

## Wedded Bride 221

### Chapter 221

As soon as Charles had heard this from Autumn, he quickly realized that Wendy must have said something annoying to her. Charles gently patted Autumn's head and said with all smiles, "Oh, my silly girl. So what if you are not really related to your grandmother? She's been taking care of you ever since you were a child and you've lived with her for many years; that is more than enough. Don't pay attention to what anyone else says. The bond you share with your grandma is stronger than your bond with your biological mother. So remove all the negative thoughts from your mind and accept it, " said Charles.

"I knew it. I've always had a feeling, but I didn't dwell on it too much because I love my grandma a lot. I just didn't have the mental strength to accept the truth, " replied Autumn in a shaky voice.

"Don't let the thoughts bother you too much. Just remember that, no matter what happens, I will always be there for you, " Charles assured her with a smile. Autumn smiled faintly, said nothing more because she didn't want Charles to worry about her.

She buried her secret in the depths of her heart and decided not to share it with anyone else.

On the same day, Aron held a press conference, but Becky was not present. In order to save her face in public, Aron announced that it was Becky who took the initiative to cancel their wedding. As for the reporters who asked him tricky questions, Aron promptly avoided and evaded their inquiries.

After the press conference was over, Aron went to the hospital, as Joanna was supposed to be discharged from that day. However, as soon as they got back home, he found Mandy there, waiting for him. She approached Aron angrily, when she saw him.

Becky did not go home from the hospital, instead she went to a bar, to drown her sorrows in alcohol. Therefore, her mother, Mandy, had been worried sick about her and hadn't found out about the cancellation of her daughter's wedding until she saw the news.

"Aron! I need you to explain yourself to me, right now! I found out about the cancellation of your wedding over the news. Why are you doing this? What's wrong with Becky? Did she do anything wrong?" Aron held Joanna, gently sat her on the couch and was about to bring her a glass of water, when Mandy rushed into the house.

"I demand an explanation. Why did you arrange this press conference today? It is you who agreed to marry Becky in the first place; then why did you decide to call off the wedding? You've crossed the line this time, Aron! How dare you treat my daughter like this!" Mandy was cheerfully preparing for the wedding. However, when Becky refused to answer her phone calls last night, she got worried. Mandy was stunned; she did not take the news of the wedding cancellation well. Livid and irritated, Mandy rushed to Aron's house soon after she had heard the news.

Mandy had been anticipating Becky's wedding for the last four years. She had bragged about her daughter's rich and brilliant fiancé to all of her friends and her relatives as well. Unfortunately, she would certainly become the laughingstock of society now, because Aron had called off the wedding.

Aron had brought shame and humiliation to Mandy and her family. After the news had spread, people began to talk about the relationship between Aron and Isla. This was too much for Mandy to tolerate.

"Mandy, I..." Aron was not expecting to see Mandy; he furrowed his eye-brows at her, slightly. Aron glanced at her indifferently and said, "You don't have to be so angry at me. I spoke with Becky yesterday, and we both agreed to cancel the wedding. Didn't she tell you about it? I tried my best to save her dignity, so I told everyone that it was Becky who decided to call off the wedding."

"What a load of rubbish!" Agitated, Mandy trembled in rage and asked, "Becky didn't come home last night and I can't get through to her on the phone. Where is Becky? What did you do to her? Why hasn't she come home yet? Answer me, now!"

"She didn't go home?" Aron frowned, because he had no knowledge of this. Yesterday, Becky had left the hospital at around 9 AM in the morning. Why didn't she go back home from there?

"Yes, she didn't come home yesterday. I have called her number many times, but she hasn't answered any of my calls. I am very worried about her. Where could she be?" Mandy asked Aron as she stared at him anxiously.

Mandy pondered for a while, but still wasn't able to figure out where Becky could have gone to. Soon she remembered the real purpose behind her visit there; she rushed towards Aron, grabbed him by his collar and said indignantly, "I don't want to hear your nonsense right now. Why did you suddenly decide to call off the wedding? Tell me!" Mandy was almost finished with the wedding preparations. The hotel

had already been booked and their friends had received their invitation cards which meant that everyone had gotten news of their wedding, but now Aron had suddenly cancelled it all.

Mandy's prime concern wasn't about Becky's whereabouts, because she knew that Becky was old enough to take care of herself and that she would come back home sooner or later. Instead, Mandy's biggest concern was the fact that, the cancellation of the wedding would eventually lead to her becoming a laughingstock to her friends and family.

"Mandy, I am sure your daughter will explain everything to you, " replied Mike, in a cold and yet impatient tone. Mike decided not to stand by silently anymore. Mandy displayed no signs of remorse even after committing such atrocious acts. Becky evaded her responsibilities and even pretended as if nothing had happened. It was no wonder that Aron didn't fall in love with Becky even though he had spent four years with her.

Mandy was so eager to get even with Aron that she didn't notice the other people in the room. It wasn't until she heard Mike's voice and saw Joanna, discharged from the hospital, that she understood why Aron was determined on cancelling the wedding. Suddenly, Mandy started to feel awkward.

Aron did not disclose the real reason for cancelling of the wedding, nor did he announce what Becky had done. Softhearted, Aron decided not to disgrace Mandy and Becky, even though their actions had warranted far more.

"I..." Mandy was ashamed to utter even a single word. "I can't find Becky. I know that she came to talk to you yesterday, but I haven't heard from her since then. That is why I've come here to ask you what had happened!" Now that Mandy was already here, she had no choice but to brace herself and stand up to Aron.

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"Mandy, do you really have no idea... how my grandma got injured?" Aron asked, skeptically. 'Since Mandy doesn't want to let it go, I need to tell her what Becky did to Grandma, ' Aron thought to himself.

Mandy narrowed her eyes with a bit of anxiety when she heard Aron's tone. Of course she knew what had happened to Joanna, but she had to keep pretending to be unaware of it because she didn't want them to cancel the wedding. As for the wedding... she was unwilling to give up on it.

