

Wedded Bride 231

Chapter 231

After witnessing what happened, Abby and Andy thought it was the time for them to head back, "Autumn, we have to leave now, there is not much we can do to help, but I will send someone to pick you up tomorrow."

"That would be really nice." Autumn kept her composure. While such a disaster was happening to her own family, she tried to hide her sorrow beneath a cheerful outward appearance. With a smile, she showed Andy's family out.

The guests had seen everything so the only choice for Autumn was to apologize to them one by one, and then walk them out. After the last guest had left, she looked around the empty hall. She sat down, finally relieved.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" What? Don't you recognize me?" Rachel stood in front of Charles.

But Charles gave a brittle laugh and responded scornfully, "You know, I did not expect you were going to stoop down to such low levels. Are you enjoying this ride?"

"I became what you made me!" There was a time when Rachel dreamt how Charles would regret what he had done. Now, the truth has dawned on her that Charles did not give a care about this. Suddenly she broke down crying as she thought of all her previous painful experiences. "Charles, you are so cruel, you wanted to shatter me to pieces only because of a woman. I couldn't get any projects then. If I hadn't met Edward, I don't even know what would have happened to me."

Rachel was sneering as she recalled how she had become a hostess to drink with strangers before she met Edward. And her hatred of Charles, for old and new wrongs, welled up in her heart, and this time, she wished she could tear Charles into shreds.

"So you are taking your revenge on me this way?" Charles looked at Rachel in front of him coldly and wondered why he had been so blind to date such an evil woman, and thought she was reasonable. "Do you have any idea who it is in there, Rachel? That's my great uncle, he is two generations older than me. And you did not hold back to be with such an old man who almost has one foot in the grave, only because you want your revenge on me. You really want me to look down on you, right?"

"Don't be an egomaniac and don't think too much of yourself. You are not that important." Rachel sneered, she wouldn't let herself be fooled by Charles. Because in this situation, she knew it indeed that Edward was her own life-saving straw, and only by firmly grasping this life-saving straw could she continue to live the life that she wanted.

She was afraid that Charles was just testing her. "Since I started going out with Edward, I finally knew how important a mature man is to me. When I was with you, I was just playing. Now Edward and I, we are going to marry each other, so I hope I could have your blessing."

"My blessing?" Charles couldn't help laughing and said, "Why would you want such an illusory thing? Since you are so happy with him, then I hope you two live well."

"You....." Rachel was flustered and exasperated. It took her a long time to ask Charles directly. "Charles, don't you feel any regret at all? Don't you regret choosing Autumn and giving up on me?"

"I do." Charles said it resolutely and decisively, god knows how thrilled Rachel would be to hear this, but what happened next made her collapse. "I regret that I was too blind to be with a woman like you."

"Charles Lu!" Rachel almost lost her temper, but she calmed herself down, she laughed grimly and said, "Anyway, I'm with Edward now, I am now an elder to you, whether you like it or not. I can always wave my wand in front of you. You can't escape from me."

"Is it worth it?" Autumn just stood at the corner, watching from the beginning. She didn't intend to disturb their conversation. To tell the truth, she was really shocked when she knew Rachel had made such a choice at first, but then she felt pity for her, it was really miserable to bet her whole life's happiness on such a man.

Autumn stood quietly by the side of Charles and said to Rachel, "Miss Bai, is it really worth betting your happiness in exchange for a lifetime of revenge against us?"

"And how do you know that I am happy or not?" Rachel looked at Autumn, gnashing her teeth in anger and then said lightly, "I'm telling you that Edward and I are going to get married. There's going to be a wedding soon, then we will be a family. Maybe you'll see me more often."

Rachel smiled and continued, "Edward has become too tired to run the company by himself all these years, he does not have a child. So he wanted to hand the company over to Charles, but they haven't been in touch for years. From now on, we'll have to get in touch more."

Rachel, smiling and holding Autumn's hand, said to her, "Autumn, although we have different seniority in the family, we are almost the same age. We should hang out together more often. Oh, by the way, I have to trouble you to help me with my wedding."

Looking at Rachel's dignified appearance, Autumn had no interest to go against her any more.

Gary slapped Edward's face as soon as he closed the door, he was so angry that his chest fluctuated violently. Usually Edward had a bad temper. If it was someone else, he would have already punched him badly on the face. But it was Gary in front of him, the person who brought him up, so how dare he?

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"You can marry anyone you want. But you can't bring this woman into our family!" Gary said in a stern tone. "You must break up with that woman as soon as you leave this room. Give her everything she wants. Money, travel or any other compensation."

"Impossible!" Edward objected immediately. "I am determined to marry her and I won't change my mind. I know that I brought you a lot of trouble all these years, but I can handle my own now. I actually don't need you to interfere with this part of my life. I came here just to inform you that the wedding is to be held in the middle of next month. I will be glad to see you there. Even if you don't show up that day, Rachel will still be your sister-in-law and I hope that you can respect her."

"How can you make such an unwise decision?" Gary closed his eyes and lowered his voice. "Have you never doubted her real purpose to be with you?"

"I don't care if she has other intentions. She is the one whom I have decided to marry, " Edward declared.

Gary had educated his younger brother as if he had raised his own son. However, Edward had been so rebellious that he went astray. Fortunately he had turned into a good man after being kept in jail for several years. Now he was capable enough to run a company, but... he still lacked wisdom when it came to relationships with women.

"Gary, I know that you're looking out for me and what's best for me. But I am an adult now and I can take care of myself. I need you to have faith in me." Edward continued. "Sun Company and Shining Company used to be one company established by our father. He intended to hand over it to you. But you divided it into two companies and let me take over one. I have always kept your kindness in my mind. I promise you that I will leave the Sun Company to Charles even if Rachel and I had our own children."

"Impulsive as always. First Maggie and now Rachel. When will you be more sensible?" Gary almost flared up when he referred to Maggie. "Never mention this name in front of me again, " Edward said, as his face turned red with anger.

