

## Destined To Be His wife by L.T. Marshall Chapter 111

“Or maybe it’s because it’s one am, and she might be asleep? You know, like I was until you banged down my door. Give me the cell, YuZhi. Stop being stupid.” Rhea clenched her fists, frustrated at his dodging her and glared at him with an urge to kick him in the stomach. He was behaving like an imbecile.

“Tang... Sheeeeeee..... where are you, huh? Are you at Rong Cai’s house? That fucker. IS that what you’re doing right now and why you won’t answer my call?” YuZhi fell over sideways, his words incoherent but Rhea knew TangShi would probably understand it when she played it back and tried one more time to get it. She knew this was an awful idea on his part and tried not to pay too much attention to his nonsense chatter.

“Give.” She whispered so as not to be heard on the recording. Aware how much it would hurt her if the role was reversed.

“Tang, because you fucked someone else I’m staying with Rhea tonight, and we’re going to have a party. Don’t wait up, kiddo, I think I might just even the scales. It’s not like you can say anything about it.” YuZhi’s voice broke, his emotions betraying him as his huskiness came out and his eyes misted up. “Maybe fucking her will make me forget you. What do you reckon, Rhea? You in?” he reached out to her, as if genuinely expecting a response and Rhea cursed at him under her breath and motioned a neck slicing gesture his way.

Rhea attempted to rip the cell out of his hand, leaning over him precariously and delivering a smack to his forehead that startled him, distracted enough to get it away from his vice like grip and she hung up immediately. Shaking her head at him and then pushed up off the ground, still cussing him out quietly, and walked off with it. Her temper rising at being used as a tool to cause pain to TangShi in this way. She didn’t know what the hell was going on, but this wasn’t who she was, who he was, and she knew YuZhi didn’t mean a damn word he said. It was petty and cruel and would only make more of a mess in the long run. Especially once his family heard about this train wreck.

Rhea flicked through his call list and hit ZhengLi’s name on the recants without a second thought. Waiting for him to pick up as she flicked at her nail and watched YuZhi maneuver himself face down on the floor, nestling into her fluffy rug, and seemingly pass out. Nonplussed with what he just did and probably doing what was the best for his body and mind. She did pity him his heartbreak even if it was somehow justified after breaking hers.

He had hit his upper limit of alcohol consumption and she didn’t dare to think how much he had consumed. He was a seasoned drinker who rarely got like this so he must have been downing it like water all day. It was a testimony to how much TangShi had royally screwed him up.

“Yo, buddy, where are you? I’ve been searching everywhere.” ZhengLi’s worried tone came through loud and clear, and Rhea was at least glad to hear he sounded sober. Someone she could rely on to actually help her tonight.

“He’s at mine. It’s Rhea. Come get him before I toss him outside and dunk some cold water over him. He’s a mess and the last thing he should do is spend a night here.” If not for TangShi’s sake, the families, then for the fact the media might snap him leaving here in the morning and blow up her life. That would be a month of headlines and speculations for sure.

“Jesus Christ, why is he there?” ZhengLi scratched his head, not overly surprised that YuZhi sought Rhea out. All their life she had been his stable and warm place of comfort. The three of them inseparable best friends in all things. She had been a shoulder to cry on when he didn’t want ZhengLi to see him break. Drunk he must have yearned for her gentle care and wanted to have that space where he could stop pretending to be strong and unbothered.

“Because he’s been my friend since I was three. And I’m guessing old habits die hard when he is going through something awful. Come get him, I’ll make coffee. You can give me the details. And Zheng... ummmm, you better call Linlin and tell her he’s with you and going home. I think he maybe called her and got her worried. He was talking nonsense.” Rhea lied, knowing fine well it was TangShi’s phone he called, as she saw it on the recent calls.

“Sure.” ZhengLi furrowed his brow, not really in the mood to tackle Linlin head on, especially after how things ended this morning but not wanting her stressed out and worried over YuZhi’s welfare either. He would text her and tell her to ignore anything YuZhi had said.

Rhea didn’t want to be something to cause pain anymore and was trying to atone for her sins as it was. This wasn’t how she wanted him, even if TangShi had done something unforgiveable. Rhea had found her pride and knew if she ever wanted him back, it would be because he wanted her and not as a knee jerk rebound impulse move. She knew she was worth more.

“On my way. Make a big pot and I can get him up and moving.” ZhengLi sighed, already out in the street because he had been wandering around trying to find this idiot for the last half hour. Relieved that like a homing pigeon, he had gone somewhere familiar and safe, and Rhea would take care of him until he got there. He could stop spam calling him like an overwrought parent now.

Rhea hung up and left the cell on her kitchen counter, walking over to switch on her coffee machine and exhaled as she gazed at him across the room. She had gone through a lot these past weeks. A lot of soul searching and self-reflection of her behaviors and the start of her own personal growth. She had discovered a lot about

herself and her dependency on YuZhi when she had time to look at him from a distance. Space had opened her eyes to a lot of delusions.

She loved him still, but she knew their relationship had never been a fairytale romance, more of a sibling love that had blurred lines. Watching him now, broken and drunk over something TangShi had done, she knew he never got his messed up over her in all their years together. It stung but it further brought home the reality that they should always have remained friends and been a support to one another. She had delayed real happiness with mutual love all these years and become so desperate to cling to him she lost sight of herself for a while.

“Are you dead?” Rhea called out, aware he was still breathing as she could see his rise and fall of rhythmic movement. “You’re going to wish you were when you wake up tomorrow. You idiot.” Rhea walked over to him, leaving the pot to stew and bent down to check his face and airways. Lying facedown wasn’t ideal if he vomited so she kneeled down, pulling his face to the side and gazed at him for a long while. It was nice to be near him again, to see him without the cloud of bitterness over their heads. She was just sad that he came in this state and obviously cut up.

“If I was still the bad bitch that was crazily trying to pull you back to me, I could have totally used this tonight. Seduced you or set you up to look like we had sex ..... you utter fool.” Rhea stroked his hair from his face, admiring the beauty of this man and yet feeling a low aching that wasn’t quite the piercing pain of heartbreak when they first separated. It was a dull acceptance and more of a sorrow for seeing him suffer now. Tired because of the late hour and lacking energy in general. Something tugging at the back of her brain at her own words, but she dismissed it.

“For what it’s worth, I hope whatever happened between you two gets sorted out. I don’t believe TangShi would do anything like that to you..... it doesn’t make sense. When you’re sober, we’ll talk. Just don’t do this to yourself, okay, it doesn’t help. Trust me, I tried it. I just want to see you happy, and not like this.” She knew she was talking to herself, but it was cathartic somehow and seemed like she could say things with sincerity that gave her closure without his judgment. She waited on ZhengLi, and blew out her air, letting her lips vibrate as she thought of how ridiculous this scenario was. Last thing she thought she would be doing ever again was tending to this guy in her apartment and willingly having Zheng take him away again.

“Maybe I should have called TangShi to come get you instead, so you were forced to see her when you woke up. Or maybe she would have taken this the wrong way and made things worse. Boy, you really do know how to make a massive mess of things when it comes to women.” Rhea got up, wandered back to the kitchen where the pot was happily spurting, nearing completion and invading the air with strong coffee scents. Slumping her shoulders and nestling on a breakfast bar stool as she dumped sugar and creamer into a mug in readiness. Her mind drifting to what he said, and she glanced his way with a sudden thought.

“The school guy? That Rong creep? Rong Cai? Hell no.” Rhea shook her head, picturing Rong Cai, someone she knew in a roundabout way through a friend from a lot of drama a few years before and had met him again that day she went to TangShi’s school. Surprised to see him there and making sure she had given him a wide berth. Her memory swirling and picking out the points that had brought her to attention and the sick feeling in her stomach about events from the past she had almost forgotten. It seemed a little too coincidental for it to involve him again and what she just said to YuZhi sparked a tingle of doubt.

It was obvious that day at the school he had a thing for TangShi. Lurking in the shadows watching them and giving Rhea the creeps. TangShi had seemed oblivious to him and even when he strolled their way, she ducked her head and left without giving him a second glance. There was no hint that she would screw YuZhi over for Rong Cai. In fact, Rhea didn’t need to be a psychologist to see TangShi was all about YuZhi and saw no one else.

She slid YuZhi’s phone to her, already knowing his passcode as he seemed to have never changed it and scrolled through the contacts list until she found the fiery little shadow that hovered around TangShi like a mother hen. She had met her a few times and always felt that Linlin was always secretly snarling her way, answering with passive aggressive undertones, and suspecting her. A proper loyal little guard dog who would fight tooth and nail for her friend. She had to be a wild one to be reckoned with if she was the current ZhengLi girlfriend, a title he had given no one before. It was pretty impressive.

