become too complacent. She had merely thought to ask Isla to be Becky's bridesmaid but forgot the real reason why John came today.

Everything would be ruined if John said something he shouldn't say in front of Aron's grandfather who was also there.

"Brother, calm down and don't worry. I will..."

John did not let Mandy continue. "Isla took Aron back home, met all of our relatives and even almost got married four years ago. I am sure you knew about it at that time. Unfortunately something happened between Aron and Becky and Isla went through the most miserable time of her life. But you never heard anything from us. We have learned to let it go. We don't care whom Becky marries, because it is her right and her own decision. But leave my daughter out of this. I know her well. She would never hurt people, let alone Aron's grandmother. I will not allow anyone to smear her name. As her father, I will protect her. You will have to go through me."

"Becky, what he is talking about? What does he mean? I've never heard this before. He just said Aron almost got married to Isla. Is that true?" Mike looked at Becky and asked in total confusion.

Becky, her face filled with embarrassment, couldn't reply immediately, because she knew that she would give herself away if she did. Instead, Becky went to Isla and said, "Sister, it was just a misunderstanding. I have been with Aron for four years and we are getting married soon. Would you like to be my bridesmaid? I hope you would share this joy with us." said Becky.

John was too preoccupied with his own thoughts and it took him a little while to notice that there were other people in the room. When he saw Aron also standing there, John stepped forward with a frown and said, "You are Aron, aren't you? I haven't seen you for four years."

"Yes, it's me, Uncle John." Aron was respectful in front of John. But John was not moved by his politeness. This was the man who hurt his daughter immensely. He had not forgiven him.

"I actually did not want to meet you again. You broke Isla's heart once. Why are you trying to hurt her again?" John paused then burst into a sneer. "You have known Isla for a long time. What kind of girl do you think she is? Do you really believe that she would hurt your grandmother? She is such a kind girl! She won't hurt anyone."

"Uncle John, I..." Aron was unable to answer John at that moment, because Mandy and Becky were also around and they should not suspect him. If that happened, his grandma's condition could worsen.

"Brother, I have explained it to Aron. It was just an accident. We are going to be family with him soon and we will not be pressing any charges. I can assure you that." Mandy hastily stepped towards John. "But today is a happy day for Aron and Becky, so let's not make any more trouble, okay?"

Becky also took Isla's hands and cheerfully said, "Sister, you agree to be my bridesmaid, right? You must wish us both a happy life."

"Becky, you have gone too far!" Isla was furious. "I don't care who you are going to marry. But I will never be your bridesmaid. So you'd better stop dreaming."

"Aron..." Becky turned to Aron looking for sympathy, "Look at Isla. She said she will never be my bridesmaid. Help me persuade her."

Becky then continued, "I have been abroad with you for so many years that I lost contact with my friends. If she declines to be my bridesmaid, I don't know who else to ask."

Aron didn't expect Becky to ask him to persuade Isla to be her bridesmaid. How could he make such a request to Isla if not to intentionally hurt her? He asked her to trust him and promised that he would

handle this not long ago. But now, two days later, he was going to get married to another woman. He went back on his words in such a short span of time.

Isla waited. Will Aron make such an unreasonable request?

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Isla, all of sudden, wanted to attend the wedding and nodded in approval. With a forced smile she promised Aron, "Well, as you wish, I will be her bridesmaid."

"My dear daughter...." Isla's Mum pulled her daughter aside and said with a sad voice "My silly daughter, if it is against your will, you do not need to undertake the bridesmaid. Nobody has the right to force you to do it."

"Mum, I am Ok." Isla forced a smile. She wanted to witness the wedding ceremony because Aron wished it, "Mum and Dad, we had better leave now. They need to discuss the wedding and our presence is no longer required."

"Well, let us go." With a heavy heart Isla's Mum agreed.

Isla's Dad, overwhelmed with anger rushed towards Aron and gave him a furious slap. Aron was caught off guard and felt the sting on his face. Isla's Dad showed everyone what a father means to a daughter who had been wronged.

