

## The Enchanted Night – Chapter: 51 – 60

### You Are On The Losing Streak

Cassandra was not his first woman. Put it more frankly, she was only one in a countless list, including a random fling here and there or a one-night stand once in a while. It was hopeless to hang on to him.

Tonight, in the faint light and the dappled shade her stunning beauty still shined through. That captivated him. Like they did the first time when they met, he ached to get her laid again.

But upon her cold and heartless words, his heart convulsed in an instant.

To recover from her smothering words he took a deep breath, reflected for a moment, and told himself to ignore his hurt feelings.

With intense eyes, he watched her face, and sensed a distance between them. It was a deep, dark rift that separated their souls and emotions, even while she stood right in front of him. How awful!

‘Sorry to say this, Cassandra, but you are doomed to lose!’ he declared, without blinking.

Believing that the headstrong woman could never escape, he fixed his gaze on her, trying to read her mind. The insolence in his voice was unmistakable.

But Cassandra didn’t mind him. She simply brushed him off with a mocking smile.

‘Well, whether I will win or lose, it is not up to you,’ she said nonchalantly.

‘At least by now, you have been on a losing streak, haven’t you?’

Rufus retorted.

Intentionally, he wanted to get on her nerves.

Never had Lionel treated her with respect, Cassandra’s love and respect for him had fizzled out along the line. Now, she didn’t even give a damn. The only inspiration she had in this particular case were the interests of the Qins – her family.

‘Whatever you think or do can’t change anything. I’ve already made up my mind and I’m OK, without your advice!’

Cassandra stood her ground.

Frustrated by her stubbornness, Rufus heaved a sigh and thought for a moment before reaching out a hand to stroke her cheek.

‘It is quite late, go to sleep!’ he suggested.

Cassandra blinked, wondering what would be his next move. Their rivalry was here to stay and it was only sensible for Cassandra to keep a watchful eye, if she was to survive in the game.

Silently, she thought to herself, ‘Am I such a fool? The man I keep fantasizing over is my husband’s elder stepbrother. That’s my brother-in-law! Why invest my emotions in him when I know well it’s a very complicated relationship?’

There was no doubt, her marriage to Lionel was just a trade-off. Her life had been set and it would not be wise to allow this man into her life. She began to fear for her family, and their family.

As if escaping some danger, Cassandra went back to her room in haste, trotting all the way. By the time she got to the room, her pulse was racing and her face flushing.

As she walked to the bed, she smiled at Cloris, who was fast asleep on the bed, like a delicate and adorable doll.

Careful not to disrupt her delicate, adorable sister on whom she doted, Cassandra tiptoed around to her side of the bed and quietly climbed into he

‘Let’s go and register our marriage on your birthday!’

Marrying Daniel should have been her best birthday gift, but everything was ruined the moment when she caught him sleeping with another woman on the day before her birthday.

‘He’s going to marry that woman! She... was my best friend!’

e tone, ‘Let’s make a baby tonight! Isn’t that what you have been wishing for!’

Then he reached out and stroked Cassandra’s long hair, in front of everyone. A chill ran over Cassandra’s body. She had never seen Lionel so...creepy before.

Cassandra tilted her face away and glared at at Lionel uncomfortably before she quickly steered away from the conversation subject.

‘It is the first time that Cloris is visiting us. I have to take her around,’ she nudged Lionel away.

At that very moment, when she happened to meet Rufus’s gaze, she was mortified and turned away at once.

'What is wrong with me? Why am I afraid to look him in the eye?' she mulled, a pang of guilt eating at her conscience. It felt as if she had been caught red-handed. Images of Rufus and her making out in the Qins' backyard flashed through her mind. She blushed crimson.

'Cassandra, don't worry about me! Rufus had promised to keep me company. You and Lionel must be tired, just go have a rest,' Cloris said tenderly.

What a sensible and considerate girl! Her sweet voice and her innocent look, somehow, left Cassandra absent-minded.

Cassandra remembered last night when the little girl had just asked her to pair her off with Rufus. She hated to admit it, but she knew, a pure girl like her sister could well be the perfect match for Rufus.

'What am I thinking about? I'm a married woman and there is no chance I'd ditch Lionel to remarry Rufus. That is impossible!' she scolded herself.

No doubt those remarks under the streetlight had caused a stir in her mind. The flood of thoughts and conflicted emotions came so thick and fast that she had to heave a sigh to recover from the shock.

Dropping her head in disappointment, Cassandra told herself to stop those fantasies. All those romantic memories with Rufus on the night in Rome and their kiss in the Qins' backyard last night were things that she needed to let go. Hell, even her future in the Tangs' family now hung in the balance.

Dry leaves rustled as the wind cast a gentle blow. Cassandra was anxious at the thought that she would be alone with Lionel. Excusing herself, she went to the backyard and took her time to think things over while walking.

The light in the backyard was dimmer compared to the one in the mansion which was overly lighted. The backyard was bleak.

Cassandra could hear the laughter made by Horace, Jill, and Cloris from inside. They were having a great time.

The peals of laughter were warm like sunshine in the winter, melting the snow. But the warmth was not enough to melt Cassandra's freezing emotions.

Cassandra knew that she wasn't as likable as Cloris, and Jill didn't like her at all. Cloris made a good impression on Jill and she liked her company. She felt happy for her sister knowing that she felt at home with the Tang family.

The chill of the early evening crept through Cassandra's senses making her nose itchy.

Out of nowhere, someone put a coat over her shoulders. Without looking back she could tell who it was by the familiar scent. Then Rufus said with his husky voice, 'Are you trying to make others feel sorry for you by getting sick?'

Rufus' bark was worse than his bite. He was showing his concern for Cassandra in a sarcastic way.

'Besides, Lionel is still expecting you to have his child. Are you sure you can do that when you're so weak and sickly?'

Usually, Cassandra would talk back. But tonight was different. She didn't have the right mood.

Lionel was acting so possessive these past few days. His actions made Cassandra realize that she could never run away from him. Needless to say, Rufus, who knew well how complicated their relationship was but still persistently did things to worsen the situation.

Cassandra felt helpless and frustrated at the thought of her fate.

