

Wedded Bride 91

Chapter 91

"I see, " replied Charles. He did not care about Sam's thoughts for Autumn as he trusted her. "Let's go inside. They are waiting for us, " he said to Autumn.

He then took Autumn by her hand and walked straight into the house, leaving Sam behind with a frown.

Almost immediately after they entered the living room, Yvonne walked up to them with a grin on her face. "Did you have a pleasing conversation with Mr. Lin?" she asked. "Despite having been abroad for many years, he still has feelings for you. If my first boyfriend was enchanted by me this way I would be ecstatic!"

"Are you?" With a sly smile Autumn replied, "Of course you would. After all, you are a precocious girl. You started dating boys since the beginning of middle school. Do you even remember your first boyfriend?"

Without an appropriate come-back Yvonne angrily stammered, "You..." She attempted to create an impression of being innocent and lovely on Charles. But as Autumn aired her dirty laundry in front of Charles, it was only natural that Yvonne was upset with her half sister's words.

'If I continue this conversation, Autumn will only reveal more of despicable past to Charles, ' Yvonne muttered to herself. In an attempt to save her pride, she turned to Charles and said in an injured voice, "Charles... don't believe what Yvonne said. She made up every bit of these fictitious stories."

Charles didn't respond and he pretended like he did not hear her. He walked past her to the table, still holding Autumn's hand firmly. Keeping up the charade, Wendy acted like she hadn't witnessed the spat and greeted them with a warm smile, "Take a seat here."

Charles took the seat on Autumn's left side while others were taking a spot to sit. When Sam entered, he only found the spot beside Autumn empty and calmly sat there.

Autumn felt a pinch of embarrassment and also awkward to sit between Charles and Sam.

Yvonne slowly came and grabbed the spot beside Charles. While pouring a glass of wine for him she said, "Charles, try this. This is my... uncle's favorite wine that he has kept and matured for years."

Brushing off Yvonne yet again, Charles handed that glass of wine to Autumn, who was pouring a soft drink, and said, "I need to drive us home later. I can't drink."

With a bottle of wine between her lap, Yvonne sat rather awkwardly beside Charles not knowing what to do next. She tried to attract his attention several times but Charles was on guard and paid her no heed.

Wendy and Simon looked at each other after observing this tension. Wendy immediately turned to Charles and with a smile on her face said, "Charles, just take a sip of the wine. It is excellent! You can sleep here if you drink too much to be able to drive. We have many empty rooms here."

Simon jumped right into the conversation, "Wendy is right. You have been married to Yvonne for a long time, you are family! You should stay here overnight." Despite their persuasion, Charles declined their polite offer.

He replied to Simon rather blatantly, "No, thanks. I cannot fall asleep in someone else's house comfortably."

After hearing this, Autumn tried hard to control her laughter. 'When we got married he slept in his study for days. And now he just used such a lame excuse, ' she thought.

Wendy and Simon knew as well that Charles was making excuses to avoid staying the night. 'He is the CEO of Shining Company. With frequent business trip every now and then, he has spent many nights and days living in hotels. There is no reason he can be so particular about beds.'

Noticing Charles was reluctant to drink, Yvonne grew impatient. After having a discussion with Wendy, she arranged the dinner with only two purposes in mind, one was to get Charles drunk and the other was to destroy Charles's relationship with Autumn.

'As long as Charles gets drunk, he will be mine, ' Yvonne pondered.

"Charles, just drink a little, see everyone is requesting you so nicely, " Yvonne tried her luck again. She hurried to pour Charles a glass but unexpectedly the whole bottle of wine tumbled onto his lap. His entire dark blue trousers were drenched.

Out of instinct, Yvonne grabbed the first table cloth she could find in an attempt to clean up his pants with the cloth. She apologized, "Charles, I'm sorry. I didn't expect..."

Charles yelled out, "That is enough!" He was unwilling to come here to begin with. And after this incident, he was impatient to leave. He grabbed Yvonne by the hand, and said, "I am going to the bathroom."

Charles got up and stormed to the bathroom while Autumn followed him.

As soon as Charles was out of sight, Wendy gave a disapproving glance to Yvonne. In that moment Yvonne realized how unbecoming her behavior was all night.

'How could I wipe the private parts of Charles in front of Sam? Besides, Autumn was there too, ' she cursed herself.

Despite seeing through Yvonne for who she truly was, Sam pretended to be ignorant. In an attempt to humiliate her, he spoke out, "Uncle, aunty, please tell me what is this woman's relationship with you? She has very poor manners. After all, Mr. Lu is Autumn's husband. Her behavior is unbecoming."

Angered by his outburst, Yvonne retorted, "Who do you think you are? How can you intervene in our family affairs?"

Sam said as he was standing up, "I'd better leave now that I'm no longer welcome here." Wendy got up from her seat in a hurry to stop him, "Sam, you're a wise man. You must have known... what had happened in our family."

"Yes, I do." With a slight nod, Sam continued, "To be honest, I have never met a mother like you. Autumn is your daughter too. How can you treat her like this?"

Yvonne sneered, "How could you compare that bitch to me?"

Sam shouted at Yvonne, "Shut up!" 'Your parents have thoroughly spoiled you, but I will not.' He continued, "A woman like you can never be equal to Little Ye."

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Before Wendy could say anything, Autumn and Charles walked out of the washroom together. "Dad, Mom, we are going home now. We won't be eating here. Take your time with the food."

Autumn said in a cold voice. Yvonne immediately objected, "No! We rarely have the opportunity to have dinner together. How can you leave now?"

"Why not?" Autumn said bluntly, "And wait for you to pour hot soup on him?"

Charles knew Autumn was angry and didn't want to make it difficult for her. So he pulled her away and spoke to Simon and Wendy, "Dad, Mom, we are going home now. We will visit again in a couple of days. If you'll excuse us, we shall leave now."

"Charles..." Simon stood up, trying to make them stay but Wendy stopped him and said, "If you want to go home now, I won't stand in your way. My apologies."

"Let me prepare a nice meal for you next time." Wendy's smile was sincere this time.

Simon and Yvonne did not say anything. Seeing Autumn and Charles leaving, Sam also stood up and said, "I am leaving as well."

"Sam, wait." Wendy stopped Sam, "You are already here. Please have dinner with us. I have something to tell you."