Pulling up her name and forwarding her contact card to her own cell with a determined frown, even if she wasn’t sure she had any reason to talk to her at all, but she couldn’t ignore it. If anyone was the person to reach out to and talk about Rong Cai to without backlash and accusations, then it would be Linlin. She might also be sat doubting TangShi’s guilt. Because none of this sat right with Rhea and knowing what she knew, it just felt like there was more to this when it concerned that perverted fuck.

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Linlin was impatiently thrusting her boba balls in her tea around with her straw, tapping her sandal clad foot over her crossed legs and eyeing up the oncoming food traffic as she waited. Growing irritated with every second she sat here. The sun was shining bright, so she had come to rest outside the small cafe on her way to the clinic and was in no mood for bullshit. She had agreed to meet Rhea for five minutes and the wench was already late. Only here because she said it was important and related to YuZhi and TangShi.

Linlin was battle ready and not about to fall for any kind of manipulation on her part. She had no time to be messing around while TangShi slept at home if this was an attempt to further separate them. After a sleepless few days and sedatives before she had a

mental break, Linlin was eager to get back to her. She didn't want her to be alone for any length of time given she was struggling emotionally over losing YuZhi.

"Miss. Choi." The familiar soft voice of that picture of poise and elegance strolled into view. A mask and sunglasses to conceal her identity, paired with a long black dress over boots, but Linlin knew who it was right away. She didn't seem all that concerned about making her wait and it left a sour taste in Linlin's mouth at how rude that was.

"Rhea. You're late." Linlin didn't care for the formalities having never liked this girl and suspicious of her motives today. "What did you want to meet me for? Spit it out, I don't have much time." Straight to the point, no messing. A haughty way of addressing her that was a Linlin normal with people she didn't like.

"Blunt, I like it. I'll get straight to the point as you don't seem like the small talk kind." Rhea slid into a seat opposite her and rested her elbows on the table to get closer and lowered her tone. "I saw YuZhi a couple of days ago and he was in a bad way. I got the gist of what happened and yet, I don't really believe it. So I'm here to impart some of my wisdom." Rhea raised a brow as Linlin observed her with a slight furrowed glare and indescribable and unreadable expression.

"Really? And how is that? Why didn't you just tell me on the phone?" The sarcasm was evident because Linlin really didn't think Rhea should ever be trusted. The girl always had a motive in Linlin's opinion.

"I can't say this on the phone in case it's recorded. You'd be amazed how far the paparazzi go nowadays. Rong Cai. He has history with a friend of mine who moved abroad to outrun him a couple of years ago. If he's connected to this then I figured you should know what I do. TangShi never struck me as the adultery type, and she genuinely seems to love YuZhi." Rhea waved her hand at the passing waiter and pointed at Linlin's milk bubble tea to gesture she would have the same. Not sure if sharing this information had a point, but she wanted to offload it and help if it did.

"So, you're saying TangShi is innocent and that Rong Cai is what?" Linlin raised her brow in distrust, sat back and crossed her arms in a gesture to show she was no pushover. She didn't fall for some fast words and kind gestures that easily.

"My friend was stalked by him for several months. He tried everything to pull apart her and her then fiancée and he had some pretty inventive methods. He didn't take no as an answer. I don't know all the details but in the end she moved abroad and got married and he had no choice but to give up. She didn't want to make it public given her fiancée's status as a celebrity, so she never reported him. He's unscrupulous and unhinged even if he does hide it well."

"Inventive? Such as drugging a girl to take her back to a hotel room?" Linlin snorted, not even surprised by this tidbit of information. Looking back he certainly seemed the type to become obsessively attached to a girl given the way he seemed to follow TangShi

and lie openly the night in the bar. His interest in her was one sided and without any come ons from TangShi he had developed an almighty attachment to her that didn't seem healthy. Linlin's gut was twinging like crazy that Rong was capable of devious acts.

"Is that what you think he did? That he took advantage of her under the influence of drugs."

"I have to collect the blood and urine report today. I'm literally on my way there but my gut tells me they will have found something in her system. TangShi is adamant she wasn't drinking all that much and then she has no memory between eating cake and waking up in a hotel bed half naked." Linlin exhaled heavily, still getting irrationally mad anytime she thought of her friends vulnerability that night and what he must have done to her. Her protective instinct kicking in strong, and she downed a gulp of tea to dislodge the choking rage.

"So she really did have sex with him? ... Only she didn't consent, and she was unaware of it?" Rhea felt sick at the thought of how easy it was for a woman to be taken that way. A stirring of empathy and heartache for TangShi because she had no idea what was even done to her. She couldn't imagine if it was her and how violated she would feel. It didn't bear thinking about.

"I don't know. She woke up with her underwear on and I don't know many rapists who will stop to redress you if they want you waking up convinced it was consensual sex. My gut says he drugged her and staged it but never took it all the way. He hopes to have a relationship with her, maybe he had some sense of boundary when it came to that. I just don't know how far he went." Linlin had been confuse don this ever since she picked her up. To her the underwear being on her body and intact was a detail that seemed important.

"You had her checked and blood and urine tests, did they examine her body to see? Can they even tell?"

"No. I couldn't put her through that trauma, and I know she had a wild night with YuZhi hours before so either way she would have had evidence of rough sex. TangShi is in denial about all of this, and I really don't want to tell her she might have been raped. The way she is right now, she wouldn't deal too well with that on top of everything. She already believes they had sex so she would never have agreed to a testing kit because of the shame of it and the doctor agreed not to push her when he saw her, due to her mental state."

Rhea fell silent, trying to block out her ears to the admission of YuZhi and TangShi having a rough and ready night of sex. Still affected by that in relation to him even if it was getting easier and instead focused on the awfulness of this whole thing. Saddened for YuZhi too as a victim in this as much as TangShi was. Glad she went with her gut



and reached out to Linlin this way to understand more of what was going on and now she was determined to right the wrongs.

“What are you going to do if the results are positive?” Rhea leaned back as the waiter brought her drink and smiled with a nod and quiet thank you before turning back her attention to the paused Linlin. They waited until he had walked away and Linlin leaned back in.

“I had hoped ZhengLi would be on board to helping me figure this out, but he’s gone AWOL and won’t answer my calls. He’s one hundred percent Team YuZhi and thinks TangShi is the devil in this.” Linlin stabbed her drink with her straw, trying not to face the swirling bitter heartache that asshole caused her. Hurting much deeper than she wanted to admit at his ability to cut her off and break up over something like this as if Linlin didn’t mean anything.

Rhea smiled softly, a small breathy laugh escaping her lips and she shook her head in warm adoration.

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“That’s Zheng all over. Loyal to a fault and when it comes to his brother, he won’t hear anything against him. A bullheaded moron who chooses him above all else, even if it’s wrong. He can’t bear to see YuZhi hurt but I think sharing the results with him will change that. He’s not got a bad bone in his body and if he knows there’s been foul play he will use all his resources to uncover it.” On this Rhea was sure. ZhengLi was special, with the investigation skills of an FBI agent when needed and quite often had been Leng Groups secret weapon. If anyone could find out the truth of something, it was ZhengLi.

“I don’t see how I can ask him to do anything while he’s avoiding me and we’re apparently on a break over this whole mess. He’s a stubborn and blind idiot who’s convinced TangShi is guilty. There’s no talking to him.” Linlin snorted, frustrated and yet also broken over that little turn of events.

“Oh dear. I did say loyal to a fault. Don’t be too mad at him. ZhengLi isn’t the brightest when it comes to love and probably thinks he’s doing the right thing for all of you. Especially if your best friend and his best friend are in a cold standoff. Maybe he wants to avoid you too escalating to the point of no return while it’s all so raw.” Rhea was amused at the fact she was sitting here giving Linlin relationship advice. It was the weirdest kind of irony given their relationship.

“So yeah, going to collect the results after waiting days for them and then I have no idea what to do next. I hadn’t thought that far ahead as I am just praying the results are what I’m expecting to be honest.” Linlin didn’t even want to entertain the idea that she was wrong because in her heart she knew that wasn’t possible, so she swerved the topic and came back to the most important point.