"Uncle, how could you do this?"

"My elder brother, you are going too far!" Mandy and Becky united their voices in protest. Isla's Dad gave Aron a decided slap with such power and might that it terrified Becky.

"Are you Ok?" Becky rushed to Aron's aid.

"I'm alright!" Aron thought he deserved such a slap from Isla's Dad and did not object.

"My elder brother, there is no justification for you to slap my son-in-law." Mandy protested.

"I would slap him, even if he was the most influential and powerful man in the world." Isla's Dad said with determination. "Aron, since my daughter promised to be the bridesmaid at your wedding, I have to respect her decision. The main purpose of my visit today is to tell you of my confidence in my daughter, no matter how ill you think of her. I wish to invite police for a thorough investigation of why Joanna's life lays in balance now!"

His words rendered Mandy and Becky paralyzed with fear.

"My elder brother, as I have told you, this matter has been dismissed by Aron's family. There is no necessity in bringing this up again." Mandy said as she looked at her elder brother in embarrassment.

"My daughter's clean conscience defies any assusation!" Isla's Dad cast a cold glance at her sister and said: "Mandy, I have seen through your tricks. I tried every means to support your schooling. What is more, my wife had suffered a miscarriage because of that. Despite everything, I expected nothing back from you. But now, we have decided to sever all family ties with you after the wedding."

"My elder brother, how could you utter such nonsense...." Mandy looked at his elder brother in dismay. Ignoring Mandy, Isla's Dad went to Mike and said: "Sir, I am sorry for the condition that your wife is in right now. But it has nothing to do with my daughter. If you wish to press this matter, we are ready to cooperate."

Isla's Dad might be a rough man from the countryside, but he was a man of principle. He brought his daughter to Mike and told her, "My dear daughter, apologize to this old gentleman."

Isla obeyed and made a deep bow in front of Mike, "I feel awfully sorry for Joanna being in a coma. It has rendered me powerless to defend myself because only she can tell the truth now. However, I will accept whatever investigation you make on this matter. Last but not the least, I wish Aron and Becky a happy wedding."

Afterwards, Isla turned to her father, "Let's go, Dad."

"Ok." Isla's Dad agreed, "Let's go home."

Isla's Dad had mixed feelings: Aron was meant to be his son-in-law, who was about to marry someone else. They were, in the end, not destined for each other.

Isla's family had already left, but suspicions started to grow inside Mike. It was his first time to meet Isla's Dad who, although dressed in simple clothes, was a man of great esteem.

He somehow believed the defense Isla's Dad made for his daughter.

Mike was confused, thinking of the incident four years ago as brought forth by Isla's dad. He asked Mandy, "Can you please explain to me why that family was insisting that Isla and my grandson were a couple in the past?"

"Well..." Mandy did not expect that she would be challenged with this question. She hated Isla's family and wished that they had never come.

"My grandpa, this incident.... it is my fault." Becky had to acknowledge her error and said to Mike, "My cousin and Aron used to be a couple. I had a crush on Aron, but I was also happy to see the two of them stay happy together."

Becky paused and continued. "My cousin and Aron came to celebrate my birthday where all of us got drunk. Aron and I somehow slept together. It was something that my cousin had the greatest difficulty to forgive. I know that I am partly responsible for it. What's worse, I got pregnant, so..."

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After leaving Becky's house, Mike turned to Aron and asked, "Becky said that you used to date Isla. Is it true?"

"More or less, " replied Aron. As he started the car, he said to Mike, "Grandpa, I have something to tell you."

Mike responded with a stone face, "If you intend to persuade me to call off your wedding, don't say anything at all. The wedding has been finalized and impossible to change."

Mike continued, "I don't care what happened between you and Isla. Now that you chose Becky, you should take responsibility for it. Got it?"

Aron thought with a frown, 'I never planned to really marry her. It was just a stopgap.'

He explained, "Grandpa, you misunderstood me. The matter I am going to discuss with you has nothing to do with Becky or Isla." "Now grandma is still in a coma. Two days ago the doctor told me that she might be in a coma indefinitely. Then I met Arthur. He told me that grandma could wake up if he did the operation himself. So I want to ask your opinion. Do you consent to grandma getting an operation?"

