

Wedded Bride 451

Chapter 451 Amnesia

The following day, Autumn was discharged from the hospital. She convinced Charles to drive her to the

Zhao family's house to visit her grandmother. It had been a long time since Emily saw Autumn. She

was unaware that her granddaughter had been hospitalized, obviously just so happy to see her.

Emily carefully led her granddaughter to the couch, knowing her pregnant state. She noticed that she

looked pale and instantly worried about her health. "Autumn, my dear, now that you're pregnant, you

should start taking care of your diet. Always eat nutritious food and get enough rest for the baby," she

told her gently, clasping her delicate hands.

"Of course I will, grandma," Autumn reassured her grandmother with a smile. "You too, grandma.

Please take care of your health," urged Autumn.

"I..." Emily broke off, looking down hesitantly. After a while, she smiled bitterly and continued, "My dear

child, you know I'm old, there's nothing on earth I want more than to see your child come to the world...

but I'm not sure if I will live to see that day."

"Grandma!" Autumn felt tears pricked at the back of her eyes but managed to look sternly at her

grandmother. "Don't talk like that," she reprimanded.

"I'm serious." Emily smiled sadly, patting Autumn's hand gently. "I know that you want me to live

forever, but I know my own health. I'm afraid that I don't have much time. Don't worry, I promise to hold

on until you give birth to your child," Emily reassured her.

Emily's words saddened her but she didn't let it show. She smiled brightly as Abby joined them on the

couch, setting a tray with tea and biscuits by the center table. Since Abby and Autumn were both

pregnant they had much to talk about.

Abby had more experience and she happily shared them with Autumn.

Meanwhile, Charles and Andy were talking seriously in the yard. Tension emanated from Charles and

he was still on high alert, even knowing that Ferry had already left.

Andy looked at Charles with concern and comforted, "I think you are too nervous. We both know Ferry

left and he can't lay hands on Autumn anymore. So don't worry."

"But I still... I still can't rest easy," Charles replied flatly, his eyes looked cold and hard. "Until Autumn

gives birth to the twins, I don't think I can eat or sleep well."

"How about..." Andy had an idea but not sure how Charles would take it. Deciding to go for it, he

continued," How about you let Autumn stay with Abby for now? Since they're both pregnant, they can keep each other company. I think Autumn will be safer here. Ferry won't dare show his face in my house."

"No, thanks." Charles' reply was abrupt and final. 'I know Andy has good intentions in asking Autumn to stay with Abby. But Autumn is my wife. I'm ready to lay down my life for her. I can't let her live somewhere else. I will do my best to keep her safe or die?trying, ' he thought to himself as he made up his mind.

"I respect your decision," Andy nodded, knowing Charles would't change his mind. "I have information on Yvonne's whereabouts. I know Ferry sent her abroad but I couldn't track her departure records. I have men posted at the airport, they will notify me immediately if she comes back," Andy informed Charles.

"Okay, that's a good idea, thank you!" Charles' countenance brightened. He appreciated Andy's help. Without his assistance, he would have had a hard time.

"Don't mention it. We are family, after all," ? Andy replied with a smile. He gave Charles a hearty pat on

his shoulder and continued, "Let's go inside. Lunch must be ready."

They stayed a long time at the Zhao family's residence. By the time they left, Autumn was so tired she

fell asleep the moment she got inside the car. Charles arranged his wife comfortably for the journey

home. When they arrived, Charles gently took his sleeping wife from the car.

"Mr. Lu..." Nancy greeted warmly from the doorway. "Autumn was tired. I will bring her up," Charles told

Nancy and continued to bring her up the flight of stairs effortlessly.

After making sure that Autumn was comfortably tucked in bed, Charles went downstairs. "Is Mrs. Lu

okay?" Nancy asked, concernedly.

"She's good now. The trip exhausted her," Charles answered. "Nancy, tell Brent to be more attentive to

Autumn when they go outside. Tell him to bring her to the hospital immediately if she seems unwell," he

urged.

"I will," Nancy promised with a nod. "Don't worry, Mr. Lu, Brent and I will take good care of Mrs. Lu."

"Thank you, Nancy. I appreciate that," Charles returned with a smile. After several minutes, Charles

went up to their room. Exhausted in body and mind, he fell asleep as soon as his head touched the

pillow.

The good night's rest invigorated Autumn. She woke up early and slipped out in the yard to enjoy the feel of warm sun on her face.

When Charles woke up, the sun was streaming from the window and Autumn was not on the bed. He strode to the window, pulled the curtains up, and peered at the curtains. He saw Autumn watering the flowers, and a smile broke in his face.

As if sensing his presence, Autumn looked up and saw Charles by the window. Looking at his handsome face, she waved at him cheerfully and gave a sweet smile.

"Mrs. Lu, please don't tire yourself, come inside to have some breakfast," Nancy pleaded with Autumn retrieving the watering pot. "You need to rest. Leave everything to me."

After a lot of persuasion, Autumn finally agreed to go inside. She found Gary walking around the living room murmuring to himself.

"What are you looking for, grandpa?" She asked him cheerfully upon reaching his side.

"I'm looking for a Jade Ruyi*. It should be here. It was a birthday gift from my friend. I remember putting it here but now I just can't find it..."

(*TN: Jade Ruyi is a kind of jade ornament.) Gary replied, scratching his head and looking confused.

"Jade Ruyi?" Autumn repeated to herself. Finally, Autumn remembered that she saw it in front of the TV set in the living room so she went there to look. But it was nowhere to be found, she wondered where it could be.

"Maybe you moved it somewhere else, grandpa? Try to remember. It will be found sooner or later,"

Autumn reassured Gary.

Gary sighed irritably. "Perhaps I'm too old and easily forget things. Also, just two days ago, I bought a string of Buddhist prayer beads, now I can't find it. I must really be getting senile...."

At the mention of prayer beads, Nancy clutched her chest in fear.

She recalled what had happened two days ago. When she went to Brent's room to bring him some night snack, she found him playing with a set of prayer beads which he hurriedly put aside when he saw her.

When she asked him where he got the beads, she remembered him saying that he bought it himself.

She already forgot the incident but Gary's words triggered the memory. She suspected with a heavy heart that Brent had stolen it.

Nancy was familiar with all the items in the house except for the Buddha beads. It was too much coincidental that Gary purchased the Buddha beads a couple of days ago, the same time that she saw it in Brent's room. She started to panic.

'Come to think of it, I saw Brent hurrying from the living room. I asked him what happened and he just ignored me.

If my suspicions are correct and Brent really stole those things, how could I continue working here?' she asked herself in dismay.

"Is everything all right, Nancy?" Autumn asked with a confused expression, after she turned around? and saw? Nancy's unusually pale face.

Chapter 452 Forgiveness

"I'm... I'm fine," Nancy reassured Autumn with a weak smile. She looked up and saw Charles coming down the stairs, excusing herself hastily on the pretext of preparing breakfast.

Nancy was unable to concentrate on her kitchen chores. The more she recalled, the uneasier she felt.

She left the couple eating breakfast and purposefully went straight to Brent's room, opening the door without preamble.

Brent was relaxing on the bed after a hearty breakfast when his mother suddenly burst into the room.

Brent sat up with a scowl and grumbled, "Why didn't you knock the door before barging in, mom?"

"Why do I have to knock? Are you hiding something?" Nancy asked her son. "Why do you look so nervous? Did you do something bad?" she quizzed.

"What are you talking about, mom?" Brent asked, evidently annoyed. Looking at his mom's red face, Brent tried to reason with her in a softer tone, "I'm not a child, mom. What if I'm changing my clothes or something?"

"You'd better watch out. If I find out that you stole things in the house, I swear I will beat you to death,"

Nancy warned with a stern look at her son. Nancy looked around Brent's room with an eagle's eye.

Seeing no signs of the missing Jade Ruyi and prayer beads, she stormed out of the room.

Charles seemed reluctant to go to work this morning but since he was already dressed, Autumn urged him to go. She planned to go shopping today so she asked Brent to take her to the mall. Charles had ordered Brent to follow Autumn closely and he promised to follow his instructions to the letter.

Autumn wasn't much of a shopper. But since getting pregnant, she couldn't seem to get enough of shopping for baby items. Brent followed her discreetly everywhere she went, which made her feel

uncomfortable.

"Brent, can I talk to you for a minute?" Autumn beckoned Brent to a corner of the big shopping mall.

"I'm sure this is terribly boring for you, why don't you go sit in the coffee shop nearby and have some

fun? I will call you when I finish here," Autumn suggested with a smile.

"No, I can't!" Brent shook his head vigorously. "Mr. Lu asked me to keep a close eye on you since you

haven't been well lately. I don't feel right leaving you alone," Brent refused her offer flatly.

"You..." Autumn gazed up at Brent in disbelief. Her husband sure could inspire loyalty, she mused.

When she suggested hiring Brent, it's only as a favor to Nancy. But she didn't expect this.

Looking at the resolve on the young man's face, Autumn gave up on the idea and continued looking

around for baby accessories, a silent Brent behind her.

Entering a maternal and infant store, she was surprised to see a familiar yet unwelcome face of her

former colleague, Leila. She was obviously alone and looking at her bulging abdomen, obviously very

pregnant. She gasped in surprise.