She was forced to marry Lionel, and the Qin family had kept on giving her the cold shoulder. That was fine with her, however, she got herself used to loneliness and ill-treatment. What scared her the most was other people showing pity on her. It made her feel belittled and vulnerable. And Rufus entered her life. He showed concerns and affections for her in different ways. She got used to the feeling of being cared for and secured, which might be the reason for her attachment to Rufus.

She would have been much happier if it was Rufus whom she married.

'Wait, stop thinking about Rufus!' Cassandra felt annoyed that she kept on imagining something she couldn't have.

'Cassandra, you should stop dreaming. It's not right, ' She reminded herself.

Then taking a deep breath and removing the coat Rufus had offered, she said coldly, 'If you know that I'll have Lionel's child, then you should stay away from me.'

Rufus glanced at Cassandra hearing her words. Her remarks angered him in an ins

‘You’re my wife in name only, on paper only. My heart and love will never be yours.’

Edward made it clear to Daisy that she was nothing to him. They were both victims of family greed -- the marriage was arranged for them.

Six years passed. She remained quiet, gaining a reputation in the army as a tough-as-nails colonel. When she walked into his life again, Edward fell in love with this woman...

to come.

‘Lionel, calm down! We have a deal. This marriage is for business only. You hate me and I don’t like you either. Why would you do this to me? You’re becoming a rapist!’

Cassandra stepped back out of fear, but Lionel kept on stepping forward moving closer to her. He smiled viciously. He stretched out one hand to caress his chin playfully while looking at Cassandra who had been trying to escape.

‘Cassandra, do you think you can stop me? I’d like to see whether Rufus will still be interested with you if he learned that you’ve slept with me!’

Lionel said coldly. His insult made Cassandra furrow her eyebrows.

‘You’re my wife. It’s your duty to make me happy. Cassandra, you can’t run away from me!’

Cassandra was cornered by Lionel. She had nowhere to go.

Lionel locked his hands on the wall around Cassandra, stopping her from running away. They were so close that Cassandra could feel his heavy breaths.

For the first time, Cassandra felt really scared.

She looked at Lionel and pleaded for him desperately. Her vision was clouded by the tears in her eyes. She hated Lionel's approach, his smell, his touch, and everything about him. She hated him a lot.

She felt so harassed. Out of her desperation to escape, Cassandra thought about telling Lionel that she had slept with another man. This might get Lionel angry and let her go.

That was Cassandra's escape plan.

She knew what kind of person Lionel was. And she was certain that he couldn't hold up to the idea that his wife cheated on him. Pulling her strength together, Cassandra said, 'Lionel, I have to tell you something...'

Cassandra didn't have time to care about the consequences of what she was about to do.

But before she could finish her words, a phone call interrupted her. Cassandra lifted up her head and saw Lionel took out the phone from his pocket. He was exasperated.

Unfortunately It Wasn't Rufus

Lionel took his phone out of his trousers' pocket. Ivy's name flashed on the screen, somewhat dampening his spirits.

His eyes darkened and the expression on his face grew hesitant as he debated whether or not to answer the call.



Ordinarily, Lionel would have answered it without hesitation. But right now, Ivy's call had obtruded on his plan. It made him impatient.

The phone kept ringing. Lionel glanced at Cassandra, who was looking at him uneasily and shivering. He thought he could give Ivy a short greeting and then get back to business, so he quickly pressed the answer key.

He heard Ivy's panicked whimper as soon as he put the phone to his ear. She spoke to him in between tears, 'Lionel, can you come right now? I... I'm scared.'

Lionel's heart jolted. Ivy was an elegant and demure woman. The only time she had pushed the panic button was when Cassandra had become his legal wife. That news cut her to the quick at that time.

Since then, however, Ivy had stood strong like a rose with thorns. Lovely, but dangerous. She had never given him a sign of vulnerability and he had never seen her cry again. What happened today? What had upset her?

'What happened, Ivy?'

Lionel asked patiently despite his agitation. Her next words immediately doused him in cold water.

'I... I'm pregnant!' she cried out.

Lionel froze, panic shooting through his veins. He could hardly believe his ears. Pregnant? They used condoms every single time. How could she get pregnant?

'That's impossible. You must have made a mistake!'

Lionel's eyes widened a fraction as he tried to convince himself that she was joking. He had been pressured into marrying Cassandra under his father's arrangement. He had been forced to make a considerable sacrifice in the form of his marriage, for the sake of Tang Group and in the hopes that he would take over the company one day.

So he reluctantly accepted Cassandra as his legal wife just to win his father's favor.

However, after Rufus appeared, he lost his position in the group. And at the last celebration party, Rufus publicly disgraced him.

Now Ivy was pregnant. Misfortune seemed to follow him everywhere. If Ivy was right, the baby had undeniably come at the worst possible time.

They used protections and he had been very cautious the whole time. There was just no way that Ivy could get pregnant!

Lionel was pulled out of his musings as her cries filled his ear and her breathing got uneven.

'What should I do, Lionel? I... I'm really pregnant. It's confirmed. Would you come to me? I'm so scared and lonely.'

Lionel had talked to her about the matter before. She agreed to his decision not to have babies for the time being after analyzing all the pros and cons. Now that she suddenly found herself pregnant, she was terrified.

'Lionel, are you coming over? I really need you...'

Lionel was so up

When her sister ran away from the wedding, Autumn was forced to marry Charles.

His name had been linked to innumerable ladies.

He had different girlfriends for every day of a year.

Autumn had never thought that she would fall in love with him.

a man. His concern for Cassandra was off-putting, but she still nodded in agreement, 'You are right, Rufus. Lionel, please take care of my sister. Call us if you need help.'

Lionel looked at his half-brother with confusion in his eyes. Rufus had already helped him twice in less than five minutes...How strange. He shook his head slightly. It didn't matter because this was exactly what he wanted. God be thanked!

After assuring Horace and Jill that he would get Cassandra to the hospital safely, Lionel dragged her out of the living room. Rufus's gaze darkened as Cassandra followed Lionel out like a ragdoll, too weak to put up a resistance. It drove him mad.

Lionel pulled her to the garage and pushed her in the back seat. He swiftly got behind the wheel and drove the car out at lightning speed.