“CCTV from the hotel. Or wherever she ate cake? Maybe it catches something..... like Rong drugging her or cajoling her in some way. Maybe evidence of him carrying her or how far gone she was. You can't consent if you are completely wasted.” Rhea offered, thinking outside the box. Not sure where to start in proving underhanded behavior in this scenario. “If YuZhi knew she was drugged, maybe he himself would seek out the details. You can only wait for the paperwork and then take it from there.”

“I don't know if it will be enough, it won't change the fact she slept with someone else. YuZhi still won't be able to get over that even if he thought she was intoxicated, and it won't change how guilty TangShi feels. I have to have proof she was out cold and completely unaware and not involved in what took place.” Linlin knew this was more complicated than it seemed, and the last few days had seen YuZhi hurting TangShi in all kinds of ways while he was hurting.

Leaving her in that room with Rong, crushing her heart wasn't bad enough. Then the night he drunkenly left voicemails to tell her he was sleeping with Rhea. It's the one text from ZhengLi Linlin had gotten, to clear that up, but it still left TangShi distraught and sobbing all morning in case it might have been true. There had been papers delivered asking her to sign to terminate their marriage, an eviction notice for the apartment which had pushed Linlin to moving her to Linlin's family home. He withdrew her payments from the school so she could either find her own tuition to carry on or leave, but TangShi had no desire to go back at all anyway.

It had been a rough few days of YuZhi ostracizing her, pushing her aside and cutting off all connections including finances. Her artwork from his office at Leng was sent to her all packed up with no note as though he couldn't stand to have any part of her in his life anymore.

He had wiped their interactions completely as though she never meant anything to him and sent the PR advisors to her to discuss how they were going to handle a public breakup announcement. YuZhi was not playing, returning to cold and heartless, determined to wipe the pain from his heart, and his grandfather was fighting him tooth and nail and begging him to keep the contract and arrangements in place even if they had separated. He blocked TangShi's contact so she couldn't speak to him or see him.

Rong Cai was on the other hand continuously trying to get in touch with TangShi to the point she changed her number. She ignored his calls and texts and never listened to the voicemails or read his emails. Ashamed about what happened between them and knowing her only way to have a hope with YuZhi was to completely sever contact with Rong Cai. She didn't care if it was cruel or unjust and he hadn't done anything wrong, it wasn't about him in her head. All that mattered was trying to claw back what she had with YuZhi and as she had no real friendship with Rong, she saw it as necessary.

She sent a written letter to the school announcing her leaving and yet Rong had kept trying to get in touch to refuse it. It was driving him crazy that after his night with her she had completely snubbed him and was making for a rather bitter and vengeful person,



especially receiving her withdrawal notice. He wasn't going to leave things alone. His plan was backfiring on him, and he was scrambling for ways to pull her back to the art school.

"I'll come with you to the clinic. And if it's positive, I'll speak to ZhengLi and convince him to help. I know you don't have reason to trust me in this, but my goal is to see YuZhi happy, no matter what that looks like. If it's with TangShi then I'll do what you need of me. I didn't lose him just to see it turn into this train wreck and it hurts my pride to know I lost a three-year relationship to this mess."

"I don't get you. Spending months being a crazy bitch who tried to sabotage them and pull them apart and now you're here on TangShi's side. What's your game?" Linlin couldn't get her head around this version of Rhea and didn't really want to believe in it either. Although she could see a change in her, as though she was calmer, somehow serene, she knew she could be a great actress.

"Repentance. I had a lot of time lately to look in the mirror and see a woman I've become all these years who resembles nothing of who I used to be proud of. I used to be independent and self-sufficient and somehow lost it. My mother would be so disappointed if she had seen me." Rhea had learned to look for spiritual enlightenment lately.

"Come on. Sooner I collect it the better. I'm driving myself insane with the need to be sure." Linlin got up, leaving her cup on the table and motioned towards the bright orange car parked across the street. "Do you need a ride?"

"That depends on your driving. If you do it the way you conduct yourself in life I may need an Uber." Rhea joked, leaving her own untouched tea on the table which she ordered to be polite.

"Funny. I can't ride with cowards so you either suck it up and get in or I leave you here. I like my passengers to be fearless and understand they waive their rights to life when they get in my car." Linlin winked, a hint of jocular softening her overall stern demeanor and it made Rhea laugh out loud in a sudden burst. A truce evident between them as they worked for a common goal.

"I put my life in your hands. I can see why TangShi has stuck with you all these years." Rhea followed her to cross the street. "You're entertaining and loyal. I admire your friendship. You remind me of ZhengLi, only a lot scarier and with way more of a colorful vocabulary."

"Hmmm, don't mention that dickwad to me. He is in the doghouse, especially after this.... If someone like you can see sense and realize TangShi didn't do this then ZhengLi should have been able to figure it out too. He was supposed to be her friend." Linlin huffed, catching Rhea's arm to guide her across the busy street the way she did with TangShi, mothering Rhea and unaware of the softening almost tearful expression

aimed at the back of her head for such a simple thing. Rhea had never had female friends who weren't model associates or celebrity fakeness. It was weird to have this tiny wild girl taking her across the road like this as though she actually cared for her wellbeing. Hitting Rhea in the sore spot that besides YuZhi and Zheng all these years, no one had taken care of her at all.

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TangShi stood outside the huge and foreboding Leng group building as it's mirrored structure stretched into the clouds above her like a black dagger. A foreboding skyscraper that helped shape Shanghai's skyline in its impressive size. Her hands shaking and her heart rhythm chaotic as nerves got the better of her. Terrified right down to the roots of her soul, but she desperately had to see YuZhi. Days of being shunned by him had left her bereft as though mourning a death. She had no sense of closure due to the fast and traumatic way it ended to help her get through this and she couldn't stop yearning for him.

She had waited until Linlin left to go run errands, pretending to be asleep and slid out to come to the office buildings in hopes of catching him. Just one minute to see him. Linlin had kept telling her to give him time and space, but she didn't understand the agony of the long silent emptiness, or the deep dark hole his lack of presence left. She had to see him, even if it was only once, to say her goodbyes and imprint his face to memory to replace the one of heartbreak and misery he left her with. There was no rational thought as to what she would say, just a deep need to be close to him again. Fueled by lack of sleep and a foggy saturated mind that was close to being fatigue drunk.

She pushed her nausea down and her doubts aside and found courage from somewhere deep within her. To be able to walk forward and in the glass multiple doors that spanned the full front of the main entrance. Aware of eyes and heads turning her way and even though she knew nothing had gone public about their separation, her guilt shamed her so that her face flushed, and she dropped her eyes to the floor.

Realistically staff down here were awed at seeing the fiancée of their CEO wandering in at this time of the day given she had never graced the building before and were of course curious. She was elegantly dressed in a long linen dress and tan sandals that showcased her petite figure, her long dark hair swept to one shoulder in loose waves and half concealed with a floppy straw hat to shield her from the sun. She wore sunglasses to shade her red puffy eyes but to them it was a celebrity necessity to shield identity and they thought nothing of it. To them, she was a natural beauty in simple fashion and a sight to behold.

TangShi wandered to a long arched silver desk that took up the entire left wall, manned by three pretty girls in matching navy uniforms. The golden logo of Long Group on a massive metal mural behind them.

“I’d like directions to YuZhi Leng’s office please. I’m his fiancée.” She sounded more confident than she felt, aware she needed to pull off an act of casualness to seem like this was a spontaneous lunch visit and held her breath as the first girl perked up and tilted her head towards her.

“Ahh yes, Miss Lei. We know who you are. I can have one of our ground staff accompany you to the top floor and take you right to him.” The sweet girl offered, admiring the flawlessness of this woman up close after only seeing her in news articles and video clips from their engagement. It was an unwritten rule among Leng group staff that you never turned away known family members or friends for fear of being fired. Even if their showing up wasn’t in the diary.

“There’s no need. If you point me in the direction of the elevator and give me a floor, I can find it myself. I want to surprise him.” TangShi tried to stop her inner tremble and smiled warmly, her face aching with the effort and sure her shallow breathing was probably noticeable. Petrified of being caught out and turned away. Suddenly fearful that he might have had her blacklisted from entering.

“Ahhh, okay, I won’t announce you then. If you head to the far left elevator over there, it will take you to floor fifty five. That’s the management floor. And there will be a receptionist upon leaving that will further help you. I’ll come over and give you access to the right floor.” The girl nodded gesturing her to follow and then walked along behind the desk at the same speed as TangShi did until they met together at the open end.

“It’s an access card to get up there that normal visitors are not allowed as it’s by appointment only, but we all know who you are so security will be fine with it.” The girl blushed; a little star struck at seeing Mr Leng’s future wife this close up. Most women in this building had heart flutters when they saw their handsome CEO and his assistant, so it was a rare treat to see the kind of woman who had won his heart.