"Leila? It's really you! What are you doing here?" Autumn surprised Leila and she almost dropped the

pile of shopping bags she's carrying. During their last unfortunate meeting, she could swear that she

hadn't noticed Leila's condition. Looking at her, she has no doubt that Leila was expecting a child. "Are

you pregnant?" Autumn blurted.

"Autumn..." Leila was totally unprepared to see Autumn, that was obvious. Her bags dropped

unnoticed, spilling baby clothes everywhere. Pulling herself together she bent down to pick up her

purchases on the floor. "Why...why are you here?" she stammered as she looked at Autumn.

"I'm buying stuff for my babies. How about you?" Autumn replied, pointedly resting her eyes on Leila's

tummy.

'Who is the father of her child?' Autumn thought.

"I..." Leila stopped and bit her lips, lowering her head as if in embarrassment. Finally lifting her head,

she met Autumn's eye squarely and said, "I'm shopping for my baby, too."

Leila's reply took Autumn by surprise. She glanced at her baby bump thoughtfully. 'From what I can

see, it must at least be four months since she became pregnant.'

"When did you get pregnant?" Autumn asked, taking a long assessing look at Leila.

With a sigh, Leila answered, "It's a long story."

Noticing the young man behind Autumn, Leila proposed, " We can grab a coffee and I will explain to you if you have time."

"Good idea," Autumn smiled her in agreement. 'I'm curious to know who is the father of Leila's child.

Besides, I don't feel like shopping now, ' she thought to herself, looking at Brent.

They left the Department Store together and went to a dessert shop across the street. Autumn ordered coffee and cakes for Brent, a discreet table away.

It was a busy shop. They chose a spot near the window overlooking the busy street. It was a cold day and they basked in the sunshine.

They ordered two tall glasses of freshly squeezed orange juice and a slice each of red velvet cake. Sitting back casually, Autumn asked, " What's going on with your child?" Her brows rose enquiringly as she waited for Leila's response.

"It's my boyfriend's," Leila replied simply. A peaceful smile passed her face as she gently massaged the bulge in her belly. "I'm on my fourth month."

"Fourth month?" Although she guessed correctly, Autumn was still shocked. Her brows knitted in a

frown. "But I didn't hear you getting married. Is he accepting responsibility?"

"You're wrong about him..." Leila defended her boyfriend. "You see, we already have plans to get married, but then I got pregnant. So we decided to postpone it for a while, but I still plan to give birth to my baby," Leila said, touching her belly lightly.

"You're doing the right thing, Leila," Autumn smiled approvingly. It was hard to reconcile the Leila she knew before and the Leila sitting before her now. 'Having a baby requires a lot of courage, especially since it's out of wedlock, I admire her for that, ' she said to herself. "Is your boyfriend the one I saw at the shopping mall with you before? I remember seeing him at the hospital. He is a doctor. I think he is a good catch, except maybe he's too busy," Autumn remarked.

"Yes, that's him," Leila answered proudly, a wistful look in her eyes. "When I found out I was pregnant, I was scared. We have plans but we're not yet ready, I thought the baby ruined my life and I was resentful for a while. But later, I changed my mind. Now I think to have the baby was the best blessing for me, so I decided to keep it."

Suddenly, an earnest look replaced the smile on Leila's face as she turned to Autumn, "I know you hate me, Autumn. I did a lot of terrible things to you and I deserve it. I just realized how cruel I've been to

you. For the sake of my baby, can you forgive me?"

Her words melted the rancor she felt in her heart against Leila. "It's all in the past now. I forgive you,"

Autumn told Leila with a genuine smile.

Pregnancy had changed Autumn a lot. She used to dislike Leila, hate her even. But finding Leila

pregnant and with a positive attitude, Autumn couldn't help but forgive her.

"Thank you, Autumn, you're very kind. I really regret the terrible things I did to you. Since I got

pregnant, I feel a lot of remorse towards you. I'm really glad I met you today. I feel like a heavy burden

was lifted from my shoulders. I'm really thankful that you have forgiven me." Leila looked at Autumn

gratefully.

'If she didn't get pregnant, would I have forgiven her so easily?' Autumn asked herself. 'But since she's

pregnant, I should let her off for the sake of her child.' Autumn felt as if a weight had been lifted from

her shoulders, too.

Leila then inquired about Autumn's pregnancy and when her baby was due to be born. Autumn's face

turning red, she suddenly felt uncomfortable as Leila stared at her belly.

Chapter 453 Thief In The Lu Family

Ever since her pregnancy, Autumn always felt self-conscious and uncomfortable when someone stared at her tummy. Unable to bear Leila's gaze any longer, Autumn got up hurriedly. "Give me a call when you set your wedding date. I'll buy you a nice wedding present."

"No need to bother, Autumn," Leila said, smiling. She looked slightly embarrassed at Autumn's words.

"You already gave me the best gift, your forgiveness. I can't ask for more."

"It's all right," Autumn responded, smiling back at Leila. "It's my gift for your unborn baby," she continued, looking around to signal to Brent that she wanted to go.

They walked together towards the exit, and Leila turned to give Autumn a big sisterly hug. "Thank you!"

They were home in a matter of minutes. Autumn noticed that Nancy still looked pale and unusually quiet. "Are you feeling unwell, Nancy? You don't look well since yesterday," Autumn said, concern in her face.

"I'm fine," Nancy said lightly, forcing a smile. "Mrs. Lu, I prepared the dinner, and it's on the table. Mr. Lu isn't home yet. You can eat first if you want," she continued.

"Thanks but I will wait for my husband. Are you sure you're fine? If something's bothering you, don't hesitate to tell me," she told her comfortingly. "Nancy has been working for the Lu family for a long time,

she's like our family, ' she thought.

"I'm really fine, Mrs. Lu. Perhaps I'm just tired," Nancy reassured Autumn with a smile. She turned to Brent behind Autumn, and with a disapproving look she told him coldly, " You, come with me. I have something to tell you."

"Can we talk about it later? I'm starving," Brent appealed to her mom. "Mom. Did you prepare my dinner?" he asked.

"Food! Is that all you can think about?!" Nancy seemed agitated. Her voice raised as she pulled her son harshly to her side. She had forgotten that Autumn was still standing listening. "Please excuse us, Mrs. Lu," she apologized.

"It's okay," Autumn replied, a little shocked at seeing Nancy behave this way. She went up the stairs still thinking that Nancy had been acting weird lately.

Nancy dragged Brent to his room. Brent pried his hands from her mother's iron clasp, complaining, " What's going on, mom? Why are you doing this? I followed Mrs. Lu all day and I'm famished. If it's nothing important, can I eat dinner first?"

Brent was puzzled by his mom's angry face. He looked at her with questioning eyes, wanting to know what was going on.

"How can you think about eating at this time?" Nancy asked with reproach. "Tell me the truth. Mr. Lu has lost valuable things recently. Do you have anything to do with it?" she asked her son accusingly.

"That's rubbish, mom!" Brent denied vehemently, avoiding Nancy's eyes. "I told you, I have nothing to do with it. What did he lose, anyway?" he asked defensively, starting to panic.

Looking at her mother's still angry countenance, he composed himself and continued, "Why are you so sure that I stole his things? Mom, I'm your son. Why don't you give me the benefit of the doubt?"

"I dragged you here because you're my son. Otherwise, I would have turned you over to Mr. Lu without delay," Nancy told her son in a hard voice. Nancy sighed deeply, catching her son's hand in a firm grip.

"Brent, I warned you to stop stealing things before I brought you here. Why didn't you listen to me?"

Nancy regretted bringing him to work for the Lu family. 'It's like setting a wolf to look after the sheep,' she thought.

"I'm asking you for the last time. Did you steal those things?" Nancy asked Brent in a grave voice, her eyes pinning him to the spot.

Brent looked away angrily. "I have nothing to do with the missing stuff. So stop being ridiculous! What if someone overhears you and suspects me?" he asked her accusingly.

Nancy looked at her son. "Are you afraid?"

"Of course, I'm afraid," Brent answered honestly. He looked at his mom appealingly. "I finally got a job. I want to continue working here."

"Are you really sure that you didn't take them?" Nancy asked again, giving her son another chance to tell the truth. 'He is my son and I hate to question him like this, but...' she thought.

"I'm sure," ? Brent replied confidently.

The moment she heard this, Nancy walked to his drawer purposefully, spilling its contents. "Then where did you get this?"

Aside from the Jade Ruyi and prayer beads that Gary mentioned, there were a dozen or so small articles made of jade and silver inside the drawer.

Brent stood rooted to the spot, his face growing pale as he knew that he had been found out. Nancy glared at Brent, "Tell me, what are these things?"

"I can explain, mom..." Brent said, starting to panic. "These things..." he faltered, not knowing how to explain.

"Go on, then. I'm listening!" Nancy was very disappointed with her son and it showed in her voice.

She knew Brent was lying to her when she asked him earlier. After he left with Autumn, she started to

search his room for Gary's missing Jade Ruyi and prayer beads. She thought maybe she wronged her

son, but she was wrong. Her heart sank in despair when she saw these things. She couldn't believe

that her son was really the culprit. She waited tensely all day for Brent to come back and explain to her

why he stole those things. But he denied it till the end.

Nancy gave him the chance to come clean but he wasted it.

"I..." Brent stammered guiltily. Unable to bear his mom's accusing glare, he lowered his head

dejectedly.