Autumn's face soured at what she heard.

Wendy saw Autumn and Charles to the door. Pleasant smiles were exchanged. Others looking might believe that Wendy was actually a devoted mother.

But the truth was...

After Autumn and Charles left, Wendy went back to the living room to get back to her plan. Simon refused to get involved, so he made an excuse and left the room. The servants were dismissed, leaving only Wendy, Yvonne and Sam.

Sam had remained silent all this time. Then he asked, "Why did you ask me to stay? I don't believe that it's because you want to have dinner with me."

"You are a clever man!" Wendy sneered, "Sam, there are only three of us in this room now. Let's be frank and put our cards on the table. I have a way to break Autumn and Charles apart. Will you help me?"

Sam fixed his eyes upon Wendy's face and asked with a smile, "What makes you think that I will help you?"

Since Wendy had told him her intention, she must be confident that Sam would take her side. Sam wanted to know why she was so determined.

"You haven't moved on after all these years."

"Has it ever occurred to you that I love her so much and I won't do anything to hurt her?" Sam gave a scornful smile.

"Oh stop being such a nice man!" Yvonne taunted, "Love is extremely selfish. If you love Autumn, how can you not want to be with her? I love Charles so much and I will do everything to have him fall in love with me. I know you feel the same about Autumn."

Sam uttered no word. Wendy looked at Sam and urged, "Sam, make up your mind. Time waits for no one."

"Fine! What do I have to do?"

On the way back home, Charles kept a serious face and said nothing. He couldn't get his mind off what he saw earlier as Sam held Autumn. He had a lot of questions and wanted to ask Autumn.

"You... You have questions for me?" Autumn asked.

"What about you? Is there anything you want to tell me?" Charles asked in reply.

"I..." Autumn hesitated for a long time before she spoke. "I didn't know that they invited Sam. My mother asked me to take him around the house, so I did it. On the way back inside, I slipped and Sam helped me to my feet. There is nothing going on between us."

"That's it?" Charles pulled over and turned to Autumn. "Who is that lady? She keeps trying to seduce me and your parents turn a blind eye. They even add fuel to the flame and encourage it. What is going on?"

"You are thinking too much." Autumn looked away. Of course she knew Yvonne had gone too far. But if she told Charles the truth, her identity would be exposed. She dared not do that.

"She is a distant relative and will stay with my parents for a while. Maybe she was just being hospitable..." Autumn murmured as she avoided looking at Charles.

"She was just being hospitable?" Charles sneered, "Do you think I'm an idiot? That other night when we had dinner, she told me she wanted to be my wife. You are my wife and you don't mind that at all. I don't understand."

Autumn remained silent. Every time they talked about this matter, Autumn always kept quiet. Charles knew she had her reasons. But Yvonne was getting way out of line and Charles couldn't bear it anymore.

"Say something. You are the daughter of Simon and Wendy. Why do they always try to pair me with some distant relative? Please tell me the truth, who is she?" Charles was getting exasperated.

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Chris knew that the problem between the couple would be solved as long as Autumn patiently explained everything to Charles.

Autumn nodded and replied, "I know." 'I want to tell Charles, but... I don't know how to start.

Besides, I have already agreed to pull away from Charles. I have made up my mind and I can't give up easily, ' she mused.

Autumn sighed. "Chris, we will solve our own problem. Tomorrow I will fly to Z City at 10:00 am. I will stay there for a couple of days. Please take care of yourself, Charles and grandpa."

Chris was surprised. "Oh, you are going on a trip?" Chris was stunned and thought, 'She chose to run away from their problem instead of solving it. If it lasts too long, their problem would be more difficult to handle.'

"Yes, I am, " said Autumn, nodding slightly, 'It has been a while since I quit my job. I had no time to travel around in the past and Charles bought me this ticket. During this trip, I can think about our relationship, ' she again mused.

"But..."

Autumn said, "Don't worry. I just want to take a trip to relax. I will come back in a couple of days." Chris wanted to persuade her not to go, but she knew that Autumn wouldn't listen to her. 'Perhaps it's good for her to take a trip to relax, ' she thought to herself then said, "Okay, then go to bed early."

As Chris left the room, she saw that Gary was talking with Charles. He asked with a frown, "What's going on between you and Yvonne? What happened?"

Charles frowned slightly and answered, "Grandpa, leave this to us." Charles just wanted Autumn to understand that they had become a family since they got married and that they should share things with each other and face them together. A couple shouldn't have secrets.

"Charles, you are the man in this relationship. Even if your wife did something wrong, you should forgive her." Chris joined in. "You shouldn't remain angry at her."

Charles replied in a disapproving voice, "You're just a child, so don't intervene with our matters."

"Did I say anything wrong? Did you know that Yvonne will be traveling to Z City tomorrow? How could you stay calm now?" Hearing this, Charles remembered that he had bought a ticket for Autumn. He had been so busy with work these days that he had forgotten that she would be going to Z City the next day.

Chris was relieved to see Charles concerned. 'At least he cares about her, ' she thought. Gary sighed, "I don't know what happened between you two. But she is a good girl. Go upstairs and talk to your wife."

Charles stood up and left the room. He had thought about it a lot since his argument with Autumn. 'Her mother had left her to her grandma since she was a little girl. Now this same mother uses her and doesn't treat her well. She must have lost all trust after what happened to her.

Besides, her mother even threatened her with her grandmother so it is natural for her to be on guard like this.'

Charles wanted to tell her that he would be on her side whatever happened and that he really loved her.

When he entered the room, he saw Autumn lying on the bed in her pajamas. She had to get up early the next day so she had gone to sleep early.

Charles had been sleeping in his study since their argument. She was surprised as she hadn't expected Charles to appear in the room.

The room was filled with an awkward atmosphere. They stared at each other then Charles asked, "Your flight is at 10:00 am tomorrow, isn't it?"

Autumn nodded. "Yes, it is." 'He bought me the ticket. How could he not know that?' Autumn thought.

Charles said, "I will take you to the airport tomorrow."

"You don't have to." Autumn refused. "Tomorrow is Saturday. You don't have to get up early just to take me there. I will just take a taxi."

But Charles insisted so Autumn agreed.