“Thank you.” TangShi followed her to a golden doors elevator that was flanked by two uniformed security guards who merely nodded their way as the girl scanned an ID card, and then spread her palm out to encourage her to enter as the doors opened. The girl leaned inside and pressed a floor on the inner panel, swiping the card again at a lower infrared slot and then bowed with a gracious smile.

“Enjoy your visit, Miss. Lei. Have a nice afternoon.” She stepped back to allow the doors to close and TangShi stared at her own reflection as the lobby was concealed from view by immaculately clean metal doors. Exhaling slowly with relief that she had gotten past the first hurdle and had a minute to herself to reel back in her nerves and paste on a fresh smile. Her body sagging and her legs turning to jelly.

Her figure was thinner and her posture a little slumped compared to her normal happier self and she tried to straighten up in her reflection. Pull it all in to conceal the self-doubt.

The floor numbers changed quickly on the digital screen in front of her and she inhaled heavily before blowing it out with gusto to try and calm her inner chaos. Her entire body internally vibrating with the sheer stress of what she was doing. She felt like she was embarking on the most terrifying ordeal and had no clue how this was going to end. Bravado fading away as she fidgeted with her ring on one hand and tapped her thumb against her shoulder bag, chewing on her lower lip to curb her anxiety.

It felt like in a blink of an eye they were pinged open again at a similarly styled and decorated new lobby, faced this time with a smaller walnut desk and a single smiling receptionist who raised her head at the noise. The lighting was subtler up here and she had a feeling of being up high despite not yet seeing a window view.

“Good afternoon, how may I help you?” the girl glanced up briefly, checking her screen diary and knowing they had no appointments for the next hour so was surprised at a stranger walking in, until TangShi’s face registered in the girl’s memory bank. All staff who dealt with incomers had to know by memory anyone that was related to the managers and her smile froze in place as she picked out a right identity for this particular lady.

“I’m here to surprise YuZhi, would you direct me to his office?” TangShi held her confidence even though she didn’t feel it and knew any hesitation would be suspicious.

“His current meeting is due to end soon, I can take you to his office to await him and set you up with refreshments, Miss. Lei.” The girl smiled brightly, sure she had the right name and stood to gesture her to head left. TangShi nodded graciously and did so, a little surprised that getting in here and up to his office was this easy and kept expecting hurdles. But then having her face splashed all over the internet and social news channels for the last months did seem to have its benefits. The secretary slid out of her seat and led the way.

The building itself was modern and decorated in an opulent neutral palette, and expensive manner that screamed of technology and wealth. Every area sectioned off with dividers, plants, and furniture, yet attention had been given to the overall feel to create a happy bright environment to work with many conveniences. TangShi was led along a beige carpeted hallway that spanned one side of an open plan office area where a few workers glanced her way from singular desks that were sectioned to their own little cozy spaces.

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“This is us.” The girl motioned to the expanse of windows serving as a wall with a center pair of double doors. All of the glass had slotted blinds which were shut, concealing the room inside from view. She was shown into a spacious office with a vast full-length wall of bright and uncovered windows so you could view the entirety of the Huangpu river and all the surrounding buildings and beyond. It was spectacular from up here and took her breath away.

“I’ll make you some coffee and a fruit platter and come right back.” The girl motioned to the far end where a grouping of grey leather couches sat beside a bar in a casual area, and she walked in with a friendly smile, sliding her sunglasses off and putting them into her pocket. Absorbing the atmosphere of the room and somehow feeling YuZhi in the details which gave her both a sense of warmth and painful loss. It helped her still her inner frenzy for a moment and take a proper breath.

YuZhi’s large dark wood desk was a curved feature on the opposite end, backed with matching bookcases and furniture that held a collection of personal items and a ton of hardback books. Pictures, memorabilia, and metal sculptures, that all seemed to fit in a CEO’s office.

TangShi forgot her fear and anxiety when faced with this serene space that had a calming effect in its quietness and view. Realizing the room became eerily silent once the door was closed and she looked around wondering if it was a deliberate feature and had been soundproofed. She guessed given some of the sensitive nature of his meetings and calls, it was most likely so. She wandered to the first chair and sat down cautiously into the soft design, glancing around, a little uptight because she felt like she was invading his personal space.

She didn’t dare look at anything on his desk, or the shelves, for fear of what she might see but did notice a large space of seemingly new artwork over the fish tank wall where he had once told her was pride of place for her work. Her heart sank seeing that now something else was standing boldly where his view from his desk zoned in. Another reminder that he had wiped the slate clean and removed TangShi in the smallest traces of his everyday life.

The click of the door opening had her turn back with a bright welcoming smile, reaching for her sunglasses to cover her obvious tear inflicted puffiness. Expecting to see the receptionist returning with a tray and froze mid task when two suited familiar men strode in, faces in files as they walked in unison. Mumbling details to one another as they read.

TangShi stood up abruptly, dropping her glasses back into her pocket, her heart hammering through her chest at the sight of YuZhi and yet it was ZhengLi who raised his head and spotted her first at catching her movement. Stopping in his tracks mid walk to the desk and tugged on YuZhi’s navy suit sleeve with a nodding gesture her way. His brow furrowed and his cheek flexed.

“What?” YuZhi looked to him on his right then followed his line of sight to the sitting area and froze too. His expression blanked out almost immediately and he locked eyes on a nervous trembling TangShi. Like laser beams being initiated and his previous calm expression hardened, and his eyes narrowed at her. He seemed to grow taller as he stood straight, and his posture became somehow intimidating.

“Leave.” His harsh single word was delivered in a cool and cold tone loud enough for it to echo around TangShi. The effect was that of being stabbed in the heart and her eyes

pricked and misted over as she swallowed hard, losing her courage. His face betraying nothing of his inner war of emotions at seeing her, or the increase to his pulse and sudden compression of his chest.

“I’ll escort her out.” ZhengLi cut in, moving past him aware they didn’t need a scene up here that could be leaked to the press. He always ran interference in YuZhi’s life and work and didn’t want this to escalate.

“YuZhi, I just want to talk and to see you for a minute. I have some things to say, to explain...” TangShi blurted out, a mess and jumble of thoughts and desperate for just a few minutes of his time. Not sure what she could realistically say now she was faced with him.

“I have nothing to say to you, and I don’t want to see you. Sign the divorce papers and go home back to that family of yours. The contract was void the second you fucked someone else and you’re not my problem anymore.” YuZhi’s words bit at TangShi, and she dropped her head in shame, feeling his anger even if he sounded controlled and unaffected. Guilt wounding her and unable to deny his words.

“Come on, TangShi, this isn’t the place. I’ll see you out. Be a good girl and let’s do this without drama. We have a lot going on today.” ZhengLi had been with YuZhi all week and knew how close to flipping his switch and being extra cruel he was as this heartbreak dragged on. YuZhi’s patience worn thin at her invading his workspace and bitterness swirling at having to face his own agonizing feelings at seeing her.

“We’re busy. She can see herself out. She got herself in here after all. Go.” YuZhi nodded towards his door, talking as if she was an unimportant being, and TangShi hesitated. Panic rising in her throat.

“Please...” She began to beg through a mumble as tears broke and her voice trembled.

“Please? Don’t make me forcibly throw you out because I will, and I don’t care what others see or spread about us. They’re going to know soon enough that it’s done. I’m not in the mood for tears or begging so don’t lower yourself to that.... I have better things to do with my time today than watch a drama.” He waved her away, glancing back at the papers in his hand even though all the words seemed to blur together, and he gritted his teeth to stay unaffected.

ZhengLi walked towards TangShi, his expression grim as he fixed his jacket and buttoned it up to somehow symbolize he wasn’t here to play nice or be the guy she once called friend. He was in bouncer mode and not going to soften. He hooked her by the upper arm with his hand firmly and tugged her towards the door with intent.

TangShi gasped through soft tears at the sudden lurch of movement, shaking her head at him as words died in her throat, then appealing to YuZhi with doe eyes aimed his way to try and beg.



“Wait.” YuZhi flicked a look at ZhengLi as something crossed his mind and for a moment TangShi saw a ray of hope and stumbled, her body shaking as she gazed at the love of her life stepping her way. Maybe he really did want to hear what she had to say, and she held her breath as he approached her, praying for a miracle.

