

## Wedded Bride 191

### Chapter 191

"What's going on?" Autumn asked, "How could you be back to work so soon? I thought I told you to get some rest."

"I am ok." Isla forced a pale smile and replied, "Staying home would only make me feel worse. I feel much better here keeping my mind off things."

Autumn felt sorry for Isla. "Isla, you are..."

She wanted to tell her about Aron's plan. It might make Isla feel better. But Autumn changed her mind and decided to keep quiet.

Isla reacted with a gentle smile, "Autumn, I feel ok. The tasks here have piled up during my absence and I have to handle them one by one. Do you have anything else to talk to me about?"

"Nothing more. You can work on them as you wish." Autumn replied. After Isla left, Autumn kept herself busy with her own work that had also started to pile up on her desk.

Close to the end of the day, Ryan Zhou knocked on the office door: "Ye..... I mean... Manager Ye, someone here is looking for you."

"Who is it?" Autumn grumbled. Who would want to speak to her near closing time?

"It is me." Autumn immediately knew who the visitor was, judging from the poor Chinese he uttered. "Mr.Hoada, what a surprise to see you here!" She exclaimed.

Hoada Masahiro was one of Autumn's former clients. Although their business did not materialize, they still had high regard and respect for each other. He lived in Japan most of the time, so there had been no frequent communication between them. It indeed surprised Autumn to see him today.

"Miss Ye, we meet again after a long time." Hoda Masahiro said with beaming smile. He is a Japanese businessman with an average height and beautiful features.

"Please be seated." Autumn expressed her pleasure as she poured a cup of tea for her guest. "Mr. Hoda, what is the main purpose of your return to China?"

"I am on business here. I wanted to take the chance to meet you when I learned that you work nearby." Hoda Masahiro looked Autumn up and down. "May I invite you to dinner?"

"I am afraid not...." Autumn would have accepted his invitation, had she not just dealt with a mountain of tasks.

Hoda Masahiro switched to a wiser course after sensing Autumn's hesitancy. "I will be here in China for no more than two days. I intended to discuss something to make up for our discontinued business... Since you seem short of time, we don't have to do it now."

"Well...." Autumn decided to accept Hoda Masahiro's invitation after careful consideration. Cloud Advertising Company hadn't been performing well due to that scandal she was involved in, thwarting cooperation from big companies. Hoda Masahiro's participation could redeem her company from this slump.

"Please wait a moment. I need to make a phone call." Autumn called her husband to tell him that she would be home a bit late. Charles asked where the dinner would be and hung up.

Autumn felt much at ease after assuring her husband. She said to Hoda with a smile. "Now I will call to get a reservation at a restaurant."

"Oh, no, it is against social practice...." Hoda Masahiro interrupted Autumn, "Though I come from another country, it's my honor to arrange the dinner. For a lady like you to treat me out would be unacceptable."

Autumn finally acceded to Hoda Masahiro's suggestion. She got off work a little earlier than usual for the dinner. Isla was at the exit and pulled Autumn aside. She asked, "Autumn, are you sure about going out to dinner with this Japanese?"

"Yes I am, what is wrong?" Autumn added, "He is my former client. If we can bring him in, our company can get the relief that it badly needs."

"But.... I suspect he has an inappropriate motive, judging from his glances at you." Isla had encountered something similar in the past.

"That's nonsense! He is married." Autumn was unable to contain her laughter, "Isla, my dear friend, you are imagining things. Anyway, I have to go. You can get off work early if there is nothing else urgent on your desk."

Autumn, then left with Hoada Masahiro.

Hoada Masahiro chose a Japanese restaurant. "Miss Ye, do you mind that I choose this Japanese restaurant tonight?"

"Definitely not....." Autumn replied.

Autumn had a strong dislike for Japanese food but for the sake of the possible cooperation, she could not decline.

Hoada Masahiro looked fairly young in his forties, thanks to his balanced lifestyle. He ordered a table of dishes to his liking without the slightest consideration for Autumn's preferences. "Chinese cuisine is profound and deep, however I have the greatest difficulty in eating any dish of that nature. I hope it's ok for you."

"Definitely! As you please." Autumn was thinking of the possible cooperation. "Mr. Hoada, can we talk about the matter you brought forth...."

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Hearing this, Eric was taken by great surprise. When he got over the shock, he asked, "Don't you know that you own that house now?"

"What... are you talking about?" Autumn asked, looking surprised. She had no idea.

"After you returned from Z City, Charles bought that house from me, with a bit of convincing and some pressure. It's your house now. You don't need to be sorry."

Autumn felt more embarrassed. 'This is a house, not a toy. How could I accept it?' she thought to herself.

"Who is this?" Eric asked, as he turned to Hoada Masahiro, evaluating him discreetly.

"Oh, I forgot to introduce him to you. This is my guest, Hoada Masahiro. Hoada Masahiro, this is my husband's friend, Eric." Autumn introduced the two.

When Eric heard that Hoada was Japanese, he showed no surprise. "Nice to meet you! What do you think of the food here? Do you like it?"

"I love the food here, " Hoada answered, looking embarrassed. "I just told Miss Ye that this is the most authentic Japanese restaurant I have been to in China."

Eric didn't look too pleased. "Then, sir. Enjoy your meal. It's my treat today, " Eric turned to him smiling.

He then told Autumn, "When it's your time to leave, please let me know and I will take you home. It's not good to bother others."