Cassandra was tired and didn't have the energy to oppose Lionel. Her eyelids started to droop. She felt like she was wrapped inside a silk cocoon; her strength seemed to have dried up and she was just biding her time.

Befuddled, she forced herself to open her eyes and then frowned when she saw the back of Lionel's head.

'Why is Lionel with me when I'm sick? I wish it was Rufus who stayed with me, '

she couldn't get that thought out of her head and smiled unknowingly as she allowed her mind to linger on Rufus.

His smile. His scent. His sensual mouth.

The ruthless lips that always gave her a hot kiss.

The muscular arms that always lifted her up in warm a embrace.

The deep and husky voice that whispered sweet nothings in her ear. Even his scolding now would sound so enticing.

...

Unfortunately, it wasn't Rufus with her.

Cassandra finally drifted off to sleep, her thoughts dissolving into nothing.

'I must relax...I must stop thinking about Lionel and Rufus...No drama, no hatefulness, and no complication...I just want to sleep...When I wake up, I wouldn't feel so tired...'

Ivy Is Pregnant

After reaching the hospital, Lionel rushed into the emergency room with Cassandra in his arms.

'Hospitalize her!' he ordered, gave a wad of money and hurried away.

As quickly as he had come, his footsteps receded into the night, leaving the doctor bewildered at his abrupt manner.

Cassandra willed her eyes to open and looked at the doctor on duty, with a bitter smile on her lips.

‘Doctor, I think I have a fever,’ said Cassandra weakly.

Then she lost consciousness and fell backwards.

Luckily, a pair of powerful arms caught her.

‘Well, the doctor is quick in movement. He’s really a nice and thoughtful man,’

thought Cassandra the second she fell into a coma.

The doctor stared at the second man who suddenly appeared in the emergency room. He suspected this second man must have come here in hot pursuit of the unruly character who had just left. By their manner of handling the unconscious lady, it was obvious there was bad blood between the two.

Rufus’s face darkened with anger. Urgently, he ordered the third guy who accompanied him and was standing by his side, ‘Victor, keep a close watch on him. Find out what he’s up to.’

Quietly, Victor nodded and left, pensively touching his nose with a finger. By the hasty way in which Rufus followed Lionel, he knew Rufus really cared about Cassandra.

Rufus was right. Lionel didn’t intend to take Cassandra to the doctor. It was just his excuse.

From the parking lot Lionel stepped on the gas and drove like a maniac straight to Ivy's home, burning with anxiety.

A puffy eyed Ivy came to open the door. When she saw Lionel, she threw herself directly into his arms.

'Here you are at last,' she greeted, her anxiety echoing on every syllable.

A beautiful, strong woman most of the time, Ivy was now clumsy and irritable. She wore little make-up and was terribly upset. It distressed Lionel.

Helping her to sit on the sofa and wiping away her tears, Lionel held Ivy in his arms and comforted, 'Take it easy. I'm here with you.'

But in the warmth of his arms, Ivy sobbed all the more, her shoulders twitching and her voice choking.

'Lionel, what should I do? I want to keep this baby,' she wept.

But Lionel flatly refused without a second thought, 'No, you can't keep this baby. I'm not ready for a baby now!'

For a moment a menacing look flashed across Ivy's face. But soon, realizing how futile it was trying to argue with him, she dropped her demand. 'It would be better to play along,' she mused.

'It's not like I'm forcing my way, Lionel. I have a good reason for my desire, and maybe, you'll understand,' she began, in a solemn tone now. 'You see, after the last car accident, the doctor said my uterus sustained pretty bad injuries. It would be virtually impossible to conceive. But look, here I am, pregnant, beyond a shadow of a doubt. That to me is a miracle which gives me joy that words cannot express. I'm more than willing to

take a risk and carry the pregnancy to term,' she paused and wiped a tear from her eyes. 'Please, let me keep the baby. It

'Do you still want to run away after what happened last night?'

Their relationship changes overnight. She tries to keep her distance from him, while he comes closer and closer.

Spoiling her, he gives her everything she desires. His only wish is to keep her around. The whole world is envious of what she has.

'Never rush in a relationship,' she says calmly.

her, right? She should be alright.'

When Ivy saw that Lionel was obviously distracted, she spoke out directly what she had held back for a long time, 'Lionel, if you insist, I will leave you. I will completely disappear with your baby!'

That jolted Lionel back to the present.

'How dare you!' he roared.

But Ivy, not worried anymore, snorted back, 'I would do anything for the baby! All these years, you've only been fabricating a future for me to keep me by your side. On my part, I've been good to you. Look how you want to reward my loyalty? Yeah, you want me to kill our baby in return! I'm bitterly disappointed!'

When Lionel listened to her, his pangs of guilty came in huge, threatening waves.

At his dumbness, Ivy continued, 'I thought the idea of me carry your baby who is also the eldest grandson in Tang family would mean

something to you. By the fact that your marriage to Cassandra had gone south, you made me believe I'd be appreciated in the family! You took advantage of my innocence!

Lionel came to a sudden realization at Ivy's shout.

He had never slept with Cassandra, but Horace didn't know that. If the family realized that Cassandra couldn't bear a child for Lionel, they'd allow him to divorce her. Once Cassandra was gone, the family would gladly accept his remarriage to Ivy.

Seeing how close he was to his dreams, Lionel gathered Ivy to him. He had gotten an idea.

'Take good care of yourself, Ivy. I will do what I have promised you. I'm ready to have a baby with you,' he promised.

Resting her head on Lionel's shoulder, a smile of triumph lit up her face.

'What a foolish man!' she thought.

What Lionel didn't know was that Ivy had hatched that plot. She knew he had no reason to divorce Cassandra. That left her with only one plan. She'd have to take the risk and get pregnant. With the baby, she could easily blackmail Lionel.

The shrewd Tang family should know which was more important between their own eldest grandson and Cassandra - the daughter of the declining Qin family.



Cassandra's dream was so surreal that it lasted unbelievably long.

In her dreams, the sky was clear and a gentle wind kissed her sun-bathed face. Luscious grasslands extended over the horizon and fragrant fumes from the budding petals were dispersed by the wind. The peaceful scene was perfected by zestful laughter and sweet words of love whispered on her ears.