"Isn't Isla responsible for your Grandma's injury? What does Becky have to do with it? Don't try to change the subject, " Mandy answered.

"I never said that Becky was involved in my grandma's injury. Why would you assume that?" Mandy's ambiguous defense was shot down by Aron. The only thing she could rely on was her strength to pester others.

"I..." Mandy muttered. After a long pause she continued, "I don't really care about that. Are you going to marry Becky or not?"

"No, I am not, " Aron replied straightforwardly. "Mandy, we won't be pressing charges against Becky for what she did to my Grandma. I won't ask you to return the bride-price. I have even saved your family's face at the press conference. I have done more than I should have, for your family, but if you keep coming at us like this, I'll be forced to take drastic measures against you."

"You..." Mandy stammered. Once she realized that she couldn't persuade Aron, she turned to Mike and Joanna. "You know what kind of girl Becky is. She would never do such a terrible thing. The wedding preparations are almost done; we can't call off the wedding now. Please help me persuade him not to act so rashly."

"You flatter us, " Mike responded. He got annoyed at the thought of being cheated by Becky's fake innocence. "Mrs. Zhao, marriage is an important commitment, to Aron. Now that he doesn't have feelings for Becky, we shouldn't interfere with his decision. Since the cancellation of their wedding has already been announced publicly at the conference, we should let it go as well. As of today, we will have nothing to do with you. If we ever meet again, I think it would be better not to greet each other."

"You... Now you're intimidating me because I am at a disadvantage. I won't forget this, " Mandy said angrily. "We are one of the richest and most influential family in Y City. You will regret treating us like this, " Mandy threatened.

"I'm not a coward. If you choose to retaliate, I will willingly face anything you throw at me and my family, " Aron responded resolutely. "But right now... the most important thing is to find Becky and bring her back."

Besides, Becky was a girl. It wasn't safe for her to be outside during late hours. Aron feared that Becky might get into trouble.

"It doesn't matter what happened before. Our biggest concern right now is to find Becky, " Joanna broke in. She was also worried about Becky's safety.

'In any case, Becky had treated me kindly in the past, ' Joanna thought to herself.

"Grandma, don't worry. I will bring her back, " Aron assured Joanna. "Grandpa, please take Grandma to your room first. I will go and look for Becky now."

Aron's chances of finding Becky were quite slim. After all, he neither knew the places Becky had frequented, nor did he know any of her friends. Mandy was still complaining about the wedding. She didn't shut her mouth until Aron threatened to reveal Becky's evildoing to the public.

"Aron, be careful on the way!" Joanna reminded Aron before he left.

"Where does she often go?" Aron asked Mandy, as they walked out of the house together.

"How would I know that?" Mandy frowned with displeasure. "She barely has any friends here as she's lived abroad with you for many years. She usually goes to your house or just stays at home. Where else could she go?"

Aron wrinkled his forehead into a frown. At the moment of despair, he suddenly received a call from the police station. He was told that Becky was at the police station. Immediately, he hung up the phone and sped to the police station together with Mandy.

When Mandy and Aron arrived at the police office, Becky was crouching in a corner. The police officer standing near her was taking down the statement of a wretched looking man. "When I walked into the bar, I saw her drinking alone. So I talked to her and proposed to buy her a drink. She didn't refuse my offer, and as soon as she got drunk, she insisted me to take her to a hotel. She said that her beloved man had dumped her and that she didn't want to stay celibate anymore. I gave into her seduction; I took her to the hotel and slept with her, " the man confessed.

"Sir, I swear, she came onto me first. I didn't force..." the man continued to explain to the policeman.

"Shut up! How could such an innocent girl hit on you?" The police officer berated.

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"Emmm..." Before the policeman started to talk, the wretched man on the side stood up to speak to Aron, "You are her friend, right? I can tell you that I'm being treated unjustly. As we are both adults, she has the ability to distinguish whether she was forced or not, then why is she accusing me of rape? Last night, I paid for her drinks and accommodation. Do you have any idea how many glasses of wine she had drank? I've spent eight thousand yuan on her alone! If I had any intentions of raping her, why would I spend so much money on her?"

With every passing moment, the salacious man grew angrier as he retold the incident. "Moreover, there are witnesses who can prove that she followed me willingly when I brought her to the hotel. She gave her consent. Why am I being accused of rape then?"

"Sit down and shut up! You have no right to talk!" The police officer reached for the man's shoulders and forced him down to sit on the chair.

"Whatever he said is true. Miss Zhang had drank too much; she had lost the mental capacity to control herself. When she woke up, and realized that she was taken to a hotel room, she called the police in anger. According to the facts of the case, this cannot be classified as rape. However, Miss Zhang is too angry to be sensible right now and she is determined to file a lawsuit against him. We can't do anything about it at the moment, so we asked you to bail Miss Zhang out." The police officer said to Aron. "As to what Miss Zhang has suffered, please rest assured. We won't rest until justice is delivered fairly."

"You shameless rapist! I'm gonna kill you!" When Mandy heard the salacious man explain himself, she screamed in a fit of rage and rushed towards the man. Her daughter meant everything to her. When she found out that her treasured daughter had been raped by such a pathetic man, she got so furious; she could no longer see straight.

Mandy was swift enough to get near him before the people around her could hold her back. She landed an open-handed heavy slap across the man's face. With only one slap, he spurted blood from the cuts where her long nails had caught his face.

The man screamed aloud in pain, "Police! You all saw it! She deliberately assaulted me! I demand justice!"

"Shut up!" The policeman gave him a real ticking-off. Having noticed Mandy's outburst, the police requested Aron, "Sir, please look after her. We do not condone fighting inside the police station. In truth, such behavior makes it difficult for us to do our jobs properly."

The situation at hand was already quite complicated, Mandy's actions would only get herself and her daughter into more trouble.

"Don't worry. I'll handle her." Aron grabbed Mandy; keeping her from hurting the man again.

"Let me go!" Mandy scuffled with Aron and scolded him, "Aron! Are you satisfied with this outcome?!