"Why not?" Mike asked, looking confused. "She has been taking care of Joanna. No one knows her condition better than Becky. Now Joanna is going to have a surgery, but I couldn't keep her company day and night. We need someone to look after her.

Becky is going to be your wife. We will be a family soon. We shouldn't keep her in the dark, " Mike continued.

"You're right. But Becky is busy preparing for the wedding, so I don't want to bother her with this. Besides, we don't know when grandma could wake up after the surgery. I also want to surprise her. I will find grandma a care giver who can look after her better than Becky." Aron paused, and then continued, "We have been together for long. I know that I owe her a lot. Now our wedding will be held, so I want her to focus on that. I don't want her to worry about grandma. A professional care giver can take better care of grandma. Do you want to see Becky prepare for the wedding while looking after grandma? She will get tired. "

"But..." Aron's words made sense, so Mike didn't object anymore. He sighed, "I never thought that you would treat Becky so well. Fine, I won't tell her about this."

Aron said with a smile, "Grandpa, thank you!" 'Now I need to arrange the surgery, ' thought Aron to himself.

Aron drove Mike home, then called Charles and told him of their decision. Charles happened to be in the hospital, so he went to Arthur.

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"Don't worry. As long as you do the surgery, I will bring her to meet you. I can assure you this." Charles said calmly. "She is preoccupied with so many things that I am afraid she would have no time to meet you at the moment."

"Well, I just want to know... I just want to know if she is fine." Arthur bit his tongue as he was about to say something. He was anxious to know what happened to Autumn in these years.

"No, to be frank she is not fine, " replied Charles. Charles shook his head slightly. Autumn had gotten involved in a series of troublesome affairs. Her grandmother's illness, Isla's accident as well as Yvonne's drama drained all of her energy.

"Oh, I almost forgot to tell you." Charles said. "Autumn's grandma is also in this hospital and she is in critical condition. If you want to see her, I suggest that you do it soon. She is running out of time and you may not have many chances to meet her."

After Charles left, Arthur checked at the information desk which room Autumn's grandma was confined then hurried to it. Autumn happened to be there feeding her grandmother some porridge. "Do you like it? Does it taste good?" Autumn asked softly with a smile.

Her weak grandmother nodded slightly, smiling back at her, "Autumn, you don't have to feed me. I can eat on my own."

"Don't move, grandma. I'm happy to do it." Autumn scooped a spoonful of porridge, blew on it a little to cool it then gently put it in her grandma's mouth. "Grandma, I still remember, you used to feed me like this and you always took good care of me. Now it is my turn to take care of you. "

"What a good girl." Grandma reached out her hands, patting Autumn's back gently and said, "I am so lucky to be your grandmother and to have you in my life. I could die without any regret."

"Grandma, please don't talk like that. You are my only family. Please don't leave me alone in this world." Autumn's eyes glistened with tears. "Grandma, my heart breaks when you say that. Never talk like that again. Promise me, grandma. As long as I am here, I won't let anything happen to you. You will get better and help me take care of my children. You have to make it through."

The poor old lady was amused by Autumn's words. She held Autumn's cheeks and cherished this beautiful moment. "I'm glad to hear that from you, my sweetheart, but I am afraid that I would be too old to help you. I am unable to take care of myself now."

She barely finished talking when she coughed and panted for breath, which scared Autumn. Autumn hastily took a glass of water from the bed stand. "Are you okay, grandma? Do you need to take a sip of the water?"

"Don't worry about me, Autumn. I am fine." Her grandmother reassured Autumn. Even though she knew that she had only a few days left to live, she didn't want Autumn to worry. She only wished happiness for her granddaughter.

Autumn gazed at her poor skinny grandmother, feeling helpless. Suddenly, the door was pushed open. Autumn looked to find a man standing by the door. He even stared at Autumn without a blink until Autumn frowned. "I am sorry, Sir. I am afraid that you are in the wrong ward." said Autumn softly.