"When you insisted on marrying Maggie, I agreed to your marriage and prepared the wedding for you. But later you messed up and ended up in prison. I had to explain to the guests one by one, why the wedding was cancelled. Now you are doing it again. How long have you met Rachel? What made you trust her and be hurry to marry her?" Gary reasoned with Edward.

"I told you not to mention her name to me again. I don't want to talk about her, " Edward said, raising his voice.

After dating Maggie for a month, Edward introduced her to his family and announced his intention of marrying her. However, due to a fight, he was sentenced to jail. Since then, he never saw Maggie again, as if she had disappeared into thin air.

After his release, he looked for Maggie everywhere. But he couldn't find her. No one knew where she was or even who she was, as if she didn't exist.

Edward spiraled into depression for some time, until Gary let him run the Sun Company. He was able to recover from it and stop thinking about her.

He hated Maggie, but he loved her more. That's why he didn't want to hear her name.

When he started dating Rachel, he felt at ease because Rachel and Maggie had something in common.

"Yes, I admit that I made a wrong decision regarding Maggie. I thought that I could live a happy life with her forever. But when I was put in jail, I realized that couples can still separate when faced with trouble. This is true. Since I got locked up, she had never visited me. At that time, I thought that she had found another. It doesn't matter. Now I have Rachel and she is different from Maggie, " Edward sneered.

"I have known Rachel only for a short time, but I know what kind of person she is. I feel comfortable with her company, and that's why I am going to marry her. I firmly believe that she will never desert me as Maggie did." he continued after a pause.

"You knew nothing. She didn't visit, not because she was reluctant to see you. She..." Gary tried to explain for Maggie. "Stop! You don't need to defend her. I don't want to hear it any more, " Edward interrupted before Gary could finish.

"The bottom line is, Rachel is different from Maggie." Edward said impatiently.

"Maggie avoided seeing you not because she despised you. She was... pregnant, " Gary continued, ignoring Edward.

Edward was stunned when he heard this. He wasn't expecting this twist. "That's not possible. You must be kidding me. How could she carry my child?" He asked, dumbfounded.

For one thing, he doubted the truth to this matter. For another, he had kept reminding himself to not believe Gary.

"Why not?" Gary smiled bitterly. When Maggie had come to Gary, he was taken by great surprise. But he had investigated this and found that the father of her unborn baby was Edward. "She not only got pregnant, but gave birth to this child. She was in poor health then, worrying about you in jail and at the same time carrying your child for 9 months. Unfortunately, she died after childbirth."

Maggie had suffered a severe morning sickness during her pregnancy. She was firm in not visiting Edward as she didn't want him to worry about her. She had planned to meet Edward after the child was born. However, she died soon after the labor.

"I am not lying." Gary shook off Edward's hands, smiling bitterly and said to him, "Chris is the daughter of you and Maggie. Maggie found herself pregnant when you were in jail. To protect Chris, I didn't tell you the truth. After you got out of the prison, we were even more afraid to tell you because you harbored this intense hatred for Maggie. We couldn't help but keep this a secret for so many years." said Gary helplessly.

He paused for a few seconds, took a sigh and went on, "I was not planning to tell you this ever. It may be unacceptable and hard for Chris to accept and I am afraid that she may be seriously affected. But in any case, she is your daughter. This is something that none of us can change. Now you are going to marry Rachel. But do you know that Chris and Rachel are about the same age? Have you considered how Chris would feel if you insist on getting married to someone of her age? She is your offspring. You could ignore how others feel, but you have to care about hers. You should now take responsibility for her."

"Why didn't you tell me this earlier?" Edward struggled inwardly. It turned out that Maggie had never betrayed him and even gave birth to a daughter for him, which gave him a warm glow inside. Meanwhile, Edward felt guilty for misunderstanding Maggie and judging her too quickly.

"Edward, Maggie died of dystocia that year. She was a great woman and a good mother. She never betrayed you even if you were put in prison. I just hope it would not be too late to tell you this right now." Gary thoroughly knew what kind of person Edward was. He understood that it must be Rachel who took the initiative to seduce him. If it weren't for her, Edward would not have made such an impulsive decision. Gary knew that it was time for him to tell Edward this secret so as to stop him from marrying Rachel.

"You are right. You are an adult now and you should hold on to your own discourse. But you should know clearly that if you are going to recognize Chris as your own daughter, you should also consider whether you should get married to Rachel or not, " added Gary patiently. Gary was clear that he couldn't force Edward to make this decision at such a critical moment. He must give his younger brother some time to think about it.

"Brother, even if Chris is my daughter, things would not get more complicated. And it make no difference if I decide to marry Rachel, right? Chris has grown up while Maggie has passed away many years ago. Shouldn't I find a woman, to keep me company for the rest of my life? You must know that I am always lonely." Though having no doubt with what Gary told him, Edward was still reluctant to give up his plans to get married to Rachel.

Looking at Edward who adhered to his own opinion, Gary said calmly while taking a sigh, "It is your own decision to make. But now you know that Chris is your daughter, I think you should ask her opinion first. If she is fine with it, then I have nothing more to say.

But now you have to cool down instead of making any hasty decisions. Think twice before you leap." Gary heaved a sigh after saying what he wanted to say.

Lightheaded and confused, Edward left Gary's bedroom. Sam was going to take Chris out but Chris insisted on staying home, so Sam had no choice but to let her go back inside. Rachel rushed up to Edward the moment he walked out of the room. Everyone furrowed their brows upon seeing them.

"Edward, are you ok? Did your brother give you too much trouble?" Pretending to be caring and understanding, Rachel asked in a soft voice. Actually she wished the Lu family trapped in endless troubles in her lifetime. This was the type of revenge she had wanted.

"I am fine. Don't worry." Patting Rachel's hands gently, Edward consoled her while secretly glancing at Chris. All of a sudden, he realized that Chris looked very much like her mother. 'How could I be so careless? I didn't even notice it before. I should have found out earlier.' Edward thought to himself.