She was lost in Rufus' embrace; she had never felt such love and passion overflow in just a simple gesture of affection. The way he held her made her feel that no storm could harm her as long as she was with him. His arms were such a stronghold and she couldn't ask for more.

The dream was overwhelming, but the reality was harsh. No matter how elated the dream was, eventually Cassandra had to wake up and continue with her real life which was the exact opposite of her fantasies.

She managed to open her heavy eyes and tried blinking for several times. Once, twice, thrice...she was playing with her eyes to test whether she was still dreaming or she was already back to reality. Rufus who was silently observing her and fascinated by her actions.

Steadily, Cassandra held her eyes open and stared blankly at the ceiling. Lifting her head, she caught sight of Rufus who was just sitting by the sofa beside the bed. It surprised her to see him and she couldn't avert her eyes from staring at his attractive face.

'So I must still be dreaming, ' Cassandra thought as he had exactly the same emotions in his eyes, tender and caring.

She gazed up at him, not before long the tenderness in his eyes seemed to subside.

‘Well, you sleep like a baby. It’s been almost 20 hours. Are you playing the Sleeping Beauty?’

His eyebrows creased with discontent, and his eyes emitted impatience, waking her up from her reveries.

His words made her gather herself and drift away from her daydreams. She suddenly realized that she was in a hospital, after noticing the bare white walls and the familiar smell.

Pieces of what had happened flashed back in her mind, and the last thing she could remember was being taken into the emergency room, then everything went blank. What happened after...? She didn’t have a clue.

The reverie was broken by the screeching of the door as it was pushed open. Cloris walked in and her face was filled with excitement seeing that Cassandra had been conscious.

‘Cassandra, my dear sister! I’m so glad you are awake now!’

She giggled excitedly as she rushed towards the patient. Cassandra wanted to say something in response to her sister’s excitement but she didn’t get a chance. Cloris kept throwing out questions and just couldn’t stop herself from talking.

‘Cassandra, do you know that you were still in a coma when I came this morning...The doctor said that you had a fever and you would need some good rest, so I went back...Now you seemed much better. Finally, you have regained your consciousness! Are you hungry? You haven’t eaten for so many hours. Do you want me to buy some food for you?’

When finally Cloris paused to give Cassandra some time to respond, Rufus coughed intentionally to let his presence be acknowledged.

‘I’ve already asked Victor to buy some porridge. It would be good for her empty stomach, as it is not going to cause any irritation.’

Cloris’s attention was grabbed by Rufus. For the first time of their many acquaintances, she was dazed at the handsome features of Rufus’ face. He looked different at a closer view – there was something in his eyes that attracted her. She couldn’t stop her heart from palpitating and found it hard to breathe.

Cassandra, on the other hand, started to wonder, ‘I remember it was Lionel who brought me to the hospital, but why is Rufus here attending to me now?’

Enjoying the infatuations she felt towards Rufus, Cloris searched for the appropriate words she could address to Rufus. With her face blushed, she put on a warm grin and asked, ‘By the way, Rufus, why are you here with Cassandra?’

Rufus was not showing much emotion on his face. A slice of fatigue flashed across his dark brown eyes.

‘I happened to be visiting a friend here, and figured I should drop by to check on her.’

Finding an easy excuse, he carefully concealed his deep concerns for Cassandra. Upon hearing his reason, a cute grin appeared on her face, and Cloris blurted out, ‘Oh, I see. So that was the reason why you were here when I came just this morning! Since you are still here when I’m back now,

‘Do you know what you did wrong? It’s alright if you just wanted to own me. But you should not have helped Molly leave me!’

When Brian learns the truth, there is no chance for Hannah to win his heart.

Molly, who wants to run away from Brian, seems to be the only one to blame for Hannah's misfortune...

pped clear some of his distress away. In a much more relaxed mood, he began to explain, 'All this time I'm bothered by my son.'

Cassandra reached out her clenched fist and started unfolding her fingers as if counting one by one.

'Not a family man? Unwilling to marry? Refusing to have a child? Or not getting along with his wife? Which one of those about your son is bothering you? Would you mind sharing it with me?'

Though her question was so direct, the old man didn't feel offended and replied straight forward, 'My son doesn't want to follow my path to take over our family business. He just wants to follow his own way of life. Tropical rainforests, plains, and deserts, are the places he love. He would take his camera with him and stay there for months without returning home. My wife and I are always worried about him and his future.'

Cassandra held an envious expression.

'Wow, he has been to so many interesting places! In my case, the only place that I have been to is Rome. I haven't got a chance to go to other places even if I want to.'

The old man, however, was not totally excited as Cassandra was. Instead, he put on a helpless smile.

'My wife and I used to lose contact with him for a couple of weeks. After all, he is my only child. Who knows what would happen to him when he

is in the wild. All the family members want him to come back to take the responsibility for our family business. But he is so stubborn and just wants to play around with the animals and the plants,' the old man complained.

The light in Cassandra's eyes now dwindled. On her mind raced the thought that...

Somewhere out there, there was someone who was so bold enough to pursue his dreams and live the life he wanted. He was living his life to the fullest disregarding the immense pressure from the family. Sadly, in her case, Cassandra was too weak to dare and she was never given the chance.

'I envy this man's son. I want to marry the person I love. I want to have a simple life with him and be with him for the rest of my life. I am willing to give up all the luxuries of life just to be happy with him, ' she thought to herself.

Ironically, in reality, she decided to give up her own life for the sake of her family. She didn't want her parents to suffer. Then she ended up with Lionel, the man whom she married without even the slightest affection.

Noticing that Cassandra was indulged in her own thoughts, the old man tried to console her back, 'My fair lady, you are so young. What is bothering you? I can be some help if you don't mind sharing it with me.'

She didn't know whether it was because of the lovely scent of the flowers, the gentle moonlight, or the cold wind which resembled her feelings, but somehow she felt a rare urge to express her thoughts to this strange old man.

‘What has been bothering me all this time is...I have fallen in love with a person, who is not supposed be loved by me,’ she stated with a voice full of despair.

A Caged Bird That Wanted To Break Free

The Tang family was like a cage, despite all the opulence around. To Cassandra, it was a coop from which she longed for an escape.