Nancy couldn't stop herself, so she started pummeling her son's chest with her fists while crying

brokenly, "I warned you not to steal things but you didn't listen to me. In just a few days you have stolen

so many things. Did you think no one would find out? How can you put me in this awkward situation? I

have worked for the Lu family for more than twenty years and diligently fulfilled my duty. But to save

you, I drugged Mrs. Lu. Instead of blaming me, she hired you to be her driver. How can you steal from these good people?"

Exhausted, Nancy finally stopped beating Brent and sat shaking on the bed. Brent endured his mom's anger, deep in thought. 'I chose small items to steal because I thought they wouldn't notice that. But they found out soon enough.'

Brent let his mom take out her anger on him. He truly regretted what he did.

When he first came to the Lu family's house, he was extremely discontented with his role as a driver.

But later on, he found that being Autumn's driver was an easy job and started to enjoy it. Since she was pregnant, she disliked going out unless to go shopping. Besides, he was receiving a generous salary. He tried to do his job, but he couldn't resist his impulse to steal when he saw valuable stuff.

"You'd better hurry and see Mr. Lu and tell him that you want to quit your job. After that, return to our hometown," Nancy told her son emotionally. "After what you've done, I can't let you stay here anymore." Nancy's tone broke no argument.

Chapter 454 Lisa Became Indifferent

"No! Don't do this to me, Mom! Please, I beg of you!" Brent said as he grabbed his mother's hands. He

was trying with all his might to make Nancy change her mind. "I admit my mistake. And I said I'm sorry.

I will never do it again. Mom, I swear!"

"Huh, it's too late now, Brent," Nancy said, her voice echoing disappointment. Her lips curved in a smile

that brought out her heart's sore more than anything else as she shook off her son's hands. "I can't

allow you to stay in this house any more or I will have to face ridicule and shame because of your

behavior sooner or later. Brent, listen to me. You go home. I'll give you all the money I earn from my

job. But if you continue to be like this, I am afraid, you will soon be arrested and sent behind the bars

one day. Being a mother, I can't see this happening to you in front of my eyes. Whatever I am doing, is

for your good."

"No, there won't be any such situation ever again. Mom, trust me." Brent pleaded, "Give me one last

chance, Mom. I will never let you down. I promise!"

"You... don't make it so difficult for me, Brent. You're my son and I know you better than anybody else."

Nancy shook her head gently, and continued, "I've asked you so many times earlier, but you kept

denying. If I didn't find these things here, you would have kept on lying to me. Isn't it?"

Brent stole his eyes from Nancy's gaze that was fixed on him. He would have never confessed his

crimes to his mother on his own, nor did he have the courage to answer back to her. However, his only concern was to somehow stop his mother from sending him home. And he was ready to do anything make her change her mind.

"I... I was under an evil spell. This stuff look inconspicuous, so I thought that they were worthless and that it didn't matter if I took and played with them. Just think about it, Mom, if I really wanted to steal them, I'd have sold them by now. Why would I keep them in my room for you to find them out?" retorted

Brent, trying to mislead his mother. The reality was that he had been trying to sell the stuff ever since he picked them. But because of his work, he could neither make time to sneak out on his own nor the time to investigate the market value of the loot, which led him to hide them in his room. To his surprise, it turned out to be a good excuse to justify the crime.

"I'm your son, please trust me, Mom. How could a thief hide stolen goods in his room and wait for the crime to be revealed?" Brent persisted incessantly and it finally worked. Nancy became hesitant.

Taking the opportunity, Brent took his mother's hand in his own once again. The firmness in her face

had softened. "Mom, I really just wanted to play with them. I intended to put them all back in two days. I

wasn't expecting you to find them today."

He then forced a smile and went on explaining, "I didn't mean to lie to you when you asked me, but I was scared to admit it to you."

"You really mean it?" Nancy asked in a doubtful voice. Brent managed to prove himself free of guilt.

Nancy finally trusted his words and said, "Well, I'll believe you this time." She then gave a sigh wearily.

"How could you do such a silly thing? Do you know that any such frivolous act can put you behind the bars for a decade or more? If you had sold these things, I would have had to see you in jail."

"Now I know how silly I was." Brent shook Nancy's hand and repented, "Mom, forgive me. I won't do anything to let you down again."

"You promise?" Nancy demanded coldly.

"Yes, I promise," Brent answered immediately and nodded. "I'll put everything back in its place tomorrow. And I swear I will never take anything from this house ever again. If I break my oath, you can put me at Mr. Lu's disposal, and I won't utter a word of complaint," he assured Nancy.

"Remember what you said" Nancy warned him, looking into his eyes. With that, she pulled her son to the bed and sat down. "Brent, poor as we are, we must not lose our dignity. The Lu family is so kind to us. We have to be grateful to them. If you ever do anything wrong to them again, I'll never bail you out again, keep this in mind," she admonished him seriously.

"I got it, Mom," Brent replied obediently.

"Put these things back as soon as possible, and remember, make sure no one watches you when you do this, okay?" Nancy bade her son with a solemn look, and was relieved a bit after Brent gave her a nod.

Brent secretly put all these things back in their places as he promised that night. Finally, Nancy felt relieved to see them in the morning.

"Hey, isn't this the string of prayer beads I lost? How come it is lying on the tea table now?" Gary was taken aback seeing the prayer beads. It just seemed to pop out of nowhere. He remembered very well that it had not been on the tea table even the day before.

"How strange!" he said to himself. He stood there scratching his head.

"Mr. Lu," Nancy called out as she heard Gary's words. "I found this string of prayer beads under this tea

table when I was cleaning today. And I've cleaned it up already," she explained.

"Oh, I see." Gary smiled and heaved a sigh of relief. "That's very kind of you, Nancy. I thought it had got lost. Thank you!"

"You're welcome," Nancy replied, and then asked Gary to have breakfast. "Oh, Mr. Lu, breakfast is ready; come and have before it gets cold."

"Okay," Gary said and walked to the table. "By the way, Nancy," he asked, sitting down, "how's your son? Has he adjusted himself in his new job as a driver?"

Nancy froze for a moment at Gary's concern for Brent, and she was overwhelmed with mixed emotions of guilt and warmth at the same time. "He's good, thanks for asking," Nancy answered with deep gratitude. "He told me yesterday that your family was his savior and that he couldn't imagine what he would have been doing now without your help."

Gary laughed and said, "Well, that's good then. Make sure to let me know if he doesn't like the job. I'll arrange another job for him that suits him better."

"I'll remember that. Thank you so very much," Nancy replied with a smile.

However, she dared not look at Gary's eyes. The family had been so thoughtful for Brent, but he was ungrateful and had done such a humiliating thing.

Fortunately, Brent had returned everything back to where it belonged. It felt like a lot of weight taken off from Nancy's shoulders.

It was the day of Autumn's pregnancy test. Ever since Brent became her chauffeur, he would talk to Autumn every time he drove. However, on the way to the hospital today, he remained quiet and seemed not in a good mood. Even Autumn didn't break the silence in the car.

When the car was well parked at the gate of the hospital, Autumn got out and walked into the hospital all by herself. Upon reaching close to Anthony's office, she happened to see Lisa on the same floor. However, to her bewilderment, Lisa was not as warm to her as she used to be. Lisa cast Autumn a brief glance and quickly looked away.

Autumn could only awkwardly lower the hand she had just raised to greet Lisa.

She had no idea what had happened to Lisa. She could only see that Lisa had suddenly become indifferent to her.

Chapter 455 Meeting Craig In The Hospital

The usual prenatal checkup is always something that an expecting mother always look forward to. And for Autumn it was twice the amount of joy. Listening to the heartbeat of the babies and trying to identify their features out of the hazy ultrasound pictures were something that could fill her heart with joy that can't be expressed in words. Walking through the corridor of the hospital, Autumn touched her belly gently and smiled. She said to her babies silently, "Are you ready to meet mom?" As she reached Anthony's office door, she could hear him speaking to the other patient. She tapped on his door. His voice came from inside, "Come in, please!"

Anthony walked out of the door with his patient who was here for her delivery. His eyes met Autumn's and he gestured her to get inside the room and wait for him. Autumn seated herself in his office looking around the room. She toyed with the paper weight kept on his table for a while to kill her time. Soon she heard Anthony's footsteps pacing fast towards the room and in a flash of a second he flung open the door and took his seat in front of her. "I hope I did not make you wait for too long. Actually the patient you just saw..." He tried to explain as Autumn gave a reassuring smile saying, "Its okay."

"Come, let's get the checkup done," Anthony said as he gestured Autumn to lie on the bed. Autumn made herself comfortably on the bed, as he started with the check-up. Anthony started with the

procedures. He pressed on her abdomen to feel the growth of the babies and then used other testing devices to hear their heart beats loud and clear. The smile on Autumn's face spread to her eyes. She laid still focusing only on the sound of the heart beats. It was that one priceless moment that she looked forward to every time she came here.

Anthony asked her several questions regarding her health and the usual symptoms that showed up during the stage of pregnancy she was going through at the moment. After making sure that her babies were safe, Autumn turned her attention towards Anthony.

She had a faint idea about the budding relationship between Anthony and Lisa. And she was curious to know more. After dealing with the initial hesitation she asked, "How about you and Lisa?" She sounded inquisitive. She had a quirky smile on her face.

As Anthony looked up at her, he looked a little startled. "What do you mean?" Anthony asked, his eye brows stitched together into a frown. He had never expected this coming from Autumn. He looked at her and tried to be put up a casual demeanor. "Lisa and I are just good friends. Nothing else," he said.