“YuZhi...” She began to try and formulate words but flinched when he grabbed her wrist roughly and yanked her hand to his aggressively. Pulling his fingers over hers to straighten them forcibly, no love or care in what he was doing, until he located her engagement ring and tugged it off harshly in one fluid swipe. It hurt so that she winced and gasped, leaving red marks across her knuckle with the way he whipped it off and scrape marks down her fingers where the setting scratched her skin from being close together.

“This was paid for by my family and belongs to me. ZhengLi, here.” He tossed it up into the air, so ZhengLi caught it smoothly, a flicker of confusion crossing his face his face. YuZhi acting like it was an unimportant trinket. “Return it. She doesn’t deserve to keep it.” YuZhi clicked his fingers to motion them away, turning away from her startled wide-eyed expression with a hateful glint in his eye and TangShi broke.

“I didn’t do this on purpose.... I don’t know why this happened, YuZhi, please. I’m sorry and I don’t want this. I want to fix us.” She wailed reaching out to catch hold of him, but it triggered that same angry response in him from that morning and he spun on her, lurching forward and catching her by both shoulders with a strong jerk that rattled her brain inside her skull. His own hurt and temper getting the better of him and unable to control it.

Rendering her mute with shock he would be so physical and harsh towards her. Gripping her tighter than he intended to until his knuckles whitened and TangShi grimaced, flinching at the biting hurt but was too afraid to make any noise.

“I don’t give a fuck what you meant to do. It’s done. Get it into your head that WE are done, and I don’t wanna see you, hear from you, have you in my office, or my apartment, or my life. I wish I’d never met you and want you to go somewhere far where I’ll never think of you again. I don’t love you anymore. You killed that the second you got into bed with him, so do me a favor and get the fuck out of my way and don’t darken my doorstep again.” He shoved her back out of his grip, unable to stand the scorching feel of her gentle heat in his palms and dusted his hands off as though he had touched something dirty.

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Hating her and himself for all the swirling agony building up inside of him like a pressure that was about to explode and needing her to go away. Cursing himself for grabbing her when it only escalated his inner dark heaviness. TangShi lost her footing as she stumbled backwards and went over her sandal as she crumpled. Reaching out to catch hold of anything to save her.

ZhengLi caught her halfway to the ground with his speedy reflexes, so she didn't fully sprain her ankle, but it was painful enough to elicit a yelp as she struggled to right herself. YuZhi flinched closing his eyes and pushed it out of his head, ignoring her even if it clawed at his heart.

TangShi's soul took a beating, and her pride was wounded at how he was being. Seeing this was a mistake and he was so consumed with hatred for her now he couldn't see anything else. She was afraid of how far he would go to throw her out if she continued to stay here. It was like a sobering slap in the face and woke her up to the reality that she couldn't go back to what they had. Being here only made it worse.

Despite the throbbing pain in her bone she pulled herself to upright and straight with determination, pasted on a calm expression and sniffed back her agony. The girl who had spent a lifetime of being downtrodden and abused, found that inner ability to pull herself together and display the undaunted and unaffected persona she had spent years perfecting. Clawing at what little self-esteem she could muster and accepting the fact he wasn't going to ever forgive her or allow her to make up for any of this.

His words stung to the core that their love was dead and did something inside of her to numb it all down. Shock, maybe, a deepening heartache delivered as a final blow. She adjusted her dress carefully with purpose and poise, pulled her bag onto her shoulder, sliding her swelling hand and aching fingers into her dress pocket to hide the evidence of the wounds. Only ZhengLi and YuZhi both saw them and YuZhi glanced away hardening his expression as guilt flooded him.

"I don't need you to walk me out. I know the way. I can manage. I won't be back." Her small quiet voice waivered, strained, and tear ridden, her tone husky and labored but she meant it and she looked him in the eye one last time. "I'm sorry. There's nothing else I can say except that, and I never wanted to hurt you. Even if you never believe me. I'll sign the papers and won't bother you again." She knew after that she should leave Shanghai for a while once the announcement hit the press, because her life would become a round of invasive reporters trying to get interviews. She knew she wouldn't be able to cope mentally while nursing a broken heart, having his name thrown at her from all angles.

"We never met. Nothing happened between us, and if we cross paths again, we don't know each other." YuZhi sternly listed off his demands, walking to his desk, throwing down his files and yanking his chair out before unbuttoning his jacket to slide it off. His heart hammering in his chest, his throat aching with the way he was choking on his own growing pain and his lungs were struggling to inflate but he couldn't let her see how much she got to him. He sounded indifferent to her ears and his manner told her he was over her.

"I understand." TangShi replied with a soft whisper as little droplets rolled down her cheeks, dripping onto her dress and she limped away, flinching at the pain from her left foot with each step she took towards the door. Trying hard to leave with dignity, knowing

she had to make the long walk back to the elevator. She held it all in knowing she could break at home, but for now she wanted to leave with a little dignity.

ZhengLi hesitated seeing the difficulty she had walking, softening a little and his compassion getting the better of him. He squeezed the ring in his palm and a sense of regret and heaviness caused him to flicker back to watching her walk out the door and disappear into the hallway. A moment of doubt, a slide in his anger towards her at her pitiful appearance and for a second he thought about following her. Linlin flashing into his mind and knowing he should text her to come collect TangShi and take her to the hospital to have her foot and hand checked over.

TangShi tried to pull herself together as she closed the office door, dabbing her cheeks and sliding her sunglasses back on before adjusting her hat to conceal her face. She breathed in heavily, pasted on a relaxed look of calm with a great deal of effort, and lifted her chin to leave the way she came in. Her body aching with the effort of not falling apart and her mind in turmoil with a thousand thoughts and feelings that were dragging her down. She knew just by this one encounter she had no way of ever pulling him back to her and she struggled to even her steps and hide her injury as she headed out of Leng group for the last time. Wincing with every step.

“Tell Linlin to come get her and to have her seen at the hospital” YuZhi mirrored ZhengLi’s thoughts verbally and ZhengLi blinked at him in surprise at the sudden return of concern. Eyeing him up and merely nodded although his expression was clear about how shocked he was.

“Don’t look at me like that. I never meant to injure her. I’m not an animal. Now get back to work.”

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“Don’t tell her. Not yet. Let me speak to ZhengLi first and get him on board. She is probably already a mess and might march right back in there and make this worse and not let us take her to the hospital.” Rhea advised Linlin as they sped towards Leng group after ZhengLi called Linlin to collect TangShi from the street. He had told them she might be upset, and she had hurt herself so they should be quick.

“I want to strangle her for going there. I told her to wait it out, but TangShi can be surprisingly headstrong. I want to know exactly how she hurt herself and if I find out that YuZhi...” Linlin was simmering in temper. Not only because of her friend but that cold and distant bastard and his cryptic calls and texts which were always short and sweet about TangShi, and never once asked Linlin how she was. She was so over that asshole.

“He’s not like that. I’m sure whatever happened wasn’t deliberate. Let’s just find her.”

Linlin sighed heavily to calm her racing mind and pulse, scanning the walkways they zoomed past on route in hopes of spotting her.

“Hide that, I’ll tell her the results weren’t ready yet.” Linlin nodded at the white envelope Rhea was holding and she quickly slid it into her handbag. Something so important and yet it looked like nothing.

“I’ll take it with me. It shows the traces of GHB were pretty high, so she probably passed out fast and didn’t wake until morning with the worst hangover. It makes me sick to think what he might have done in those hours, and I think we should go to the police and report him for this.”

“No!! Can you imagine if this got out. TangShi even as the victim would be tarred. The questions about drinking with him, they wouldn’t care about the truth, and she would get the blame regardless. She’s an heiress and a Leng group daughter in law in the public eye. They would one hundred percent blame her. Not only that but being labelled as a victim of rape still carries a certain amount of shame even if some do believe her.” Linlin shook her head aggressively, having seen similar stories erupt in recent years and running young girls lives.

“What should we do then.? Let him go? He drugged her and assaulted her.” Rhea’s anger rose and swirled, twisting her stomach in knots. Enraged on behalf of a girl whom she maybe had seen as an enemy but knew her character well. TangShi was one of the softest people she had ever met and sure she needed a few lessons in standing up for herself and growing her own self esteem but she was a good girl. A rare pure soul in this crappy city, especially for the spoiled rich social scene which Rhea had grown up in. TangShi was a rare find and she spent enough time with her to harbor some kinds of feelings in the depths.