"Well, thank you!" Autumn nodded. She had been worrying about how she could get rid of Hoada after the meal. Now Eric had provided the perfect solution.

When Autumn saw Eric leave, she sat down again. "Mr. Hoada, I'm so sorry. I didn't expect to meet an acquaintance here..."

"It's okay, " Hoada Masahiro replied. "Miss Ye... when did you get married?" he inquired, confused.

"Well..." "It has been a while. I'm really sorry not to have invited you to my wedding. My husband and I will treat you to a meal next time," Autumn continued. When she thought of Charles, a sweet smile appeared on her face.

"Well, thank you!" Hoada Masahiro responded, observing Autumn. Hoada wasn't easily discouraged. He thought of another plan to get Autumn.

"Miss Ye, I intend to invite you to come to Japan. I have just been promoted to General Manager in the Asia-Pacific region. I am planning a Chinese-themed event. Our company has selected several planning firms in Japan..."

"But Chinese culture is profound. And because the theme is Chinese culture, I think it's better to find a planning company in China to organize this event. We have known each other for a long time, and I believe in your capabilities. That's why I convinced my superiors to select a company through a public bidding. I hope that you won't let me down."

"Well..." Autumn said, frowning. 'I want to seize this opportunity. However, I can't go to Japan now. Grandma is still in the hospital,' she thought. "Hoada, may I ask when the bidding starts?" she asked.

"In two months," Hoada replied. "You have two months to prepare for it. I will inform you of the exact date soon. I can also book the ticket for you. Will you participate in the bidding?"

Autumn hadn't scored a big client since Charles appointed her as General Manager. She was eager to show Charles some achievements. "Please send the relevant documents to me," she said with a nod after some hesitation.

"I will," Hoada said with a smile.

Although there was some tension earlier, they both got what they wanted. After the meal, Hoada went to pay the bill. However, Eric refused to take his money. "You are Autumn's friend, so you don't have to pay tonight," Eric insisted.

When Hoada left the restaurant, he approached to Autumn. "Let's go. I will drive you home."

"No, thanks, " Autumn declined immediately. She had agreed to Eric's suggestion of taking her home just now because Hoada was present. "The subway station is close by. I will go home by myself."

"I can't let you go home alone, " Eric disagreed. "I promised Charles to bring you home. Otherwise he will be mad at me for this."

Before leaving the restaurant, he asked the cashier to take care of the restaurant. "Let's go, " he said to Autumn.

Autumn's house wasn't close to the Japanese restaurant. She was never a talkative person but Eric was a chatterbox. On the way, Eric kept talking to Autumn. She was amused by his funny jokes.

"Eric, your girlfriend must be well entertained when she is with you. You are such a talker!" Autumn said. "I am single, " Eric admitted.

"You are kidding me, " Autumn said in surprise. 'Eric is handsome and has a decent family background. How could such a man not have a girlfriend yet?' Autumn wondered.

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Hoada Masahiro emailed all of the files to Autumn early the next morning. As soon as she received the email, Autumn studied the files thoroughly and then notified the designers of the company to prepare for a meeting. Suddenly, Paula pushed the door open and put a letter on Autumn's desk. "This is my letter of resignation. Sign it please, " said Paula in a cold tone.

"You are resigning? Are you sure, you are not kidding?" Autumn asked with great astonishment. She wasn't expecting that Paula would submit her resignation at this time.

"Yes, that is right. I don't want to work here anymore. Do I want to work here as a cleaner my whole life? It is ridiculous, don't you think?" Paula said with a grim smile.

"Don't be so mean, Paula. Well, obviously you have already found another job." Autumn stared at Paula then signed her resignation letter. "I wish you a brighter future then, " said Autumn slowly yet calmly.

"Those are nothing but crocodile tears, " replied Paula. Paula snatched her resignation letter from Autumn's hands and then went on, "We have competed for a long time and you may have won this round, so I am going to leave. But don't ever think that this is over. You'd better watch out at every moment, because I am going to reappear sooner or later and defeat you."

Autumn looked sour upon hearing this. "I don't know why you hate me so much. You have always held a grudge on me from the first time you saw me. I have never wanted any rivalry. But I am sincere when I say that I really wish you the best after leaving Cloud Advertising Company, " said Autumn.

"I know what kind of person you are. A hypocrite." Paula continued. "I know you want to turn this company round by taking advantage of Mr. Masahiro. But don't get too complacent. I can take this away from you. Just wait and see."

What harsh remarks from Paula!

All the employees already know that Hoda Masahiro handed Autumn this new project, but they were not clear about the details. 'But where did Paula get this information?' Autumn wondered.

She was sure that she hadn't divulged any details to others. Then it must be Hoda himself.

Autumn was convinced that Cloud Advertising Company was the only option for Hoda. How naive she was.

But Autumn did not care about that. No matter how many companies Hoda had consulted, Autumn was determined to devote her energy to this project. It's a matter of one's own capability. Whether Paula left or stayed, it made no difference.

She called all of the designers for a meeting. They brainstormed and deliberated the whole afternoon but no resolutions were made. Autumn realized that it was time to end the day. Closing her notebook, she announced, "Let's call it a day. We are going to discuss some more tomorrow if anyone has new ideas."

She paused and then went on, "I am sure you all know that our company is currently at a bottleneck. Now that we have accepted such an important project, we have to put all our energy into finishing it. I can assure you that if we do this successfully, all of you will get a bonus.

I know that you have been working very hard, so you deserve it." said Autumn with a smile.