Arthur was wearing plain clothes so Autumn thought that he had somehow gotten lost.

"No, he isn't." Autumn's grandmother, lying quietly on the bed, suddenly spoke. Arthur didn't move his eyes from Autumn until he heard Autumn's grandmother.

"Grandma, do you know him? Is he your friend?" Autumn asked, a little confused.

"Yes. Of course I know him. Autumn, please help me up." After so many years, she could still recognize Arthur. The poor old lady understood that she was dying and Autumn was the only one she cared about in this world. If the Zhao family would acknowledge Autumn as one of their own, then she might die in peace.

However, Autumn was confused. She neither knew this man nor did she know why he was there. Autumn helped her grandmother up, propping up a pillow behind her to make her more comfortable. "How do you feel now, grandma? You have to tell me if it hurts."

"I am fine," replied her grandmother. She patted Autumn's hands and said with a smile, "Autumn, I want to eat something. Could you go get me some fruit?"

"Okay. I will be back soon." Autumn knew that it was merely an excuse of her grandmother to send her out, but she said nothing and walked out of the ward quietly. They needed to talk in private.

As soon as Autumn closed the door, her grandmother got off from the bed and knelt down in front of Arthur. "Arthur, I am so sorry. It is my fault. I didn't take good care of Bowen. I am really sorry."

She began to breathe heavily. Arthur stepped forward and held her. "Emily, what happened to you? Why are you so sick? You didn't take care of yourself?"

He held her to the bed and then continued to ask, "I haven't seen you in decades. How did this happen to you?"

Suffering from an illness all year, Emily lost a lot of weight and looked frail. If not for her big beautiful eyes, Arthur almost did not recognize her. She used to be graceful and pretty.

Arthur was upset. If Bowen didn't fall in love with Wendy, he would not have run away. Emily wouldn't have had to go through any suffering with her granddaughter.

In order to take care of Autumn, Emily didn't get married. She was the only true family that Autumn had ever known.

"What happened all these years? Tell me, Emily." Arthur looked guilty. If he'd known earlier that Autumn had gone through so much misery, he would have come back from abroad much sooner.

"I am fine, Arthur. Don't worry." Emily shook her head. "My life is worthless. The most important thing for me is to take care of Autumn and to see her live a happy life. Then I won't be a failure when I die."

"You still look the same as before. You are still handsome and refreshing." she said, smiling bitterly.

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"Emily, say no more." Arthur said with a frown, "You are not well now. Let me carry out a checkup for you."

Arthur stretched out his hand to check her situation, but she stopped him and said, "Arthur, that's not necessary. You are a good doctor, but I know my health condition very well. I know I'm dying."

Emily had given her whole life in service of the Zhao family. Arthur was deeply grieved by her physical condition. "Emily, you..." he murmured.

"Don't be sad." Emily smiled. "Everyone dies. I can take care of Bowen in the other world after my death. Arthur, could you please take Autumn home with you?"

Emily worried that Arthur would refuse to acknowledge Autumn because of Wendy. She asked with a hopeful expression, "You will take Autumn back home, right? After all, she is your granddaughter."

Before Arthur could say anything, Emily continued, "Autumn is a good girl. She was well behaved just like Bowen. She was also obedient towards Bowen and me. Sometimes too obedient that Wendy manipulated her. That's why I'm so worried about her."

"Rest assured, I'm here to take her back." Arthur patted Emily's hand to comfort her. "I will take both of you back to the Zhao family."

Emily was elated at Arthur's first half of the sentence, but after listening to the last half of it, she frowned slightly. "I don't have to."

It was enough for Emily that Autumn could go back to the Zhao family. She had long felt responsible for Bowen's early death because she didn't take good care of him. She fell into low spirits and refused to get treatment. She also had to take care of Autumn who was just a child at that time. As a result, her health gave in.

"That's an order." Arthur insisted. Emily had devoted herself to the Zhao family. Arthur made up his mind to have her spend her remaining years in happiness.