“Wait... wahhh.” Linlin squealed scaring Rhea half to death before banging her steering wheel and pointing out with manic finger jabs through some roadside foliage, the figure walking along a path further back from the road. “It’s Tang, right? You see her... that’s her for sure. The hat is making it hard to.....nope that’s her, I know that figure. God damn her for turning her phone off.” Linlin spun her head around looking for a turn off or parking, but they were on a main straight to traffic lights with no possible way to get out. Frantic that they might lose her.

“The lights ahead are turning; I’ll jump out and get her. You find a way to pull over and call me to come to you.” Rhea was a quick witted and smart person at times when not clouded by emotional misjudgment.

Linlin nodded pulling up to the lights and thanking god when they turned red for them and afforded a few minutes for Rhea to slip out and hightail it off the road and back in the direction they came from. She wasted no time in getting out and on her way.

Rhea was quick on her feet, half jogging, half power walking and headed where they saw her a moment ago with determination. A sense of urgency and yet empathy coursing through her and she forgot everything about past grudges against this girl and instead truly wanted to find her and bring her to safety. Her hearts welling with a protective instinct as a woman to know someone vulnerable had been so badly abused.

“TangShi!!” Rhea spotted her cutting through a park entranceway ahead and called out, switching to a run and took off after her. “Wait. It’s me, Rhea.” She yelled knowing that it might not get her the results she hoped for given their last encounter and YuZhi’s cruel voicemail. TangShi glanced back at the sound of her name, seemingly caught in a blank daydream and paused, for the figure trying to catch up with her. Dazed at first and not really acknowledging who it was.

Her mind a million miles away so she didn’t register at first and then hesitated when Rhea’s face became a focused vision instead of a blurred one. Confused at her sudden appearance as Rhea caught up to her and hooked her arm in hers to keep hold of her.

“How’s your foot? Is it painful? Do you need help to walk?” Rhea looked down seeing no real evidence of an injury or swelling and scanning her overall appearance noting TangShi seemed gaunt and slimmer than last time they met. Other than her drawn face, pale pallor and dreamlike state, she seemed absolutely fine much to Rhea’s relief. She realized how uptight she had gotten herself on the way here with the state they might find her in.

“What? Why..... why are you here? How do you know I twisted my ankle?” TangShi blanched, unsure how to take this sudden invasion of obvious care from this particular person and tried to pull away. Not wanting physical touch from this crazy woman who didn’t even like her.

“I’m with Linlin, she’s parking and ZhengLi called saying you might need your ankle looked at.”

“It’s fine. I’m fine. I don’t need it seen as it’s getting better as I walk.” TangShi slid free, pushing Rhea away and eyed her up and down with utter mistrust. Her heart twisting at the memory of YuZhi’s voicemail a few days ago and stepped away from her. All she saw was a woman who twice attacked her.

“Let’s go get her then. She came to pick you up.” Rhea ignored the deadpan look, the change in her demeanor to defensive and waved behind her to move them from this spot. Aware some meandering walkers had glanced over and worried they would be recognized. Even with sunglasses on.

“Why is Linlin with you?” TangShi balked at her. A hint of disbelief and jealousy and a stirring of anger that there was something off going on..

“Ummm... it's..... let her tell you, okay? I promise I'm not here to cause problems.” Rhea floundered, aiming for a gentle and light approach as though TangShi was a child.

“Are you happy now? You know how I screwed things up and he hates me! You get him back after all. Is that why you're here? To gloat!” TangShi's throat ached as her voice broke, and a single tear rolled down her cheek that she wiped away aggressively. Refusing to sob out here and jutting her chin out in hostile defiance, ready to battle this wench. Finding a fire she rarely let out.

“It's not like that. I'm not happy about any of it and after talking to Linlin and .....” Rhea sighed heavily, wanting so badly to tell her the truth but knowing it wasn't her place. “Please, just come to Linlin's car and we can all talk.”

Almost as if on cue Rhea's cell began to ring and she whipped it out holding it towards TangShi to show her Linlin's name appearing on screen. “Answer it and ask her yourself. Please, just go with me.” She held it out for TangShi to take and she did so with a dubious gentleness, so they didn't touch fingers, swiping it to answer.

“Linlin?” She asked, staring Rhea dead in the eye and maintaining a glare. It was obvious there was no trust.

“Yesss!! Tis Moi, my little chickadee. You're hero has arrived. I parked up a half mile away from where we saw you, please head with Rhea past the traffic lights she got off and come find me. I'm on the side of the road. How's your foot?” Linlin was busily waving her hands at passing cars slowing down to see if she had broken down with her odd choice of parking space, getting annoyed with busybodies.

“Why is Rhea here?” TangShi asked in the same monotone and unimpressed way as her facial expression. A hint of betrayal at her best friend being with this woman. Discarding everything Linlin said.

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“She asked me to meet her. She came with me..... Just come to the car so I can tell you, okay?” Linlin was drumming her fingers impatiently knowing she shouldn't keep this from her but not sure how else to tell her either. Her main concern was getting her little princess to a hospital to get checked over.

“Tell me now.” TangShi looked Rhea up and down, trying to summarize exactly what there could be going on between them that they would need to 'tell' her something. Refusing to play ball when she was being kept in the dark.

“I want to see your face first. Just come.” Linlin was getting uptight at TangShi's reluctance, knowing her stubborn side could be a nightmare. Hating that she was questioning and not in the mood for her to be defiant. She rarely was, but sometimes.....



“I want to walk and clear my head, so I’ll see you at home. I don’t need babysitters.” TangShi hung up before Linlin could say anymore and tossed the phone back at Rhea in a flippant manner. A sulky mood overtaking her as bitterness seeped in. Angst riling her and the scenario with YuZhi still rolling around in her head and making her crazy.

“You can leave. I don’t need you of all people going anywhere with me. I don’t know what this is, or why you’re getting involved in my business, but go away. I won’t thank you for it.” TangShi turned on her heel, showing that hint of sassy she kept concealed most of the time. Her walking still a little fragile from her throbbing ankle but it was nothing to be overly concerned over.

“Wait.. TangShi wait.” Rhea panicked. Her concern escalating with TangShi’s whole demeanor being weird for her. The hostility and aloof behavior and strange attitude which quite frankly shocked Rhea. Who knew TangShi did possess a backbone at times?

“Bye.” TangShi paid her no heed, walking on with intent and ignored Rhea coming after her, pulling her arm free as Rhea tried to latch on and determined to be left alone for the rest of the day. Even if it took her hours to walk home from here she didn’t care. Her entire life was a shambles and the one person she loved more than anything in the world had just thrown her out and humiliated her. Her hand was a throbbing reminder of what he’d done.

“For the love of fucking god.” Rhea snapped, her fiery temper getting the better of her and she grabbed TangShi’s upper arm in a vice grip and tugged her hard towards her with serious strength. TangShi spun on her with momentum, startled with the velocity.

“You did nothing wrong, That fucker drugged you and took advantage and I’m here to help Linlin prove it to YuZhi.” It was a harsh, stern statement blasted right into TangShi’s face and she reeled in shock gawping at her as though she had two heads. Eyes widening and mouth opening to reply but nothing came out. Her brain trying to engage the word to thought process and how Rhea would even know or believe that.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean it to come out like that, but I have the report in my bag. I’ve read it and it’s conclusive that you were spiked. The one Linlin collected from the clinic. I just want to help. What he’s done, you aren’t the first girl to be used and terrorized by that asshole.”

“What?” TangShi’s voice came out sharp and short, shock evident as her brain rattled around and came to an agonizing halt. Not sure if she just heard her correctly and blinked at her with complete disbelief. “Say that again.” Her heart tore open and left her raw. Despite not really having any kind of deep feelings for Rong Cai, she had trusted him as her school mentor and the fact he kept telling her they were friends. She had felt relatively safe around him and would never have come to any conclusion like this.

“You were drugged. GHB levels were positive and still pretty high despite it being next day when you got the tests done. There’s a massive possibility you passed out not long after and woke up next day. I knew of him, from before. He stalked a friend of mine and did some pretty messed up things to ruin her relationship with her fiancée.” Rhea moved her hand from grip to gentle rubbing, up and down on TangShi’s shoulder as she stood there in bewilderment. Dissecting and letting this fully sink in. A look on TangShi’s face that was a cross between shock and a need to cry. Rhea lifted her other hand to the opposite shoulder and did the same on both sides to comfort her, unsure how else to help.

“He....? He drugged me? He did this on purpose?” TangShi began to softly cry as the realization sunk in and a warring confusions of thoughts and feelings hit her like a tidal wave. Relief, regret, conflict, pain, fear.... She didn’t know how to feel with the truth hitting her this way. Unpacking so many details and seeing that night from a whole different and sinister perspective which shook her to the core.

