

Destined To Be His wife by L.T. Marshall Chapter 1

TangShi Lei stared hopelessly at the paper in her trembling hands, a tear escaping with silent despair. Sliding across her delicate pale cheek as she stifled the sob which caught in her throat, burning painfully. Her heart and soul shredding as though a million sharp blades were piercing every inch of her body and she knew that her new life was about to end before it had even begun.

She'd finally managed to escape the cold and miserable existence back home in Shanghai. From her cruel father, and hateful stepmother and sister, and now here she was, being summoned home like an object who had no will of her own. To fulfil the role her father placed on her as the family prize, to be sold to the highest bidder. A marriage alliance for the benefit of Lei Enterprise, her family's conglomerate.

Her body gave out as her knees weakened, shivering, and slumping down onto the sofa behind her which saved her from a full fall as her tears began to drip in quick succession. Her heart breaking in two. The agony of knowing she was so close, and yet never stood a chance of ever being free, and now he had new ways in which to call her to heel. She could never escape the responsibility of being the eldest daughter of the Lei family and what weight that held, even if he had never treated her as his child.

She had worked so hard to get the scholarship to this prestige art school in California, on her own merit, hard work, and undying commitment to being free. He had finally been convinced by her stepmother Ava, to let her go and rid her from under their feet. Something Ava had wanted since she married him when TangShi was merely a toddler and became her new mother's burden. Just eight weeks ago she tasted joy, and now he was taking it all back. Loosening her reigns for the briefest moment before hauling her back to heel.

It was her light in a dark world and a chance at fulfilling her dreams of one day becoming a known artist who could support herself and live a modest life, far away from the Lei family and all it encompassed. A world of socialites, rich families, and business moguls, of which she was never given the chance to really be a part of. Nor did she ever want to. If they were all as cruel and cold as her own family, she didn't want to be a part of that lifestyle or community.

Shanghai was a place of bad memories, cold nights, and the loss of her mother before she had ever known her. TangShi had never truly felt love, adoration, or warmth from her family that was meant to cherish her. All they had ever done was make her feel like a rabid dog that wandered in from the streets and took every opportunity to kick her down so very brutally. She had only ever known how it felt to be outcast and unwanted by everyone around her that wasn't paid to care for her.

Wasn't her mother why her father hated her the most? That her mother died so she could enter this world, and he never stopped reminding her of the fact that she was a cursed brat who took the love of his life away in her act of selfishness.

When Ava had Juefeng, her younger half-sister, she had held her breath in hopes that he would finally move on and she would experience the gentleness of a sister in her life, but she was so very wrong. Ava hated her, was jealous of her natural beauty and quiet temperament, and soon made sure to give her father a new daughter to replace the one who disappointed him the most. Breeding it into Juefeng that TangShi was the enemy and a rival for her inheritance and position in the Lei family.

Juefeng was a full seven years younger than TangShi. She was as cruel and as hateful as her parents, only with so much more venom as she hated that she was the second born of the family Lei and not the sole princess she always wanted to be. TangShi was nothing more than grit in her shoe.

TangShi stared at his words once more and couldn't breathe through her despair any longer, choking as each black inky knife-like letter on white paper clawed at what was left of her sanity. Her tears saturating the letters and pulling watery ink down the paper with them.

"You will return home as soon as you receive this letter. We have arranged your engagement to the young Master of the Leng family, as you are the eldest child of Lei, and our two families wish to unite to better our standing in the corporate world. You will obey this request, or I will use any means to extract you from the USA and bring you home to make life unbearable for you. Do your duty, return at once, and begin preparations to become the Young Miss of Leng. Do not disappoint me further. I have spent time and money to raise you to adulthood and I expect you pay that back with obedience and cooperation. Do not embarrass our family name by ignoring my request. I have enclosed your travel arrangements and ticket for immediate return."

There was no love or affection in his letter. No asking her to think of her family and giving her options or kindness in the tone. Not even a hint of asking how she had been these past two months or fatherly concern. Just the same demands, orders, and the same vitriol she had known her whole life.

His voice rang through her head as she read it, as though hearing the scorn and bitterness in how he always addressed her. Blinded by watery tears and unable to do anything but slump and die a little inside. She had no fight in her anymore, it was all sapped away with every year she endured this lonely unfairness. She knew refusing was pointless and her visa here depended on her scholarship, but it wasn't forever. He had abilities to have it revoked and have her shipped back to Shanghai to face worse if she didn't obey.