Emily said no more. Arthur adjusted the covers for her and said, "I'm going to check with the doctor regarding your condition. Have a good rest, Emily."

When Autumn came back to the ward, Arthur had already left. Autumn asked, "Grandma, who was that man? I have never seen him before."

"He..." Emily hesitated. She was unsure whether she should tell Autumn his true identity "He is an old friend of mine. We haven't seen each other for decades. I didn't expect to see him here. Maybe he heard that I was ill and came here to visit me."

"Is he your old sweetheart?" Autumn was joking, but Emily did not find it funny. "Autumn, how can you say that?"

This was the first time that Emily got mad at her. Autumn was startled and immediately retreated, "Grandma, please don't get angry. I was just joking."

"Please don't make such jokes." Emily said in a cold tone, "I'm tired and want to rest. You may leave now."

"Okay." Autumn smiled awkwardly, "Grandma, have a good rest. I'll be back later."

At that time, Yvonne was also at the hospital. Autumn had to take care of both her grandma and Yvonne. Although Autumn vowed that she would never take care of Yvonne, she did otherwise. After all, Yvonne was her sister who just had a miscarriage.

Before Autumn reached Yvonne's ward, she heard yells and screams coming from the room.

"Get out! I don't want to see your face!" Chris came out of the ward, crying. Autumn ran towards her and asked, "Chris, I told you to stay home and not to come here. Why are you here?"

"Autumn..." Chris said in a choked voice, "I was worried about her, so I bought some fruits. I just wanted to check if she was alright. But..."

Chris cast a glance at the closed door, and cried even harder.

"Chris." Autumn grabbed her hands and comforted her, "She is an ill-tempered person. She always blames other people and never reflects on herself. I will take care of her. You can go home now."

"Autumn..." Chris stopped Autumn and gave her the fruits. "Please bring these fruits to her. If she refuses to forgive me and insists on calling the police, I'm okay with that."

"Don't worry about it. You will be fine!" Autumn pushed the door open. Yvonne lay on the bed with her back to the door. "I told you, get out of my room. Why are you still here?"

"It's me." Autumn put the fruits on the table and asked, "Yvonne, are you feeling better now? Are you still uncomfortable?"

"Autumn!" Yvonne gnashed her teeth and demanded, "Why are you here? Are you here to mock me?"

Autumn sneered as she looked Yvonne in the eye saying, "Your mother didn't even come here to take care of you. How pathetic you are! Yvonne, you are such an ungrateful person and a loser. Shame on you!"

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"No, you're lying!" Yvonne retorted.

She always had the assumption that Charles refused to accept her because of Autumn. "Autumn, I will not spare you!" she continued with hatred in her voice.

Autumn could feel a headache approaching. Somehow, she still felt sorry for Yvonne. Sighing, she said, "Yvonne, I hope I won't see your face again. Take care of yourself."

But Yvonne yelled at her, asking her to stay.

"I need to see Charles, do you hear me? I need to see him right now!" She demanded as she grabbed her hand to keep her from leaving.

"Yvonne, why do you..." Autumn asked, her forehead wrinkling into a frown.

'Everything can't be salvaged, what's the point of her meeting with Charles?

Besides, he won't even agree to meet with her.' Autumn thought to herself.

"Stay!" Yvonne cried out once again, looking distressed.

"If you don't bring him here, I will call the police. I'm sure he'll come to see me after Chris has been put behind bars." She threatened.

"You..." Autumn trailed off, now looking at Yvonne with much distaste.

After a few moments of silence, she finally complied, "Alright. I will find him and bring him here."

When Autumn walked out of the room, she immediately saw Charles who was standing just outside. He had left Emily's ward when he was told that Autumn was with Yvonne. Not wanting to see the face of Yvonne, he didn't enter the ward. Autumn stepped forward at the sight of her husband.

"Charles, here you are, " Autumn uttered gently as she embraced Charles.

So much had happened these past few days. If Charles hadn't kept her company, she couldn't have gotten through all of those days alone. Therefore, she felt really lucky to have him by her side.