For four years, since she got married to Lionel, her dreams had began to die a slow, painful death. Patiently, she prayed and hoped for a turn-around in her marriage. But all the time, Lionel gave her the cold shoulder, moving away from her with each passing day, until there was an irreconcilable rift between them. How she now wished for an escape from this unfulfilling, oppressive marriage! But what were her chances of ever falling in love with a man again?

Right now, only under the soft moonlight and the gentle night wind could Cassandra tell the strange old man what she had buried deep in her heart all this time. She just needed someone to talk to, and this man was the perfect chance to let out the struggles bottled up in her heart. She couldn’t talk to her parents or her sister about her problems, let alone they too were in a hard place at the moment, and were emotionally and financially drained.

‘Adding to them yet another burden would break them down completely. That’s not something I’d do to my parents. For all the sacrifices they’ve made for me. They deserve better. Right now, I should be the one supporting them,’

Cassandra said with a blank look on her face. She gazed into the distance, eyes unreadable. It seemed that her mind had flown back to the summer of the year when she just graduated from high school. The argument between her parents, the tears of her mother, and her disappointment. They all came rushing back to her in an instant.

For the sake of the Qin family, she accepted the arranged marriage with Lionel. It was forced on her by the family. Putting up resistance, she had cried, cursed and even tried to escape this horrible fate. But in the end, she just couldn't see her mother suffer. She had compromised and agreed to this nightmare of a marriage.

'I also realize that there are things in life that I just can't change. So I think that I should be content with what I have right now and focus on the good side of my life. But...'

Cassandra trailed off. She had agreed to this marriage for the sake of her family, that was true. But it didn't mean that she would give up on her dreams. That was why she was determined to finish her studies in Rome, and graduated with first class honors.

'But fate again played a cruel joke on me, letting me meet a person that I shouldn't have met. And one thing led to another...'

she said, thinking back to the cruise before she returned home. When she lifted up her head, she locked eyes with Rufus, and felt something in her heart stir.

Under the influence of alcohol, in the heat of the moment, the two of them got tangled with each other, and shared a passionate night together. The night was unforgettable. Whenever Cassandra thought of the fateful night, she had a bittersweet feeling in her heart. On one hand, she was happy that she could spend a night with the man she liked; but on the

other hand, knowing that Rufus and Lionel were brothers, she felt bad that they could never be together for real.

That fling would end in Rome, so she had thought. Little had she expected that she'd see Rufus again. What was more, she even found out that he was her brother-in-law. Now, their relationship was complicated. She had no idea where the two of them stood. She liked Rufus, and this was something she couldn't lie to herself about. But she also knew that they would never have a future together, as long as she was married to his half brother.

The Qin family put their hope on her. They really depended on her. Besides, Horace was also fond of her, and believed in her potentials. All these expectations put so much pressure on her. Cassandra just wanted to leave all this behind and fly away from here.

When she woke up in the hospital and saw Rufus, she almost couldn't tell whether it was the reality or just a dream. Was she losing her mind? Her head was in a spin!

Ever since she came back from abroad, she had come to the hospital a few times. Accidents just kept happening to her. And every time it happened, Rufus was always there to save her.

No, Rufus was everywhere. The more she wanted to keep her distance from this man, the more she seemed to be attached to him. It looked like their lives were tangled together in some mysterious, inseparable ways, that she could never escape.

An inner hunch told her to get away from that man if she didn't want get into trouble, but she just couldn't fool herself. Her heart, body and soul always betrayed her. Every part of her wanted that man. A strong, irresistible desire for him, his love and all that he was.



Whenever he came clos

Falling from nobility, Zen Luo became a humble slave and served as a human punchbag for his former cousins. Inadvertently, he found a way to refine himself into a weapon and a legend started because of that. With a strong belief in never surrender, he strove for revenges and pursued big dreams. Warriors from various clans contended for hegemony and the world was stirred. Relying on the body that was comparable to a powerful weapon, Zen beat his numerous enemies on his way to the immortality. Would he succeed eventually?

y a pawn in their game. Sleeping with Cassandra could be Rufus's best form of revenge on Lionel.

However peace was all that Cassandra wanted at the moment. As much as it depends on her, she'd do everything to avoid getting herself into trouble, with anyone. But Rufus was quite the opposite. He didn't just attract trouble, all the time. Like the eye of a storm, he was trouble itself.

To allow Rufus into her life, it was like to play with fire - she could have ended up burning and harming herself. Was that something for which she was prepared?

Maybe because she was still sick, Cassandra quickly became drowsy. Not long after, she went out like a light.

Right at that moment, the door of her hospital room opened, and a tall man walked in with light steps. Stealthily he walked, careful not wake the woman up.

He walked towards her, and stopped by the other bed beside hers. He lay down on the bed and turned to face Cassandra, studying her face.

She was still asleep, but it seemed that her sleep wasn't very peaceful. She tossed and turned in her bed while moaning in a small voice. There was a frown on her face. She seemed to be having a bad dream.

Thinking of the other night when she had been rushed to the hospital feeling weak, Rufus couldn't help but worry about her. She was immediately admitted into the hospital and he was by her side all this while. She had been dizzy and sleepy because she had a high fever.

Moreover, when she was also crying and kicking because she didn't feel well. The doctors and the nurses couldn't make her calm down. He held her hand and tried to comfort her.

And miraculously, she immediately stopped crying as soon as he held her hand in his. While he was holding her hand, the nurse gave her an injection that began to lower her fever almost immediately.

As she fell asleep, Cassandra was like a cute, little girl who wouldn't let go of her parent's hand.

Surprisingly, she had a strong grip despite her small hands. She grabbed his hand so tightly that it almost hurt.

Tears kept streaming down her cheeks from her tightly closed eyes, making Rufus' heart ache for her.

Using his free hand, he wiped away the tears on her face gently. Then he leaned forward and whispered into her ear, 'Don't be afraid. I am here. I will never let you go.'

Never had he been this gentle towards a woman in his life. Slowly, she calmed down and loosened her grip. Finally, she fell sound asleep. But he still didn't let go of her hand.

He simply just wasn't willing to let go.

Watching her small, delicate frame, he had an instinct to protect her. The way she trusted him, her love and honesty made him long to see her back to perfect health. He badly needed her.