"Chris, come over here please." Edward waved and called out to Chris. She just stood motionlessly beside Sam, showing no expression.

"Chris, be a good girl and come to me please." Seeing this, Gary motioned Chris to obey, although with a frown.

Reluctant, Chris walked over to Edward and stood in front of him. "Listen to me. I am not going to prevent you from getting married to Rachel. But you are not allowed to bring her back here as your new wife. I don't want to see her here ever again. None of our family members want her here. Do you understand me?" Chris said in a cold tone. She didn't hide her anger while saying this to Edward.

However, Edward didn't respond to what she said. "Chris, you have grown up to be a pretty girl. You are twenty-two years old, right?" Edward gazed at Chris like a kind father, not blinking. This made Chris uncomfortable. "Why are you looking at me like that?" She asked with a frown.

"Edward, what are you doing?" Confused yet worried, Rachel also asked since she felt something weird. She wanted to leave with Edward immediately. "That's enough time here today. They must need some rest now. It is time for us to leave now, Edward, " said Rachel with a frown.

"Yes, I see. You are right." Edward seemed to wake up from something when he heard Rachel speaking. He was not well prepared to tell Chris the truth. Chris might not recognize him as her father, so it was not the right time to tell her. Besides, Edward still had to think about Rachel. "Well, Chris, have a good rest. See you later, " said Edward in a caring tone -- perhaps too caring.

After Edward and Rachel left, Chris also sent Sam off while Autumn went back to her bedroom. Charles, instead of going back to his room with Autumn, went to Gary's room and asked, "Grandpa, are you available now? I want to talk with you about something."

"Ok, come in. I also have something to discuss with you, " responded Gary. Gary smiled softly as Charles entered. "What are you going to talk to me about?"

"Something about Chris." replied Charles directly, his eyes brows furrowed tightly. "Grandpa, did you tell him Chris's identity today?"

Obviously, the so called "him" referred to Edward. Charles looked serious since he had always disapproved of telling this secret to him.

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Rachel frowned as she wondered why Edward was thinking about another woman while she was in his arms dressed in a sexy nightgown.

"I am fine, " Edward answered. Evidently Edward simply didn't know how to explain the situation to Rachel, so in an attempt to change the topic, he said, "I am going for a shower."

"Wait a moment and please hear me out!" Rachel pulled him back as she held his arm and said, "I don't know what has happened to you but I am your girlfriend now and we are getting married next month, so I can only hope that you trust me. The foundation of any relationship is trust, so no matter what it is that happened and is troubling you, let's face it together. You are not alone in this. Please open your heart to me without having second thoughts. Moreover, please don't leave me alone, with me guessing what you're thinking, like an idiot."

"Rachel, it's rather complicated to explain everything now. Please give me some time to think it over..." Edward looked at Rachel with embarrassment.

"Is this about the girl in the photo you are holding? Who is she? Is she your ex-girlfriend? Or your ex-wife?" Rachel asked Edward while pointing at the photo.

"I..." Somehow in that moment Edward felt sorry for Rachel. She stood up immediately and said, "It is okay for a man of your age to have been with several unforgettable women in your life. I just want to know what happened with you because I hate to be kept in the dark. I hope you can understand that."

"Rachel please don't dwell much on this." Edward sighed as he sat beside Rachel and said, "Fine, I'll tell you everything since you want to know the truth."

Edward showed Rachel the photo and started narrating, "The girl in the photo is Maggie. She is my ex-girlfriend."

"She is beautiful." Rachel sincerely praised the girl's features. Maggie looked even more graceful than Rachel.

"Yes, she is quite a woman." Edward said with a smile. He then touched the photo carefully and looked at it with deep affection. His eyes shimmered with tenderness. Rachel looked at him and felt that he had never looked at her so affectionately.

As Rachel didn't truly love Edward, she didn't feel an ounce of jealousy towards this girl.

"Maggie was only twenty years old when we fell in love. After going out a couple of times, I took her to my house to meet my family. We then began to prepare for our wedding, but..." Edward recollected what happened in the past in a tender tone. He remembered how Maggie told him with a warm smile that she would wear the most beautiful wedding dress in the world, but now... everything had changed.

"So what exactly happened? What happened between Maggie and you?" Rachel asked Edward abruptly.

"Then..." Edward sighed and said with remorse, "I was an inconsiderate jerk when I was young. I did not think my actions would have such adverse results. I was involved in a crime of affray just a few days before our wedding, so I was locked away in prison for several years together. Maggie never came to the prison to visit me in those years. When I was released I wanted to ask her about our relationship but I couldn't find her. How naive was I to think she would wait for me through all those years after my immature act jeopardized our entire future."

"How could it happen?" Rachel looked at Edward with shock as she asked him, "Why did Maggie disappear?"

"I thought she left me just because of my criminal record, so I tried to change myself and be a better man for her. I took over Sun Company from my elder brother while I broke all the connections with the friends who had a bad influence on me. Then I worked hard day and night to develop Sun Company so that if I would see her one day, I could tell her that she made the wrong choice to leave me." Edward recollected how childish he was. So many years had passed. But they were not enough to erase the memory and love he had for her.

"Then did you ever come across her again after all those years of seeking?" Rachel asked Edward curiously as she was perched on the edge of her seat.

Edward shook his head and answered rightfully, "No I still have not. Before I met you, I always thought about how to find her and make her regret for what she did, But I changed my mind since you crossed my path. It is about time I forget her now... After all she must have got married after these years and even become an ugly old woman now."

Edward sighed and said, "But... Today I realized I was the one who made a mistake. I was so immersed in the thought that she abandoned me and I continued to blame her for so many years that I failed to understand the woman who I loved so much. I found out that she was pregnant before I went to jail. She died while giving birth to the baby, our child..."

"What? That's so terrible..." Rachel was shocked, then she said, "This is complicated and melodramatic enough to be the script for a movie. What about the baby? Where is it now?"

"The child was a girl and now she is twenty two-years old." Edward put the photo aside and said, "Rachel, I know this overload of information might trouble you. Now that you're so young you still can..."