Charles didn't go back to his study. He took a shower, and lay on the bed beside Autumn. She turned over, and saw the gauze on his head. 'After I return from Z City, his stitches could be taken out, ' she thought.

Autumn couldn't ignore the bandage, so she said, "Don't forget to go to the hospital to have your wound examined while I'm away."

Charles replied flatly, "Don't worry about me. Have a good trip." He turned over and went to sleep.

Autumn looked at Charles's wide back. A sad feeling came over her.

'If I hadn't gotten married to Charles in this manner, I would hold his hand tightly. But now... I can't, ' thought Autumn to herself.

The next morning, the alarm clock rang waking Autumn up. She hurried to press the clock. When she turned around, she found Charles still sound asleep. She got up, got dressed, and then went downstairs. She was having breakfast when Charles came down to join her.

He asked with sleepy eyes, "Why didn't you wake me up?"

"You were still sound asleep." Autumn wasn't expecting Charles to be up at this time. She had gotten up quietly to avoid waking him up.

Charles hollered towards the kitchen, "Nancy, get me a cup of milk."

Since the incident, Nancy was polite towards Autumn but she still didn't like her. As long as Nancy didn't cross the line, Autumn would not give her a hard time.

"Young master, I made congee with red dates for you. It can invigorate you with vital energy and nourish your blood. Would you like to have a try?" said Nancy, giving Autumn an hostile glance. 'If it hadn't been for her, I wouldn't have displeased the young master, ' she thought.

Charles replied, "I have to drive Yvonne to the airport in a minute. I will eat later." He didn't want to make Autumn miss her flight.

"Nancy, go get him some congee." Autumn said. And she turned to Charles with a concerned expression, "We have enough time. Have some congee first. I won't miss the flight."

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Charles helped Autumn check her baggage in, got her boarding pass and took her to the security checkpoint. "Go, " he told her. Autumn turned to him and with a gentle wave, said, "You go home now. I'm leaving."

"Bon voyage!" Charles watched her leave and did not turn away until she was out of his sight.

He already began to miss her. He now knew what it was like to miss someone.

On the plane, Autumn took a blindfold out of her coat pocket, and asked the stewardess for a blanket, ready to sleep. She was about to fall asleep when there came a familiar voice. "Can I sit here?"

She quickly took off the blindfold and saw Sam standing by her seat, smiling. Then he sat down at the empty seat next to her before she could answer him.

Autumn was baffled. It wasn't until Sam fastened his seat belt that she understood what was going on. "Why... why are you here?" she asked.

"Surprised?" Sam shot back with a smile. Wendy had told him about Autumn's flight. He didn't know how she got the information, but upon learning it, he booked the same flight almost without hesitation.

"Yes. How did you know that I was going to Z City?" Autumn asked again, frowning.

"Relax, it's just a coincidence. I have an appointment with a client in Z City to sign a contract today. I wasn't expecting to see you here either. It looks like the trip won't be too boring, " Sam answered, still smiling.

"Really?" Autumn didn't believe him.

"Of course. Get some sleep if you're sleepy. I'll wake you up when the plane lands, " Sam said.

Autumn was really sleepy, so she put her blindfold back on and fell asleep. Sitting next to her, Sam was deep in thought.

When Wendy told him about Autumn's flight, he was actually a bit hesitant. But when he found out that Autumn's destination was Z City, he immediately decided to join her.

When Autumn was very young, he told her that Z City was a beautiful city with mountains and seas, and that it was romantic just walking on the beach hand in hand with a loved one.

And he also told her that he was sure to propose to his future wife in Z City.

So now was the perfect time to be with her there. He thought that... Autumn was going to Z City because of what he had said.

What Sam did not know was that Autumn wanted to go to Z City mostly because of Chris's recommendation. Z City was not far from Y City, and the scenery was wonderful. The other reason was that her grandmother once said she also wanted to visit this place one day.

She had already forgotten what Sam had said about it.

When the plane was about to land, Sam woke Autumn up, offered her a glass of water, and said, "We are landing soon. Have some water to drink."

"Have we arrived in Z City?" Autumn asked, rubbing her sleepy eyes. When they got off the plane, she took her luggage, ready to leave, but Sam stopped her and offered, "Let me take you to your hotel."

He pointed to his car.

"No, thank you." She came here to be alone for a few days, and she had gained a good understanding of this trip before coming. Besides, she thought it would ruin the fun if everything was arranged. So she refused Sam's arranged car. "Don't you have an appointment? Go and do your thing. I can go around by myself. Don't delay whatever you came here for." Autumn said.

Obviously, the appointment was just Sam's excuse to join her. Since the HKind Group had a branch office in Z City, he easily arranged for a car to pick him up.

He knew that he could not rush things, so he did not insist and nodded. "Then be careful. I'll be here for a few days. Call me if you need anything," he told Autumn.

"Okay." Autumn replied with a nod. When Sam left, she took a taxi, planning to leave her luggage at the hotel before exploring the city.

The room Charles booked for Autumn had an ocean view. The room was beautifully decorated, and what pleased Autumn the most was the large French window.

She could clearly see the entire seaside. Some clouds had just moved in front of the sun and sunlight filtered through them, making the sea sparkle. There were couples walking barefoot on the sand. When the waves hit, they would run, chase and play around the water. Everything there was perfect.

After changing into proper clothes, Autumn joined the people at the beach wearing a sun bonnet.

She was in a bright mood, just like the blue sea and the bright sky.

Standing on the beautiful seaside, she could hear her heart beating.

"Excuse me, I can't find my mom..." She was savoring this rare moment of pleasure when she heard the soft, broken voice of a child.

Looking down, she saw a little girl tugging at the corner of her dress, her big eyes full of tears.

"What's wrong?" The little girl had bright eyes and small, chubby hands, and wore a pink princess dress, which melted Autumn's heart. She stooped down, looked at the girl and gently asked, "What's your name?"

"My name is Cindy..." The girl sobbed, "Can you help me find my mom?"

"Sure." Autumn then took Cindy by the hand, and asked, "What does your mom look like?"

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"Yes..." Cindy nodded her head seriously and asked, "Big sister, where is my mom?"

Cindy finally got back to the place where she last saw her mother, but she was unable to find her. Disappointed, she pouted and tears trickled down her cheeks.