Keeping a watchful eye, he spent the whole night on the bed next to her. In the morning, Victor called, informing him of some members of the Tang family were coming to visit her. It was only then that he let go of her hand, and walked out grudgingly.

As he left, he gave her one more admiring look, wishing her a quick recovery. She was still sound asleep, like a Sleeping Beauty waiting to be kissed by her Prince Charming.

Who Is The Better Hunter

Moonlight poured through the windows of the ward, shrouding Cassandra in an unabating silver glow. Her eyes were shut tight as she drifted into dreams.

Rufus's lips couldn't help but curve up in a soft smile as he looked down at her. She looked peaceful. The only time Cassandra was not on her guard was when she was sleeping.

It was actually quite interesting to tease her on purpose. It amused him to see her ears go red and her mouth twist into a scowl when he provoked her shamelessly.

But watching her while she slept was fascinating too. He felt himself being drawn to her serene face.

It would undoubtedly be even more comforting to hold her in his arms as sleep took over both of them.

Looking back, Rufus was not sure when it all started. When did spending time with her become his favorite past-time?

When dawn came, he took his leave. Cassandra was still in deep sleep, a result of the drugs injecting through her IV drip.

Before stepping out, he bent down and kissed her on the forehead. His gaze held bottomless depths of sincere affection.

Cassandra woke up soon after Rufus left.

She realized that she had dreamed of him again.

At first, she had been sucked into a recurring nightmare. She remembered feeling like she was drowning and unable to come to the surface while her lungs burned from the lack of air. Someone had finally pulled her up and relieved her of the torment.

That someone had been Rufus.

She shook her head in an attempt to forget the dream.

'Cassandra, what the hell? You promised yourself you would never think of him again. How could you dream about him? What's wrong with you?'

she said to herself with frustration and shame, then tossed right back into bed.

Nevertheless, she couldn't help thinking of his beautiful eyebrows, his deep-set eyes, his straight nose which gave on to his captivating lips...

She groaned out loud, 'Why couldn't I just get him out of my mind ?

The last three days, Cloris had been keeping Cassandra company. That way, she also made sure she met Rufus at least once a day.

She found it strange that he was in her sister's room every single time she arrived. He was always reading out Tang documents or case projects though, so she turned a blind eye.

'Rufus, my sister hasn't healed completely yet. She shouldn't be working so soon. What's the hurry ?'

Cloris said. She didn't want to bother him too much but was just curious about his work ethics.

Rufus answered her in a clipped, formal voice, totally unlike his casual manner with Cassandra, 'It's not easy to be the manager of the Design Department. People take notice of your every action and decision. If she doesn't work hard enough and people get to know that she is Horace Tang's daughter-in-law, it could lead to complications.'

It was stressful for Cassandra to deal with the bout of sudden work, but she was glad for his company. His presence soothed her anxieties so she could easily redound to her exertion.

Not to mention he helped her a lot as they worked together. He pointed out her shortcomings, informed her what kind of documents needed to be rejected, and which f

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dreams. Warriors from various clans contended for hegemony and the world was stirred. Relying on the body that was comparable to a powerful weapon, Zen beat his numerous enemies on his way to the immortality. Would he succeed eventually ?

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At this point, if Ivy wanted to become his wife, Horace would probably welcome her with open arms because of her pregnancy.

After all, compared to the perishing reputation of the Qin family, a heir to the Tang Group was far more important.

The day Cassandra was to be discharged from the hospital, Lionel drove there in person to pick her up. He wanted to make a deal with her.

He whistled in a low voice as he strode to her ward, in a fantastic mood today. After all, he held the key to regaining his power in the form of Ivy and their baby. But all his excitement vanished the second he opened the door.

While Cassandra was packing up her stuff, Rufus stood looking out by the window.

Lionel straightened his spine, on his guard immediately as he gazed suspiciously at the pair. He was sure that they were involved romantically. They spent far too much time together.

It was one thing that he wanted to leave Cassandra, but he would never allow her to be intimate with Rufus. His self-esteem was on the line.

‘Darling, let’s go home. I’ve come to pick you up!’ Lionel announced sharply.

He pretended not to see Rufus and enveloped Cassandra in his strong arms. Burying his face into her hair, he inhaled deeply and sighed in satisfaction to irritate his half-brother on purpose.

‘I’ve been so busy lately. Sorry I didn’t have time to come see you. How are you doing now?’

Lionel asked as if he cared. Jill had taught him never to show weakness in front of an enemy, no matter how bad the situation got. He always bore that principle in mind.

A keen hunter was always exceptional at detecting the weakness of his prey before striking it down.

However, Rufus was a keener hunter than him. He was more insightful than most people and saw through Lionel’s ruse immediately.

It was no wonder that he was so successful in business. His shrewdness had made sure he emerged safely on the other side of every danger he faced.

And he had come back to this city not only to take over the reins of the Tang Group, but also to avenge an innocent and vulnerable woman...

#### The Fight In The Tang House

Lionel put his arms around Cassandra tightly all of a sudden. Her first instinct was to push him away.

But Lionel had already thought of it. He pulled her closer to himself, making escape impossible.

Rufus marked this in his deep eyes.

Victor had reported to Rufus that Lionel and Ivy seemed to be planning something in the past few days. They were having serious talks for hours. Rufus had no idea what the plan was so all he could do was to wait and figure it out.

Cassandra was his woman. No one could change that. Yes, Lionel was her husband and so what?

‘There is no need to display affection in public,’

Rufus mocked Lionel, with a look of disdain.

Just one hour ago, Lionel was kissing Ivy. Now, he was hugging Cassandra.

Rufus knew that Lionel was just using these women. He didn’t take his relationship with Cassandra seriously. But he still felt jealous when he saw Lionel hugging Cassandra.

Cassandra was very embarrassed by Lionel’s hug. She hated Lionel’s touch. Lionel was not comforting or reassuring as Rufus.

Suddenly, Lionel lowered his head and kissed Cassandra’s face. Cassandra got goosebumps.

‘Honey, let’s go now. Father and mother are waiting for us at home. And I have good news to announce when we’re back home!’