"What are you trying to say Edward? Are you asking me to break up with you?" Rachel held his hand and said, "I know we have been together for only a short period of time but I have fallen in love with you. No matter what happened in the past I only care about our present and future..."

"Rachel, I don't want to end our relationship either..." Edward grabbed her hand tightly and explained, "I'm just worried that the things in the past will come to trouble you in our present. I was a single man without children when I promised to marry you but now... I have learned that I have a daughter who is almost the same age as you, so I'm afraid..."

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Her plan had almost succeeded. Now suddenly Chris was in her way. What was worse, she was Edward's daughter. Rachel was afraid that all her efforts would now go down a drain in one swift spiraling movement.

"Is Chris really your daughter?" Rachel asked Edward to confirm her fears.

"Chris bears great resemblance to Maggie. Besides, she is turning 22 years old this year. I am sure that I am her father."

"Rachel, I owe Chris and her mother a lot as I have been absent from their lives. Now Maggie have passed away, so I have to compensate Chris as she have lived a life without her parents till now and I am to blame for that. I know it's a huge demand to ask you to be a stepmother. I have thought about this for a while. If you can't accept this and ask to break up with me, I will respect your decision. If this is the case, I will even give you a sum of money which will guarantee a good and respectable life in Y City. Moreover, please contact me any time if you need any help from me."

"What do you consider me?" Rachel asked Edward as she blazed with anger. "Edward, I chose to marry you simply because I love you. I don't care about your past, all of that happened before you even met me. I don't see how even Chris being your daughter can hinder our life together. Do you want to make amends? I can help you compensate and be a family together. Even though Chris dislikes me, I promise you that I will try my best to please her and befriend her. Once she accepts me, you won't be in a dilemma."

"Are you serious about this?" Edward looked at Rachel with delight as he held onto her hand. "Are you really willing to take care of Chris with me?"

"Of course I am, " Rachel answered in a serious yet optimistic tone. "Edward, although I don't have a child of my own, I swear that I will be a good stepmother and attend to Chris well, like she is my own daughter. In this way you can focus and devote yourself to your career."

"Rachel I can't tell you how happy and grateful I am to have you in my life!" In fact, Edward was full of fear. All of a sudden he had a daughter and she was a young woman. He had no idea how to tell Chris that he was her father, not to mention getting along with her. With Rachel's support, he became more confident.

"I was at a loss when I learnt about this. I really didn't know how to bring it up with you. I least expected you to support me with such love and respect. Rachel, I simply cannot thank you enough." Edward was convinced that he found the right person to spend the rest of his life with. He was content to have a kind, sensible wife like Rachel.

"What a fool!" Rachel said gently with a smile. "No more secrets, okay? Irrespective of what happens with you, I will be on your side and help you get through it. Please remember that, we are a team."

"Okay, " Edward said with a content and relieved smile. "Wait a moment. I will take a quick shower and get back to you."

Rachel responded with a shy smile. The moment Edward entered the bathroom, her smile disappeared. 'Gary is such an annoying old man. He opposed the idea of Charles dating me. And now he tried to create a riff between Edward and me. I will soon retaliate against him one day for all these interventions.

As for Chris... I can't offend her just as yet. But I will let her know through actions that I am the most important person in Edward's life sooner or later, ' Rachel mused.

Rachel didn't fall asleep because of Chris. Edward's wedding also disturbed Lu family's peace. Autumn got up and didn't catch sight of Emily. After asking the servant, she found out that Emily hadn't gotten up yet. As worried as she was, she walked towards Emily's room and knocked at her door in an attempt to check on her. A weak voice came from behind the door. "Come in."

"Grandma, I was told that you hadn't left your room yet. Is everything all right?" Autumn asked with concern as she pushed the door open. As Autumn walked inside, she found the room was dark. "I'm fine. Since the weather has become colder I have not been feeling so good. But I just need some rest. Don't worry about me, " Emily replied as she was lying on the bed. She noticed from the corner of her eyes that Autumn was about to pull the curtains aside.

"How about I take you to the hospital for some regular checkups?" Autumn was aware that Emily didn't have much time left, but that didn't stop her from hoping that Emily could keep her company longer. "I'm okay. I will get better after some rest, " Emily refused.

"I will bring the breakfast to you. Grandma, if you still feel uncomfortable this evening, you have to go to the hospital with me, " Autumn complied, knowing that Emily wouldn't give in to her request.

"Okay, " Emily responded with a little nod. "Go for your work, please."

After Autumn brought the breakfast to Emily she still worried about her. She asked Nancy to keep an eye on Emily and call her if Emily felt uncomfortable. She then left home with Charles.

Today, Abby and Andy were going to hold a housewarming party. To buy some gifts for their housewarming and Cindy, they went to a shopping mall. It took them quite a while to choose an array of gifts. As they finished their shopping, the trunk of their car was full.

"Charles, didn't Mrs. Zhao say that she would pick us up? We don't know the address of their new house, how will we get there?" Autumn asked in a hurry, seeing that Charles was leaving to get his car.

"I know where they live, " Charles said to Autumn with a smile. "Did you forget that it is also Arthur's new home? I had made some inquiries and learned the address of their new house."

"I see, " Autumn nodded. As they arrived at the Zhao family's house, they saw many festive decorations inside the gate that had made the place come alive. It wasn't a long drive from Dream Garden. But they lived in different housing estates.

Arthur was an educated man and it was reflected in the way the house was elegantly furnished. The three-storey villa was close to the mountains and it had an scholarly atmosphere with an array of fine

selected painting and vintage decor. As soon as they entered the gate, they saw a path paved with cobblestones with each side lined with a variety of pot plants and flowers. They also spotted a stone bench. Perhaps they had lived abroad for long so they preferred an American-style decoration.

"Autumn, you are finally here. We have been waiting for your arrival, " Abby greeted them first, followed by Cindy. "Pretty sister..." Cindy put her hands around Autumn's legs.

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"Autumn..."