"Cindy, you are a good girl. Don't cry. I promise to help you find your mother, okay?" It was gradually getting dark. Autumn had waited for a long time and never moved from that spot with Cindy, but her mother didn't show up. Now Autumn had gotten a little anxious as people at the beach started leaving one after another. However, as time passed it seemed that this little girl had forgotten that she had lost her mom. She looked at Autumn and said with a sad little voice, "Sister, I am so hungry."

Autumn took a glance at her watch. This beach was not far from the hotel where she was staying. Autumn hesitated for a little while then decided to take Cindy back to the hotel with her.

"Well, let's get something to eat then, okay?" Autumn carried her back to the hotel and there, Cindy freely ordered whatever she wanted. Cindy could speak English fluently as she ordered, through which Autumn could tell that she may come from a wealthy family.

Cindy's parents may be frantic now, but she was still enjoying her meal here.

"Cindy, take your time with your food." Though she had elegant table manners, she ate in a hurry perhaps out of hunger. She even choked a little so Autumn quickly handed her a lemonade.

They were dining in the hall of the hotel. Autumn had just registered at the reception desk. She hoped that Cindy's parents could find them there as soon as possible, so they sat where it would be easy to see them.

Looking at this adorable girl in front of her, Autumn wondered if she should call the police if her parents still didn't show up that night, but she hesitated.

"Sister, what are you thinking of? Why don't you eat?" Cindy continued eating and asked Autumn who was deep in thought.

Autumn wiped her mouth and grinned. "I am not hungry. You can have some more."

"I am full now, " said Cindy. She gazed at Autumn with her big, clear eyes. It made her look so lovely. Autumn felt her heart almost melting as she looked at this lovely girl. She even wanted to take her back home.

"Are you full now?" Autumn now felt trapped in a dilemma. If she took Cindy back to her room, her parents who are already worried about her, may not see them. But Autumn also couldn't bear to leave her alone to the police.

"Sister, I am sleepy now. I want to go to bed." Cindy wanted to sleep now that she was full. And it seemed like she had forgotten that she had lost her parents.

It was probably because Autumn looked like Cindy's mother, that Cindy could feel safe with her.

Autumn paid for the meal and then said kindheartedly, "Cindy, I know you are sleepy, but you can't sleep now. We need to find your parents."

"But..." Cindy pouted, her eyes filled with tears.

"Cindy, don't be upset. I promise you that I will buy you some sweets when we find your mother." Autumn tried to comfort her. When she finally calmed down, Cindy insisted that Autumn hold her.

Autumn had no choice but to hold her while walking to the reception desk. "Excuse me. Did anyone come looking for a little girl?"

"Yes, miss. A lady did come looking for a girl just now. She is still here." The desk clerk looked around and pointed to a woman in a red skirt standing by the door of the hotel. "Look! She is still over there, " said the clerk.

"Thank you very much!" Cindy had already fallen asleep on her shoulder, so Autumn held her and walked over to the door. The woman happened to see Cindy in Autumn's arms as she turned around. She exclaimed and rushed to Autumn, taking Cindy away into her own arms.

"Cindy, where did you go? I am so worried about you. You almost drove me crazy." The woman held Cindy tightly and didn't loosen her grip, her eyes glistening with tears.

"Excuse me..." The woman looked up at Autumn as soon as she uttered the words. But both of them were astonished as soon as they saw each other's face. Autumn now understood what Cindy was talking about earlier.

Cindy was right. Autumn indeed looked very much like this woman. Perhaps that was why Cindy immediately felt comfortable with her.

"Who are you? Why do you have my daughter with you? What is your purpose?" The woman was hostile as she looked and spoke to Autumn. Before Autumn could reply, a man walked over and stood behind the woman. He was dressed in sportswear and looked very casual. But his eyes flickered in the light. Under his gaze, Autumn somehow felt embarrassed even though she did nothing wrong.

"Abby, have you found Cindy?" The man asked. Perhaps it was because the little girl was so tired that she did not even wake up when her mother took her away from Autumn.

The man sighed with relief when he saw his little girl.

They had been looking for her for a long time and now they have found her.

"What is going on?" The man asked the woman as soon as he noticed Autumn standing there.

"I found this woman holding Cindy here. It must be her. She took away Cindy when we were not looking. Andy, don't let this woman leave. The woman had already made up her mind that it was Autumn who took Cindy away, so she asked the man to arrest Autumn. "No, no, no. That is not the case. It is not me. I found her lost and alone at the beach. I..."

But before she could finish her words, Abby interrupted her and turned to the man again, "Andy, don't let her leave. Let's go to the hospital first and then come back to deal with her."

As soon as she finished talking, a few men in black suits and sunglasses behind the woman readily stepped forward. Autumn glared at them. 'Well, now I am really in trouble.' She thought.

Luckily, the man was reasonable. He stepped towards Autumn and said, "Miss, though I don't know what happened, I have to take my daughter to the hospital and have her physically examined. Are you staying at this hotel?"

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Autumn picked up the phone and said, "Hello..." As soon as she answered the phone, it was Charles's angry voice that greeted her. "Didn't I ask you to give me a call when you got off the plane? I called many times. Why didn't you answer the phone?"

When he hadn't gotten through to her, he almost lost his mind. Now he only wanted to make sure that Autumn was safe.

Charles's anxious voice shook her determination to alienate him. Autumn replied, "I'm sorry. When I got off the plane, I forgot to call you. Then, when I went out, I forgot to take my phone with me. I'm really sorry."

With Autumn explaining to him gently, Charles couldn't pretend to be mean to her anymore. His voice softened. "What did you do the whole day? It's already dark. Did you return to your hotel just now?"

"Yes, I just came back to the hotel." Autumn turned over on the bed where she was sitting and told Charles, "Today, I saw a little girl who had gotten separated from her parents on the beach. I didn't leave her until her parents showed up. That's why I have just gotten back."

Charles wasn't pleased. "Next time if you get in a similar situation, just walk away. Don't get yourself in trouble."

Autumn couldn't believe that Charles would say these words. After a short pause, she replied, "Fine, I will."

That little girl looked so cute. Autumn couldn't just ignore her.

Nowadays people have become indifferent. Sometimes you think you have done some good deed, only to find out that you have fallen into a trap. That's why an increasing number of people don't dare to help others anymore.