‘Good news?’ Cassandra worried. If the news was good to Lionel, it probably would not be good for her.

Lionel dragged her to the car as she screamed.

‘What is this dirty game?’



Lionel smirked, as if he had conquered Cassandra.

True, he didn't like Cassandra. But he didn't want Rufus to get the love of his life. His original plan was to divorce Cassandra and kick her out of the family. Now he had a change in mind.

Rufus loved Cassandra. Instead of divorcing her, Lionel decided to torture her and make her life hell.

'Be patient, sweetie. You'll know when we get home!'

Lionel said with an evil laugh.

Cassandra called the house to inform that she was coming home with Lionel. Horace answered and breathed a sigh of relief over the phone.

Cloris couldn't wait to speak with Cassandra in her excitement. She took over the phone and said, 'Cassandra, I reported today to the Tang Group. Leo showed me around the offices.'

Cloris continued, lowering her voice to a whisper, 'It turns out that employees in the company don't know about your true relationship with Lionel. You can rest assured. I will help you keep it a secret.'

Cloris finished with a reassuring wave of her hand even her sister couldn't see.

Cassandra wasn't listening. She was nearing a breakdown. She wondered why Lionel was torturing her mentally.

A chill went down her spine when

Jean Wen sacrificed herself for family interests. Before her husband divorced her, she made every effort to please him.

‘You are inexperienced in bed,’ he said coldly.

‘You! Give that land to my family, or I won’t agree to divorce,’ Jean replied furiously.

‘Fine. It is exactly what I am thinking about,’ he sneered.

broke free from Cloris’ grip and said indifferently, ‘It’s no big deal. It looks like that we might need to buy wine glasses from a different maker.’

Jill was silent all this time. She didn’t want to get involved. But when she heard Rufus, she couldn’t help herself and said angrily, ‘I bought these wine glasses from France myself. They are the most expensive ones. We don’t need to change anything!’

Rufus just laughed, with no regard to her anger.

‘Price isn’t the only standard when judging a wine glass, just as not everyone has the taste or the sense to tell whether a wine is good or not. It is like casting pearls before swine. Wine is worthless if it is given to someone who knows nothing about wine.’

Jill’s family were the new money. She knew that she wouldn’t have married Horace if her family wasn’t in the upper class.

She became angry and embarrassed when Rufus implied in public that she had no taste but only money.

‘I’m the lady of the house now. I handle everything in this family. These wine glasses, since I brought them from France, have served many guests. No one has ever complained about them!’

Rufus remained calm, as usual, in spite of Jill’s tantrum.

‘Of course, strangers won’t say anything. But I’m a member of the Tang family. I think it is fine that I make suggestions which will benefit our family.’

Hearing Rufus, Jill stood up.

She had been in charge of the daily affairs of the family for so many years and no one had questioned her. Rufus was the first one to challenge her and he did it in front of so many people, embarrassing her.

What’s more, he was just a bastard child.

‘Rufus, when did you become a part of the Tang family? Your last name is Luo. You have nothing to do with the Tang family!’

A Special Designer

Jill, with her towering fury, stood up angrily and pushed the dining chair back. She went on with the heated argument with Rufus. She was shouting mean words towards him like a shrew.

‘That’s enough!’

Horace slammed his heavy hands down the table. His roar-like voice made Cassandra jerk.

‘Jill! I’m warning you. Rufus is my son and a member of the Tang family. If you continue on humiliating him, I will definitely drive you out of this house! Then we’ll see who will be no longer part of this family!’

Jill’s pale face quivered with embarrassment. She knew for sure that he meant what he had just said. It was for real and not a threat as Horace

bristled with anger. She deemed it wise to just stop and take her seat, or else she would be an outcast in no time.

Her retreat, however, didn't mean that she had admitted defeat. She glared at Rufus silently and sat back in her seat with a sinister plan of revenge running on the back of her mind.

A servant hurried towards Rufus and cleansed his wounds with some disinfectant and wrapped it neatly with white gauze. After that, he turned towards Horace and bent over to whisper something in his ear, 'Mr. Tong called and said he would come over because he had something urgent to discuss with you. He also added that he would come personally to check on Mr. Luo's injuries.'

Upon hearing the news that Jenks was coming, he turned to the servant and ordered, 'Tell the chef that Jenks is coming. I have oriented him about his favorite dishes last time. Make sure he cooks something he likes.'

The servant nodded. Cold sweats were popping out of his forehead.

Horace was naturally strict at ordinary days, but it was very rare to see him so upset. He was so infuriated that the heavy and raspy yell he had made earlier veiled a mask of fear to everyone at the house.

Everyone knew well that the reasons for it all were Jill and Rufus, but no one dared to point it out. The fear of Horace weakened the strength out of them.

Jill had been difficult to get along with. Over the years, she had been peevish and grew fond of criticizing and finding faults with the servants' work for no reason whatsoever. Every servant was afraid of her, but they were like a dumb man eating the bitter herb - suffering in silence.

However, Jill was a great pretender. She always wore a smile in front of guests as if everything was fine with her. Especially when Horace was around, she would transform into an elegant, sophisticated, well-mannered woman and act like everything was perfect and orderly fine.

Nonetheless, misunderstandings had habituated the household recently. It started the moment Rufus moved in together with the Tang family.

Ever since Horace learned about Rufus's existence, he had done everything possible for Rufus to be accepted to the family.

Rufus was his biological son, and he owed Rufus's mother a lot. His conscience smote him for not providing and taking care of them in the past.

When all his plans for Rufus were set, he pulled all the courage he had to tell Jill about his son from another woman. Jill was so mad, but Horace was confused if her ma

When her sister ran away from the wedding, Autumn was forced to marry Charles.

His name had been linked to innumerable ladies.

He had different girlfriends for every day of a year.

Autumn had never thought that she would fall in love with him.

zling outside. His hair was slightly wet when he came in.

Horace rose from his seat to greet him, and everyone else came up to show respect and welcome him.

Jenks first checked on Rufus's wound. It wasn't serious, so he just asked Rufus to go to the hospital for a tetanus shot after dinner.

Horace repeatedly thanked him and led him to the seat of honor. Then they began to talk.

'Jenks, I heard that you were going to build another branch in the suburbs.'