Are you happy to see Becky suffer like this?

"

If Aron hadn't cancelled the wedding, they would have been happily married, and Becky wouldn't be in this miserable state.

Aron silently endured as Mandy kept hitting at him. However, out of the blue, Becky broke her silence. She suddenly stood up and screamed at Mandy, "Stop hitting him! Don't you see that I'm embarrassed enough? Do you have to embarrass me even more in front of everyone?"

After leaving the hospital, Becky had no intentions of confiding in her family about what happened; she just wanted to indulge herself in the bar. However, when she woke up next to an obscene man, she regretted drinking too much and entering the bar in the first place. She called the police in a fit of rage, because she did not want to accept the fact that she had slept with such a man. On top of that, Mandy's display of abhorrent behavior made her feel even more embarrassed.

"Becky!" Mandy was panic-stricken; it's the first time Becky had been so angry at her.

Aron slowly let go of Mandy and told the police, "Please let me bail Becky out."

The police officer guided Aron through the formalities and the paper-work. Becky still felt resentful towards the wretched man. Even if he was thrown in prison, she couldn't change the fact that she had lost her virginity to him.

After Aron posted bail, he waited for Becky and Mandy at the gate of the police station. After a while, they walked out one after another. Aron opened the car door and said to them, "Get in the car. I'm taking you home."

Before Mandy got in, Becky stopped her and said to Aron, "Thanks for your help today. We can go home by ourselves. You don't need to bother."

Aron refused, "It's no bother at all. It's already quite late, and it'll be difficult to find a taxi here, at this hour. Let me take you home." Aron felt unsettled; he didn't expect Becky to retaliate in such a way. He felt guilty for the situation she was in.

Mandy agreed and said to Becky, "It's the least he could do. Let's get in the car and go home as soon as possible."

Becky pulled Mandy angrily to one side and said, "Enough, mom. Don't do this. I refuse to get in his car!" Helplessly, she continued, "Don't you think I've suffered enough disgrace?"

"Becky, you've caused enough trouble. Now listen, and stop arguing with me! Get in the car!" Aron frowned. This time he needed to make sure to send her back home safely, so he wouldn't have to worry.

"You think I like arguing with you?" Becky sneered at Aron, "Have you forgotten?"

Now that we are separated, you don't have to pretend to be nice to me anymore.

Huh? Have you come here just to humiliate me even more?



You see, I'm just a loose woman, who'll sleep with just about anyone. I am no match for someone as distinguished as you. Are you satisfied now?"

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"Becky, don't speak to Aron like that, you know he cares about you, " Mandy persuaded her. Somehow she believed that Aron would still marry Becky as long as she persisted. She continued, "Aron, Becky's not been in a good mood lately. Would you kindly ignore her brashness. You know that you're the one she only loves, can you... be more patient with her?"

Mandy yanked Becky's arm and said, "Look at you, you can't even control your temper. What would you do if Aron really left you?"

Becky let out a bitter laugh and said, "What makes you think he'll want to marry me after what has happened? It's not going to happen, mom. Stop dreaming!"

She walked up to Aron, stood in front of him, and said, "Aron, from now on, I don't want to have anything to do with you. Do I make myself clear?"

She wasn't able to get the man she loved, so she turned her love to hatred.

Her hatred for Aron was as strong as her love.

Becky intended to leave right after she had said everything she had to, but Mandy persisted. Becky understood what her mother was going to do, so she said to her assertively, "Mom. just come with me, okay? If you continue to pursue this, I promise you that I will never come back home."

Mandy had no choice but to give up and leave with her daughter, even though as a mother, she was reluctant to let go of her daughter's chance at happiness. She murmured, "Becky, dear, why would you say something like that? There could still be a chance to salvage this if you are willing to show remorse. But..."

"Enough, Mom!" Becky yelled at her mother. She stood there in the cold wind, pulling her wind-breaker tightly, as she held her head high.

She had belittled herself to Aron for too long; it was time to get her dignity back. There would be a lot of other suitors for her, besides Aron. However, the thought of Aron being with Isla annoyed her far too much. She was determined not to let them have peace so easily.

She said to Mandy, "Mom, I don't want to hear anything else about him; not even his name. From this day onwards, I will stop loving him. I want him to regret, letting me go, for the rest of his life."

Mandy looked at her daughter's eyes and felt as if something about her had changed.

Aron sensed the change in Becky too, but he didn't care about that at all. He followed them with his car until they had found a taxi.

Aron wanted to explain everything to Isla, but she refused to see him, so he had no choice but to wait.

From that day onwards, Becky's family never came to make trouble again. The days had gone by peacefully, but sadly, the health of Autumn's Grandma, Emily, was deteriorating.

It was Chris's first birthday after she had returned to China, and the first one since Autumn had married Charles. It was a grand and magnificent party, aimed to celebrate the addition of Emily and Autumn into the family. Charles decided to take this opportunity to introduce Autumn to everyone at the party... as his wife.

Chris, however, was not in a happy mood in the morning, because she couldn't see the people she wanted to see on her 22nd birthday.

"Chris, are you ready?" As the new hostess of the Lu family, Autumn began preparing everything for the party early in the morning. She wore a purple dress, which looked dignified, but not too dazzling as to draw the attention away from the star of the party.

"Autumn..." Chris said unhappily, "Can I just stay here? I don't want to go down there."

"How can you not show up at your own birthday party?" Autumn tidied Chris's dress and said, "You've turned twenty-two, and the purpose behind your brother throwing such a grand party is to find a suitable husband for you. He'll be so embarrassed if you don't show up."

Autumn helped Chris tidy her dress and smiled at her, "Look at you now, this is what a twenty-two-year-old girl should look like, young and beautiful."

Chris sighed and said, "Autumn, come on, don't make fun of me..." Chris wasn't very eager to attend the party, because she didn't want to meet anyone else, apart from one person. She added, "You know what I mean..."