"Oh! Come on!" Autumn had an impish smile on her face. "I'm not a fool, Anthony. I can see that she is

completely into you." Autumn was not ready to rest the topic so easily.

Anthony kept scribbling on the prescription pad silently. He hoped the moment would pass if he showed

his ignorance towards it. But Autumn was not ready to let it go. She again started after a

pause,"Besides, you guys had a relationship earlier. She traveled a long way for you. You should give

her a chance."

Anthony maintained the solemn look on his face and answered in a calm voice,"She has a thing for me,

so I must like her. Is that what you mean?" Anthony looked up at Autumn for a moment and glanced

straight into her eyes. Autumn could sense it was difficult to break through with him at the moment.

Then again he went back to his writing pad.

There was a momentary silence between both of them. Then Autumn uttered stammering,"I don't mean

that..." She was taken aback to see the indifference in Anthony's behavior. This made her rather

uncomfortable. She felt Anthony was overreacting. Still unwilling to rest her case, she pushed it a little

further,"Don't get me wrong. I just think that... Lisa is beautiful and she has a soft corner for you. And

now that you don't have a girlfriend, why not try dating her?"

Then she stared at Anthony with a piercing eye and blurted out abruptly,"Do you have a crush on

someone else?"

With every passing moment, it was becoming more and more difficult for Anthony. He froze in his chair.

Autumn sensed the stiffness in his behavior but still refused to stop probing into the matter. She forged

again with all excitement with another set of questions, "I got you this time, didn't I? Tell me now. What

kind of girl she is? Is she someone I know?"

"Oh, yeah, you know her," Anthony answered, his eyes calmly resting on Autumn.

"Who?" she asked brimming with excitement.

"You." Anthony replied jokingly, putting up a camouflage that he had learnt to master ever since he fell

in love with Autumn. He had never been able to express his feeling in front of her. And now that she

was so inquisitive about getting him settled with some other girl, it was nothing but the ironical truth that

came handy to make her silent. Autumn went silent for a while and then she started once more, "It's...

it's not funny." Her face turned embarrassed this time.

"Enough now!" Anthony got up as he spoke with a completely no-nonsense look on his face. "Don't

bother so much about my love life. Otherwise, I will use you to scare away girls who try to approach

me," he said with a sly smile on his face to make it light between the two of them. "You can leave now.

Other patients are waiting outside," he urged politely.

Autumn stood up silently and approached the door. He could not help looking at her face as she was preparing to leave. His heart wrenched inside his rib cage. The more he looked at her face, the more softened his eyes turned.

Autumn had her face pointed floor-wards. She carefully arranged all the reports in the file in one hand and her hand bag on her shoulder. She looked at Anthony who followed her to the door once again before he opened the door for her and smiled before walking out. The panic-stricken look at her face was a clear indication that he had no chance to get her. As he opened the door, both of them were welcomed with bustling laughter of Lisa and Craig who were approaching Anthony's office.

"Well, you must come to my house and cook for me to show your cooking skills," Craig said as he laughed heartily.

Lisa nodded her head. "Sure, I would love to do that. But..." she smiled as she spoke.

"Don't worry about Anthony. I will handle him," Craig said keeping the spirit high. "I will break his leg if

he stops you from cooking for me."

"Thank you, Grandpa!" Lisa responded as both of them burst into laughter once again.

Anthony stood at the doorway watching them walking straight towards him lost in their conversation

and laughter. This was the last thing he was expecting at this moment. He was completely startled. Lisa

looked up at Anthony ignoring Autumn who was standing right beside him and said, "Anthony, surprise!"

"What made you come here all of a sudden, Grandpa? You should have called me in," Anthony spoke

to Craig with a frown on his face.

"Anthony!" Craig cried at this sudden disapproving behavior of his grandson. "I'm your grandpa. Do you

mean that I need to take your permission before coming to see you?" He stood there expecting an

answer from Anthony.

Anthony had never mentioned to Craig about Lisa since their latest call. But he learnt from an

acquaintance about the alleged rumor in the hospital that something was steaming between Anthony

and Lisa. He also heard how the rumor had enraged Anthony and that he clarified that there was

nothing between him and Lisa. This was what brought Craig to the hospital.

He wanted to meet Lisa in person. If he found Lisa to be a good girl, he would help her and Anthony

come together. Otherwise, he wouldn't force Anthony to accept her. Anthony's loneliness bothered Craig to a great extent. He wanted to see him settled in his family. He was also eager to play with his great-grandson.

"Hello, Grandpa Craig!" Autumn's voice came cutting through the tense conversation between the grandfather and the grandson. She stood right behind Anthony smilingly looking at Craig.

Craig turned to Autumn and broke into a smile. "Hello Autumn, good to see you here. How is your grandpa doing these days?"

Autumn was glad to see Craig. Suddenly the awkwardness between her and Anthony got shifted from her. Though Anthony felt like just before he could manage to get out of one awkward situation, he just landed into another one. "He's good," she replied. "He mentioned you a couple of days back. He said that no one played chess with him after you left. How long will you stay here this time? If you have time, I can arrange for you to meet with my grandpa," Autumn said with a smile.

"I plan to stay here from now on," Craig declared in a profound voice. "Tell your grandpa that I will visit him and we can play chess and go fishing every day as long as he likes."

"He will be glad to hear that," Autumn replied heartily. "Grandpa will be elated to learn about this good news. I can't wait to share this with him."

One person who could not agree with the niceties, laughter and joy that were happening around him was Anthony. Moreover, Craig's intention to stay here put him absolutely incomprehensible for him. He turned towards Craig with a frown and demanded a reply, "What's going on, Grandpa? What do you mean by saying you will stay here?"

"Didn't I make it clear to you?" Craig turned towards Anthony with a stiff look on his face. He maintained a completely no-nonsense look as he spoke, "I came here to see you get married. That's what even your parents want. They said, I would come back after you make a girlfriend. Are you not willing to look after me?"

Anthony was completely out of his wits as to how to react to this situation. "Don't get me wrong. I..."

Anthony stammered to find words. After a short pause, he looked at Craig and continued, "You're my grandpa, and it's my duty to take care of you. But if you have come here for that purpose, I think you'd better leave soon."

I'm not a kid anymore. I know what kind of girl I like. I don't need other people to make a decision for

me,"

Anthony said in a cold tone in his voice. His eyebrows were knitted in a frown. He even looked at Lisa in a reproachful glance.

When Lisa met Anthony's angry eyes, she realized that he had misunderstood herself. So she quickly tried to explain, "Anthony, it's not like what you imagined. It's grandpa..."

She had just started explaining when Anthony raised his palm and gestured her to stop. "He is my grandpa, not yours. Please call him Grandpa Craig." Lisa turned pale with embarrassment. It was as if someone just sucked all the blood out of her face. She stood there with her mouth half open. Craig gave Anthony a tight slap on his back that startled both the girls.

"Child, don't pay attention to what he said. He is talking nonsense," Craig said to Lisa. He tried to make up for his grandson's heartless comment. "You can just call me Grandpa. Just ignore him."

"Grandpa!" Anthony called out to show utter disgust and disapproval to what Craig said to Lisa. Craig retorted to Anthony with sharpness in his voice, "You stop calling me that. If you don't want to see me, then I won't live with you." He then turned to Autumn, "Autumn, ask your grandpa to leave a room for

me and tell him that I will move in with him." Anthony looked helpless, not having a clue about how to handle the situation.

Craig's words put everyone feel rather awkward. Autumn glanced at Anthony and sensed the dilemma he was going through. She tried to pacify Anthony and said in a gentle voice, "Well, don't get angry, Grandpa Craig. You must have got him wrong. Anthony is a dutiful person. I'm sure he'd like to live with you. Now I must excuse myself because I have something really important to deal with."

"Okay. Be careful, my child. Watch yourself on the way," Craig said to Autumn with an approving smile.

Autumn did not waste a single moment before she walked out of the scene without turning around even for once. 'I don't know what will happen if I continue to stay here, ' she thought to herself. She never expected the situation would become so grave.

Seeing Autumn leave, Lisa also found out a way to sneak out of the situation. She looked at Anthony and Craig, and said to Anthony, "Well, I gotta go now. Talk with your grandpa patiently, Anthony."

She then turned to Craig and smiled gently. "Grandpa, please let me know if I can be of any help. I need to go back to my work. But I will see you soon."

"Bye!" Craig watched her receding in the corridor and smiled approvingly.

'She is such a good girl! Why does Anthony have no feeling for her?' he thought to himself.

Chapter 456 Drink Down

Anthony and Craig maintained complete silence while they drove back home. Anthony parked the car

and led Craig inside the house. There was still no exchange of words between the grandfather and the

grandson. Craig could not understand what made Anthony so angry. And Anthony found it so terribly

difficult to explain why he could not get married to Lisa.

Once inside the house, he took a deep breath to calm himself down and then looked at Craig.

"Grandpa, please try to understand. I am a grown up now. I know what I am doing and what I should

do. If you keep forcing me to get married, I..."

"What do you want to do then?" Craig stopped him in the midway and asked, "Anthony, why are you so

stubborn? Why are you so resistant to Lisa? I think she is a beautiful and good natured girl. And what is

most important is that she loves you so much!" In just a matter of a brief encounter, Craig developed a

fondness towards Lisa. He believed that she would make a good wife for Anthony.

