

Destined To Be His wife by L.T. Marshall Chapter 17

“Yes.” She replied, unsure which woman this came from and gave a sweeping glance around and then to the youngest lady who had focused on her a moment ago. The one who held a strong resemblance to her annoying husband, and she hoped they didn’t share a personality too.

“I feel so rude to have not done this before we started eating, but I won’t be here in the morning. I’m Jun, your sister-in-law. My brother should have introduced us when we sat but I’m afraid he has all the manners of a spoiled brat. So welcome, TangShi. I hope we can become close sisters in time.” Jun smiled as she said the words, making it clear it was with affection and not a real insult and no one at the table blinked an eye at her teasing of her brother. For a moment it softened TangShi’s tight nerves, and she relaxed with a genuine smile in response.

TangShi bowed lightly towards the girl, aware of all the eyes of the half dozen diners now filtering her way as she was suddenly on show with standing here. The last few days had been a strained existence, but she was determined not to make things worse while under this roof. If she had to submit, smile her days away, and be as timid as she could, then so be it. She wanted a peaceful life.

YuZhi sighed, gave his sister a frown and carried on eating as if this was somehow nothing to do with him. Obviously annoyed she intervened on his chasing away his new bride. Jun was not as clueless as she made out and she had a keen eye for details and small interactions. This girl TangShi interested her, because of the way her brother seemed to revert to being a prickly teen in her presence. She hadn’t seen anything but cold and disinterested from him for a number of years. Rhea was the only one which pulled any kind of thawing but even then, he was so proper and prim even around her it was like he was a feeling-less corpse.

“It’s nice to meet you, Jun. Thank you, I hope we will have a great relationship in time.” TangShi sounded polite and robotic as she churned out another expected response then grimaced when she realized how forced it sounded. She was normally better at social interaction, but she was dead on her feet and needing to slide away to peace and quiet. Her body ached, her head was weary, and she wanted to go. Three days of nonstop doing was not how she normally lived her life, and the constant tension of living under a strained atmosphere was wearing her down.

“I will be back in a week, I come every Tuesday, maybe I can come earlier in the day, and we could sit out in the garden and get to know one another. I’m at college and live in dorms so I am not often around.” Jun was persistent but TangShi softened a little, for like Rhea, this girl gave her no hints of ill intention and she relaxed a little. Hoping her gut instincts on judging people were not letting her down and she accepted gratefully. Any kind of warmth from these people was to be jumped on and treasured for she was sure she wouldn’t get a lot of it in the next two years. Already she could tell among most of them her position was not important, or even noticed.

"I would like that, thank you, Sister-in-law, Jun." TangShi made one final bow and with a gracious goodbye she turned and followed Xiaosu into the hallway and they made their escape with a heave of relief and hurried steps.

Jun narrowed her eyes at her brother, and he caught her smiling his way, looking like a Cheshire cat.

"What is it, Brat?" He frowned at her, pushed some braised beef into his mouth and ignored her continued fixation on his face.

"Nothing. Just curious...why my ice-cold brother suddenly acts like a moody boy and treats his wife like an unruly, unwanted employee, when it's more your style to glare and ignore. Don't you have more grace? You barely looked her way at all unless it was to tell her off and seemed you can't stop yourself from doing it. Do you dislike her so much or is it that you're so intrigued that you're worried you might like her too much?" Jun had always been bold and to the point, something that YuZhi both adored at times and, sometimes, like right now, abhorred.

"Shut up. You have no idea what you're talking about." YuZhi glared her way, instantly angered by her foolishness and denied it completely. Shaking his head and throwing his focus back on his food. Sometimes he was sure his sister had been dropped on her head as a baby.

"You doth detest too much!" Jun grinned, amused by his instant snap, thinking she had found something to toy with, but her brother then reverted to the person she had been surprised not to see since she got here.

He instantly closed up, his face returned to a mask of indifference, and he shrugged nonchalantly. The armor in place and he exuded an immediate improvement in maturity as he sighed at his sister as though she were a mere annoying fly. All too good at putting himself back in place and being who he usually was when that damned woman wasn't riling him.

"You young people, think you know everything and yet have a lot to learn. Eat your food or go home. Either way, get on with it, brat." YuZhi smirked at her and winked, taking some of the harshness out of his words but his fiery little sister only shook her head. She was completely unfazed as the family ignored their bickering and continued with eating and small talk. They were used to the siblings being this way with one another and it was nothing interesting to listen to. Even grandfather ignored their squabbles with an affectionate smile.

Jun tucked her chin down to eat, but a small ember of something grew in her brain and she glanced her brother's way and then at the empty doorframe where that girl had gone. She was going to get to know TangShi and figure out what it was about her that made her brother so blatantly unkind and impatient with her. He had always been a distant kind of person with most people, and it had only worsened in the last few years,

but this girl struck something in him, and she was intrigued to see where it would go. Fanning his temper was better than the iceberg he had been for years.

She pushed his patience, for which he was famed. She brought out a side of him that was missing for a long time since he came home from the military, even if it wasn't his best side, and she wasn't so sure her brother's dislike was that at all. She had seen him with people he truly hated, and yet he was good at playing cool and undisturbed and the lack of reaction and emotion always made him less human. It was how he handled all conflict and never let his enemies ruffle his feathers or get under his skin, no matter what they did.

Why was this girl so different?

She hadn't done anything near as bad as people he truly disliked over the years. Jun couldn't help but feel hopeful that with even an ounce of her brother's mask being moved that maybe this girl would help revive other parts of her brother that she missed so much too. He may be mean, but any kind of reaction was better than the lack of any. Eight years of nothing and Jun was excited to see a ripple.