“Come on. Let’s go to the car and go somewhere quiet, just the three of us. I think you might be in a little bit of shock. There’s probably a lot to process.” Rhea’s heart ached for the traumatized expression on TangShi’s face and the urge to hug her was overwhelming. She had never been a girl with real female friends, friend sin general or affections outside of her trio with YuZhi and ZhengLi. Being a famous model in a backstabbing, cutthroat, bitchy industry meant she kept women at arm’s length, so she didn’t know how to genuinely show her sincerity.

“Are you saying.... he raped me?” TangShi’s softly whispered as tears fell fast and heavy and her chest constricted so painfully fast she couldn’t catch her breath and started hyperventilating. Her mind blotting in and out of the flashing memories of that dinner and how nice and caring and attentive he was towards her. Of all the times at school he helped her or guided her and seemed normal. She couldn’t believe he would do something like this to her of all people. She had never done anything to him. Never given him reason to harm her or ruin her life like this.

“We don’t know if he went that far. But we need to find out for certain that it was him. CCTV at wherever you ate might show what went down in the corridors, or even the dinner hall.” Rhea was trying to be rational and keep her focus, curling an arm around her as TangShi crumbled in the middle of the street and struggled to breathe. Clutching at the pains in her chest and heart and blinded by watery eyes. Bending forward as tears and chokes came in unison and Rhea panicked about the audience wandering about.

“Why would he do that to me?” TangShi was lost in her own mind, seeing a million things from her entire existence flash before her. Cruel and sometimes painful acts that were bestowed upon her by so called family and friends over the years, always trampling her down like she was a worthless object, and this seemed like another person who did just that. That she was so valueless and nonexistent in this life that people always had to beat on her and make living hell. She couldn’t understand when

all she tried to do was go on peacefully and never react, never fight back, and never cause trouble for anyone. That when she finally found happiness why was it okay for someone to snatch that from her and get away with it?

It snapped something in her head. Like a violent shake that knocked everything together into a horrifying perspective. Sick of being everyone's doormat and tool. Sick of being something to push around and use or discard and hurt. Angry at her father, her stepmother, her sister, her existence. Madder at YuZhi for casting her aside when he claimed to love her and all it took was one little thing and he didn't give her the benefit of the doubt. Absolutely livid at Rong Cai for doing the complete unspeakable to her because he had decided who she should love and how she should live without once consulting her for her fucking opinion.

"Delusional. He thinks if he got rid of YuZhi you two could live happily ever after, maybe? I don't know. I can't begin to imagine because I'm not as sick as him." Rhea's face flushed, her cheeks blushing as she thought about the lengths she went to drag YuZhi back to her and ashamed for even coming close to the same kind of erratic behavior and hurting people. Hurting TangShi. A new wave of remorse that only strengthened her resolve to make amends because she too had been on the same path to destruction and this brought it home.

"Take me to the school. I want to see him... I want to know why." TangShi straightened up, a fire growing in her belly that pulled her through her tears and inability to inflate her lungs. A molten anger bubbling up to the surface and she stood tall, lifting her chin as fierce hatred took over her normally placid expression. Swallowing it down to calmness and yet a surging and fierce volcano was growing inside of her.

"I don't think that's a good idea. Not yet. We need more evidence to know it was him."

"What more do I need? He was the one who woke up with me. If I was unconscious then how the hell did I get there and why did he lie about my being all over him? He had to have been the one to carry me there. It seems obvious now. How could I be so blind and naïve? Why didn't I listen to Linlin?" TangShi was pushing aside the doubt, her guilt over what she thought she had done replaced with fury and she held her hand out to Rhea. Her eyes smarting and her resolve growing stronger by the second.

She lost her love, her home, her place in school and her future because of that bastard. She wasn't playing anymore.

"Give it to me." She demanded, her palm upturned, and she locked Rhea in the eye with determination. "I will show him all the proof I need."

"Yes to all of that but GHB is a drug that can have side effects. He could argue you were awake and acting seductive or whatever, that you seduced him. It can make people do and say the weirdest things and he could lie. He could say he didn't know

about any drug, only that you hit on him. He already lied. I'll give you it when we're in a private place and you're calm and thinking straight."

"That's why I need to confront him. He can't lie if I say I remember and demand the truth. I'll see it all over his face." TangShi wasn't thinking straight. Her mind a mess of colliding thoughts she couldn't pull apart. Vengeance and hatred controlling her emotions. YuZhi coming to the forefront of her brain but a new additional pain in her chest because of him. Disappointment, betrayal, and heartbreak that he couldn't think outside the box the way Linlin did and have a little faith in her after everything they meant to one another. YuZhi was another on the list of people who discarded her easily and knowing the truth she found a venomous reason to be just as angry at him. How he treated her. How he humiliated and hurt her. Not once did he question another possibility.

"Let's talk it out, think on it, and let you calm down. You can read the report with Linlin. I have someone to go see." Rhea didn't want to tell her about including ZhengLi, in case he refused to believe any of it. But she knew he would be able to source any video footage and find the evidence needed if TangShi wanted to take this further, even though Linlin was against it.

"Yeah, let's do that. I have to make plans. He ruined my life so I should repay him for that." Rhea answered in a zombie like state and pulled a worried frown from Rhea who gently turned and guided her onto the path back to where she came with a feeling of uncertainty. She had witnessed a strange change in the last moments and now was sure the hospital wasn't a bad idea.

## **Destined To Be His wife by L.T. Marshall Chapter 119**

"Are you sure you want to do this? ZhengLi could have ...." Linlin gently rubbed TangShi's shoulder as they sat in the overly fancy office. A small, neat space that was unusually elegant.

"No. I don't want him involved. He turned his back on me the same way YuZhi did. Why would I ask them for help now? They're part of the ruins of my life and I don't need them to help me fix this." TangShi cut in, stern and stubborn. She had been in this mindset the last two days. Refusing to let Rhea go to ZhengLi or tell a soul about the test results or asking for any kind of help in proving this further. Determined to find out the facts directly and not letting other people solve her problems for her.

Linlin and her had made an appointment with the hotel manager themselves today after talking to him at length on the telephone the day before. It was unexpectedly simple and not the huge hassle they expected it to be. Doing this with just the two of them as TangShi also rejected any interference from Rhea, not ready to forgive and forget or trust her either.

TangShi had taken a massive hit in her heart in terms of betrayal in all of this and Linlin was the only one she wanted to believe in anymore. The only person she would allow close to her as she was still the only one who had never hurt or abandoned her in all these years. No one had come through as who she thought they were, and she needed to rely on herself to get through this. Linlin was all she needed by her side.

TangShi was caught up in a numb bubble of disbelief where anger and outrage held side by side and had managed to block out the agony of heartbreak of the previous few days while on a mission to clear her name. Right now, YuZhi didn't matter anymore, nor did fixing what they lost. The Leng family was unimportant. Nothing except finding out what that scum did to her and knowing the truth for herself so she could process and decide what to do next. That's all that mattered to her now.

"Here you go." The manager walked back in with a bright smile, having left them sitting here momentarily and waved a USB in his hand. Dangling it from a hotel logo keychain and passed it to Linlin gently. "I had them pull up the times covering the corridors and dining room of when your party was booked in and the walkway to 3208, where Mr Cai had booked a room. I hope this is beneficial to your needs." He hadn't asked to review the footage because quite frankly he didn't want to be involved. He was hoping they would take it and leave. Knowing he probably shouldn't hand over delicate footage like this but the Leng group was well known and somewhat of a force in this city. You would be an idiot to get on the wrong side of them.

Learning the publicly adored daughter in law of Leng group had possibly been assaulted in his hotel was enough to have him copy the CCTV to a file and hand it over easily, without the gesture of cash, or perks. That was a headache that could cause him all sorts of mayhem if it got out that he didn't assist. So many rich clients would never come here again if the hotel reputation was dented in this manner, trust lost, and he had already instructed staff to blacklist the Cai family from future bookings.

"You watched these?" Linlin queried wanting to know if they were any use and it might save them time. Eyeing him up with scrutiny and able to tell he really didn't care about the outcome. He only cared about how this would affect this hotel chain.

"No, we just pulled time dates and locations and moved them for you to view. If the hotel can assist you in other ways, then please let us know." He wanted them out of his building and this matter to be over. His statement he hoped made it clear they could leave.