"Grandpa, it is my business. You are able to understand me." Saying this he immediately checked

himself and lowered his voice. He pleaded, "Grandpa, it is not possible for me to be with Lisa. Please

just don't force me to get married to her." He felt helpless as he could not explain it to his grandpa why he could not marry Lisa.

Craig looked into his eyes and sensed the earnestness in his voice. But Anthony's words stung him too hard. He could not utter a single word. He walked out of the door with a straight face and slammed it right behind him. Anthony kept staring at the closed door as he watched his grandfather walk out of the house. As soon as Craig came out of the house, his phone rang. The moment he glanced over the phone, the name that flashed on a screen brought smile on his face. He loosed up his facial muscles as he answered the phone. It was Arthur on the other side. "Craig, when did you get back? Why didn't you come to meet me? It is so nice to see you back!"

Craig felt light after hearing Arthur's voice. He heaved a deep sigh to lighten up his mood and said, "It is a long story, my friend! Well, are you free now? Let's have a drink together."

Arthur reciprocated with equal excitement and said, "Okay. When shall we meet? I will come over soon." As soon as he hung up the phone, Arthur looked all charged up. He changed his clothes and got ready to go out. Amy was taken aback to find her husband being up and about in such a hasty manner at such a late hour. She expressed her concern as she asked, "Where are you going? It is already so

late."

"Craig is back," Arthur replied promptly. After a while he explained, "Craig sounded like he was in a bad mood. He called me to have a drink with me. I will be back soon. You don't worry about me and don't wait for me. Go to bed on time."

"Okay, take care of yourself." Amy knew that when it came to Craig, no one could stop Arthur from being with him. She just nodded her head gently to express her consent to her husband.

The two friends met at a small roadside stall. They used to drink in roadside stalls in their younger days, but as they grew elder they rarely visited this kind of places. Sometimes such places made them feel like coming back home.

By the time Arthur reached, Craig had started drinking all by himself. Seeing Arthur coming in, Craig raised his glass and welcomed him with a laugh. It felt like the good old days when they were in their thirties. Life had come a full circle as their families from children to grandchildren. But even now, when the two friends met, it made them feel young. Good friends were like old wine. It only got better with time.

Craig gestured him to take the seat in front of him. "Arthur, come. Sit over here!" Craig was new to the Y City and just happened to find a place drink peacefully. So he entered this restaurant. But to his surprise, a small restaurant like this had a upgraded food offering.

Craig could not get over Anthony's behavior that night. It wrenched his heart each time he thought about him and how he reacted towards Lisa. Hence, he ordered himself some white wine even before Arthur arrived.

Arthur looked at Craig and spotted the gloom that he was trying to hide behind his smile. "What's wrong with you? What happened? You look so upset," he asked. "At this age, you should just relax and enjoy.

But you are trying to drink it down. What's the matter?" Arthur asked with concern in his voice.

"It's quite a long story, my friend." Craig looked at Arthur and thought how lucky he was. He let out a deep sigh and lowered his eyes. Then he looked up at Arthur and said, "I am jealous of you, my friend.

Your granddaughter is happily married now. You have nothing to worry about. But my grandson..."

As Craig mentioned Anthony, his eyes mellowed down into an unexplained gloominess and he let out another sigh. Then he said, "He doesn't even have a girlfriend. He has reached marriageable age.

There is a beautiful foreign girl who likes him a lot. But he just refuses to be with her as well. I don't

know what I should do to help him."

Saying this, Craig heaved a sigh and looked at Arthur's face once again. "You are free from such worries, Arthur. I am happy for you. But even I want to play with my great grandchild. But with Anthony not consenting for marriage, I have no idea if my dream will be fulfilled in my lifetime."

Arthur patted Craig on his shoulder and tried to reassure him. "Craig, I think you don't have to worry about this at all. Anthony is an adult and after a certain age you can't force your wishes on the youngsters. You have to let them be. We are getting older, but they are still young, so it's better if you let them to take their own decision." Arthur uttered the words with a lot of concern towards Craig to make him feel better. He became silent for a while and then he started again. There was a sudden gloom in his voice that Craig could not avoid noticing. "You are right to say that Autumn is married. But.." said Arthur, his eyes filled with gloom. After a small pause, he added, "Yes, she is married and is also on family way. But every happiness comes with a price for her. Do you know? Someone tried to poison her! And she had just conceived. She has not recovered from it completely. How can you say that I have nothing to worry about?"

As he finished speaking, his lips curved into a painful smile. He had never spoken about this with anyone. But now that he was sitting with his close friend, he felt like pouring his heart out. There were not too many people you could share your thoughts with. Craig, a childhood friend, was the kind of person with whom Arthur could speak without any inhibition. He could never express the sore and guilt that he felt for Autumn in his heart. Even Craig was aware of that.

Though he never revealed it in front of anyone, he secretly blamed himself for not being able to protect his granddaughter.

Thinking about the hardships that Autumn had to face in her growing years, he felt like a knife cutting through his heart. He remembered her smile that remained constant despite all the debacles that took place in her life. Thinking of her kind and gentle nature made him feel more miserable.

Craig was aware of everything. Though he was in full empathy towards Arthur, he could not let go of his anger towards Anthony. He looked at Arthur and said, "Arthur, I am getting old. I don't know how much time I have. My only wish is to see Anthony marry a good girl and live a happy life. I want to see the face of my great grandson before closing my eyes. But as you said, the kids are grown up now.

Anthony is not even ready to listen to me. I have no idea how to communicate with him."

He lifted his head and looked back at Arthur. "Anthony told me that he didn't want to get married for now. And he is not ready to explain why he is so rigid on his decision. He does not even have a girlfriend. How ridiculous is that? I am so anxious about his future. Alright, he is a grown up man. But don't I have any say on his life as a grandfather?"

Arthur was in full understanding with what Craig was saying. He tried to pacify him by saying, "Don't be so anxious. Anthony is a very level headed and kind hearted young man. And I could see that when he helped Autumn without hesitation. His presence in her case made me feel so much assured. He is a very sensible person. At the moment, he may only want to devote himself to his career. As for his marriage, I am sure he knows what he wants to do. So you stop being so worried. Everything will happen when it has to happen. Don't worry." Arthur tried to persuade him to cool down.

The words uttered by Arthur brushed through Craig's ears but could not reach his heart. He was so overwhelmed with grief, concern and anger towards Anthony. He said to Arthur, "Leave it alone. Let's drink!"

And they sat drinking like two jolly good fellows. It was such an incredible feeling to sit with a person

who had been a part of the long journey of your life, through thick and thin. All the grievances and worries faded away when you came together with such a friend. So they both dunked all their worries in the alcohol and poured it down their throats and chose to remember the good old days. But no matter how much they tried to avoid the topic, their conversation came back to the kids once again.

Craig was feeling light after a hearty chat with his friend. He looked at Arthur and said, "Honestly, I really like your granddaughter, Autumn. Such a good natured and beautiful girl she is. If she were not married, I would ask Anthony to woo her. She would have been a perfect wife for him."

Arthur shrugged him off immediately and said, "Craig, you are drunk. You have started to talk nonsense now."

It was already very late for two old men to be out of the house like this. Arthur stood up to pay the bill.

Then he turned towards Craig and said, "Let's go home now. I will walk you home."

Even though Craig did not drink too much, he was quite drunk. Fortunately, Arthur knew the way to Anthony's house so he could take Craig back to the house.

When they reached Anthony's house, it was quiet late in the night. There were hardly anybody on the street. Though Y city was one of the busiest cities in the country, the neighborhood where Anthony

lived was a little secluded from the main city. It was a quiet and tranquil neighborhood, especially during the night time. Anthony was pacing up and down the hall when he heard the gates opening. His mind was crowded with the thought of all that happened that evening. He was repentant about his spat with his grandfather. "Grandpa Arthur?" he said in confusion. Anthony was at his wits end. He was trying to reach Craig on his phone but he did not reply any of his calls. Seeing Arthur out of his house almost gave him a panic attack. As he opened the door he just prayed and hoped that his grandfather was alright. And when he saw Craig being assisted through the entrance by Arthur, he heaved a sigh of relief.

"What's wrong with my grandpa, Grandpa Arthur?" Craig was resting on Arthur's shoulder dragging his feet into the house. Anthony gave him support and released Arthur from carrying him. Arthur put his hand at Craig's back as he leaned on Anthony's shoulders.

"He is fine. He is just drunk," replied Arthur calmly. "Take good care of him. I need to go."

"Grandpa Arthur, please come in and sit with us for a while," Anthony spoke in a hospitable manner.

Arthur shook his head with a smile and responded, "It is too late tonight. I have to go home."

Anthony stopped Arthur as he turned door-wards. "Please wait for a second, Grandpa Arthur. Why did my grandpa drink so much? What happened to him?" He had never seen his grandfather in this condition. He was really worried. He was afraid that this condition of Craig was the outcome of the argument he had with him in the evening.

Arthur smiled as he looked into the concerned eyes of Anthony. "He is just worried about your marriage, so he drunk down," he replied with a smile. "Your grandpa is so eager to play with his great-grandson. So he is anxious."

Arthur stopped for a while to map the expression on Anthony's face. Then he continued, "Anthony, you are supposed to be married by now or at the most start seeing someone. Your grandpa is worried because you don't even have a girlfriend." Now that Anthony had taken the initiative to ask him the reason, Arthur took advantage of the situation to give him a word of advice.