Charles asked tenderly, "Have you had dinner?" Autumn had been so worried about Cindy that she had forgotten to get food for herself. She was just starting to feel hungry. She didn't want Charles to worry about her, so she replied, "Yes, I have. What about you?"

Before Charles could answer, Chris grabbed the phone from his hand and said, "Yvonne, don't lose contact with us again. If you still hadn't picked up the phone, he would have flown over to check on you tonight."

Autumn could hear Charles's voice in the background, "Don't talk nonsense..." Charles took the phone back from Chris and said, "Don't listen to her. All I wanted to say is to take care of yourself and get some rest."

Because of his gentleness and concern, Autumn was overwhelmed with happiness. She replied, "I will." Then she hung up the phone. When Autumn remembered the men standing outside her door, her good mood quickly faded away.

She heard a knock from outside. She opened the door and saw a man in a suit. He said, "Excuse me, madam. Our boss asked for you. Please follow me to the hospital. "

'It sounds like an order rather than a request.

Would I be in danger if I went with this person alone?' thought Autumn to herself with a frown.

Then, she remembered Sam. 'Perhaps he could help me.'

"Wait a minute. I will get my coat." Autumn closed the door and immediately dialed Sam's number. Soon she heard Sam's voice, "Little Ye, I'm surprised to receive your call at this time. Is everything OK?"

"Sam, I..." After hesitating a bit, Autumn told him what had happened to her. After she finished her story, Sam said, "Don't worry. You go with the guy first. I will catch up with you soon."

Then he hung up. 'I haven't even told him which hospital I will be going to. How could he find me?' Autumn thought, getting anxious.

That man in the suit knocked again and urged her to leave for the hospital. Autumn put on her coat in a hurry and this time, took her phone with her. Then, she opened the door and left the hotel with the man.

Autumn didn't know that Sam was at the same hotel. After hanging up, he rushed out of his room, got into his car and then followed the car that Autumn had gotten into.

In the car, Autumn didn't say a word. When they arrived at the hospital, she got out of the car. Sam who was close behind reached the hospital as well. However, he needed to pull up first. The man led Autumn to Cindy's ward. When they arrived at the ward, Autumn saw Abby and Andy by the door. Cindy was screaming from inside the room, "Sister! I want to see that pretty sister!!!"

"Miss Autumn, you're finally here." Andy had been the leader of a gang for years. He feared nothing except his wife and his loving daughter.

For his daughter, he swallowed all his pride and ran to Autumn. "I'm sorry for what we did to you. We made a big mistake."

He pulled Abby's sleeves. Then Abby came forward slowly and said with an embarrassed look, "I'm really sorry. I almost lost my mind when I lost my daughter. So when I saw you with her, I... Miss Ye, please don't get angry with me."

Autumn was relieved and said, "It's okay." Hearing Cindy's wails, she couldn't help but ask, "What's wrong with her? Why is she crying like that?"

Andy sighed, "I don't know what to do." He then continued, "Cindy has lived with her grandparents since she was little and they spoiled her. She is allergic to seafood, but seafood happens to be her favorite. My wife and I don't let her eat any. Today, she even ran away from home because of that. While she was with you she ordered seafood. Now she's having an allergic reaction. The doctor needed to give her an IV drip, but she refused. Now, we don't know what to do about her."

"I'm so sorry. I didn't know that she..." 'This place is along the seaside so naturally seafood is abundant here. Cindy ordered lots of seafood. I had no idea that she is allergic to it.' thought Autumn to herself.

Andy said gratefully, "It doesn't matter. Thank you for looking after her today." 'Abby and I mistook her for a person with bad intentions. How could I suspect her as such?' Andy blamed himself.

Chapter 97

"Please!" Abby requested. When Autumn entered the ward, Cindy perched herself on the bed, crying. She looked so small and sick as her eyes were swollen from all the weeping. The doctor in the room did not dare to move closer to her but continued consoling her from a distance.

"Cindy..." In her soft and humble voice, Autumn called out to her. Hearing the familiar voice amidst the commotion, Cindy immediately stopped crying and turned to the door. Upon seeing Autumn's face, shock gripped her as she could not believe who was standing before her. She rubbed her eyes, leaped off the bed in one swift movement, ran forward and wrapped her arms around Autumn's legs.

Cindy whimpered, "Why did you abandon me, sister?"

Autumn didn't know whether to cry or to laugh at this question. She looked into Cindy's eyes while slowly bending down and said, "Cindy, I did not abandon you. You are the apple of your parents' eyes. I may not be able to stay with you forever, Cindy, but I promise you that I'll give you my personal number so that you can call me whenever you wish to see me. Okay?"

"I don't want to part with you..." Cindy cried harder this time.

Abby stood right outside the door in the hallway. Hearing Cindy break down, she wanted to enter the ward to comfort her, but Andy stopped her and said, "Don't worry. I think Miss Ye has the situation under control."

Andy knew his daughter had a mind of her own. He also knew that Cindy trusted Autumn and with that he did not worry at all.

Autumn was patiently consoling Cindy and within minutes Cindy calmed down. Autumn sat on the bed with Cindy in her arms. She then assumed a serious tone and asked, "Can you tell me why you refused to receive the injection?"

"I... am just scared of the needle..." Cindy whispered timidly.

Giving Cindy a disapproving glance, Autumn said, "You knew you would need an injection after eating seafood, then why did you run from home and request me to specifically take you to a restaurant serving seafood? Cindy, what you did is not right. Do you understand?"

Children at Cindy's age can distinguish between actions that are right and wrong. With that perspective, Autumn tried to reason with Cindy. Hearing Autumn's words, Cindy lowered her head and murmured, "I knew I was wrong, but I just couldn't help..."

Cindy felt that she'd been wronged.

She loved seafood so much, then why couldn't she enjoy it like other people do?

Why did she have to suffer an allergic reaction?

"See, you did something that wasn't good for you and now you must pay the price. After eating the seafood, you got rashes. If you don't let the doctors administer the injection, you will not recover. What if your pretty face gets many scars from these rashes in the future?" Autumn bluffed.

After thinking about it for one long moment, Cindy rolled up her sleeve and stretched out her chubby arm as she closed her eyes and demanded, "Give me the injection."