"Don't worry. We will do our best for the success of this project." Thanks to Autumn, everyone echoed her high spirits.

After the meeting, Autumn went back to her office and looked through the files again. As she got out of her office, she found that the light in Isla's office was still on. Autumn knocked the door and asked, "Isla, you are still here. It is getting dark. Why haven't you gone home?"

"I am reading the papers. I am trying to come up with some ideas." Isla smiled and added, "Autumn, you have to go home. Charles is waiting for you. I will go later. Don't worry."

Autumn frowned and said to her, "Okay. I am going to go home now. Don't stay out too late."

While waiting for a taxi by the roadside, Autumn realized that it was time for her to get her own car. She had been thinking about it for a while now, but she never acted on it.

Autumn decided not to go straight home. Instead she went to the hospital. She had to take care of her grandmother. When she arrived at the hospital, she didn't expect to see Dr. Zhao there. He had paid her grandmother a visit before. He happened to be walking out of the room. His eyes sparkled as he saw Autumn. But when he remembered that he had something to discuss with her, he said nothing.

Autumn nodded to him and then went into the ward, "Grandma, do you feel better today?" Putting down her bag, Autumn went to her grandmother.

"Autumn, you are here, " replied Emily cheerfully. She felt better today. She was able to sit up and her skin was rosy. She told Autumn that Dr. Zhao had played an important role in her treatment.

"Grandma, you look nice today." Autumn felt good to see her grandma in a better condition. "Dr. Zhao prescribed another medicine for me. I feel better these days, " said Emily who gave out a hearty laugh."

"Well, grandma, I have something to ask you. Is his name Arthur?" Autumn hesitated but finally asked. "Such a coincidence isn't it?"

"Yes, his name is Arthur, " replied Emily. "How did you know? Is anything wrong with that?" Emily asked.

Autumn became curious about Dr. Zhao.

But she remained calm and replied, "Nothing. Grandma, I am just curious about it. Are you hungry now? I have brought some snacks for you from Yummy Restaurant. I know you like it very much, " said Autumn, wearing a big smile.

Emily was like a child who was fond of tasty food. Autumn felt good to see Emily having a good appetite.

"Autumn, you don't have to come here every day. You work really hard and you need a good rest." Though Autumn tried to be energetic, her fatigue was obvious. Emily cared about her so much and she didn't want Autumn to be too exhausted.

"I am fine, grandma. I am not tired. Don't worry about me." Autumn looked at her grandmother and continued, "I will take you home as soon as you get better. And, I will take care of you there too."

Autumn kept Emily accompany until she fell asleep. Walking out of the ward, she happened to see Dr. Zhao again. Though hesitant, Autumn took the initiative to greet him.

"Hello, Dr. Zhao." Autumn went up Arthur. As soon as he saw her, he grinned. "Hello. Everything ok, Miss Ye?"

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The next morning, Autumn, with her reddened eyes, went to the hospital to fulfil the formalities required for the discharge. 'Since the hospital can't do anything else to help with grandma's illness, I'd better take her home.' Meanwhile, when Arthur found out that Emily was going to be discharged, he hurried to meet with Autumn.

"Miss Ye, remember to give me a call if Emily's condition gets worse, " he said to Autumn. 'That's the only thing that I can do for her, ' he thought.

"I will, " Autumn nodded. "Mr Zhao, thank you... for being so concerned about my grandma."

"You're welcome, " Arthur replied. 'It's hard to believe that my own granddaughter is standing right in front of me, all grown up, talking to me in such a courteous and orderly manner. I really wish to tell her that I'm her grandfather, but I can't. I am afraid that she might freak out when she finds out about it, ' Arthur mused.

On her way to Emily's ward, Autumn met Aron. "Miss Ye, how is Isla doing now? I called her a few times, but she didn't answer my phone. Is she still mad at me?" he asked as he walked up to Autumn.

"I asked you to keep Isla in the dark, but instead you asked her to be Becky's bridesmaid! How could you be so mean to her?" Autumn complained angrily, glaring at Aron.

"I had no choice, " Aron replied, looking back at Autumn with shame and embarrassment. "At that time, I couldn't risk Becky suspecting me, so I had to ask Isla to be her bridesmaid. Later, when I tried to explain this to Isla, she refused to answer my phone. How is she now?"

"She is fine, " Autumn sighed. "But this time you really broke her heart. Lately, she's been in low spirits. I wanted to tell her all about your plan, but I think it's better for her to hear this from you."

"I hope that you can find out the evidence that proved Becky hurt your grandmother. In this way, Isla can be proved innocent, " Autumn continued.

"Don't worry. I will get everything ready soon." Aron had no intention of meeting Isla before he got rid of Becky.

Soon, Autumn took Emily to Dream Garden. When Emily arrived there, she was astounded. She looked around and felt awkward.

"Autumn, are you living here?" Emily felt happy for Autumn. She noticed that Charles really loved Autumn and had treated her with care and respect. It wasn't until then that she realized Charles was a very rich man.

"Yeah, " Autumn replied with a nod. "Grandma, this is your home now."

"No, I can't..." Emily declined immediately, shaking her hand. "I'd better return to my house."

"Just stay here, " Autumn insisted, frowning. "Grandma, this is my house now. You've worked so hard to raise me. Now it's my turn to give you back the love and support you had given me in all those years. Charles and I will take care of you now."