"What do you mean?" Autumn pretended to be unaware and asked Chris, "You should get out and make new friends more often, that way there's a chance you will meet someone you'll fall in love with, am I right?"

"Autumn!" said Chris as she curled her lips, indicating her to stop.

Autumn laughed and stood up. She kept a secret from Chris, because it wasn't the right time to tell her. She pulled Chris and said, "Okay, fine, do as you like, but we better get down there, because everyone is waiting for us."

Chris had no choice but to head downstairs with her sister-in-law. She took a short glance at the people downstairs when they got to the entrance of the second floor. Much to her disappointment, she didn't see the one she was hoping to see there.

The both of them drew everyone's attention towards them as they walked down the stairs. Chris was an adorable combination of being cute and pretty, while Autumn was beautifully elegant and charming. At the same time, Charles, the brother and husband, was the focal point of everyone's envy.

Charles smiled, as his face gleamed with happiness and satisfaction, at the sight of his sister and wife walking down together.

Someone from the crowd said, "Miss Chris, you're looking so beautiful today!" The others followed suit and began to cheer and praise her beauty as well.

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The fact that Charles got married was fairly known to one and all present there. However, right until this moment the public did not realize that the woman Charles married was Autumn Ye instead of Yvonne Gu.

"I am fully aware of the cloud of confusion that descended upon all of you present here. But it is with great happiness that I now unravel the mystery: Autumn and I got married out of sheer luck and destiny. Now we spend each and every day of our lives together in conjugal bliss. This is my official statement to confirm the true identity of my beloved wife. I appreciate you all for your kindly understanding." Charles then egged Chris to take over, "Now I urge today's hostess to divide up the delicious cake for us. I do hope you enjoy the party here!"

Charles's brief statement was, indeed, a pleasant shock to all the guests. It was only second before the audience started to whisper among one other in shock and awe.

Isla was happy on seeing Autumn's face light up as her innermost desires had turned into reality.

Aron's voice rang behind Isla, "So are you getting excited too on the prospects of receiving such happiness?"

"Why are you pestering me?" Isla answered to Aron without turning back to look at him.

"I have called off the wedding with Becky and ended all ties with her." Aron pleaded for her attention with hopeful eyes, "Now can you please hear me out?"

Isla turned around swiftly without reflecting a single emotion on her face and plastered a smile as she said to him, "Aron you are still ignorant of your mistake of shifting the blame onto others. This trait was the root cause of our failed relationship. While Becky did play a major role, you too were an accomplice in this plot."

Isla continued with a gentle smile, "There is absolutely no point in continuing this conversation if you still abandon your due responsibility. Either way please excuse me as I have to attend to some work now."

Isla turned around and made her way to Autumn. As she gave her a gift as a token of best wishes, and said goodbye to her, "Autumn, there is a matter that requires my urgent attention. So in that regard please excuse my absence."

"Why are you in such a hurry?" Autumn looked at Isla in astonishment, "Is this about Aron? Are you trying to avoid seeing him?"

"Not really, that is not what this is about." Isla smiled, "I was prepared to meet Aron here. I would not have attended this event had I wanted to avoid his presence all together. Believe me when I say I have some other urgent matter at hand right now."

Isla had to drive the point loud and clear to Autumn who still looked apprehensive, "I am old enough to marry someone and, as you know, my parents have been long anticipated my marriage. They have arranged a blind date for me. I have to leave now to reach that appointment on time."

"A blind date?" Autumn was too shocked to believe her revelation, "I remember very clear that you used to shun and dismiss the very idea of blind dates."

"Your memory is good. Yes I used to..." Isla replied with a warm smile and explained patiently, "I used to believe in a marriage created by God so I never sought out for someone deliberately. However, not until now did I realize that love is somewhat beyond my reach. As a result, I agreed to meet the eligible bachelors my parents have arranged for me to meet through blind dates. I want to go through it to meet my parents' wishes."

Autumn, all of sudden, was somewhat amazed to see this other side of Isla who went beyond her comfort simply to please her parents and to respect their wishes.

"Well, anyway, now please allow me to take leave." Isla smiled to Autumn, "Enjoy your time here."

"Take good care of yourself." Autumn expressed her concern.

As Isla was walking out of Dream Garden, she bumped into a woman dressed in pink attire; and as she took a second glance at the woman, Isla found her pretty and attractive. While the woman ignored Isla and gazed toward the stage, paying little attention to Isla's prompt apology.

Isla shook her head, and then departed from the premise.

Autumn was utterly exhausted because of the toasts. As she was roaming about to look for a quieter place, she heard a familiar voice from behind her, "Autumn, it has been too long!"

"Leila, what brought you here?" Autumn was surprised and taken aback when she turned around and saw Leila. She least expected Leila to show up. Leila felt rather troubled and disturbed to learn that Autumn was married to Charles. Autumn felt a pinch of embarrassment as she noticed the awkward expression on Leila's face. However the more she dwelled on that thought she realized there was absolutely no point of feeling guilty.

Dream Garden was her home in that moment and her marriage was known to one and all. There was more pride than uneasiness over that.

"So? It seems my presence here is unbearable for you." Leila couldn't help letting out a sarcastic laugh. Leila felt like being deceived beyond measure, as she tried every means to milk a favor from Mrs. Lu, little expecting Autumn was the one.

"How could it be? I am just a little surprised as I was not expecting you." Autumn explained to Leila with a friendly smile and requested Leila to get take it easy, "Please do take a seat."

## Chapter 226

Leila received an invitation to Chris's birthday party. It couldn't have been Charles who sent her the invitation because she was no more than a secretary to him. Thus, Leila assumed that it might have been Autumn who had sent her the invitation.

The moment Leila got the invitation, she was so thrilled that she hurried to buy an expensive present. On Chris's birthday, she had hoped to flatter Chris with an expensive gift and extravagant compliments. Besides, this was a good chance to get to know what kind of person Mrs. Lu was. When she entered the main room, Charles was just speaking about Autumn. She had presumed that Charles was having an affair with Autumn, but never in a million years did she expect that Autumn was actually Mrs. Lu. It was remarkably unbelievable. Leila's jaw dropped on the floor, as she stood there, totally stupefied. It seemed as if she had been struck by lightning, her face becoming stale and mirthless. Isla accidentally bumped into her in a hurry, but Leila stood there paralyzed still, not having recovered from the shock she had just received.