Amy locked her tear-filled eyes on Autumn eagerly. But for Autumn, this was overwhelming as this old lady was simply a stranger. She withdrew her hand in one swift movement with embarrassment and greeted her, "Hello, Mrs. Zhao."

"Mom, you have scared Autumn by your over excitement, " Abby said to Amy. Abby was much younger than Bowen but she was still Autumn's aunt.

"Sorry, I'm just too excited and happy." Amy wiped her tears from her cheeks and told Autumn, "I heard that Cindy is very fond of you and you saved her life so I just got so overwhelmed when I saw you now. I hope you don't mind."

"It is alright." Autumn smiled. She didn't mind it at all but she felt a little shy and awkward to speak with a stranger.

After considering for a moment, Amy told Autumn, "You can call me grandma, child."

Although she hadn't told Autumn their relationship yet she still hoped Autumn would call her grandma.

Autumn was a little confused. As she was about the same age as Abby, she thought it would be weird to call Abby's mother "Grandma".

"My parents were quite old when I was born, so since then most of my friends preferred to call them grandma and grandpa instead of aunt and uncle out of respect and love. Besides, now that Cindy calls you 'sister', you can call Amy 'grandma' just like Cindy." Abby tried to explain to her with a smile.

"Oh, I understand." Autumn nodded her head slightly then greeted Amy, "Hello, grandma."

"Hello, Autumn." Amy couldn't contain her emotions, but Arthur stood up immediately and told her secretly, "How could you be so excited before Autumn? If you continue to speak like this, you will scare our visitors away. Didn't you say that you would prepare dinner all by yourself? Why don't you go to the kitchen and prepare now!"

"Okay. Autumn, wait a moment and I'll prepare dinner for you." Amy cast a glance of affection at Autumn and proceeded towards the kitchen.

"Sit here, Autumn." Abby asked Autumn to sit in the sofa and then Cindy climbed onto her shoulder immediately. Autumn secretly asked Abby with Cindy in her arms, "Is this a celebration for your new house? Are Charles and I the only guests you have invited?"

"We also invited Sam but he has some matter of more significance to deal with today. You know that Z City is our hometown but we almost cut all the connections with our relatives and old friends there. Now we have only two friends here, Sam and you. Therefore, you are the only guests we can invite." Abby added with a smile, "Don't worry. My parents are very kind and friendly. They just got a little overexcited when they saw you."

Autumn nodded her head and replied. "I see." Cindy told her she wanted to eat oranges so Autumn picked up one and started to peel it for her.

Abby frowned slightly and said, "Cindy, you are not a child any more. Don't bother Autumn with such trivial things. Get off from her now or else she will feel tired by carrying your weight."

Cindy was unwilling to let Autumn go and Autumn continued hugging her with a smile. Then Autumn said, "Don't worry. I really like Cindy. Just let her stay with me."

"But..." Abby felt a pinch of embarrassment. She wondered whether Cindy was doing this instinctively or not because Cindy had never been so close with a stranger before.

"It seems that you like kids very much?" Arthur looked at Autumn with mellow eyes.

Although Autumn didn't grow up in Zhao Family, she somehow had a strong connection with its family members. Arthur felt so happy to see this fact.

"Probably not." Autumn considered the thought for a moment. She realized she had never cared much for the children of her other friends but she had a special feeling for Cindy somehow.

She couldn't help but give all her love to this little girl.

"It sounds ridiculous but I can feel an instinctive affection for Cindy." Autumn said with a smile while Charles was looking at her with adoration.

"You can sit for some more time while I'll help my mom prepare dinner." Abby said as she stood up and left.

At the kitchen's door, Abby spotted Amy wiping her tears secretly. She entered the kitchen and asked Amy, "What are you doing, Mom? Why are you crying?"

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"That is reasonable, "

Abby said, smiling in response.

Amy, who has long been curious about Charles, decided to ask her daughter a question.

"Dear, I would like to ask you something... " she said, looking at her daughter. "How well do you know Autumn's husband?"

Abby stared back, not sure why her mother was asking such a question. "Is he kind? How long have they been married?" Amy continued to ask, wanting to know more.

"I assume they've been married for quite a while. But Autumn isn't pregnant, is she? Do you know why they haven't had children yet?"

"Mom, can you pause for a second? Why are you suddenly so interested to know all of that?" Abby asked, overwhelmed by the barrage of questions. As she tried to talk, Abby continued to think about what sparked her Mum's curiosity. "Well... All I know is that...", " she started. "Andy confirmed that Charles was indeed a playboy before getting married to Autumn."

Amy, surprised to hear the information, expressed her concern. "It must be difficult for her to get married to a lady-killer. Autumn must have been living in constant fear, " she sighed. "I have already considered Autumn as my granddaughter. Don't you think we should protect her? We shouldn't let her be with Charles any longer."

"Mom, can you please just hear me out?" said Abby, stopping her mom before she even got the chance to go for Autumn.

She couldn't believe that someone sensible like her mom would lose composure over her concern for Autumn. "There's no reason to worry because Charles has changed a lot. He wouldn't do such things because he really loves Autumn, "

Abby explained.

"Besides, Dad wouldn't let anything bad happen to Autumn. Charles would suffer dire consequences if he dared to do anything that might hurt her."

A sense of relief washed over Amy upon hearing this. She was glad to know that Autumn was safe to be with Charles. "Let me just prepare some food to eat. Though I'm not exactly sure if Autumn will like it or not. Hopefully this will satisfy her as your brother used to like it."

"Mom, it's okay. I'm sure she'll like it. I'll let Dad stay with Autumn for a while. Here, let me help you, " Abby said, smiling as she offered to lend a helping hand.

Because of her age, Amy has refrained from cooking regularly. But she was so eager to make some food for Autumn that she decided to cook it herself.

Andy was able to divert Charles's attention after making a conversation with him, leaving Autumn, Arthur and Cindy in the living room. Taking advantage of the moment, Arthur stole glances at Autumn while trying to remain well-poised.