"But..." Emily hesitated. She was glad to know that Autumn led a happy and comfortable life. The kind of life most people could only ever hope for, but she didn't want to be a burden on Autumn.

"Autumn, why are you still standing outside the gate?" Charles asked, walking up to Emily. "Grandma, we have prepared a room for you. Please go inside and have a look to see if you are satisfied with it. If not, I will ask the servants to redecorate the room according to your tastes, " he told Emily, as he took her by her hand.

"Just think of this place as your own and don't be so formal with me. If you want to eat anything, just tell the servants. I pay their salary so that you can feel free to have them at your service, " Charles smiled.

Charles's joke finally broke the ice, as his words amused Emily very much. "Charles, I know you and Autumn are dutiful children, but I don't want to be a burden on your shoulders, " she said, looking at Charles.

"I'm old now. I don't want you to feel uncomfortable living around me, " she sighed.

"Grandma, you think too much, " Charles continued to persuade her, dragging her inside. "Now you can keep Gary company. Autumn and I need to go to work every day, and my sister doesn't have much time to spend with Gary as well. He usually just stays home alone with no one to talk to. If you move in, at least you can talk to each other. Please don't refuse our request. You'd be doing me a favor."

"But..." Emily couldn't find any excuses to refuse, after she heard what Charles had said.

"He is right. I always stay at home, alone. Autumn has been married to Charles for quite some time now, but we haven't even had the chance to get to know each other properly yet. At least, now I'll have someone to talk to," Gary broke in.

"Please grandma, just stay here," Autumn said. She was touched by what Charles and Gary had said. Knowing that Emily was in poor health, she couldn't let her stay in the hospital or anywhere else. 'They really consider me as one of their own. Otherwise, they wouldn't have cared so much about my grandmother,' Autumn thought.

If you don't live with us, I won't be able to take care of you at any time. I will always be worried about your condition," she continued. Emily finally gave in to their sincere persuasions and agreed to live there.

Autumn was over the moon with joy. She went to the kitchen to help with serving the dishes. Gary had been expecting Emily to move in, so he asked the servants to prepare a bountiful meal beforehand. Nancy was busy cooking dishes while she complained to Autumn.

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Autumn flushed immediately at what Charles had said. "I'm going to take a shower,"

She said with her cheeks blushing red, running away from Charles's embrace.

The elders always woke up early. When Autumn got up, Emily was already talking to Gary. She had told Gary many interesting stories from Autumn's childhood. Gary found them quite amusing.

"She is such a quiet girl now. I find it hard to believe that she was a troublemaker as a kid," Gary said, laughing.

"Indeed. She is a quiet girl now. But she used to make a lot of trouble as a kid. Her father had punished her a lot back then," Emily said, smiling. "But she has a kind heart. She has spent a huge amount of money and has even sold her house, to help pay for my treatment. I owe her a lot," Emily continued, looking sad.

"I don't have much time left anyway. She shouldn't have wasted so much money on me, " she sighed. "I've brought her so much trouble."

"Grandma..." Autumn interrupted as she didn't want to hear Emily blame herself anymore. "I heard that you told Gary all about my embarrassing moments from childhood, " she changed the subject.

"You got me, " Emily admitted bluntly. 'Although Autumn always got into trouble as a kid, she was very carefree and cute. Unlike now, she always keeps her problems to herself and tries to handle everything on her own, ' Emily thought, feeling sorry for Autumn.

"Gary, don't believe her, " Autumn turned to Gary, after she gave an angry glance to Emily. "I used to be an obedient and polite girl."

"Yes, you were. Even though you almost burned down your teacher's office, " Emily said, with a serious look. "Except for that, you were always a good girl."

"Grandma!" Autumn said in a bit of anger, looking embarrassed.

Gary and Emily burst into laughter. Making fun of Autumn seemed to be their choice of entertainment. After having breakfast with Emily, Autumn went to the company. An intense atmosphere had shrouded the company now. Everyone was buried in their work. During lunch break, Autumn went to an Automobile Sales Service Shop 4S with Isla.

"You always said that you didn't need a car when I asked you to buy one. Why do you suddenly change your mind?" Isla asked curiously.

Autumn was attracted by a commercial van. 'Grandma can lie on the backseat, ' she thought. "Now that grandma is living with me, and sometimes I will have to take her to the hospital for checkups. I don't want to bother Charles every time. The subway is always crowded, and it's inconvenient for grandma to take the subway. If I buy a car, I can drive grandma to the hospital myself, " Autumn replied.

"You are too formal with Charles. He is your husband. You don't need to feel guilty for asking his help to take grandma to the hospital, " Isla advised. "Besides, look at the car you chose. Why do you want to buy this type in particular?"

"Don't you like it? I think it's good and very practical, " Autumn said. "This car has enough internal space. If grandma feels tired, she can lie in the back comfortably, " Autumn continued smilingly.

"If that's what you want, " Isla responded after a pause.

Autumn decided to buy it and paid the initial down payment.

"Your husband is the CEO of Shining Company. Why don't you just choose to pay for it all in one-go? Did Charles refuse to give you the money to buy a car?" Isla asked in confusion, when she saw Autumn pay the down payment.

"I haven't told him about it yet." "Why didn't you discuss it with him before buying a car?" Isla raised her voice, with her eyes wide open.

"I want to give him a surprise, " Autumn answered, looking awkward. In fact, she kept Charles in the dark deliberately. 'If I had told him about this, he would have insisted on paying for the car. But that's not what I want, ' she thought to herself.