"What's wrong?" Charles asked, staring at Autumn in his arms.

"Did Yvonne give you a hard time again?" He continued, concern painting his face.

Hearing the name of that woman made Autumn frown. "No, she didn't..." She muttered, unable to finish her sentence.

She took a deep breath and thought of ways she could tell Charles about Yvonne's demand to meet him.

"Tell me. What did she want this time?"

Charles asked, noticing the hesitation on Autumn's face.

"Well, she... She asked to meet with you alone. Otherwise, she will call the police and make sure that Chris will be jailed." Autumn answered, raising her eyebrows. 'Yvonne is my sister. I'm really sorry that she has brought the Lu Family so much trouble, ' Autumn mused guiltily.

"Charles, I am really sorry. I..."

Autumn couldn't help but put the blame on herself for getting Chris into so much trouble. After all, Chris had pushed Yvonne for her sake. But now, Autumn didn't know what to do to make things better. She found herself at a loss.

"Chris is fine now. You should stop blaming yourself. If she really wants to see me then I will go see her. It's really not a big deal, Autumn."

Charles tried to console her, stroking Autumn's hair tenderly.

"Charles, you don't have to..." Autumn said, frowning. "You don't need to force yourself if you really don't want to see her, I'll go talk to her, " she continued after a pause.

"It's alright, don't worry. I can handle this, " Charles responded, smiling reassuringly.

He wasn't afraid of Yvonne's threat. He knew that it was the right time to finally settle things between him and Yvonne. "I'll go inside. Wait here and I'll be with you shortly, " he instructed Autumn.

"Okay, " Autumn nodded in response.

She watched Charles enter the ward as she sat on the bench anxiously.

As soon as Charles stepped into the ward, Yvonne immediately ran towards him and grasped his arm. "Charles, I've been waiting for you! It's so good to see you, " she said with a happy smile.

"I heard that you wanted to see me.

Here I am. What do you want to tell me?" Charles asked, pushing Yvonne away.

"I..."

Yvonne became upset as she looked at Charles. 'This handsome, rich man was almost mine. Now, everything is gone, ' she thought to herself.

"Charles, can you stay here and talk to me? I have so many things to tell you, " she told Charles, staring at him obsessively.

Charles glared at Yvonne, contempt clear in his eyes. "Yvonne, I came here for Autumn's sake. Say whatever you have to tell me now. I'm not going to waste any more time here with you, " he said coldly.

Yvonne finally snapped when she heard him say her sister's name. "Autumn! Autumn again!" She screamed crazily.

"What is it about her?

Why did you choose her instead of me?!" She yelled out in rage, gnashing her teeth in the process.

"I admit that I shouldn't have run away from our wedding ceremony. But I've finally realized my mistake. I fell in love with you the first time we met. I did everything just to be with you, even after you became my brother-in-law. Please, Charles! Can you give me one more chance..." she begged, gripping Charles's sleeves desperately.

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Softhearted as he is, Charles consoled Yvonne. She had just lost her baby and the doctor said that she had less than thirty percent chance of conceiving again in the future. Charles felt sorry for her.

His words of consolation gave Yvonne hope somehow. She stepped forward, holding his hand and said, "Charles, you still care about me. You must love me, or you would not comfort me today."

"Have you lost your mind?" Charles got rid of her hands and stepped back. "Haven't I made myself clear before? If you dare make any more trouble for Autumn, I promise that I will take some steps next time and you will regret it."

"Charles, if you dare leave me alone today, I will call the police right away. I will tell them it was Chris who pushed me and caused my miscarriage. If she gets arrested, how long do you think she will be imprisoned?" Yvonne burst into sneer. She thought Charles would be threatened but he remained expressionless.

"Are you threatening me?" Charles coldly asked, squinting at her.

Filled with guilt, Yvonne hesitated. But she could no longer take back what she had just said. She was convinced that Charles could not bear his sister going to jail and that she could win him back.