Autumn concentrated on playing with Cindy, completely unaware of the gesture.

Knowing how much she loved her grandmother, Arthur thought of a good conversation starter.

After a few moments of hesitation, he finally managed to speak. "How's your grandmother? Is she feeling better?" he asked, facing her.

"I'm glad you asked, Dr. Zhao. This is exactly where your expertise might come in handy..." Autumn replied.

"There's no need for formalities. From now on, I want you to call me Grandpa Zhao. Alright?"

Arthur said, voicing out his thoughts.

Despite feeling uneasy, Autumn decided to grant his request. "Grandpa Zhao, my grandma refused to see the doctor last night even though she's sick. If it's not much of a bother, I would like to ask you to pay her a visit so you can check her condition. I'm worried about her health, " Autumn said, expressing her concern.

"Don't worry. I'll make sure to go see her tomorrow, " he said, accepting her request.

A few moments later, Cindy threw a tantrum over a Hami-melon, causing Arthur to rise in order to fetch it. Autumn rose unexpectedly at the same moment.

"Grandpa Zhao, why don't you stay here with Cindy? I'll just wash my hands and bring her the fruit, "

Autumn said, her hands sticky from peeling the fruit for Cindy.

Nodding his head, Arthur pointed in the direction of the kitchen. Upon entering, Autumn happened to overhear the conversation between Abby and Amy. "Do you know? You took after your brother when you were still a child. Look at Autumn now and you'll see the resemblance between him and Autumn, " Amy said, beaming.

"They look so much alike!"

"Frankly speaking, I was quite taken aback when we first met each other. But I trusted my gut feeling, not even sparing a second thought. Luckily, Andy had suggested that I make a thorough investigation. That eventually led to our family reunion, which, as you know, is a big satisfaction to my brother, " Abby said, smiling as she washed the vegetable.

"You know that your brother was a kind man, though I must admit that he could be very stubborn. His stubbornness even led to a scandal, " Amy sighed. Both of them continued talking, completely unaware of Autumn's presence.

The truth dawned upon Autumn, recalling what Mandy had previously told her. She was certain that the two people she had referred to were undoubtedly Arthur and Amy.

Autumn stood in shock, unable to walk away as she tried to comprehend what she just heard.

She wondered, trying to make sense of what just happened. Just as she was about to dismiss the matter, she heard Cindy's innocent voice, demanding the Hami melon.

Amy and Abby were startled, now alerted to Autumn's presence. Autumn stood still, her face aghast because of the awkward situation.

"Autumn, please allow me to-" Embarrassed, Abby tried to find the right words to explain the situation, but all her efforts proved to be in vain.

"I need to leave, " Autumn stammered, still in shock.

"I almost forgot I had some business to attend to. Kindly excuse me."

"Autumn, wait! Let me explain, " Abby said, rushing towards Autumn in an effort to stop her from leaving.

"I've long been wanting to tell you about this, Autumn. Believe me, I really do. But I was waiting for the right moment to tell you about everything. Our attempts to win you back never faltered. But..."

"Stop! I don't want to hear it!" Autumn said as she shook Abby's hands off her.

Trying to excuse herself, she turned to face Abby. "Miss Zhao, I really have to leave-"

Chapter 238

After Charles had finished talking, Andy pulled Abby to the side, "Abby, just forget it. Don't worry about her."

"But..." Abby seemed a little hesitant. Arthur Zhao, who was standing beside them, spoke in a cold voice, "Just let her go."

Charles took Autumn's arm to leave. After their departure from the Zhao family, Autumn finally calmed down, but remained silent still. Instead of taking Autumn back to Dream Garden, Charles drove her to a secluded park. Charles turned his face to Autumn and said, "How about going for a little walk?"

"Okay." Autumn gently nodded her head in agreement. She didn't want to go back so early as well, because she was afraid that her Grandma would ask her what had happened. Autumn unlocked her seat belt and got out of the car. She walked around the park with Charles, hand in hand.

There were very few visitors in the park, as it was already time for supper. The cool breeze over the lake blew into her face. Autumn felt serene and tranquil. She glanced at Charles's face and asked, "You know about it all along, don't you?"

"Yes, " Charles answered firmly. Charles shook his head and added, "It was Grandma who told me about it. "

"It was Grandma?" Autumn was surprised to hear that. She stared at Charles in front her, and wondered why Grandma chose to tell him about it.

"Autumn, I'd like to have a word with you." As they sat on a bench along the road, Charles began to explain, "Firstly, the reason why the Zhao family invited you to their home today was to tell you the truth about your family. The truth is you have more relatives, besides Grandma. You have two Grandparents and a younger Aunt. I don't understand why you are unwilling to accept them. In my opinion, having relatives can only do you more good than harm."

"You don't understand me at all." Autumn smiled bitterly. She said to Charles with a hint of anger, "I have been living with my Father and my Grandma since my birth. Had they not kicked my father out, my father wouldn't have died young; my grandma wouldn't have fallen ill. It's all their fault. I hate them."

Autumn smiled at Charles and said to him, "I don't understand what they are planning to do by acknowledging my existence now. Neither will I return to that home, nor will I recognize them as my family."

"Autumn, your words seem to go to extremes." Charles frowned at what Autumn had said and added, "They are your family members, why would they want to harm you?"

"Why not?" Autumn sneered, "You have no idea what kind of life I've had with my father. If they really cared about my father and I, how could they bear to sit back and watch, while we lived such a painful life? And my Grandma. Look at her health condition now. If they had done something to help with her illness, she could have lived a healthy life."

"But they didn't even know what kind of predicament you were in." Charles frowned, "Autumn, I can see that you detest the Zhao family; I wonder if someone had said something to make you feel that way?"

"No." Autumn went silent with a grim look on her face. Soon she admitted that she was a little influenced by what Wendy had said, but she also had a grudge against the Zhao family. Then she took a deep breath and said, "It's getting late. We should get back home."

Autumn didn't feel like continuing the conversation with Charles, so she changed the topic. Charles just wanted Autumn to be calm, so he decided not to force the conversation and went back home with her.