When Leila finally returned to reality, she stared at Autumn with fierce intensity. In her eyes, Autumn was a manipulative, vicious witch. 'She set a trap for me. She knew I had feelings for Charles, so she invited me here on purpose, hoping that I will dismiss the idea of seducing him once I hear what Charles has to say about her, ' she thought.

When she locked eyes with Autumn, she sneered, "Autumn, I guess, you are proud now, aren't you? Becoming Charles's wife and winning his unconditional love were the crowning glories of your life. You sent me the invitation to witness my humiliation firsthand, didn't you? Now that you've achieved your goals, are you satisfied?"

"You're not making any sense. When did I invite you to come here?" Autumn was confused about what Leila had said. She had never sent an invitation to Leila.

"Stop pretending!" Leila was too outraged to feign friendship. She raised her voice, and asked, "If not you, then who sent me the invitation? It couldn't have been Mr. Lu, right?"

Leila fell madly in love with Charles, when she was first hired as his secretary at the Shining Company not long ago. Since then she let her imaginations run wild, as she imagined being with Charles as his lover. She insisted that Charles had only married Mrs. Lu because they were both from rich families and their marriage wasn't built on love. Leila had deluded herself into thinking that Charles would somehow realize she was more appropriate for him and he would fall in love with her some day. She didn't mind being criticized. She would be happy and content if Charles accepted her as his mistress.

When she heard Charles declare his love for Autumn, her fantasies faded like fog on a sunny afternoon. Soon she realized that she had been daydreaming for quite some time.

"I have no idea why you are so angry. I don't think I have ever treated you unfairly. When you lost your job, I recommended you to the Shining Company. As for my marriage, I don't think it's necessary to discuss my private matters with you. Besides, I didn't invite you here. If you'd like to stay, please make yourself comfortable. If you want to leave, go ahead. No one is going to stop you, "

Autumn retorted. She felt insulted by her allegations. She did not fancy being blamed for a crime she did not commit.

"It wasn't you? Well, that's a barefaced lie. That's impossible! I marched in here as bold as brass. If not you, then who else would have invited me?" responded Leila with a sneer.

"It was me!" As soon as Leila finished making her baseless claims, Chris slipped in and revealed the truth. She had been watching Autumn and Leila talking from a distance. When Chris noticed the atmosphere was getting tense between them, she hastily came to Autumn's rescue.

When Leila and Autumn turned around, they were surprised to see Chris.

Autumn quickly stepped close to Chris and said, "Chris, don't worry. This has nothing to do with you. I can handle the situation."

"Autumn, it's ok, " Chris comforted Autumn with a smile. Then she patted Autumn's hand and stood in front of her as she said to Leila, "It was me. I invited you here. What's the matter?"

Autumn looked at Chris in puzzlement. She wondered, 'Why did Chris invite Leila to her birthday party? I don't think they were friends. I don't even think they knew each other.'

"Chris, why did you invite her?" Autumn asked with uncertainty.

Leila was disappointed when Chris stood up for Autumn. She said crossly, "Stop pretending! I don't even know you. Why would you invite me?"

"Don't you remember? We've met once at a western-style restaurant, " replied Chris, scornfully, "You told me you were there to buy food for my brother. I have seen many women fall for him before. I figured you had feelings for Charles, so I invited you here to witness how much my brother and sister-in-law love each other. So you'd better give up pursuing him."

"What? You look disappointed. Let me tell you, my brother and sister-in-law love each other deeply, " continued Chris with a sneer.

Leila was burning with fury. It felt like everyone was looking at her and no matter how much she tried to avoid making eye contact with them, she failed.



Chris was happy to see Leila at a disadvantage. She warned, "Leila, I remember your name. It doesn't matter whether you love my brother or not. You have seen today, just how much my brother and sister-in-law love each other. There is no place for you in his heart. You'd better give up on your fantasy, or I will give you a piece of my mind."

Chris thought, 'Autumn is sure to be aware of Leila's bad intentions, but since she doesn't want to deal with her, I don't mind being the bad person.'

Leila felt embarrassed and humiliated. It was such a silly situation to be in. After a moment's hesitation, she spoke to Autumn awkwardly, "Autumn, I am... sorry, there's been some kind of a misunderstanding."

Autumn remained silent. She felt like she had already seen Leila's true self just now and that Leila was just pretending to be apologetic for the moment.

"I admit that I had feelings for Mr. Lu. However, my feelings were not based on love, but adoration and respect. I worshipped him. I know that you are doing well now and I am willing to let go of the past."

After calming down, Leila said plainly to Autumn, "I was not in good mood just now, so I lashed out on you. I hope you can forgive me. I... I'm sorry."

"Forget about it. It's not a big deal." Autumn didn't argue with Leila once she apologized sincerely. However, she knew that Leila was just pretending to be friendly. It was obvious that Leila didn't give up on Charles. Autumn wouldn't be foolish enough to take Leila's words genuinely.

## Chapter 227

Upon hearing this, Autumn fell silent. She was tired of handling more rivals like Rachel and Yvonne. All she yearned now was to lead a happy and undisturbed life with Charles.

As Autumn turned around, she caught a glimpse of Emily standing in a corner. "Grandma what are you doing here?" Autumn asked while walking towards her. "It is not good for your health to walk around. You have been asked to take bed rest. So please stay in your room and take more rest. If you require anything, I will bring it for you," Autumn advised in a reproachful tone.

"I'm absolutely fine, " Emily reassured Autumn while stroking the back of her hand gently. Emily was squinting hard in an attempt to see Autumn's face but she failed. "Autumn, I am feeling lethargic. I will return to my room now. I hope you enjoy yourself here!"