"I know. I always know that. Thank you, Grandpa Arthur," replied Anthony with a bitter smile. "I am so grateful to you for bringing my grandpa safe back home. I have been really worried about him for a long time."

After Arthur left, Anthony helped Craig to his bedroom. Craig had his eyes half closed all this while.

Anthony laid him down gently on the bed. The moment he reached out to the switch board to put the lights off, he heard a groan coming out of Craig's mouth. And before he could even turn around he heard him vomiting. Anthony immediately tended to his grandfather. He stayed up taking care of him throughout the night as Craig went on vomiting intermittently till three o'clock. Then Anthony took a short nap and got up again at six to prepare breakfast for Craig.

He cooked some porridge and pickled vegetables since Craig was drunk last night. Being in the medical industry had its own advantage. Anthony knew exactly what kind of diet should be administered for Craig. And hence he prepared a light breakfast.

By the time, he just finished cooking, Craig woke up.

Even after the night had passed, Craig was still angry on Anthony. But Anthony behaved as if nothing had happened. He greeted Craig with a big smile and said, "Grandpa, I have prepared breakfast for you. Come on. Eat the porridge. It is still warm."

Chapter 457 Breakfast With Craig

After breakfast, Craig was ready to leave without communicating with his grandson, Anthony. The young doctor, however, noticed his grandfather heading for the door. He called out, "Where are you

going, Grandpa?"

"And what do you care?" Craig replied impatiently. He turned to look at Anthony, studying his grandson.

"I'm old. You probably think I'm a burden. Since you don't care to listen to me, I'm asking you to leave me alone," he said.

Craig was sulking and becoming unreasonable and this slightly annoyed Anthony. He took a quick breath to dismiss the feeling.

He thought, 'I need to persuade grandfather to respect my decision, otherwise, he will stay mad at me.'

"Can you please come and take a seat, Grandpa? I want to talk to you about something," Anthony requested. They stood apart, looking at each other.

Craig hesitated for a moment before walking over to where Anthony was and sat down. "What do you want to talk about?" he asked.

Anthony poured a cup of tea and handed it to Craig. He was also thinking of how to broach the subject with his grandfather. "I know you are hoping that I get married soon and give you a great-grandson," he started.

Craig huffed before replying. "Ah, so you know what I want. So, why can't you grant my wish?" He

straightened his shoulders and relaxed. "I'm old, but I still worry about you getting married. Can't you settle down as soon as possible?" the elderly man inquired. Craig didn't want to complain, but he was truly concerned about his grandson.

He moved forward in his seat and looked straight into Anthony's eyes. "Lisa is a young and lovely girl.

She is not only attractive but also well educated. So, why are you not seeing her?" Craig probed. He

showed his frustration with Anthony as he continued, "She traveled so far to be with you. Why are you not giving her a chance?"

Anthony slapped his thighs and said, "That's what I want to talk to you about." He wanted to make

things clear with his grandfather where Lisa was concerned. Anthony took a deep breath and then

started to explain. "Lisa and I used to date each other. We saw each other when I was overseas."

Craig was surprised with the revelation and exclaimed, "What?!" He stared at Anthony in disbelief. 'He

was dating someone?' he thought to himself. Craig wondered why he never heard about such a relationship.

Anthony broke into his thoughts. "What I learned after dating her is that she and I aren't meant to be

together. Yes, I want to get married and have a child," he went on. "But I cannot marry someone I don't love," Anthony finished. Watching his grandfather's reaction, he added, "It's not fair to either of us, don't you think so?"

Craig was trying to understand everything he was hearing. It was with disappointment when he finally asked, "So what you're saying is that you and Lisa are never going to work out?" The old man thought Lisa would make a good partner for Anthony. But his grandson had now made it very clear this was impossible.

"That's exactly what I'm telling you," Anthony stressed. He had noted the disappointment in his grandfather's face and tried to lighten the mood. "Grandpa, if ever I meet the right person, I promise to introduce her to you," he assured. "But Lisa is not that person. So I'm asking that you stop worrying about this, all right?" Anthony said.

Craig gave a bitter smile. "Well..." he started to say. Craig reluctantly agreed. He told his grandson, "If you insist, there will be no more discussion about Lisa." But he was not finished. "However, I still believe it's time you consider getting married. Look at Autumn. She's younger than you but is already married, and will be a mother soon." Craig looked teasingly at Anthony. "Hurry up, will you?"

Anthony smiled and nodded. He was relieved they had come to an understanding. He stood up, patted his grandfather's back and appealed, "Then please stay home and get some rest. I have to go to the hospital."

Craig sighed, "All right." As he sat alone, he thought, 'Arthur is right. I should leave Anthony to make his own decisions. I have to stop meddling when it comes to marriage.'

Anthony left for Y Hospital, leaving Craig all alone in the house. The old man was feeling restless. Finally, he sat down on the couch and became lost in thought. 'I came back hoping to bring Anthony and Lisa together. Now, I have no reason to stay, ' he told himself.

Craig decided to pack his bags and get ready to return home.

He gathered his bags and was about to call Anthony when the doorbell rang. Craig checked to see who it was and saw Lisa outside. The young lady flashed him a bright smile and greeted, "Hello Grandpa Craig!"

Surprised by the visit, he asked, "What brings you here, Lisa?" He first met Lisa in the hospital. And he was impressed by her, even liked her. But since his talk with Anthony earlier, the situation was now

different. And Craig didn't know how to face Lisa.

Still smiling, she told Craig, "I know Anthony has to be at the hospital today. I'm almost sure you haven't had breakfast. So, I bought some ingredients and came here to make you breakfast." Lisa showed the shopping bags, sidled up to the house and walked straight in.

She had never been to Anthony's home before and had no idea where the kitchen was. She looked at Craig and asked, "Which way to the kitchen, Grandpa?"

He escorted the young woman to the kitchen, and then said, "Thank you!"

"No need to thank me, Grandpa Craig. It's a pleasure to do this for you," Lisa said politely. Her shopping bags were full. Lisa started to unpack and stored them in the fridge. There were fruits and yogurt, which she told Craig were Anthony's favorites.

Craig stood by the kitchen door and watched Lisa putter around. "Thank you for treating my grandson well," he told her.

"He's important to me, and I like doing these things for him," Lisa replied. She stopped moving before speaking. "I like Anthony very much. He's the reason I decided to work here. So I can see him every day. Do you think you can help me, Grandpa Craig?" she asked earnestly.

Hearing her say these things embarrassed Craig. And he tried to hide it with a smile but did not reply.

Lisa didn't realize that his attitude to her had changed. She started to prepare the ingredients for the three dishes she would cook. Once everything was ready, she set them on the table before a stunned Craig.

"Aren't you a foreigner, Lisa?" he asked politely. "So, how do you know to cook delicious Chinese food?" Craig was impressed after he had taken a bite. He sampled the other dishes laid out in front of him. All of them tasted very good. Craig was thinking, 'They may not be as delicious as those prepared by professional chefs in hotels, but this home-cooked meal is wonderful.'

Lisa sat down facing Craig. "Grandpa Craig, I'm what you call a hybrid. I'm an American citizen, but my mother is Chinese." She added, "Her hometown is Y City." Lisa filled a bowl of rice for Craig.

"Is she?" he asked, now more curious about his visitor. "What a coincidence!"

The woman smiled. "I thought so, too." She put the rice bowl in front of Craig. "That's why I can speak Chinese fluently. When I was young, my mom taught me Chinese. I also love Chinese food. And before I came here, my mother taught me to cook two dishes." Lisa suddenly turned shy. "I wasn't sure if you

would like them."

Craig looked at her with gentle eyes. "You learned to cook for my grandson, didn't you?" he probed. He could not help but feel sad for Lisa.

Lisa's cheeks turned pink and she stammered, "I, I thought..." She blew out a breath before continuing, "I didn't want to bother Anthony about food. Besides, I want to look after him. So, I learned several Chinese dishes to cook for him."

Craig laid down his chopsticks. "Here's the thing, Lisa," he started. He wanted to honor his promise to Anthony and was intent on persuading Lisa to stop waiting for Anthony. He knew his grandson very well. Once he had made up his mind, nothing and no one could change it. And he didn't want to see this girl wasting her time on his grandson.

But Lisa was quick to interrupt him. "Please hear me out, Grandpa Craig!" She was now leaning forward. "I made up my mind before coming here. I will do everything to get back with Anthony. No matter what happens, I will never give up on him." Her eyes were full of determination.

Chapter 458 Girlfriend Waiting

Craig forced a smile, before lightly admonishing Lisa, "You silly girl! Is he worth all that you are doing for him?" He took pity on the girl and decided to tell the truth. "Anthony told me

everything that happened between the two of you, including you being lovers before," he admitted.

Lisa was quite shocked by the admission. She wasn't expecting Anthony to tell his grandfather about personal things. She smiled awkwardly and confirmed things. "Yes, it's true that we were lovers before." She was quick to add, "But it wasn't for long."

Their relationship had been very brief and did not allow her to get to know Anthony well enough.

Craig gave a bitter smile. He said, "Child, let me give you a piece of advice." He looked at Lisa with kind eyes. "Anthony is my grandson, and I know him very well. No one can force him to do anything that he does not want." Craig took a deep breath. Lisa was listening to his every word. "Even I can't change his mind once he has made a decision," he admitted.