When they arrived, Autumn went straight to her Grandma's room. She asked her, "Have you been feeling better, Grandma?"

"Much better." Emily leaned against the bedside with a face that was as pale as porcelain. With just one look at Autumn she had perceived her mood. Concerned, she asked, "What's the matter, Autumn? Is something bothering you?"

"I..." Autumn mumbled. Autumn fidgeted anxiously, wanting to ask her Grandma why she hadn't told her about the Zhao family before. However, taking Emily's health into consideration, Autumn fought back the urge to ask her questions regarding the matter and calmly said, "No, Grandma, everything is all right with me. Just get some rest."

Soon after, Autumn walked out of Emily's room, leaving her to rest. She spent the whole night restlessly wondering how to confront Cindy and the Zhao couple in the future, but alas she failed to find a reasonable solution to her worries.

The next morning, Arthur arrived just after Autumn had woken up. She got dressed and came down to meet with Arthur. Her voice turned cold, as she asked him, "What are you doing here, Mr. Zhao?"

"Last night you said that your Grandma wasn't feeling well, so I decided to come over and check up on her." Arthur sighed, and then said to Autumn, "I know that you are angry with me and you don't want to see me, but your Grandma's health is of the utmost importance right now. For her sake, please put your grudges aside for now."

Autumn frowned with displeasure and paused for a moment to think. She concluded that Arthur was right about the fact that her Grandma's well-being was everyone's primary concern at the moment. Having acknowledged that, she said to Arthur, "Follow me."

Arthur followed Autumn into Emily's room. Over the past few days, Emily had been facing difficulties with her condition, so she rarely went out of the room. She was lying in bed, when Autumn walked in with Arthur.

"Grandma." As Autumn drew the curtains aside, she said to Emily, "Doctor Zhao is here to visit you. Since you are reluctant to go to hospital, I have decided to invite him over."

"Doctor Zhao..." Emily struggled to get up. She could barely see the blurry figure standing in front of her. Recently, she had been having trouble seeing things clearly, but she didn't tell Autumn because she didn't want her to be worried.

"Autumn, I'm feeling a little hungry now, could you please go and fetch me a bowl of porridge?" Emily asked Autumn, suggesting that she was feeling better.

"Yes, my pleasure, " As soon as Autumn left the room, Emily tried to get a hold of Doctor Zhao's hands, but she struggled to find them due to her impaired vision.

"Emily, you are..." Doctor Zhao stretched out his hands, waving them in front of Emily's eyes, only to find that she couldn't see anything. "You can't see my hand right now, can you?"

"Yes, you're right, I am blind." Granny smiled bitterly, "I can hardly see the things I could see the day before yesterday. I'm running out of my time; I know that. At first, I had planned to visit you even though you didn't come to see us. I don't have much time, and Autumn is... What's your plan?" asked Emily.

Chapter 239

"It is her again, " She thought of the years Autumn had suffered from Wendy's cruelty. Fortunately, things had changed. Autumn got married to a good man; the Zhao family had found her and expressed their intentions of welcoming her to the family. Everything was going well until Wendy had come back. The very thought of Wendy stealing even that tiny bit of happiness from Autumn, made her blood boil in anger.

"Emily, today I've come here seeking your advice. I know that Autumn has immense respect for you, would you please speak with her and find out what it is that she really wants?" Arthur felt helpless after Autumn left his house yesterday. He was in desperate need of Emily's advice on the matter.

"Arthur, you may put your mind at ease. I will talk to Autumn about this." Emily sighed and said to Arthur, "Please don't blame Autumn. She means you no harm. She's just young and innocent."

"Take it easy, I'm not blaming her for anything." Arthur smiled wryly and said, "I'm regretful for what happened with Bowen, and I cannot allow Autumn to suffer the same fate as her father. I understand her reasons for being resentful and defensive. The blame should only fall on us for failing to fix the problem sooner."

"Arthur, please don't talk like that." Emily frowned, "If anyone is to be blamed, it should be Wendy instead of you. As a matter of fact... it's also my fault, I should have persuaded him not to give himself over to blind emotions. None of this would have happened if I had been able to guide him to the right path."

"Well, the past is the past; we cannot change that. Pointing fingers isn't going to help us get through our problems." Arthur frowned slightly, "You... should stop delaying the inevitable and just go see a doctor."

"No, that won't be necessary." Emily allowed herself a mirthless smile, "I know myself very well, even now going to the hospital would be useless. I would rather do something to help Autumn while I am still able to speak. My dying wish is to see her go back home to her family."

"Arthur, please ask Autumn to come in here when you leave," Emily requested Arthur with efforts.

Arthur did not know what else he could do for her. He agreed with her on the fact that going to the hospital now would be of no use. At most... she was more likely to suffer more.

Autumn stood outside the room, with a bowl of porridge in her hands. She waited there because she understood that Emily wanted to speak with Arthur in private. When Arthur came out, she rushed to him and asked, "How is my grandmother?"

Before, she would respectfully address him as "Doctor Zhao", but now... She doesn't even know what to call him.

"She..." Arthur looked at Autumn with regret in his eyes and said, "As I've told you before, she does not have much time left. I insisted her to go see a doctor at the hospital, but she willingly refused."

"So..." "How much time do you think she has?" Autumn asked with great anticipation, as she gripped the tray carrying Emily's favourite dish, pumpkin porridge, tightly.

"It will not make much difference whether she stays in the hospital or not. At best, we can expect her to live for another month, but... going to the hospital could increase her chances of suffering more pain, so she has decided not to go."

Arthur found it difficult to look at Autumn in the eye. Somehow he managed to open his mouth to utter, "Autumn, your dad..."

"Enough!" Autumn would not listen to another word from Arthur's mouth if he would talk about her father. "You don't deserve to mention my father, " she said to him, with a look of strong resentment in her eyes.