"Please let me escort you to your room. You look a little frail, grandma, " Autumn said to her. "I can go back to my room by myself. You just stay here and have some fun, " Emily rejected her offer politely.

Emily walked towards her room slowly at the pace she was comfortable with. Autumn didn't heave a sigh of relief until she saw Emily enter her room safely.

After being rebuked by Chris in front of an entire crowd, Leila was drowning in embarrassment and with that heavy heart she left the party immediately. Charles greeted the guests while keeping one eye on Autumn. When he saw Autumn settle down in one corner of the room, he swiftly walked right up to her.

"Are you fine? You must be feeling quite tired, " Charles said to Autumn as he saw her rub her shank. Autumn rarely wore high-heeled footwear. It was only natural for her feet to be sore and aching because of treading slowly on those uncomfortable heels for hours together.

Autumn was surprised as he understood her so well even when she had not uttered a single word. "What are you doing here?" Autumn asked in relief as she looked up at him.

Charles humbly took a seat beside Autumn and raised her leg onto his thighs. "Do you feel better now?" he asked while massaging her calf gently.

"Oh Charles, please let go of my leg. What will people think when they see us..." Autumn muttered in embarrassment as she tried to withdraw her leg. "What is wrong with it? I am doing this for my wife as her feet is sore. I don't feel an ounce of embarrassment, " Charles retorted holding onto her leg tightly.

"You..." Autumn flushed red like a rose. She was too shy for any public displays of affection. However, Charles didn't care much for the opinions of others.

"How are you feeling now? I hope you are better?" he asked, looking up at Autumn while massaging her leg gently.

"Much better, " Autumn replied as she did feel a sense of relaxation wash over her. She then retreated her leg immediately to avoid attracting too much attention. "Please don't do this again in an occasion like this. I do feel it is all sorts of weird, " she added.

Charles did not respond. He never cared much for what others thought. Even if he agreed not to, he would do it again if the situation called for it.

"Mr. Lu treats Autumn so well that even I am envious of her." A voice echoed from behind them. Autumn turned around and was taken by great surprise at the sight. She saw Abby, Andy and Cindy, who was crouched in Andy's arms. Cindy was brimming with excitement as she looked at Autumn. She struggled to get out of Andy's arms and then sprinted towards Autumn and put her hands around her neck in one loving gesture.

"Pretty sister..." A warm smile appeared on Autumn's face. "Honey, what are you doing here?" she asked affectionately as she lifted Cindy off the ground and onto her chest.

"Mom told me that I could meet you here so here I am, " Cindy replied with a sweet and innocent smile on her face. "Pretty sister, I have missed you so very much."

"Me too, " Autumn responded holding Cindy closer to her chest. She was overjoyed to meet Cindy here in that way. It made her forget all about her aching feet.

"Since we left Z City, Cindy has been repeatedly chanting your name. If we didn't bring her here, she would have driven us crazy, " Abby said with a laugh.

"What brought you here?" Autumn asked Andy and Abby with a confused expression.

"I invited them, " Charles replied with a smile. Although Cindy didn't show any affection towards Charles, he didn't think much of it. "Do you remember Arthur?" he continued.

"Of course I do, " Autumn nodded while recalling him. Arthur not only saved Joanna but also knew Emily very well. She would never forget him.

"Mrs. Zhao is his younger daughter. When they came back, we were planning to hold a birthday party for Chris. So I sent an invitation asking them to join us on the occasion, " Charles explained to Autumn.

"Autumn, I..." Abby stammered with excitement, coming forward and taking Autumn's hand. "We..." she muttered.

"What has been going on?" Autumn asked curiously as she could sense something was going on. "Mrs. Zhao, what's going on? Why did you look anxious?"

"Nothing. She is just too thrilled at the sight of you, " Andy said, laughing. "Abby, you are scaring Autumn."

Hearing this, Autumn's confusion disappeared. "It's alright. I am glad to see Cindy again. So when will you go back to..." she responded with a smile.

"We'll stay here, " Abby turned towards Autumn. "This time we won't leave. We are going to hold a housewarming party at our new house tomorrow. Would you and Mr. Lu be so kind as to join us?"

## Chapter 228

"Well I will be ever grateful, " Andy responded with a bright and optimistic smile. He was somewhat comforted on hearing this as they were still worried about it. But they realized if Charles would like to do them this favor, then things would get better results when compared with their effort alone. And this was the right way to go about it. "I had a chat with my father-in-law about this. Though Autumn gets along very well with my little daughter, Cindy, she is still not familiar with our entire family. So we were hoping to get in touch with her as strangers instead of her family members so that she could get to know us gradually. Sometimes in this manner she may come to like our family, and after understanding the situation, it may become easier for her to accept the truth. What do you think?"

"Okay. Please do as you think appropriate, " responded Charles. He nodded in approval and went on to add, "I am just happy about the prospect of Autumn reuniting with her family members who will actually accept, love and cherish her as she is. I have no other wishes. But I just hope that she would not improperly belittle herself in front of me. The essential thing is that she should be able to be more nerved in face of Wendy."

"I know. I understand your concerns." Andy nodded in agreement. "Well, then since everything seems to be in order we will wait for your arrival at home tomorrow, " said Andy with great appreciation.

"Okay, " replied Charles briefly. At the moment, Chris was feeling bored in one corner of the room. She approached Autumn once she saw a little and lovely girl sitting beside her. Chris walked over and started to play with Cindy who didn't reject her at all, and was frolicking cheerfully.

"Autumn, who is this child? She is so adorable and lovely. I like her very much." Chris asked Autumn while poking fun at her. "Wow, Autumn, she looks very much like you. Don't you see the striking resemblance? Is she your illegitimate daughter?" Chris joked around with Autumn.

"Chris, what nonsense are you babbling." Patting Chris's back gently, Autumn complained, "I came across Cindy in Z City when I traveled there. This is her mother. Please don't crack such jokes in her presence."