"I think it's going to be more of a shock, rather than a surprise, " Isla said.

Isla's words were right. When Charles found out that Autumn had bought a car behind his back, he got angry at her and didn't speak to her.

After accompanying Emily to her room, Autumn decided to apologize to Charles. She entered their room with a plate of fruit salad, hoping to please Charles with it. However, she couldn't find Charles there. Then, she went straight to the study, and knocked on the door. Soon, Charles's cold voice came from the study, "Come in."

Autumn pushed the door open slowly. "I saw that you didn't eat much during the dinner, so I brought you a plate of fruit salad. Try some, " she said, putting the fruit salad on his desk.

"I'm not hungry, " Charles responded, with a serious expression on his face. 'Do you think that a plate of fruit salad will please me?' he thought.

"Are you mad at me?" Autumn asked, pulling Charles's sleeves as she stood beside Charles.

"You should know, " Charles replied coldly.

"I know that I shouldn't have kept you in the dark about buying the car..." Autumn apologized, lowering her head.

"I know you very well. Although you're apologizing to me, you still think that you did nothing wrong, don't you?" Charles asked angrily.

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"But....." Charles felt upset. It was his wishes to give her gifts and not the other way around.

"No more shilly-shallying!" Autumn got up with the help of Charles, "It is late. Let's get some rest."

Charles said to himself, 'I will make Autumn realize her mistake.'

On the following weekend, Autumn decided to take her grandma out to buy some new clothes, as all of her grandma's clothes were too old and bleached to wear anymore.

However, the intense and passionate love-making with Charles last night had rendered her absolutely exhausted. She woke up late, and found her grandma basking under the sun in the courtyard. Grandma said to her, "I've prepared breakfast for you in the kitchen, hurry up and have some breakfast. You should never miss your breakfast even if you're too busy."

"Grandma, thank you." Autumn replied at once, "Grandma, prepare yourself, we're going out after breakfast."

"There's no need to accompany me. You must be very busy anyway." Emily declined immediately. She had been overcautious in fear of troubling Autumn and Charles, since settling down in Dream Garden.

"Grandma, I've decided to buy some new clothes for you today, you see, the winter is coming." Autumn whispered to her, "Dear grandma, I do this for you at my own expense. Moreover, I have just bought a new car for us. Why don't we go for a drive today?"

"I am afraid..." Emily finally acceded to Autumn's requests, "Then go have your breakfast now."

Autumn changed her clothes after breakfast and was about to go out with her grandma, when Wendy, her mother unexpectedly walked in to the house.

"You are not welcome here!" Autumn stood in front of her grandma like a shield and challenged her mother, "Now you do not have any power over me!"

"Yes, you must feel very powerful, now that you have found your grandma even though I hid her so well." Wendy reacted to the challenge with a cold smile, "But you can rest assured. I am not here for this old woman."

"So what is the purpose of your visit?" Autumn's countenance turned rigid as she cried out to Wendy, "Wendy, from now on, consider our bond as good as severed. I will no longer play by your rules. All of that must come to an end!"

"You are too innocent! I'm afraid nothing is ever that simple." Wendy grinned and pestered her daughter, "The fact that I am your mother cannot be challenged. I won't allow you to sever our bond so easily."

"It, indeed, pained me to give birth to you. To sever our family ties would be the last thing I'd want to do. Anyway, I expect you to repay the boundless kindness I have showed you over the years!" Wendy insisted with a cold smile.

"Wendy, you are going far beyond my ability to tolerate you!" Emily protected her grand-daughter the same way Autumn had protected her, "Autumn has done everything she could do, to repay you, even though you kept hurting her. You should have been well satisfied with that!"

Emily continued her protest, "The bond between you and Autumn is as good as inexorable. I am not asking you to treat her with kindness, but since she finally has a life of peace and comfort, I am just asking you not to drag her down with you."

"Autumn is my daughter, she owes me a duty of support and care throughout my declining years." Wendy replied jestingly, "After all, she adopted my surname Ye, didn't she?"

"You insolent woman!" Emily realized that Wendy's motive of being there was just to put an end to Autumn's peace of mind, "Stop your arrogance! You've come here to claim Autumn's duty of care to you, but have you even spent one day loving her the way that befits a mother? There is no way you can justify your demands to her!"

"I gave her life!" Wendy agitated Emily on purpose.

Autumn immediately came to her grandma's rescue, as the old woman coughed at Wendy's insolence. "Wendy, what else should I do to satisfy you?" she asked Wendy.

"My dear daughter, all I ask is that you support me throughout my old age." Wendy replied with a cold smile, "I was informed that Yvonne was sent down to live in a maid room. Now... I expect you to treat me with proper courtesy."

Wendy said slyly, "Be quick to tidy up a room, because tomorrow I am moving in here." Wendy put on a crafty smile, "Emily, tomorrow I will move in here to accompany you. Isn't that a great idea?"

"How could you be so shameless..." Emily's face turned paler by the minute. Autumn spared no seconds to help her grandma to a chair. Gary was disturbed by the noise and came out to ask, "What happened? Why do you look so terrible?"

Immediately, Gary instructed Nancy to help Autumn's grandma retire into her room, "Nancy, take good care of Emily."

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"Gary, I am not pleased to hear such remarks. Autumn is my daughter, and so is Yvonne. I love them both equally. They are the only people I hold dearest in this world. I am not going to be partial to either of them. Yvonne made a mistake before, but I have to take responsibility for her because it is my fault.