The doctor gave Cindy the injection while trying to controlling his laughter. After the dreaded injection was over, Cindy jumped into Autumn's arms. Autumn held her tightly and patted her back to comfort her.

"Okay, the injection is done. She can be discharged shortly." The doctor said to Autumn, "If anything is wrong or you need any assistance, please press the button which is on the bedside."

"Alright." Autumn nodded. After the doctor left the ward, Cindy raised her head and glanced at Autumn, "Sister, I hope now I look prettier than before?"

"Yes, most definitely." Autumn smiled and in a serious tone proclaimed, "Cindy is the most beautiful kid in the world."

This made Cindy content. Soon after she fell asleep, Autumn got out of the ward quietly. She informed Abby and Andy, "Cindy is asleep."

"Thank you so very much!" With utmost sincerity Abby thanked her. Her daughter had never been so close to a stranger before. Maybe one reason was that Autumn looked very much like Abby.

There were times even Abby couldn't handle Cindy, but Autumn made it look easy.

"It is alright. Cindy is a wonderful child and I am very fond of her." Autumn spotted Sam in a distance. She waved at him and greeted him with a warm smile, "Sam."

Sam had reached the hospital earlier, but hadn't shown up in front of Autumn as there was nothing serious. He walked up to Autumn and asked, "Are you alright?"

"Yes, I am." Autumn answered and introduced Sam to the couple, "They are the parents of the girl. This is..."

"I know." Before Autumn could introduce Sam, Abby spoke up, "He must be your husband. You two seem like an ideal couple! Are you on your honeymoon in the Z City?"

Sam remained silent and so was Autumn in that moment as she was embarrassed by Abby's words. She tried to explain their relationship, "You misunderstood our relation. We are not..."

"We have been through the experience. We understand..." Abby again assumed that Autumn was just being shy, but Andy immediately realized something was wrong. He grabbed Abby by her hand and said, "It is getting late. Miss Autumn has stayed here for a long time. She must be tired. We should also check on Cindy now. Miss Autumn, thank you for coming! "

"You're right. I almost forgot. Miss Autumn, we are so sorry for what happened today. We..." Before Abby could finish her sentence, Andy dragged her into the ward and left Autumn and Sam in the hallway.

Autumn said, "Sam, I'm so sorry for bothering you. I thought they wanted to... I feel embarrassed for having called you here. I am sorry!"

"What a silly girl! You don't have to be so formal with me." Sam smiled and stretched out his hand, in an attempt to pat her head, but Autumn stepped back.

Sam was left rather awkward, but he recovered immediately and offered, "Well, let me drive you back."

"That is not necessary. I will take a taxi back." Autumn refused the request.

"Let's go." Sam grabbed Autumn's arm and adamantly said, "I'm going in your direction..."

"Going my way?" Autumn asked with a frown, "How did you know where I live?"

Chapter 98

Andy laughed and continued, "Perhaps it was in our destiny to meet. You and Abby look very alike. That's probably why Cindy is so fond of you. When Cindy woke up last night and could not find you in the room, she cried out for you. She didn't fall asleep until she exhausted herself."

When Autumn heard this, her affection for Cindy increased. She said tenderly, "I have been fond of Cindy since the first moment I met her. I wish I can have such a cute and loving daughter like her one day."

Andy replied with an assuring smile and blessing nod, "You will." He then continued, "I'm sorry for what happened last night."

"For what are you apologizing?" Autumn thought he was apologizing for taking her for an evil woman with ill intentions. She continued, "Mr. Xu, if you continue to be so civil and formal with me, I will not come here again."

"I was talking about that embarrassing scene when my wife mistook that man for your husband." Autumn was taken aback when she heard Andy's words. 'He knew it, ' she thought with a surprised expression. With a rather awkward smile she said, "Never mind it. It's not a big deal."

"My wife has been spoiled since she was a little girl. As meddlesome as she is, she wishes no harm for any one. Please don't be mad at her." 'It wasn't easy for me to pursue her.

Luckily, we now lead a happy life, ' Andy thought to himself.

"It's okay." Hearing his heartfelt and sincere apology, Autumn felt uneasy. She responded, "It is really not a big deal."

Autumn didn't enter Cindy's ward as Cindy and Abby hadn't woken up yet and she didn't want to disturb them. When she saw Andy having breakfast, she took a seat beside him. Andy said, "I caught your accent. I suppose that you're not a native of Z City, are you? "

With a slight nod, Autumn answered, "No, I am not. I'm from Y City. I chanced upon Cindy as soon as I arrived here yesterday. "

Andy asked, "So you are a tourist?"

"Yes, I am." Autumn continued with a smile on her face, "What about you? I noticed that Cindy speaks English very fluently. It feels like she lives abroad. "

"Clever girl, " Andy complimented her. He responded while laughing, "My wife was born in Z City. Later, her family emigrated abroad. Cindy lives abroad, but my wife and I speak to her in Chinese. So she speaks Chinese quite well too. "

When she heard this, Autumn thought with frown, 'Perhaps this means I will not be able to meet Cindy again.' She then followed up, "Did you come back to... visit your relatives?"

"My parents-in-law have been eager to come back. This time we brought Cindy back and wanted to see whether she would like it here. If she does, we will gradually shift our business back here." Andy added, "Even after staying abroad for so many years, I would still like to stay in our homeland."

Andy didn't tell Autumn the other reason why they chose to come back. After breakfast, he turned to Autumn and asked, "Autumn, may I know more about your family?"

With a bitter look, she replied, "I have a grandma, that's it." She never considered Wendy as her mother. She continued, "She always longed to come to Z City. But now she can't come here as she is very sick. So I came here and I intend to take many pictures and show them to her when I get back."

Andy asked, "What about your father?" When he observed the confusion on Autumn's face, he hurried to explain, "I did not mean to put you in a spot. Do not think much of these questions and you do not have to answer it if you don't want to."

"It's not a secret." With a sense of gloom, Autumn answered, "My dad passed away when I was a little girl. My grandma didn't tell me how he died and as for my mother... she abandoned my father and me, and remarried. She now leads a good life."

Andy admired Autumn for her sense of calmness when she spoke about her family. Although Autumn only briefly introduced her family members, he could guess that she must have suffered quite an ordeal.