"I have another question." TangShi broke in, ignoring his dismissal. Her tone flat and her expression somber. She had been in an unreadable mood all morning and Linlin was concerned with this disconnected version of her. Knowing this could be delayed shock or even trying to process what had been done to her body since she found out about the toxicology report and read it for herself. "When did he book the hotel room?" TangShi knew this was as important as the test results in proving Rong was the one who did this. Proving he planned it in advance. Another notch in the list of disgusting betrayals.

"I'll check that for you." The manager turned to his desktop screen and punched a few keys on the keyboard and seemed to scroll through some kind of list.

"The day before the dinner when he booked the private dining room. Both were done at the same time." He nodded towards TangShi with a pleasant smile, not knowing the weight of that detail.

"Can you print us the booking form please." Linlin cut in taking TangShi's hand as she sat there staring silently at the manager and sensing TangShi was probably dissecting the fact he knew this is what he would do. He booked a double room near the dining hall for this purpose. It was all clicking into place.

"Sure." The manager pressed some keys and then the whir of a printer churning out the document seemed to fill the gap in dialogue and the eerie heavy silence of this room. The tension between the three of them. He picked it out of the nearby tray and slide it across the table to Linlin with a nod.

"Anything else?" He raised a brow with a polite half smile.

"If I report this, the police may come see you, but other than that thank you for your help. It's appreciated. We don't hold the hotel responsible for any of this so don't worry, we won't be causing you issues. We're leaving." TangShi got up first, stilted and polite but there was an edge to her tone. Startling Linlin into action with her decisive behavior and statement as she walked to the door. Linlin quickly bowed and thanked the manger before hightailing it after her.

TangShi didn't wait but walked at speed towards the main foyer on the ground floor and out into the grey day that seemed to match her inward emotions. The clouds were covering the sky in its entirety and making it gloomy. Leaving the air damp and cold, while the light was depressing. She walked to the car they had abandoned on the front pathway of the expensive hotel and got in when Linlin unlocked it from a distance before catching up.

"You okay?" They slid into the car at the same time at opposite sides and Linlin threw her a wary glance. Not sure how to comfort or deal with this new version of TangShi. Feeling like she should walk on eggshells and be extra gentle with her today.

"I'm fine. Let's go home so I can use your laptop to watch it." Her tone was stilted and empty and Linlin did as she was told.

Traffic was unusually light for this time of the day, so it didn't take long to get to Linlin's home a few miles away. Silence heavy between them only broken up by some soothing song choices played on low when Linlin couldn't stand the lack of conversation anymore. She wanted to help her friend and knew she needed time but TangShi's lack of communication these past two days was making her sick to her stomach with worry.



Worrying like a mother hen and had even started texting Rhea back and forth for advice on how to console someone in TangShi's position. Rhea wasn't much help either.

## **Destined To Be His wife by L.T. Marshall Chapter 120**

Home was empty as Linlin's parents were on another cruise and the staff always kept out of the way until dinner, knowing Linlin liked her space. Linlin pulled out her laptop and set it on the coffee table of the lounge before settling down with TangShi to start viewing the files. Dumping some warm mugs of cocoa and a platter of cookies to somehow soften this task into something bearable.

"I'll copy it into editor and can clip away anything worthless and only keep what shows us what happened. So we have pretty easy access at a glance." Linlin was being methodical and meticulous in collecting the evidence as she still hoped TangShi would take it to the police and not let this creep get away with it. She had photocopied all documents too and created an easy to send file should they want it on top of the physical stuff.

"Okay. Move over." TangShi slid in beside her on the floor in front of the couch and waited for Linlin to put the key fob in. Uptight, wringing her hands and focusing on breathing in and out slowly as her nerves built to epic levels.

"This is you guys arriving here." Linlin pointed out their group from the main door, shuffling in and looking merry about being there. There was a collection of files from different cameras they looked at one at a time, that had them being shown to the upper floor private dining, fast forwarding with purpose all the unnecessary footage. It meant clicking in and out of several to see their progress and nothing footage they could discard right away.

"I remember everything up until we ate dessert. You can skip all of until then. That's the last moment I have a memory of." She nudged Linlin who was squinting at the dining hall footage. It seemed that room had one camera that overlooked the whole room, but it wasn't of the best quality in low lighting. It did cover the dinner table at a distance though and showed how they were all seated and how Rong made a point of following her. It picked up the group of them but when they moved to the couches for drinks, although you could only see some of it. TangShi sat down on one edge and nothing of Rong who was cut off at the arm. It was a bad angle out of shot and Linlin sucked in air through her teeth in frustration and started again.

"The angle shows nothing of that side of the room. Although it's pretty obvious you wanted space and he kept invading it." Linlin frowned in irritation and scrolled forward a little. Becoming impatient and antsy and feeling like this was mounting to something momentous with the amount of building pressure in the air between them.

“Wait.” TangShi clasped her hand over Linlin’s hand on the mouse and pointed at the screen “We changed cups. Are those Saki glasses? I remember something..... Saki... I don’t know. It rings a bell somehow.”

“Let me try another file. Each one is a different camera.” Linlin located one that had an ID number similar to the dining hall and thankfully was one pointing from right above the mini bar of the same room. She clicked play and forwarded to the same time stamp as the other recording where they had moved to the couches and were sat with Saki cups.

“Rewind it a little. To me getting the cup.” TangShi was uneasy about the Saki cups for some reason and a strange clawing at the back of her head kept bringing her back to them. A gut sensation that it was important and something in her subconscious was screaming at her.

Linlin backed up catching the moment Rong Cai got up and went to the bar, unaware there was a camera over his head and pointing at an angle towards the sunken couches which caught his full front and what his hands were doing. It was in shadow, but they made out him setting up the cups and stopping to pull something small from his inside pocket and tapping it into the far-left cup. It was a few seconds of precise and swift motions, no hesitation, and bold as hell, without even glancing back to see if they caught it. Something tiny like a little vial, or a dropper, and all it took was a moment in time to completely ruin TangShi’s life.

He then proceeded to pour the alcohol into all of them, doing that one first and swirling the cup before he put them on a tray. He kept that one cup until last and carried it in his hand instead. They watched in silent disbelief as he slid the tray on the table and that one cup in front of TangShi brazenly with a smile on his face they could even see from this angle that screamed of smug accomplishment. He hovered over her, egging her on to drink before sitting down beside her and forcefully lifting her elbow so the cup was drained into her mouth.

“Son of a...” Linlin’s temper riled, and she watched in fury at what the evil bastard did to her best friend. “If that’s when he did it, then maybe fifteen minutes before it really kicked and affected you. He’s a complete scumbag, Tang. He didn’t even hesitate or take a moment to doubt what he was doing.” She hit the triple speed on her screen to fast forward what they were watching and returned it to normal when TangShi got out of her seat on the couch. Sensing TangShi beside her squirming around and staying quiet as this sunk in.

“He was all over you like a litch, and you can see how uncomfortable you are sitting there. Not exactly painting the flirting image of you being into him. Lying prick.” Linlin clenched her fist as the camera angle showed TangShi leaving with Rong Cai before she headed to go find the corridor file to see what happened next. Losing them once they left the room. TangShi couldn’t stand it anymore. Her anxiety building to the point she felt like she may scream or faint and she was having trouble breathing as her lungs closed up on her.

"I don't want to see it... not right now. I can't." TangShi lost her courage, her nerves kicking in and nausea consuming her at seeing for herself that the tests results were not a lie. That Rong Cai really did something to her with intent. Somehow in the back of her mind she had held a glimmer of hope that it wasn't him, that it was maybe another student as a prank and somehow this was part of a misunderstanding, or a mistake meant for someone else. She had prayed it wasn't how it seemed so it would be less devastating. She had so badly wanted to see something innocent that had taken a bad turn and not this...this cruel and horrible reality.

"I need the bathroom." TangShi got up, leaving Linlin to watch the footage herself, her eyes misting over and her stomach churning as she hightailed it into the toilet and barely made it before she threw up. Retching her guts out and emptying her stomach as tears poured down her face. Her cool and aloof numbness deteriorating, and she crumbled into a small ball on the floor hugging her knees to her chest and burying her face as she sobbed. She fell apart and everything she had been holding in since she saw that report all came tumbling out in a watery and painful mess.

She was drugged and god knows what, and it made her feel violated and broken. Despairing over memories she didn't have yet feeling dirty and ruined as though she did. How that man could have done such a thing. How any human could do something so sordid and awful to another person and she was caught in devastation that it had been done to her. A cloying gripping pit of despair in her belly that she had been raped and she couldn't mentally accept it.