As her mother, I didn't discipline her well enough. But just as the old saying goes, 'no wool is so white that a dyer cannot blacken it'. Yvonne is still young, so it is natural for young people to make mistakes since they are not experienced. Moreover, Autumn also made a mistake. Although she was married to Charles, she still kept an ambiguous relationship with Sam. When she made a mistake, everyone in your family forgave her. So why don't you be lenient to Yvonne as well?" Wendy stood up to Gary in order to defend Yvonne. Moreover, she even smeared Autumn's name.

Normally, Autumn's loyalty to Charles would have been questioned since Gary had heard this from Wendy. However, Gary did not believe a word of what Wendy had said. Instead he felt sorry and yet indignant for Autumn. What a vicious mother she had!

"I know Autumn very well. I am clear about what kind of girl she really is, so don't try to slander her reputation," said Gary. He remained indifferent towards Wendy and did not feel the need to defend Autumn. Now that their real identity had been disclosed, it was unnecessary for Autumn to recognize Wendy as her mother anymore, because she wasn't fit to be her mother at all. So it made no difference for Autumn whether she had a mother or not.

"Wendy, why are you here today? Be frank and don't waste anymore time. You have kept Autumn from being with her grandmother long enough. If you still have a conscience, you'd better be frank with us and tell us about the real purpose of your visit here." Gary asked impatiently. He knew that Wendy would never come here without an ulterior motive.

Wendy hesitantly gazed at Gary for some time.

Wendy had never expected that Autumn would have the courage to expose her real identity. And much to her surprise, Charles had really found Autumn's grandmother. Now, she had run out of bargaining power to put pressure on Autumn.

The real purpose of her visit here today was to extort some money from Autumn. It didn't matter to her who Charles got married to, because Wendy's ultimate goal was to get money from the Lu family.

"Gary, don't be so impatient. We are family now. I haven't seen my daughter in a long time. Can't I come here to see her or even live here with her for a few days?" Wendy replied indifferently with a sly smile. She was determined to nag Autumn, since she understood that there was little chance for her to approach Charles now that Yvonne had a miscarriage and their identities had been disclosed.

"Wendy, I know the real purpose behind your visit. How much money do you want? Say it." 'As long as I can afford what she's asking for, to get a peaceful life, I would gladly pay her at any cost,' Autumn thought.

"You think you can afford to pay me any sum I ask for?" Wendy asked Autumn scornfully while rolling her eyes at her.

"I can. I will get you the money even if I need to borrow it from someone else. I would pay you at any cost as long as you promise not to bother me anymore," replied Autumn. Autumn sneered and then continued, "Wendy, you have never taken care of me after giving birth to me. Yes, I admit that it is you who gave me life and we will always be related by blood, but I have to clarify that as soon as you take the money, we shall cease to be related anymore," said Autumn firmly.

"What? Do you want to break off all relations with me?" Wendy asked with a sneer. Although Autumn was her natural born daughter, she had hated her from the moment she was born. Wendy had seduced Bowen because she wanted to get married to a man from a notable family, in order to become rich and to lead a better life. However, she didn't expect that the Zhao family would object to their marriage. Therefore, Wendy always bore a grudge on Bowen and his family members, and even her own daughter for that matter.

She thought that if it weren't for him, she could have been married to a richer man instead of being spurned by others for being someone else's mistress.

"You have never treated me as your own daughter. We don't have to break off any relationships, because we do not have a relationship," Autumn replied as she smiled bitterly.

"But it is I who gave birth to you. Moreover, you couldn't have married Charles if it weren't for me. Now that you have gained so many advantages from me, you could at least pay me ten to twenty million," said Wendy shamelessly. She demanded an exorbitant price. Even though Autumn didn't have that much money, Charles was undoubtedly rich. Now that they had been completely open with each other, Wendy decided to come straight to the point. What she only wanted now, was money.

"Ten to twenty million? Are you kidding me? Where am I going to get so much money? Why are you so greedy?" Amazed, Autumn stared at Wendy, who was coming very close to push her over the edge.

"Of course I am not kidding. I know you don't have that much money, but don't forget that you are now, the wife of Charles. He is rich. You should know what I mean." Wendy was determined to urge Autumn to ask Charles for the money. "I am your mother. It is natural for you to support me, as it is your unavoidable duty."

Upon hearing this from Wendy, Autumn was disillusioned, because it seemed that Wendy would never show her mercy.

"Wendy, I don't have that much money. To be honest I only have one hundred thousand in total, and I can borrow some money. But at most, I can only pay you two hundred thousand in total. This is to repay you for having given birth to me, " replied Autumn. Since Wendy did not treat Autumn as her daughter, Autumn felt that it was necessary to clarify everything to her. "I owe you. But Lu family doesn't owe you anything. That is all I can afford to give you. You can take it or leave it. The decision is yours, " added Autumn.

Autumn had her plans. If Wendy refused to take this money and asked for more, Autumn would have to resort to legal actions. Either way, she had completely given up on Wendy.

"Two hundred thousand? I must have misheard." Wendy furrowed her eye brows and burst into a sneer. "But there is another option for you. If you can't afford to pay me the money, you'd better divorce Charles as soon as possible. Then I won't ask you for help, or perhaps I could give you some money."