She had no idea who the young Master of Leng was, as it was a family so superior in riches, fame, and power, that she had never been allowed to cross paths with. TangShi was never taken to events, dinners, or functions that benefitted the Lei family. She was seen as the black scar on the surface of the porcelain flawlessness of her father's reputation. The hidden shame.

She screwed up her eyes and considered for a moment why he would now deem her worthy to be married to someone so influential. It dawned on her with a deeper heaviness that Juefeng was only seventeen, and so spoiled that she would never marry for anything less than love and adoration. Her father would never force his precious girl to marry this way. She liked to be chased and held suitors at arm's length, so it would be beneath her to be ordered to marry for position. As always Juefeng was to be pampered and coddled.

TangShi knew her father was betting on her submissive nature and quiet personality, to be controlled, and used without complaint, and no doubt there would be conditions to be met for the duration of the marriage. TangShi wasn't stupid and knew how these things went. She had heard of many of the girls in her years at school getting married off for a contracted alliance. To supply heirs, name, funding, and then at the end sometimes a separation, a so long, and left to get on with life as a divorced woman to live in shame. She could only hope the term of this marriage was short and that they only wanted a union until whatever business affiliation was strengthened. She couldn't bear to think of anything more than just wasting a couple of years bound to this stranger. Thankfully divorce among the rich was becoming more commonplace and not the shame it once used to be.

TangShi couldn't help herself but be resigned to fate and pulled out her cell phone, internet searching the identity of the young Master of Leng with morbid curiosity. Somehow knowing she had no way out; this was the only thing she could think to do to distract her from her own misery. Be proactive and try not to fall apart as her life came crumbling down around her.

She inhaled her breath sharply when faced with dozens of red-carpet event images that sobered her tears immediately. Pages and pages of editorial pictures, paparazzi shots, news images, and so much more. He was famous enough anyway. So much so that his Weibo account was listed on the first page, and she hovered over it indecisively. He seemed more celebrity idol than son of a well-known conglomerate. She had never paid attention to news or social media so to her, she had no idea who he was.

YuZhi Leng was twenty-six years old, gorgeous in a flawless and sculpted way, in his tall and muscular physique that seemed almost unreal. Straight and stiff in posture, exuding confidence in his own handsomeness. His eyes were oddly green in his beautiful Chinese face and mono-lids that somehow enhanced the beauty of his look under straight manicured brows. The effect was stunning.

He looked like a movie star, his hair styled sexily at a longer length on top, short back and sides, and dyed a slight chestnut brown instead of his natural black. He screamed of money, and pride in his appearance. Every other part of him was dark and sinister, shrouded in expensive tailoring, and a dignified cold look on that noble profile. He could make any woman melt with a face like that and his ruggedness shone through, even at such a young age.

Looking at his beauty made her forget her woes for a second, but something about him pulled her back to a close-up picture of his face. Her heart rate upping a little, and her hands began to tremble as her emotions reacted. Swallowing heavily as a nagging detail in the back of her mind kept pulling her to search the images closely.

There was a rare one of him smiling, so naturally at ease and caught off guard, and it tugged at something of the familiar deep in her heart. It changed his face dramatically, from cold and standoffish to a boyish charm that hinted at warmth. She couldn't place her finger on it at first, just a feeling that she had met him somewhere, and began to search the endless articles of him. Each one on the arm of a woman in almost every single shot, but she ignored her and found one other of that smile.

There was an inkling of memory once again as she gazed at the perfectly straight and white dazzling teeth that had seen thousands of dollars' worth of dentistry. Those dark brows, that clear gaze that enhanced his youthful charm, yet also brought out a mature manly quality to the shape of his face. She was rendered speechless for a second and her mind wandered backwards in time, trying to place him with the image that was fast fading in her own mind as the years went by.

Clawing at a memory she had forbade herself to recall for so long, she hesitated. She tried to stop herself before the old pain of a wounded heart resurfaced to bruise her, but she couldn't hold back the glimmers breaking in. She was piecing together uneven pieces of a puzzle and trying so hard to make them fit. Still almost a decade on looking for answers to the mystery of a boy she had never been able to truly forget.

How silly she was to think that it might be him, and even if it was, she would be stupid to place any emphasis on that night. Stupid to try and figure out if YuZhi Leng was even him. The boy in her mind, eight years ago, was a fleeting fancy and nothing more than a cruel heartbreaker. Who lifted her up and made her feel cherished for just one perfect night. Right before abandoning her and casting her aside like everyone else did, the very next day.