"But how can that be?" she asked with a frown. "You are his grandfather. Surely, he must consider your opinion," Lisa

insisted. The old man shrugged his shoulders. He looked at Lisa helplessly.

"I'm sorry. I'm afraid I can't be of help to you," Craig said sadly. "Anthony made it very clear to me that he didn't want to be with you. He said a relationship with you was impossible. I've decided to stay out of

it. So, I've packed my things, and will be leaving today."

He looked at Lisa with sorrowful eyes. What could he say to spare her heartache? "You're young and beautiful, Lisa. You can have your pick of men much better than my grandson, yet you don't give up on Anthony. Why?" he asked gently. Craig did his best to make Lisa see the futility of it all.

"He's not into you. But there will be someone, sooner or later," he pointed out. Lisa refused defeat.

"Grandpa Craig, Anthony and I were happy together when we were living abroad," she insisted. "But since he came back, everything has changed," she said with meaning.

"What are you trying to say?" Lisa's statement made Craig curious.

Lisa was debating whether or not to tell Anthony's grandfather about Autumn. It wasn't only because she was jealous, but because it was inappropriate since Autumn was married. And that was an important problem.

But something was stopping her. It was probably the thought that Anthony would hate her once he found out what she did.

She inhaled before giving a bitter smile. "It's nothing serious, Grandpa Craig," she assured him.

Craig finished eating. Lisa tidied up the kitchen. She wanted to see Craig off, but was politely refused.

Lisa finally left.

The old man proceeded to the hospital to say goodbye to his grandson. He brought along his luggage and was planning to head straight to the airport. Anthony was shocked by Craig's decision. "Why are you in a hurry to leave, Grandpa? Can't you stay longer?"

Craig gave Anthony a hug and smiled at him. "No, I think I have to go now," he said. "I came for Lisa, to make sure you would end up together. But since you told me you did not love her, now there's no reason to stay. It's best for me to leave. But, remember what you promised me," Craig said to Anthony. "I'll remember that, Grandpa," he assured Craig. He suddenly felt light-hearted, not because Craig was leaving, but because Craig finally chose to respect his decision.

He called a taxi for Craig. When his grandfather finally left, Anthony made his way back to his office.

On the way there, he ran into a woman, and she ended up on the floor.

Concerned, Anthony crouched down to help her and asked, "Are you okay?" He assisted her in standing up, examining her closely if she appeared hurt. She did not look like she came to see a

doctor, but was looking for someone.

"I'm fine, really," the woman assured Anthony. It was Leila. After the doctor helped her up, she brushed the dirt off her

clothes. Then she asked, "Do you know where Burke Zhou is?"

Leila may have been knocked down, but she wasn't hurt at all. Several days ago, she came to see

Autumn. At that time, her belly was a bit raised. But now it was not.

Anthony thought for a while, mumbling, "Burke Zhou?" He suddenly remembered. "I think he's in surgery. But the operation should be over soon," he told Leila.

Anthony felt guilty about knocking the woman down, so he repeatedly asked if she was hurt. "Do you mind if I examine you? I'm a doctor, too," he offered.

Leila was quick to refuse. "No, thank you. I'm okay." She knew who Anthony was and did not want to be examined by him. Leila learned Anthony was Autumn's doctor. Several days ago, she lied to Autumn and said she was pregnant. So she had to avoid Anthony because he might eventually discover her fake pregnancy.

"I just came for Burke. We're supposed to be going out for dinner," she explained. Anthony finally

agreed that there was nothing wrong with Leila.

"Oh, all right then," he told Leila. Anthony recalled his conversation with Burke a few days ago at the dining hall. Burke said he was in love and was planning to propose to the woman. He glanced at Leila and realized this might be the woman Burke was referring to.

"Why don't you sit down and wait for him? I have to be on my way, so please excuse me," Anthony said. He hurried along leaving Leila in the hallway.

Anthony detoured to the operating room. He found Burke cleaning up, and looking exhausted. Anthony said to him, "Hey, there's a woman outside asking about you. Is she your girlfriend?"

"Leila?" Burke asked. He checked his phone and saw several missed calls, all from Leila. Burke lightened up and said, "Hey buddy, I gotta go. See you!"

He would never forget his date with Leila and ran off.

This was an important moment with a very significant person.

He was grinning, fatigue forgotten, as he ran back to his office to change

clothes. Then he called Leila. She asked, "Where are you now?" Leila sounded a little impatient. "I've

been calling you but you didn't answer."

She was planning to tell Burke that she wanted to break up with him but did not expect to run into

Anthony. Leila had been waiting for a long time when she finally received Burke's call.

Burke kept apologizing and explained that he was in surgery. "I had to finish the operation and phones

were not allowed there. I'm so sorry. Where are you now?" He hoped Leila had calmed down. "I'll come

and find you," he said.

Leila replied, "I'm in a café near the hospital." Burke hung up quickly and ran to the café. He smiled at

Leila and apologized again. "I'm sorry for making you wait.

Will you forgive me, please?" he pleaded. Leila still looked annoyed and ordered him, "Sit. I have

something to tell you."

But Burke interrupted her. "Wait, I want to bring you some place else." He sounded excited. The doctor

had been waiting for that moment for a long time and could hardly keep his excitement.

"What? Where?" Leila asked irritated. He helped her get up and took her hand, pulling Leila.

"We're eating, remember?" he said secretly. Burke was pleased with himself. And he hoped Leila would

like the place he chose.

Dinner was at the most luxurious hotel in Y City. She caught up with Burke and demanded, "Why are you bringing me here?"

"To have dinner, of course," he replied. Burke grinned at Leila again.

"Come on!" he pulled at her. Leila thought Burke couldn't afford expensive restaurants. In her mind, hospital doctors did not make a lot of money. So it was a complete surprise to find herself in such a luxurious place with Burke.

Chapter 459 Burke's Proposal (Part One)

Leila regarded Burke with veiled eyes. She liked him but he didn't quite reach her standards. For her, a rich CEO like Charles was the perfect husband material.

"What's wrong?" Burke asked, noticing Leila regarding him with cold eyes. She had been distant since she agreed to date him. Despite this, Burke didn't mind. He was just happy to have his beloved girl to be his girlfriend.

"Are you sure you can afford this place?" Leila asked him with a frown. She knew how expensive the food was in this hotel. "A meal here will cost more than two months of your salary. Besides, it's too hard to get reservation from the restaurant here. We can't enter here without reservation."

Leila's tone was mocking as she looked up at Burke with contempt and derision written plainly on her face.

"Are you worried about my pocket?" Burke grinned, ignoring her mocking tone? "Don't worry your head about these things. I have taken care of all of this."

Burke took Leila's hand excitedly and said, "Let's go."

Leila had no choice but to follow Burke into the hotel lobby. They took the elevator up to the tenth floor.

The restaurant there was famous for its delicious food and panoramic view of Y City.

This was not Leila's first time to eat in this restaurant. She had been here before with Charles while she was working at the Shining Company. But today she felt that something was different.

"What's going on?" Leila asked in a puzzled tone, grabbing Burke's arm. "How come there's only the two of us here?"

Looking around at the lavishly furnished restaurant, Leila was baffled that the usually busy restaurant was now curiously empty. The restaurant was sought after because of the romantic ambiance it afforded its customers. Tables were set apart far from each other to achieve cozy privacy.

Tonight, all the tables were unexpectedly empty except for a table near the window with a great view of Y City at night. The table was elegantly set, lighted candles cast dancing shadows across the room adding to the romantic air.

"Because I booked the whole restaurant," Burke replied smoothly, smiling widely. "What do you think? Do you like the place?"

"You booked the whole restaurant, really?" Leila couldn't believe she heard him right, looking up at Burke in disbelief.

If the gesture was coming from Charles, she could well believe, but from Burke it was unbelievable.

She knew Burke's family was not rich. How could he afford to book the entire restaurant on a doctor's salary? Leila thought that she might accept Burke if he was as well off as Charles. After all, her dream was to marry a rich man.

"Yes, I did," Burke affirmed. "Let's go to our table," he invited.

Burke escorted Leila to their table by the window. He pulled out her chair and waited for her to sit down before going to sit down at the opposite chair. A few moments later, a waiter appeared welcoming them both and turning to Burke asked courteously, "Excuse me, Mr. Zhou. May I serve the dish?"

"Yes, thank you," Burke nodded affirmatively. "I ordered the food beforehand. I hope you don't mind,"

Burke apologized.

"It's all right," Leila responded absently. Her mind was still dazed from the surprise. Looking out the

window, Y City spread out before her. 'Isn't this the life I've always wanted?' she asked herself.

She wanted to experience how the other half lives, parties and bars at night and eating at exclusive

restaurants, a rich upper-class status.

'Now I almost achieved my dream, why is it that I don't feel happy?

I know Burke too well. He will probably be eating noodles for months after treating me to this meal.'

She looked at Burke guiltily, feeling sorry for making him spend so much.

Burke was unaware of the thoughts going through her mind. He poured her a glass of wine and said,"I

wanted to bring you here before for a romantic dinner but you didn't give me a chance. But now..."

Burke smiled leaving his sentence unfinished.

"Tell me, why did you bring me here, Burke?" Leila asked puzzled.

She took a sip of her wine, staring out the window to appreciate the breath-taking night view of the view

of Y City. 'I really enjoy looking at the city from this vantage point. If only... it was Charles sitting opposite me, it will be much better.