"Autumn, I..." Arthur tried to explain, but Autumn deliberately ignored him and got in Emily's room with the tray. Once she stepped inside the room, she cast her anger to the wind, and gently asked, "Grandma, how are you feeling? I made your favorite pumpkin porridge. Would you like to have some?"

"Leave it aside for one second." Emily could only see a dark silhouette of Autumn against the dim light. She smiled and waved at her to sit, "Autumn, sit here beside me, I need to talk to you."

"Of course." Autumn bore a heavy heart; she wanted to be with Emily, but God had only given her so little time, "Grandma, I am here to listen and talk to you about anything you want."

"Did you just... have an argument outside with Doctor Zhao?" Autumn realized that she must have been very loud when she spoke to Arthur, for Emily to hear her. Emily added, "Autumn, you are aware of the truth about your family lineage, right?"

"Grandma, what are you trying to say? I don't understand." Autumn pretended to be unaware and said to Emily, "I am just who I am. I am your granddaughter, and apart from that, I don't have any other identity."

"My silly girl." Emily smiled bitterly; feeling helpless, she patted the back of Autumn's hand and said, "You can never hide the truth from the world. You will always be bonded by blood to your family."

"My only family is you and Charles. The both of you are all I will ever need in my life. I don't need anybody else."

Autumn said with a cold tone, "Grandma, let's eat breakfast first, I don't want you to be hungry."

"No, Autumn, I don't have much time; I must unburden my heart before something happens to me."

Emily pulled Autumn closer and said, "Can you please tell me why you carry so much hate and resentment for the Zhao family? Did Wendy say something?"

"Grandma, can we stop talking about them?" Autumn's face showed her discontent as she continued, "What is wrong with us just living our own lives?"

Chapter 240

"That very year while your father was sick, he always worried that your mother would blackmail the Zhao family by using you. That was why he never told them the whole story. Your father didn't want you to be used as a tool for Wendy's plans, do you understand that?" With a wry smile, Emily said, "Do you remember that your mom made a hell of a fuss at your father's funeral? She said that she'd have to take you back, but what happened then? She had been looking for the Zhao family when she was taking care of you, probably to ask for support. But when she couldn't find them, she wasted no time and sent you back to me. You still remember, right?"

Autumn nodded, with her face cold. She did remember that.

When Wendy brought her home that year, Autumn was really happy. After all, kids would always be happy to stay with their parents. However, Wendy only gave her a difficult time, which was totally the extreme opposite to how she treated Yvonne.

"When your father was dying, he told me that his greatest wish in life was to see you return to the Zhao family. But I am now too old, and my capabilities are limited. I have tried everything I could to get in touch with the Zhao family, but I wasn't able to even get a number. Meeting them in the hospital must have been fate. I must now fulfill the young master's wish." Emily said, holding Autumn's hand.

"Autumn, I did not tell this to you before, but it is the whole truth. I was afraid that you wouldn't be able to bear it. Now that the Zhao family has returned, they really want you back. You are now a grownup and I am sure that you have developed your own wisdom and judgement. You do know who is good to you and who is not. I just hope that you don't turn them down. Give them a chance and try to accept them and see if they are really good to you. By then if you still are not willing to go back to them, I will certainly not stop you anymore." Holding Autumn's hand, Emily said, "Remember, it was your father's dying wish. Now, it is also mine. Could you promise me?"

Autumn frowned tightly. She did not know whether she should promise or not. She was totally confused by what Emily had just said. She was losing her focus with all this pressure.

"Grandma, let me think about it." Autumn did not make a promise right at that moment, but she did not turn it down either. Emily was right, that she could already make her own sound judgement. She knew Abby well for she had been in contact with Abby for quite a while now. The same could be said about Doctor Zhao.

Deep inside, she wanted to try and get to know the Zhao family.

When Autumn came out from Emily's room, Arthur had not left. He was sitting on the couch, talking to Charles. Seeing Autumn come out, he stood up quickly, and in an awkward manner, he said, "Autumn, do you have some time later? I want to take you somewhere."

Autumn shook her head, then nodded. Arthur smiled with amusement.

Arthur took Autumn to a cafe where there were cubicles to sit in. He brought Autumn into one of the cubicles, while he himself sat in another one. After a while, Wendy also entered the cafe. But due to the partitions, she didn't see Autumn there.

"You've come." Arthur said dryly. "I've already ordered a cup of coffee for you. See if you like it.""

"Thanks, Doctor Zhao." After a sip, Wendy asked Arthur, "Doctor Zhao, what was it you wanted to see me about today?"

"It is about Autumn." Looking coldly at Wendy, Doctor Zhao continued, "She is Bowen's only daughter. And she is yours, I know. I just want to ask you today, if we, the Zhao family would take her back, as her mother, will you agree?"

"Well....." Wendy paused, then said, "I'm afraid that's not appropriate."

"What is not appropriate? Tell me." Doctor Zhao said with a sneer.

"As you know, Doctor Zhao, Bowen died so early, and from then on, I had been taking care of Autumn. To me, she is my only one." With a wry smile, Wendy said, "I know that the Zhao family is a reputed family. But Autumn is my daughter and I wish that she would be with me for ever. No matter how my life goes, I will never treat her badly, and you have my word."

"Well, as far as I know, you have another daughter from your second marriage." Doctor Zhao paused, "I don't think that your current husband wants you to take care of someone else's child. It would lighten your burdens if we have Autumn back."

"Don't worry, I really have my husband behind me on this. There's nothing to worry about." Wendy said with a smile.

"Wendy, let me be honest. I've already gotten in touch with Autumn. But she still have grudges against us right now. I've come here to ask you, what nonsense you've told Autumn?" Doctor Zhao sneered continuously.

A weird smile flickered across Wendy's face, 'Autumn is just too naive, it is really easy to deceive her.'

"Doctor Zhao, is there any misunderstanding?" Wendy smiled coldly.

"Come on, I've known you for a long time, right? That very year when Bowen died, you had sent a message to us that you would like us to have Autumn back if we gave you ten million. I am just curious, how much you want this time?" Doctor Zhao said with a sneer.