Even as they continued engaging in the conversation, they saw Cindy walk outside her ward with her drowsy eyes. She said, "Dad, I'm hungry."

'Cindy is a true foodie. The first thing she remembers once she wakes up is to eat, ' Autumn thought.

At the sight of Autumn, she called out in a cute voice, "Hey, pretty sister..." She walked in Autumn's direction with an injured look and said, "You're a liar."

Autumn pinched Cindy's cheek gently, and then lovingly asked, "When did I lie to you?"

Cindy pouted, and then in an angry tone inquired, "Last night you told me that you wouldn't leave. But when I woke up, I couldn't find you. I cried for a long time. But you were nowhere to be seen." Facing Cindy's anger, Autumn had to apologize.

She finally coaxed Cindy not to be angry as she had brought with herself the best breakfast.

"Before eating breakfast, let me first take you to brush your teeth and wash your face." Autumn took Cindy by her hand and took her to the bathroom. Andy had asked his bodyguard to buy the toothbrush and towel last night. Autumn got Cindy dressed in a white dress and brought her straight silky hair into a cute double ponytail. Once they were out all tidy and neat, Abby woke up.

"Autumn, good morning!" When she saw Autumn in the hospital, she was delighted. 'I don't know how to coax Cindy. But fortunately, she listens to Autumn.'

Autumn replied with a happy and assuring nod, "Good morning!" "I brought you breakfast. You must eat right this instant before it cools down and loses all its yummy goodness."

Abby was sincerely grateful in that moment for Autumn and said, "Thank you!" While Cindy was busy eating breakfast, Andy said to Abby, "You eat now! I will go finish all the discharge formalities."

Andy was so tired that he fell asleep soon after sitting in the car on their way to the hotel. Abby put a coat on him gently and lovingly. Autumn whispered to Abby, "Mrs. Zhao, I will go out now. You must haven't gotten a good sleep. What about... letting me look after her for you today while you both catch up on your sleep?"

Chapter 99

Autumn had earlier planned to go to the temple to burn incense today, but now with the new chain of events leaving Cindy with her, she made a temporary adjustment and decided to go to an amusement park, where she supposed all children liked.

When she told Cindy the plan for the day and watched her eyes light up with sheer happiness and excitement, she knew she had made the right decision.

"Autumn, I want that..." Cindy demanded pointing towards ice cream. Autumn didn't have the heart to say no to such a lovely girl, but after considering Cindy's health she firmly refused despite her moment of hesitation.

"Cindy, I know you want ice cream but, you just got out of the hospital and if you fall sick after eating it, you will have to return to the hospital. Besides, if you're sick, your parents will blame me again, won't they?" she said.

"But..." While cutely tilting her head, Cindy reevaluated her options. Eventually the fear of an injection conquered the temptation of ice cream. She nodded her head helplessly and said, "Okay, I won't eat it."

"Now that's a good girl. I'll reward you with some delicious cotton candy, okay?" Once they entered, Autumn saw a vendor selling cotton candy right at the gate. The soft cotton candy looked just like clouds in the sky.

In that moment, she recalled a unique memory from her childhood. Whenever she was upset and cried, her beloved grandmother would buy her some cotton candy in a bid to cheer her up.

As a child, she loved watching cotton candy being made from scratch. Once the cotton candy machine was stepped on, the white cotton candy would get bigger and bigger, almost like silk from silkworms and butterfly pupae. It was a fluffy cloud of happiness as each bite would have pulled strands of filaments which would slowly melt in the mouth. It was a sweet delight.

Cindy took a glance at the cotton candy, and nodded happily.

This was her first visit to China and her first encounter with cotton candy here. She liked to eat cotton candy in Chinatown back where she lived abroad.

"Does it taste good?" Cindy took and gobbled down a huge chunk of the cotton candy, leaving her lips coated with sugar. Autumn looked at her and laughed.

They spent the entire day at the amusement park. They visited all the stories and covered almost all rides available. From the merry-go-round to the pirate ship, from the maze to the ferris wheel, Autumn accompanied Cindy to all the games and facilities which was safe for Cindy to enjoy.

There was also a clothes shop in the amusement park. Autumn found several beautiful princess dresses there. She couldn't help buying a couple of them as she wanted to give Cindy all things good.

She didn't know why she was so good to Cindy and fond of her, maybe one reason was that... Cindy was so incredibly cute.

"Did you have fun?" Autumn asked while straightening and fixing Cindy's dress on their way back.

"Yes!" Cindy nodded her head rather formally, and whispered in Autumn's ear, "Autumn, I have to tell you a secret..."

"Okay." Autumn replied with a wide smile. Children are so sweet and innocent. When you treat them well with all your heart, they give you the same love in return. "I think you're better than my mom, Autumn."

Cindy whispered, putting her index finger to her mouth signalling for hush. "This is a secret between us."

"Okay it is our secret, pinky promise." Autumn held Cindy. Over a short span of a day, she found that her affection for Cindy was increasing more and more, and even... began fearing the moment she would have to part ways with her.

As the car pulled up outside the hotel, Abby was already there waiting with a welcoming smile at the entrance as she had gotten word of their return. Sure enough, mothers and their children are linked by hearts. After just one day of separation, Cindy jumped excitedly into Abby's arms and called out, "Mom..."

"How's the amusement park? Did you have a good time?" Abby picked up Cindy in her arms. When she glanced at Autumn briefly and saw all the newly bought children's toys and clothes, she frowned, "Autumn, I'm already embarrassed to ask you to accompany Cindy. You have bought so many things for her, I..."

"This is nothing, really." Autumn smiled at Cindy, "I am congenial to Cindy. I don't know when you will return to China next time and I might not ever get a chance to be nice and pamper her in the future."

"Not necessarily." Abby smiled. Then the driver took all the bags of goodies which Autumn was carrying. "In fact, my husband and I came back this time to investigate the market in Z City. This is my parents' hometown. Now they are quite old and want to come back from abroad. And Cindy loves it here. Well then maybe... we'll see each other often," she explained.

"That is just great," Autumn said rapturously.

"You must be tired. Please feel free to go back to your room and take some rest, Autumn. Let's eat together later." Abby invited Autumn.

Autumn was looking forward to dining with Cindy and so she gladly accepted Abby's invitation.