Unfortunately...' she sighed fixing her glance at Burke.

Burke chose that moment to seize Leila's hand resting at the table. Still basking at the romantic atmosphere, Leila didn't withdraw her hand immediately.

But after a while she managed to untangle her hands from Burke, saying, "I accepted your dinner invitation because I have something important to tell you."

"Please let me speak first, Leila," Burke said trying to recapture Leila's hand. He had planned for this moment for a long time and he couldn't wait to tell Leila how he really felt about her.

He had been in love with Leila for a very long time and today he finally decided to propose to her.

Leila sat quietly, waiting for what Burke had to say. Suddenly, out of nowhere Burke brought out an exquisite rose bouquet and offered to Leila.

"This is for me?" Leila asked surprised and confused at the same time.

"Of course," Burke replied with a bright smile. "I remember you told me that you loved roses, so I

brought you these flowers. I know it's the first time I have brought you flowers but I promise it won't be the last. From now on I will send you flowers for every occasion in your life. Will you give me this chance?" Burke said, his handsome face serious.

"Is this your idea of a joke?" Leila asked flustered. She couldn't believe that Burke was really proposing to her right now. He caught her off guard and she didn't know how to respond.

Burke smiled warmly. "Leila, we have known each other since high school. I loved you at first sight and I never stopped loving you. You know that, but why are you so surprised?"

Leila lowered her head guiltily. She knew exactly how Burke felt about her, but she was not sure about her feelings for him.

'I had a feeling that he's going to propose tonight, but I came here to end our relationship. How could I tell him that I want to break up with him now?' Leila thought, biting her lip.

At that moment, a waiter came to their table with their food. Leila gave a sigh of relief at the intermission.

The waiter arranged the succulent dishes in the table and left. Burke looked at Leila with a smile. He opened his mouth to continue where he left off.

Before he could say a word, Leila said, "The food looks delicious!"

She smiled up at him before continuing, "Thank you for bringing me here."

"I'm glad you like the place," Burke smiled back at her enthusiasm. He was relieved that she liked the

food he ordered. Looking pleased, Burke continued, "I can bring you here anytime you want."

He knew that Leila had a taste for luxurious places like this restaurant. 'I don't mind if she is a little

spoilt. After all, she is the woman I love,' Burke thought to himself.

"You don't have to, Burke," Leila replied hastily. "The food here is good but really expensive. I don't

want you to go broke because of me," Leila teased him.

Chapter 460 Burke's Proposal (Part Two)

"Don't worry about that." Burke gave a gentle smile. He had never told Leila all about his family

circumstances, but today he was determined to tell her everything. "Leila, try this. It tastes very good,"

he said affectionately.

He put the sakura jelly in front of Leila which was crystal-clear with a beautiful and bright cherry

blossom inside. In doing so, it was easy for Leila to find the diamond ring in the middle of the

translucent jelly.

"What is this, Burke?" Leila was shocked. Even though she could somehow sense what Burke was about to do, she was still feeling weak in her knees and flushed when she saw the diamond ring in the jelly.

When she was a little girl, she always imagined the scene when a man would proposal to her someday.

It should be romantic, touching and she would nod her agreement with tearful eyes glistening with love and hope.

Now the man sitting across from her not only had a respectable job but was also handsome. Moreover, he also came from a good family. It seemed that from every aspect, he was the perfect husband, but in comparison, Burke and Charles were as different as chalk and cheese.

Leila was surprised as Burke smiled softly at her, taking out the diamond ring from the jelly. After wiping it with a tissue carefully, he stood up abruptly and knelt over which startled Leila. It all seemed like a dream, a beautiful dream.

Even though there were only two of them in the restaurant, Leila still felt a pinch of embarrassment on all the attention she was receiving. Therefore, she reached out, in a bid to stop him. "Burke, please don't do this. Just stand up."

"Leila, don't stop me please. Let me finish what I am saying or I will not stand up," Burke said firmly. He

looked at Leila with his sincere eyes optimistic of their future.

In fact, Burke was handsome and the most important thing was that he was a dignified man. He was

pursuing Leila for so many years and he never gave up hope. Leila might have accepted his proposal if

she was not such a wavering girl.

However, she was still not content with him.

Upon seeing this, Leila's eyebrows knitted into a frown and had no idea how to respond.

Staring at Leila, Burke was so eager to take their relationship forward since he courted Leila for many

years. This was a big leap into their future.

"Leila, we may not have been together for a long time but we have known each other for so many

years. And I am sure that you know me well and know what kind of person I have become." Burke said

in a soft tone, as his eyes filled with affection and admiration for her.

All of a sudden, melodious music began to play in the background, with violin as the highlight. It was a

dream for every girl to be proposed in such a romantic manner. Leila's heart was warmed up by the

entire set up.

"I remember you telling me that this is your favorite song." Upon perceiving Leila's subtle and content

look, Burke felt that everything he had done was worth the effort. "I remember that when we were in the

high school, you said that you liked this song, so I played truant to learn this song. Do you still

remember that?"

"Yes, I remember it almost clearly," replied Leila softly as she chuckled to herself. She nodded slightly

and then said to Burke, "You did many things for me in high school and sacrificed a lot. I will never

forget it, but..."

However, before she could finish speaking, Burke interrupted her mid-way. "I am so glad that you could

remember all of that." Burke said cheerfully and went on, "Leila, we have been through a lot and I

hope..." He paused for a moment and continued, "I hope we could spend the rest of our lives together. I

hesitated for a quite long time, because I didn't know how to express my feelings. I know you only have

a favorable impression on me. But I am not sure if it is enough for you to accept me," he said sincerely.

He gazed at Leila with hopeful eyes and went on, "I thought about executing many grand and luxurious

scenes that would move you while surprising you, but in the end I chose the most conventional one. I

remember everything you said to me including what you like and dislike. I don't want to wait like this

anymore knowing that I want to spend my life with you and I don't want to remain in a state of

apprehension, because I am afraid that I will lose the chance before I could say these wonderful words

to you.

So I have to ask you today. Will you give me the pleasure of marrying me?"

Right after he finished his sentence, Burke looked at Leila nervously, waiting for her answer. He was

striving to have the perfect ending with Leila, but he was not sure how Leila would respond. He was at

a loss even when he had knelt over. He was sweaty and trembling slightly with fear. He tried his best to

calm down his nerves, but he realized it was impossible.

Leila shifted her eyes to the big diamond ring which was dazzling under the light and looked so

beautiful. She had never seen a ring so perfect. Burke added as he shivered, "I designed this diamond

ring personally, because I wanted it to be unique in the world just like you are. Leila, would you like to

wear this ring?"

Slowly, Burke said what he wanted to say most, though he still couldn't figure out what Leila wanted to

do. He could not read her expressions. In that moment he felt like a student who finally handed in his examination paper and was waiting anxiously for the result. This was really about his future and dreams.

With tear filled eyes Leila turned to Burke and whispered softly, "I am sorry, Burke. I can't accept your proposal at this moment."

"Why? Did I do something wrong?" Even though somewhere in his heart Burke had anticipated this result, it was hard for him to accept it. He had planned this proposal for a long time and he was confident that Leila would accept him. However, she just declined him out rightly which was hard for him to accept so quickly. "Leila, I love you so much. I would like to take care of you for the rest of my life. Why won't you accept me? Did I do something wrong? Please tell me and maybe I can change..."

Burke reflected and tried to find some mistakes in himself. He always felt that he hadn't done enough and that was why Leila didn't fall in love with him even though he was wooing her for about ten years.

Staring at Burke, Leila was at a loss of words on how to explain what she was thinking. In a hesitant tone she said, "Burke, listen to me. You are a good man and I appreciate everything you did for me with

all my heart. But..."

She stopped at mid-sentence, because she couldn't get herself to tell him the truth. She was unable to tell him that it was because he was not rich enough. She was materialistic and she could not let him know that harsh truth.

After hesitating for a long moment, she then said in a shaky voice, "Burke, it is not your fault. You are an amazing man, but I am not good enough for you. I am sorry."

"What do you mean by that, Leila?" Gripped by shock and a wave of confusion, Burke blurted out in a hurry, "Why did you say that you are not good enough for me? You are a kind girl and I love you for all that you are. So why are you saying this now?"

"Don't ask anymore questions please. Burke, I request you with all my heart." Leila stood up, grabbed her bag and turned around to leave. She was unable to stay there a moment longer or she would die out of guilt and shame of hurting him the way she did.

For others it may seem ridiculous that she would feel so immensely burdened by guilt.

"Burke, I am so sorry. Please forget me. I know there are many wonderful women who would love to be with a man as kind, gentle and considerate as you. I can't be with you," said Leila as she choked back

on her tears. She then took one last glance at Burke, as her eyes turned red with gushing tears.

"Leila, stop. Don't leave me alone here. Leila, please wait." Burke got up from the floor, but his legs

were now numb as he was kneeling over for quite a long time. But between all of that he did not realize

it and leaped ahead to stop Leila who was going to leave.

He had too many questions to ask her as she had left him quite dumbfounded.

He was afraid that he would lose the chance to get answers if Leila left today. He needed these

answers for clarity, for peace and more importantly to accept what had happened before he can move

on.

"Leila, please tell me why you didn't say yes. I know what you said just now wasn't true. If you aren't

good enough for me, I don't know who is." He looked distressed while Leila kept looking at the ground

to avoid looking into his pitiful eyes.