"Yes. You can regard it as a threat." Yvonne kept smiling stubbornly and continued, "Charles, Chris is your only sister. You probably don't want her spending a minute in jail. This won't do you any good. Think carefully."

"Do you think you can threaten me?" Charles shook his head. Yvonne was too simple-minded and she may have forgotten that Charles was a big shot in Y City. He was capable enough to make people believe that it was just an accident. Who the hell did she think she was? He would not bow to anyone.

"Yvonne, no matter what you do, I won't be with you, let alone fall in love with you. Just give up and stop this madness." He then walked out of the room, leaving her alone and furious.

"What is going on? Tell me. Did she promise not to sue Chris?" Autumn rushed up to Charles as he stepped out. Her anxiety almost overwhelmed her. Yvonne's hysterical cries could be heard from the

ward but Autumn could do nothing but wait outside. She was afraid that the situation would get worse if she went in.

"I have thought about it for a long time. If Yvonne insisted on suing Chris, I would take the blame. Yvonne would love that and she won't object to it. It was all my fault. Chris got involved in this trouble because of me and I don't want her to get hurt. I have to protect her." said Autumn. She had taken all of the consequences into account and has decided to take the blame for Chris.

Charles didn't know whether to laugh or cry upon hearing such an absurd idea. "And where did that ridiculous idea come from? Is that what you have been thinking all day long?"

"What's wrong with it? Won't it work?" Perplexed, Autumn gazed at Charles. It was the best solution that she could think of. If this didn't work, she didn't know what else to do.

"Don't worry about that. Let's go home." Charles put his hand on her shoulder. "Don't worry too much about it. I will take care of it. As long as I am here, no one could hurt you and Chris," he added. They left the hospital hand in hand.

However, Autumn still remained uncertain and worried about Chris. She knew Yvonne too well. She would definitely not let this go easily this time.

Autumn had taken care of her grandmother for a long time. Then Yvonne had a miscarriage, so she had to look out for her as well. Charles was worried about Autumn's health, so he insisted that Autumn go home and have a good rest.

Back home, Autumn took a shower and had just lay down on the bed to enjoy this rare leisure time when Chris showed up at the door. "Autumn..." Chris said with a sad look.

"What's wrong, Chris? You look upset." Chris's eyes were red and swollen as if she had been crying for a long while. "Come in, Chris. Tell me what happened."

"I am fine." Chris came in slowly and Autumn invited her to the bed. "Are you still worried about Yvonne?" Autumn asked.

"I just feel really bad for what I did to her. It was my fault. She lost her baby because of me. I cry every time I think about it. I killed her baby. It's just so horrible." Chris sometimes had embarrassing characteristics but she had been protected well by her family and had never gone through such things. Chris took all responsibility for this accident, suffering from extreme guilt.

Autumn thought for a long time, then asked, "Chris, I am not Yvonne, and my name is Autumn. Isn't it weird for you?"

Chris looked a bit stunned. Then she shook head. "I was surprised at first. But I have already gotten along with you and I know that you are a good person. My brother loves you so much, and I believe my brother's judgement. So, it's not that weird."

Autumn smiled as she heard this. "Then now you know why I got married to your brother using the name of Yvonne?"

Though Chris knew about her identity swap with Yvonne, Chris still was not clear about the details. "It is an absurd story indeed. Yvonne is my half-sister. After my mother gave birth to me, she abandoned my father because he was too poor to give her a good life. She ran away with another man whose wife died soon. They got married and Yvonne was born shortly after.

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"Exactly. Such an horrible mother, don't you think?" Autumn gave a bitter smile and continued, "Of course I refused to marry Charles at that time. But Wendy Ye... took my grandma away and hid her. She told me that my grandma would receive medical attention if I married Charles. If I refused, I would never ever see my grandma again." Autumn couldn't hold back her tears. Chris was filled with anger. How could a mother be such a monster to her daughter?

"Autumn, please stop crying. You got married to my brother and you are a part of our family now. Grandpa, Charles and I will protect you from Wendy Ye." Chris held Autumn's hand to comfort her.