Saying this, Autumn took a glance at Abby to check her temperament as Autumn was afraid that Abby would be annoyed by such an absurd and inappropriate joke.

"It really does not matter. It is just a joke." Abby smiled softly and jumped into the conversation, "Cindy looks like me while in fact I look a little like Autumn, so it is no wonder you feel that way." Abby explained to Chris patiently.

"What's wrong? Are you fine?" Autumn asked her with concern as she reached out to touch her forehead to check if she had a fever. However, Chris dodged her hands subconsciously.

But soon Chris realized that her cold attitude may hurt Autumn. Therefore, she turned to Autumn and explained hastily, "Autumn, I am fine. I just need to rest. Please don't worry. It is nothing. A quick nap will fix."

Soon after finishing her sentence, she turned to leave before Autumn could say something. However, in a rush she tripped and fell into someone's arms. "I am so sorry, " said Chris in a shaky voice with her head lowered. She got up on her feet and began to leave as she was embarrassed. But soon she heard a familiar voice from behind, "Is this how you intended to greet me?"

As soon as she put a face to the voice, Chris turned around in shock and happiness but still did not raise her head. It wasn't until she heard Sam's voice again that she did believe this reality. Tears soon trickled down her cheeks as she was unable to control the sudden surge of emotions.

"Don't cry, Chris. Please don't cry." Obviously, Sam was startled by Chris while Abby was curious about what was happening. "What happened to them? Have they been seeing each other?" Abby asked with eyes glimmering with hope.

Autumn shook her head slightly with a smile and then she added, "But... they will soon be in a relationship."

It took Chris a long time to stop crying but she finally calmed down on seeing his face. But she still was unhappy about this surprise, about the fact that Sam took the initiative to call Autumn instead of her.

Chapter 229

Sam was evidently unhappy, but he did nothing. Chris's dancing partner was taking the opportunity to get closer to her while dancing and Sam got even more upset. Nonetheless, he still kept a straight face.

Seeing Sam uneasy with what was before him, Autumn could not help smiling.

It was torture for Sam, standing helplessly at the edge of the dance floor. But it was the same for Chris. She just wanted to make Sam jealous. She really had no plans to do anything with other men. But she had already accepted the other guy's invitation and couldn't back out of it. She regretted every moment of it and it made her even more furious.

No matter how much he wanted to look away, Sam kept watching. Then the other guy's hands began to go to inappropriate places and started touching Chris. Finally, unable to stand it any longer, Sam stepped forward and pulled Chris away. He stood in front of the man, blocking him from Chris, staring him down.

"Who the hell are you?" The man asked angrily. Chris was beautiful and she came from a well-to-do family. Many men were eager to approach her, but only this one took action and actually went up to her. And now a dark figure stood between him and Chris. He was no doubt, unhappy.

"What the hell are you doing!" Seeing that Sam was concerned, Chris began to act silly again. She pushed away Sam's hand and shouted at him, "It's none of your business."

"You heard her, didn't you?" The man looked defiantly at Sam. "Miss Lu and I are having fun, dancing. Why are you getting in the way? Go mind your own business."

"Chris, you don't have to be mad at me....." Sam said in a serious tone. But Chris interrupted him halfway, "Who do you think you are? And why would I be mad at you? Do not think too much of yourself."

Though Sam was mad at Chris, he tried to explain his side to her patiently, "I know that you are mad at me for not getting in touch with you while I was abroad. But I was extremely busy the entire time. I tried my best to come back as soon as I could. I actually tried to be back before your birthday. Unfortunately, my flight was delayed. I called Autumn and let her inform you, but....."

Chris's eyes widened. Then she looked over to Autumn, who was standing near the dancing floor with a playful smile on her face. She then realized what Autumn had done on purpose.

"Hey, who are you, really? Do you have any idea that....." Thinking to himself that Chris liked him, he tried to drive Sam away. But he was pulled aside by Charles, "Mr Han, I've heard that you have just started dating a young model. How's that going? I heard you've broken up. Is that true?"

Their voices faded out while they walked away. Chris dared not look at Sam in the eyes, but asked guiltily, "You..... You called my sister-in-law just to let me know?"

"I made another call before this one. She told me what happened between you and Yvonne. With what I heard, I wanted to come back immediately." Chris's anger quickly melted away and was replaced by a sweet, loving smile. Who wouldn't be impressed by that?

"Then why didn't you tell me earlier?" It was then Sam's fault for not saying it soon enough. He just sheepishly said, "Did you give me any chance to explain?"

Chris, now in a bright mood, looked at Sam and asked lightly, "Cut the cackle, where is my birthday gift?"

"Sorry, but there's none." Sam answered matter-of-factly, "Well, I came back in such a hurry, without any chance to stop and get you a gift."

Chris was pretending to be angry, but his presence was the biggest surprise and the best birthday gift for her. However, she wasn't ready for what she heard next.

"To make it up to you, I feel like giving myself to you." She had to make sure what Sam was saying to her.

"Wh..... what?" If Chris were a girl who was responsive enough, she must have cheered at that moment. But she just looked at Sam in a state of shock. "What did you just say?"

Sam was anxious at the moment. Before that, he didn't really feel the same way as Chris, who had always wanted to be with him. However, he then realized that his feelings for Autumn were shallow -- some kind of obsession. He even made it clear with Autumn. Lately, he had started getting used to being around Chris's company.

While he was abroad, he would think of Chris whenever he saw an amusement park. He couldn't help eating the food she liked to eat and buying the things she wanted to buy. He couldn't wait to get back and be around for Chris when he heard of what happened between her and Yvonne.

It was then, when he realized that he had fallen in love with Chris.

He whipped up a lot of courage, to not let Chris say it first, this time. It was not easy for him or anyone to show vulnerability and express his feelings. What if this girl did not understand?

He tried to read Chris's surprised face, now stuck in a dilemma, not knowing whether to laugh or to cry. He could only repeat it one more time, "I mean, will you be my girlfriend?"