At seven in the evening, Cindy knocked on Autumn's door, and said, "Autumn, it's time. Let's go for dinner now."

After Autumn heard her childish voice, the corners of her lips involuntarily transformed into a smile. She opened the door and found Cindy changed into one of the dresses that she bought in the afternoon. Cindy was looking quite adorable.

"Let's go," Abby said thinly, she was standing beside Cindy.

Abby took Autumn to an old restaurant in Z City. Although the interiors of the restaurant looked a little old-fashioned, the food here was delicious. And this restaurant was also mentioned in the travel guide Charles prepared for Autumn. It had been a long time since they arrived at the restaurant, but Andy hadn't come yet. Autumn asked rather curiously, "Abby, where's Mr. Xu?"

"He has a work dinner plan tonight, so he will not be able to join us." Abby smiled at Autumn, and added, "Order whatever you like, Autumn."

Chapter 100

Sam pondered for quite a while before answering Abby, "I have known her for more than 20 years, if you ask me. We used to live in the same neighborhood, but lost touch when I moved abroad with my parents. It was not until recently that we met again."

"Then I presume that she is your childhood sweetheart?" Abby said while nodding her head lightly, "I saw the way you looked at her. And I dare say that you still like her very much, don't you?"

"Abby, you have seen right through me. However..." Sam let out a bitter smile. Autumn had already married someone and there is nothing he could do to change this no matter how much he loved her. "I may have no more place in her heart, " he said.

"Don't be so sure." Abby frowned and said, "As a woman, I understand her better than you do. And I suggest that you, as a man, should take the initiative."

"What do you mean?" Sam frowned and asked in confusion.

"You really need to follow my husband's example. He made a move on me back then, but I kept turning him down. He then skipped the courtship and proposed to me directly. I was deeply moved by his sincerity that night. I finally said 'yes', knowing that he really wanted to marry me, and would take care of me, for the rest of our lives. You see, we are happy to have such a lovely daughter as Cindy now." Abby poured Cindy a glass of juice and continued, "You two are close friends from childhood, and have known each other well enough. All you have to do now is to make the final push. In fact, I'm planning to fix you up with her today. Autumn is such a good girl, let her go again and you will regret it every single day, for the rest of your life."

Sam hung his head low without saying a word. Of course he knew that Abby was telling the truth. But the question was, did he still stand a chance of winning Autumn back?

Just then, Autumn came. When she saw Sam in the room, she frowned.

Although it was no big deal to have a meal with him, his presence made it abundantly obvious that Abby was resolved to make a match of them.

"Autumn, come and take a seat." Before Autumn could say anything, Abby stood up, took her by the shoulder and quickly sat her down. "You and Sam are good friends, and have really helped me a lot yesterday in the hospital. So I have also invited him to have dinner with us. Autumn, I hope you don't mind."

"Not at all." Autumn replied. What else could she say under such circumstances?

During the meal, Autumn had spent her time talking with Cindy, leaving Abby and Sam in a nice conversation. She had been busy taking care of the girl throughout the meal, and ate very little herself.

"Autumn, may I say that I have invited you here to have dinner, not to look after my daughter. She can feed herself. Just enjoy your food." Abby said to Autumn.

Autumn smiled. She then started eating when she was sure that Cindy was full.

Sam knew that Autumn was ill at ease in his presence, so shortly after, he excused himself and left. Abby tried her best to make him stay, but to no avail.

On their way back, Abby still couldn't figure out why Sam insisted to leave, so she asked Autumn, "Autumn, what happened between you two? In my point of view, it is perfectly natural that lovers should have some friction once in a while. Just forgive him before things get worse. I do believe you two are made for each other."

Autumn looked at her in frustration and said, "Abby, I've been meaning to explain it to you, but you just wouldn't let me. Sam and I are ordinary friends. There isn't any affection involved. And I am telling the truth."

"How could it be?" Obviously, Abby didn't take Autumn's word for it. "But I have seen it all. Sam has been looking at you in exactly the same way Andy looked at me years ago."

"Even if we did have sort of a relationship then, it is now a thing of the past, " said Autumn with a forced smile, "Abby, thank you for what you have done for me, but... please don't do it again. You will only put us in an awkward position. Sam and I... It will never work out between us."

It wouldn't work out. Autumn had known it even before she met Charles.

Back in her suite, Autumn took a shower. In her solitude, she suddenly missed Charles dearly. Although she had promised to distance herself from Charles, she just couldn't stop thinking about him at this very moment. Feeling overwhelmed by the longing, she couldn't help initiating a video call. She needed to see his face and hear his voice right now.

"Why are you still up? It's very late." Autumn heard the grumble once the call was connected, then Charles's expressionless face appeared on the screen. He could see Autumn lying on the bed, with water dripping drop by drop from her wet hair. "Why didn't you dry your hair before going to bed?" he slightly frowned and asked worriedly.

"I'm fresh out of the bath, and just feel like giving you a call first. I will blow dry it later." Autumn smiled and suddenly remembered the two beautiful young secretaries in the Secretary Department and couldn't resist asking, "How are you getting along with your new secretaries? Are you satisfied with their performances?"

"Of course. After all, you picked them for me personally." Charles said with his mouth unconsciously curled into a smile. He had been missing her, too. Although she was now hundreds of miles away, this conversation seemed to bridge the distance and bring her back right beside him. "Why? Are you feeling jealous of them?" he teased.

"Impossible!" Autumn exclaimed. He got on her nerves but had also amused her successfully. She giggled and said, "I'm glad you like them."

Charles couldn't help but burst into laughter. It took him quite a while to catch his breath and asked in a serious tone, "When will you come back?"

"It's only my second day here. Don't forget that you've booked the room for five days. It can't be wasted." Autumn said with a casual air, playing with her hair on the bed.

'Five days...'

Charles mumbled to himself. He was definitely going to question David tomorrow about why he had booked so many days.

"Well...in fact, your husband is a wealthy man, and doesn't care about the money. You can simply disregard the remaining days if you'd like." Charles said seriously.

"No way! Haven't your teacher told you to avoid extravagance and waste?" She was now teasing him back. While they were talking happily, the light in Autumn's room suddenly burst with a bang. She then found herself in complete darkness. The call was also cut off due to the network outage.