

The Enchanted Night by LEIGH COBBETT Chapter 2

The long night in Rome was freezing cold.

Cassandra Qin ran to the deck in haste. The chilly breeze blew against her hauntingly beautiful face as she stared aimlessly into the distant sea. Her past saddened her. She rhythmically tapped her forehead absentmindedly. She looked rather bothered with her own thoughts.

Today was her last day in Rome. She was due to graduate from her university shortly and would soon have to bid farewell to this beautiful country.

The student union had scheduled their graduation ball on the cruise ship. She had been so enthralled with the celebration that she had drunk more than she could handle. Things went out of control and Cassandra held herself tightly in the wind to allay her fears. She felt herself slide into the past memories. ‘Why on earth have I done that?’ thought she.

Her head throbbed steadily thanks to her heavy consumption of alcohol. The hangover didn’t allow her to remember much from the last night except for the sharp pain that she had experienced. “Rufus Luo,” she murmured the name unconsciously. The image of this man was not quite clear but haunted her like a ghost.

The wind was howling on the deck. She didn’t retreat to her cabin instead, she stood in the cold, to try and sober herself. Her mind was a mess, however, old memories flashed through her mind unexpectedly. It had almost been four years since she came to Rome.

“Cassandra, it is fine that you decided to go abroad to further your education. However, you always need to remember that you are a married woman.

I am sure you are aware of the things that are expected of married women. There is no need for me to nag you with the details anymore.”

Her mother’s words still rang in her mind.

Cassandra’s lips curled up bitterly as she remembered her mother’s face. Before she came to Rome to study, her mother had given her detailed instructions to govern her daily life. Usually, married women were not supposed to venture abroad without their families. It was quite uncommon in her family. However, her mother had supported her and eventually, she got to realise her dream. The cruise ship continued its course on the calm ocean. Stars shone brightly above Cassandra’s head as she was lost in nostalgia. The night breeze seemed to be chronicling the past against her ears.

Cassandra Qin suddenly realised that she was married and her face twisted in a scornful smile. ‘How ridiculous, ‘ she thought to herself, ‘I am indeed married to someone.’ The funny thing was, she had been married for almost four years now. However, she only met with her so-called husband four times. The whole marriage thing was just a farce for her.

They were married not because of love but for the union of two families. In order not to disappoint her parents, she had to contract an alliance with a wealthy man. However, she had no feelings toward him. Similarly, he couldn’t care less about her either.

“The only thing I can give you is a marriage certificate. Apart from that, do not expect anything from me,”

said Lionel Tang, the man whose name was written against hers on the marriage certificate. The irony of the situation was not lost on her. His cold words slashed through her on her wedding night and he was serious.

He never touched her. The marriage certificate was just a piece of paper. It brought Cassandra no joy whatsoever. The thought of Lionel Tang depressed her. She quickly shook her head against the wind, trying to rid her of her foul mood.

She had absolutely no impression of Lionel Tang. He was a total stranger to her before the wedding. After four years of marriage, the situation was still the same.

He hated her guts. Cassandra Qin had no idea why he was so hostile towards her to start with. ‘Some questions might never be answered,’ she thought as she sighed and gazed at the dark swirling ocean.

What a complete and utter joke her life was! Without any warning, she had unintentionally lost her virginity to a stranger ten hours ago.

She didn’t even know him!

She had cheated on her husband!

The thought exploded in her head like fireworks. Cassandra Qin buried her face deep in her palms. What had she done to herself? Her head now ached like hell. She agonized over the thought and the fact that she did not have the guts to face the consequences.

The overwhelming guilt was devouring her. Cassandra’s beautiful face twisted. She closed her eyes in agony and stumped her feet on the deck. She was agitated and didn’t have any clue as to what to do next.

All she could remember was the steaming hot sex she had had with Rufus Luo. She was the one who took the initiative and was completely indulged in the lust. The way she moaned in the bed... Cassandra couldn’t believe what she did back then. Horrified by her own crazy

drunk behavior, she bit herself really hard in the bottom lip. Blood came out but she didn't have the time to wipe it away. Her mind was fully occupied with her own stupid farce.

She, as a married woman, had dared to sleep with a complete stranger on the cruise. How could she possibly do this to her husband? How drunk was she? Cassandra shook her head rapidly, hoping to get rid of the unbearable shame. Why did she keep picturing herself with Rufus Luo? 'What is wrong with me?' thought Cassandra shaking her head vigorously. The image was so vivid that every time she closed her eyes, she could see his handsome face and fit body. The way she had felt when she had been underneath him... Cassandra's eyes suddenly widened. She couldn't carry on thinking about him anymore. This needed to stop right now.

She blamed the whole incident on the alcohol. She should have never drunk more than she could handle. She should have known better. The alcohol had made her do crazy things like that. She didn't know that such a pliant girl like her could actually be capable of such wild things under the effect of alcohol.

Her study in Rome had, now, come to an end. Tomorrow she was scheduled to depart and return to her home country. Was this one-night-stand a gift from her fate? How interesting it was! Her graduation gift was "this unexpected intercourse" on the cruise ship.

How was she going to face her husband and his family? Cassandra looked around herself and was glad that the incident had taken place far away from home. She couldn't bear the consequence of her husband finding out the truth. Thankfully she had trespassed her own boundaries in Rome. The Tang family would never know about what happened here. Cassandra sighed softly as she thought about Lionel's wrath. She was sure that he would literally kill her.

Tossing her hair back against the wind, she tried to calm herself down. It was now critical for her to think of a solution in case things got worse. She found it quite comforting that she was still in Rome, not back at home. Right now, it was essential she buried this secret. No one should ever know about her one-night-stand. If the Tang family knew about the scandal, her family would suffer greatly.

She couldn't hurt her mother. The scandal would literally kill her. Cassandra thought about her mother's hurt face and took in a deep breath. She made a promise to herself that under no circumstances would she tell the truth to anyone. Cheating on her loveless marriage was almost inevitable, however, she could get away with it if she played it carefully. Tomorrow she would leave this place forever and the incident would not bother her anymore. She should imagine it was a beautiful dream. For the sake of her old mother, she couldn't afford to tell anyone about her Roman incident.

The night was long and the ocean was calm. Apart from the splashing sound from the waves beneath the deck, the only sound she could hear was her own steady breath. It was time for her to move on. Cold yet determined, Cassandra calmly made up her mind. She would never ever let anyone else know about this cruise. Her life depended on its secrecy. She would never let anyone ruin it.