Jenks nodded, but his eyebrows knitted in a frown.

'I do have a plan, but I've been hesitating about who will be the director of the branch.'

Seeing his hesitation, Horace knew that he was still upset by his wayward son. He comforted him with a bright smile, 'Don't worry. I've talked with your son last time. He said he knew how you felt. He is a high-caliber medical school graduate. It won't be easy for him to give up his calling. I'm sure he will come back.'

Jenks shook his head in dismay, but his face remained relaxed.

'I am learning to accept his decision. He is so like me. I also rebelled and argued with my family when I was young. So I just let him do whatever he wants.'

Horace was glad to see his friend's knitted brows smoothed.

'Our children and grandchildren have their own lives to live. Don't worry too much about them. Jason is a good doctor. You must be very proud of him.'

Speaking of his favorite student's achievements, Jenks let out a smile.

‘You are right. I’m so proud of him and satisfied with his ordeals. I’ll have a good talk with him after he comes back from abroad.’

Suddenly something came to his mind.

‘By the way, you said last time that you would introduce a special planner for the architectural design of my branch. Who is that?’

Horace replied with a complacent smile, ‘The designer is young but insightful. She is now the design manager of the Tang Group.’

Then he pointed to Cassandra, who had been hanging her head low beside Lionel.

‘She’s my daughter-in-law, Cassandra. I want her to take charge of the architectural design for your branch.’

*Waiting For The Storm To Come*

Upon hearing Horace’s words, Jenks Tong looked towards the woman and smiled.

Then, he said with pleasure, ‘You’re Cassandra Qin. Am I right?’

Cassandra had tried to hide her face by lowering her head and letting her hair cover her face, from the second the old man entered the room. She didn’t want him to notice her.

However, her efforts failed, as he easily picked her out of the crowd, calling her by name.

With no place to hide anymore, she raised her head and met his gaze. Everyone in the room was staring at her.

Apparently, he was not surprised to see Cassandra here at all.

She didn't realize that the man had known who she was the day they met.

Anyway, Cassandra put herself together and said, 'Nice to meet you, Director Tong.'

There was not much to say. The only thing on her mind now was the story she had shared earlier about the canary and the birdcage. She feared that he would let slip the story.

She shouldn't have worried at all, as Jenks gave nothing away concerning their meeting. Instead, he went straight to discussing the construction of a new branch of the hospital with Horace.

At the end of their conversation, Jenks praised, 'Rufus is a great man. Two days ago, he came to me and floated an idea for the project and I must say I was impressed. That's why I chose your company.'

Hearing the praises heaped on Rufus, Horace smiled with satisfaction. It gave him great joy to hear someone speak so highly of his son.

Jill, however, wasn't happy about the new development. Two years ago at a dinner party, she remembered Mrs. Tong agreeing to Lionel taking up the same project.

She wondered why Rufus was getting a deal to which his brother had already committed. Did Horace find it right to shortchange one son for the other?



If things went on like this, Jill feared Lionel would eventually lose his current position at the Tang Group.

The only consolation she found in the whole arrangement was that Horace still needed Cassandra to undertake most of the major construction projects, like this one. But then again, Cassandra too would lose, if Rufus was to be favored against everyone else.

Out of the blue, Lionel cut in, with an unrelated subject. Listening to Horace, he had noticed how willingly his old man agreed to an arrangement that would unsettle their earlier deal. So Lionel decided to disrupt their scheme. For now, all that he needed was just something to downplay the discussion. If he could derail their meeting, that would allow him time to plot a come back. He wasn't going to stand on the fence and watch his brother gain unfair advantage.

'By the way, Father, Cassandra and I are planning to have a child. I wonder if Uncle Jenks could recommend one of his doctors. Maybe we'll need some help along the line.'

The diversion worked like magic. No one in the room had seen that coming.

Horace burst into laughter at once.

As a fact, he knew that Lionel's marriage to Cassandra was the result of pressure from the two families. The parents on both sides had their own interests in forcing the marriage. But now, everyone knew that Cassandra and Lionel did not get along well with each other. Why did Lionel

When her boyfriend betrayed her, all light and joy was gone from Cherry's life. Deserted, bereft of hope, she married a man that she had

barely met, but she had never expected him to be her ex-boyfriend's uncle.

Cherry thought that she had finally found her happiness, but she had no idea about the dark secrets that were bound to unfold and haunt her forever...

've told him? Have my words touched him that much?' she wondered.

Weighing her options, she really hoped that Lionel wouldn't change his mind. Out of fear, she wrapped herself tightly with the quilt, and closed her eyes, pretending to be asleep.

In earnest, she prayed to God that Lionel wouldn't touch her. Not today, or any other day.

Meanwhile, a Rolls-Royce Phantom roared in the evening wind and rain.

On the back seat was Rufus, being driven back to the Tangs' residence from the hospital.

His tightly bandaged hand would probably not be able to bend for a week.

Beside him was an apparently tired Cloris, who had fallen asleep with her head resting on his shoulder.

Rufus watched rain drops falling on the window and sliding down in slow rivulets.

Suddenly his phone rang. An incoming call from Victor, who in a low voice reported, 'Well, at least he didn't force Cassandra to have sex with him.'

It seems she's pretty safe at least for now.'

Rufus looked at the Cloris who was still asleep, and answered in a low voice as well, 'Have someone to keep monitoring them. If something happens, you know what to do.'

Rufus then hung up the phone and heaved a sigh of relief.

'That's a good news but... it can be actually a bad news, ' he thought.

'Why didn't Lionel force her to sleep with him after the announcement? Could he be planning something else that we can't guess at the moment?'

But no matter what was in Lionel's mind, Rufus would stop him, if he wanted to hurt Cassandra.

What Lionel didn't know was that he was being watched and there was already someone close by to deter him if he dared touch Cassandra. Right now, on the foliage-covered wall near the window of his bedroom, a man in all black was lurking in the shadows like Spiderman, watching and ready to strike at any moment if Lionel crossed the red line.

Just in case something happened, Rufus was well-prepared as always.

Information was an asset in this battle. And on that score, he was ahead of the game.

On this cold night in the late autumn, a hawk-eyed Rufus squinted, waiting for the real storm ahead.