"I can give you 30 million, but you have to promise that you will break off all ties with Autumn and that you will never pester her again. What do you think?" Charles's voice crept in from behind all of a sudden. As she turned around, Autumn furrowed her eye brows and asked Charles, "Why are you home so suddenly?"

"Grandma called me and told me that you were in a bit of trouble, so I hurried back." As soon as Charles arrived at his company, he received a call from Autumn's grandmother, who told him that Wendy had come to bother Autumn again, so he came back immediately. "Are you okay?" Charles asked in a soft voice.

"I am fine, " replied Autumn while shaking her head. She did not want Charles to worry about her and get involved in this matter. However, it was too late to prevent him.

Emily didn't think too much about it. She only wanted to prevent her granddaughter, Autumn from getting hurt. However, she was too old to protect her, but since Charles was her husband now, Emily decided to ask him for help.

"Wendy, long time no see, " said Charles in a cold tone. Charles put his arms around Autumn's shoulder, and said to Wendy, coldly, "Don't misread me this time. As soon as I give you the 30 million, we will not be related anymore. Most importantly, Autumn will have nothing to do with you from now on. What do you think of this deal?"

Charles glared at Wendy and then added, "But if you refuse my offer this time, I'll take necessary actions to deal with this situation, as I see fit. Then we will see you in court."

#### Chapter 198

Charles decided to negotiate despite having various ways to stop Wendy from making trouble. If it weren't for the fact that she's Autumn's mother, he wouldn't have even bothered.

Charles wanted to avoid further disagreement. But it didn't mean that he would just agree to everything that she said. He knew that willingly granting Wendy's request would only end into more trouble.

"Don't be too greedy?" Wendy said, shaking her head with a scoff. "I'm the one who gave birth to Autumn. I'm the one who raised her! I'm only asking for 50 million. A very small amount in exchange for everything I did. Don't you think that's only fair?" she exclaimed.

Charles stared at her with indifference. After a few moments, he finally said. "I can only give you thirty-five million. Take it or leave it."

Charles felt sympathetic at the thought of Yvonne's miscarriage that he decided to add another five million. Wendy knew she had no other choice but to agree, knowing full well that Charles would withdraw his offer if she dared to ask for more.

Besides, she had no intention to destroy her relationship with Autumn.

Despite already taking a large sum of money, she knew that remaining in good terms would prove to be beneficial. Knowing Autumn, she didn't think she had it in her to turn a blind eye the moment she asked for financial help in the future.

"Alright. I'm accepting your offer, "

Wendy said, nodding her agreement to Charles.

"I will ask my assistant to remit the money to your bank account later. But let me be clear. If you ever dare to bother Autumn again, I will definitely make you regret it. You better keep that in mind."

Wendy was so pleased to receive such a large amount of money that she wasn't able to pay attention to what Charles was saying.

She didn't have any doubts when it came to Charles' character. As long as Charles promised to remit the money, Wendy knew that he would keep his word. But somehow, she can't help but feel uncomfortable at the thought of Autumn living such a privileged married life.

"Charles, why do you love Autumn so much? What do you see in her?

Have you forgotten that she had a relationship with Sam? That's something that she can't deny, "

Wendy said, trying to dishonor Autumn before leaving. Gary got enraged upon hearing this.

He couldn't bear the fact that Autumn's biological mother treated her in such a cruel way.

He didn't care how much money Charles had promised to give her. He just wanted to get Wendy out of his sight.

"Wendy, you should be careful with your words. Autumn is my grandson's wife and she is a part of our family. If you talk about her that way again, I promise you won't receive even a single cent. Do you understand?"

Serious about the matter at hand, Gary went on. "Starting today, Autumn has nothing to do with you. I don't ever want to hear you talking to her in that way. She is a part of my family. Therefore, she's my responsibility.

If you are tired of doing nothing, why don't you go ahead and try to discipline your other daughter?" he exclaimed.

Wendy blushed with embarrassment upon hearing Gary's words. Mortified, she left without saying anything.

Gary and Charles went back inside the room. They saw Autumn hold her grandmother, her eyes red from crying.

Emily suddenly knelt down, surprising Charles and Gary in return. "Grandma, what are you doing?" Charles said, rushing over as he held her arms. "Don't do this ever again, " he continued, worry apparent in his voice.

"Charles is right. Please don't do this again, "

Echoed Gary, startled by the scene in front of him.

"Gary, Charles, I want to express my deepest gratitude. I really appreciate both of you for taking the time to help my granddaughter. I haven't been able to protect her because of my old age. Please help me take good care of her, " Emily said while choked with sobs. "She's gone through so many hardships because of me. But thank God! She's really lucky to be a part of your family. I really hope we could prevent Wendy from hurting her in the future, " she continued.

"Grandma, don't worry about that. I promise I'll never let anything bad happen to Autumn as long as I'm alive, " Charles said, trying to reassure Emily.

With a soft smile, he then continued, "Autumn, are you going shopping with Grandma?

I'll go with you."

"Don't you have to be in the office today?" Autumn asked, her eyes glistening with tears.

She didn't want Charles to put off his work despite being pleased by what he said. After all, she understood that he was busy with his work these days.

"Don't worry. I've already taken care of my work so that I can go shopping with the both of you, " he said, beaming with a smile.

Charles temporarily excused themselves, taking Autumn to the bathroom.

"Why are you crying? I don't want to see you upset, " he said upon entering the room, holding her in his arms.

"Charles, I'm fine. You don't have to worry about me, " Autumn responded in return.