Autumn dried her tears and continued, "If Wendy Ye had my grandma treated by a doctor, I would have been grateful for that. However, she didn't even hire a nurse to take care of my grandma. She only used my grandma to blackmail me."

With her illness, Emily was at death's door. Every time Autumn thought of it, she regretted having trusted Wendy Ye. She realized that Wendy Ye would never be a kindhearted person.

"Then, what happened?" Chris didn't expect Autumn to have such a miserable past. She felt sorry for her.

"I managed to find my grandma, but she is dying. I hate Wendy and Yvonne for that. When Yvonne had a miscarriage, I called Wendy and told her that I wouldn't take care of her." Chris was already family to Autumn, so Autumn wanted her to know everything, and to know that not all mothers loved their children.

"Wendy Ye... didn't care about Yvonne at all. She said that since Charles was not the baby's father, it did not matter that Yvonne lost the baby. She asked me to take good care of Yvonne, hoping that Yvonne could take Charles from me when she recovers." Chris was dumbfounded..

"What? How is that possible?" Chris couldn't believe her ears.

"You see, Wendy Ye is such a selfish person. She only cares about herself. Yvonne inherited that from her. They don't care about the baby at all. Chris, you don't have to feel sorry for her." Autumn reassured Chris.

Despite Autumn's encouragement, Chris got even more depressed. She gave a wry smile and said, "Autumn, I know you are trying to comfort me. But I feel sorry for the baby. No matter how evil Yvonne is, the baby is innocent. I..."

"Chris, you shouldn't think it that way." Autumn interrupted, "You have prevented a possible tragedy. Do you think Yvonne would keep the baby? Even if she did, do you think she would take good care of it? The baby would suffer a lot."

Autumn grabbed Chris's hand and continued, "Chris, we are a family. No matter what you have done, Charles and I will protect you. Don't dwell too much on that. Everything is going to be fine."

Chris felt much better after being comforted by Autumn. Autumn left Chris's room and returned to her bedroom. When she was about to take a shower, she received an overseas call from Sam.

"Hello, Sam. So you are free now?" Autumn asked, "Have you made your decision?"

"Come on, Autumn. I'm not calling for that. How is Chris?" Sam asked in a serious tone. A company staff had told him that Chris hadn't gone to work for several days and hadn't answered the phone calls. Sam was very worried about Chris, so he called Autumn to ask what had happened to her.

Autumn hesitated then told Sam what happened. "Sam, Chris is very upset now. I'm so worried about her..."

Actually Chris felt much better after the conversation. Autumn exaggerated it on purpose to find out whether Sam would come back to Y City for Chris.

"Sam, are you still listening?" Autumn asked.

There was a pause, then Sam answered, "I'm unable to come back right now. But I will finish my work as soon as possible and then return to Y City. Little Ye, please take good care of Chris. Chris is still new to these things and it will be hard for her."

"Please rest assured. Chris is more than a sister, and I will take good care of her." Autumn answered with a smile. Sam cared about Chris very much. She hoped that Sam would eventually fall in love with Chris.

After hanging up, Autumn took a shower and went to bed. She was so exhausted that she didn't wake up until the evening. Charles came into the room and asked Autumn to have supper, "Autumn, wake up. It's time to have supper."

"What time is it?" Autumn asked as she sat up on the bed and rubbed her eyes.

Charles glanced at his watch and answered, "It's 7 PM. You can go back to sleep after supper."

Chris seemed much better at the dining table and even had a smile on her face. Autumn asked Charles, "Charles, how is Joanna? When will she have the operation?"

"The operation will be tomorrow morning."

"Tomorrow morning?" Autumn asked in surprise as she didn't expect Joanna to have an operation so soon.

"The sooner she has the operation, the better. She must wake up, so that Miss Zhao can clear her name." Charles replied.

Early the next morning, Autumn readied herself and was going to take the subway to the company, but Charles insisted on driving her there. As he pulled into the entrance of the building, several employees saw Autumn getting out of his car.

Autumn cast a sharp glance at Charles and said, "I told you not to drive me here. They are going to gossip about me again."