Chris did not seem to understand what he indirectly said so he just spit it all out. Clearly. Word for word. Looking at Chris's widened eyes, Sam felt really awkward, "But if you don't want to be..."

Not waiting for Sam to finish his words, Chris jumped up and put her arms around her "I do, I do, I've been waiting for this day for such a long time....."

Standing in the distance, Charles smiled. He was glad to see his own sister happy. The way she acted slightly embarrassed him, though.



Sam smiled as well. He was the man who had the courage to take the blame for his actions. Now that he had revealed his feelings, he just put it into action. He closed his eyes, savoring every moment as he hugged Chris back.

"Alright, alright. Everybody around is now watching us." Chris jumped boldly and hugged Sam some more. Sam smiled, patting on her back slightly.

Chris then slid down from Sam's arms, a bit embarrassed. She stood back, winked and stuck out her tongue at him.

Grandpa Gary came closer, also smiling. He patted Sam on his shoulder. He knew all along that Sam and Chris were a good match. Now, seeing them happily together made him happier than anyone else.

#### Chapter 230

Rachel giggled while glancing at Autumn with downright jealousy and resentment. Then she turned her eyes over to Charles, her eyes full of affection and bitter nostalgia. But knowing that a lot of people were watching, she had to pick up her composure. "Edward and I have come here especially to bring Chris this gift. Nothing special. It looks like..... I'm not welcome, though."

Rachel pouted her lips. Edward slightly frowned and comforted her by taking her hands and patting them. When he turned to look at Gary, he pulled a long face. He said to Charles and Autumn, "Rachel is my girlfriend now, which means she is your Aunt. Be kind to her. Do you understand?"

"Excuse me?" Hearing this, Gary almost dropped his glass. He had left no stone unturned to prevent Rachel from marrying into the Lu family. He never expected that she could finally make her way in like this. "Edward, are you crazy? Look at yourself. You are already old and you found yourself a young girlfriend. Do you really think she is in love with you, a senior citizen?"

"Gary, don't embarrass me here. We are in this relationship for the love and companionship. I know he is your younger brother, but age can never set true lovers apart. I love him and he loves me. Why can't we be together?" Rachel snickered casually, pretending to be as affectionate as Edward Lu.

When she was with Charles, she had known that Gary had a brother, about 20 years younger than him and about the same age as Charles's father. He had been sent to prison at a young age because of fighting and brawling. After he was released, he had plotted to split the Lu family business with Gary Lu

who had no choice but to give in by dividing the Shining Company into two - the Sun Company and the new Shining Company.

Over the years, the Shining Company had become bigger and stronger under Charles's leadership. The Sun Company did not do too bad either. Edward Lu's hawkish strategy had established a firm foothold for the company in Y city which earned him a good name among the big shots.

After the division of the Shining Company, Edward stopped keeping in touch with his family. That was why Autumn had no inkling as to who Edward Lu was, even after she married into the Lu family.

Originally, Rachel had no intention of making her revenge on Charles after they broke up. But she began to nurse the idea after she was cornered by Charles himself when he found out that she was picking on his wife Autumn Ye.

Her star power had started to fade as offers came in trickles and eventually stopped coming. Worse still, her hidden dark history had been exposed little by little. Even her agent and representative cancelled their contract. She was getting desperate when she met Edward Lu at a dinner party and got to know his connection to the Lu family. That was when she made up her mind to make a come back.

She was a gorgeous super star. As for Edward Lu, he had been rolling in money over the years and was never in shortage of women around him. However, he never actually married anyone. Knowing this, Rachel used some tactics to make Edward fall head over heels in love with her. That explained why they showed up together here today.

Edward Lu stirred up rumors and poured money on several movies starring Rachel. Because of this, her career revived and she could finally ride out the difficult times. She was becoming capable of making her revenge on the Lu family.

Gary glared at Rachel, who was compared to Helen of Troy at his first sight. He would never let such a woman marry into the Lu family, so he turned to look at Edward in disgust. "Don't you know that this woman used to be Charles's....."

"I know. She already told me everything." Edward said dispassionately, "Our father had died many years ago and I remain single all these years. I am pushing 60. This time, I mean it. I have decided to marry Rachel. After all, you are the only elder to me in this family and I need your support."

"Gary, he is telling the truth." Rachel was pleased with herself. She had gone through all the troubles to hook up with Edward just to see Charles's astonished face if he saw her with Edward. However, to her disappointment, Charles didn't look like he cared one bit.

She gave a sneering smile and added. "When I found out Edward's relationship with you, I told him everything between Charles and me. It's true that Charles and I were in a romantic relationship. But it turned out that we were not right for each other. I have had to meet quite a number of men to realize that Edward's maturity and consideration are all I want and need. So, we have decided to get married and I hope you all will come to our wedding."

Autumn turned to Charles standing next to her. Expressionless as he tried to be, his knitted brows betrayed him.

How does it feel to have your ex-girlfriend become your aunt all of a sudden?

"In your dreams!" Gary raised his voice at her. "I am telling you. You will never marry into the Lu family. Never in your whole life."

"Brother!" Edward looked at Gary with a grim face. "Twenty years ago, we broke up the family and lived separately. Rachel is going to marry into my own family instead of ours. It has nothing to do with you."

Edward scoffed and added. "You think I really want to come here? It is for Rachel who wants our marriage to be witnessed and blessed by an elder brother."

Rachel tugged at Edward and said, "You don't have to be like this. After all, he is your senior....."

She was smug to see the look on Gary's face now. Wasn't that all she wanted after all the troubles she had gone through?

"Grandpa, are you all right?" Not a single word did Charles say all this time. In contrast, Chris immediately flared up when she saw Rachel being so cocky. She held Gary by the arm and snapped. "You two, listen up. We don't have a care in the world whether you fall in love or marry each other or

fall off a cliff and die. You don't really exist to us. Don't even consider yourselves as part of this family with the wedding that you are talking about. I'm telling you! No way."

"Hey, little girl! Watch your tongue!" Edward angrily shouted at Chris. "I am your uncle and this is your aunt."