"I just thought that if I stayed obedient and followed Wendy's orders, she'll eventually be moved by me someday. But that was naive of me to think so. You know what? I'm willing to let go of the past and support her when she gets old if Yvonne decides to abandon her. But I realized she doesn't really care about me at all.

She just wants to take advantage of me for the sake of Yvonne's happiness, " she said, smiling sadly.

"This is why I'm so grateful to you, Charles. I promise that I'll pay you back the money no matter how much it costs."

"Autumn, I'm your husband. We are married which means that what's mine is also yours. As a couple, we need to face everything together. Have you forgotten that?" Charles said, trying to explain to her.

"Now go ahead and wash your face. Grandma is waiting for us downstairs."

"Okay, " she said, unable to express her appreciation.

Autumn knew that she had no time to be upset. Despite grandma's critical condition, she wanted to keep her company and enjoy the remaining time she had left, knowing that a peaceful life was the only thing that she could give her.

Charles went shopping with Autumn and Grandma for the whole day. Emily had so much fun that she didn't even notice the time quickly passing by. They heard bursting laughter in the room as soon as they went home. "Dr. Zhao, why are you here?" Autumn asked with great astonishment, clearly shocked to see Arthur.

"Autumn, you're back!" Gary stood up, smiling as he walked towards them.

He was also surprised to see Arthur drop by after dinner. Through their conversation, he found out that they were very compatible. Gary even discovered that he had already made contact with the Zhao family before.

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Chapter 200

"Stop playing dumb. Let me be clear to you. Whatever your struggle was, you will always be the trash that was abandoned by the Gu family." Yvonne screamed at Aron.

Wendy who was now beside Yvonne looked at Aron, stunned. She hadn't seen him for years, but she still recognized him.

"Aron, it has been a long time! Why didn't come home when you returned from abroad? What happened years ago was a mistake. Are you still mad at me for that?" Wendy pretended to be innocent. "After you left home, I criticized your father for being so cruel to you, after all, you were just a kid. I also felt guilty for this was because of me. I felt much better when I heard that your grandparents had taken you abroad, " she sighed.

"Your dad will be very happy when he finds out that you're back. You have grown up into a handsome young man, " she continued.

"Aron, how about you come home with us today? I will cook for you and you can see your father. Do you have time?" Wendy asked, taking Aron by the hand.

"No, thanks. I am busy today, " Aron responded as he shook off her hand, and gave Wendy a cold look.

Aron had no intention of wasting time with them. As he turned around to leave, Yvonne grabbed his arm. "Oh don't you just leave yet. Tell me, why did you set me up?" she shouted at Aron.

"Have you gone mad?" Aron was getting impatient. He had no brotherly affection towards Yvonne. He actually detested her.

'There are so many people in the hospital. Now Simon doesn't know that Yvonne had a miscarriage. If he finds out, he will be furious. Moreover, Aron is back and he will let Aron lead the family. If this happens, all my efforts will be in vain, ' Wendy pondered.

Wendy knew that Simon felt guilty about what happened to Aron and he always wanted to bring Aron back home. Wendy couldn't allow this to happen.

"Are you out of your mind?" Wendy turned to Yvonne, pulling her sleeves. "Aron is your brother, and we are a family. How could he frame you?"

"Mom..." Yvonne said, her face pale with anger. 'Now, Wendy starts to speak in his favor. What should I do?' Yvonne thought.

"Well, that's enough, " Wendy stopped Yvonne. "Aron, inform me in advance if you plan to visit us. I will cook your favorite food." Wendy said to Aron.

Aron went straight to his grandmother's ward without uttering a word. When he got there, he saw Mike pacing anxiously by the door. "Grandpa, why are you here outside?" he asked, walking up to Mike.

"Here you are, " Mike said, taking Aron's hand. "What took you so long?" Mike asked.

"I wanted to know the latest about grandma's condition." Aron replied. He had never seen Mike act so anxiously like this.

"Becky is here." Aron had paid so much attention to Joanna's surgery, that he had almost forgotten about the wedding. He didn't really care about it. Becky had called Aron many times today, but he hadn't answered the phone. Assuming that Aron must be in the hospital, she came for a visit.

"What is she doing here?" Aron asked, looking concerned. He opened the door, and saw Becky wiping Joanna's face with a towel and talking to her. Anyone who saw this scene would be touched. However, Aron felt uneasy, fearing that Becky would hurt Joanna again.

"Why are you here?" Aron asked Becky with a frown.

"Here you are." Becky put the towel down and walked to Aron. "Where have you been?" she asked.

"I went to the doctor's office and inquired about grandma's condition. Aren't you supposed to pick up the wedding dress? Why are you here?" Aron asked. 'Grandma has just had surgery. I can't let anything else happen to her.' Aron thought.

"I have asked Isla to try on her bridesmaid dress today. In your case, your suit was slightly bigger. I have asked them to make adjustments. How about we go there together? Then you can try it on again, " Becky said. "I can handle the wedding alone. But I can't try that suit on for you. Aron, it's the only thing that you have to do." Becky begged, teasing Aron with a sad face.

"But..." Aron responded, still frowning. After all, he had no intention of really marrying her. However, Becky had come to the hospital today, which worried him.

"Go with her, " Mike said. After knowing that Becky had stolen Aron from Isla, Mike had been slightly angry at her.

But he saw how Becky had come to the hospital to check on his wife and he remembered how good she was in the past. Over all he was still satisfied with his future granddaughter-in-law.