

## The Enchanted Night – Chapter: 71

### The Dress Disaster

In this world, there are a thousand things that can bring pain:

a sharp object like a knife that lacerate through flesh; a bullet from a gun that end a life; and forces of nature that wreak havoc upon humanity...

But nothing is more dangerous than a sinister mind. Evil is indifferent to appearances, and when it lurks underneath pure, beautiful skin, it becomes twice as deceptive.

Cloris's fingers closed over a small pair of scissors as she stood behind her sister. She clutched the handles with determination. In one swift, clandestine motion, a piece of lace was cut from her sister's beautiful dress.

It was barely holding on, and threatened to snap any moment.

An eerie smile flashed on her painted lips before morphing into one of her sweeter ones, the one that charmed people and had men running to fulfill her every whim. It was a very convenient facade indeed. No one could have discovered the malicious tilt of her eyes as she waited.

She had taken the time to carefully study the dress. The piece of lace that she had damaged held the upper and lower parts in place. Once it was broken, the dress would break apart from the waist.

Cassandra would definitely become the center of unwanted attention if her dress caused a blunder at this event.

Nothing would save her from judging eyes. They would feast on the sight of her and tear her skin off piece by piece until nothing was left of her reputation.

They say clothes make the man, but after tonight, Cassandra would be destroyed by these fabrics. With these thoughts in mind, a wicked sense of fulfillment rose in Cloris.

'Cassandra, don't blame me for being cruel. You're being too ambitious, stealing the spotlight every time. You need to have a taste of humiliation!' Cloris thought spitefully as she looked at Cassandra.

Her sister was refining her make-up in front of the mirror, powdering her beautiful face innocently and ignorant of Cloris's plans.

'You look really beautiful tonight, Cassandra,' she said sweetly. Yes, her sister looked beautiful, and she could hardly wait to see her lovely features twist into shock and despair later. She would surely savor the image of a devastation on Cassandra's face. As they walked out of the restroom, she let Cassandra go out first and stealthily threw the scissors into the trash bin. Cassandra was none the wiser.

A cold expression dawned on Cloris's face, giving her eyes a cruelty that was impossibly wrong on such a beautiful face.

Who could ever have imagined that a girl such as her, blooming like a flower, had poison in her veins? Her beautiful eyes were scalding in their malice.

'Cloris, let's go find Arthur. I have a plan to discuss with him,' Cassandra said to her young sister. At once, Cloris's expression morphed back into practiced pleasantness.

Cassandra remembered that Rufus mentioned his plan of pursuing a real estate company alliance, which would promote the joint development of real estate companies in G City. Arthur headed one of the major real estate companies. This event would be a good opportunity to discuss plans with him.

The two sisters walked back towards the hall, oblivious of Victor's watchful eyes from the dark.

He stalked to the trash bin where Cloris had secretly disposed of the scissors. Pulling a handkerchief from his pocket, he picked them up and examined.

There were tiny blue fibers caught at the blades, the same as those of Cassandra's dress.

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...

felt more at ease.

Victor watched her silently with curious eyes, wondering what was going on inside the woman's head.

Unable to decipher her thoughts from the quick changes in her face, he finally decided to open his mouth and ask, 'Have you figured out how to deal with this? What's the plan?'

Stella rolled her eyes at Victor and said, ‘Don’t worry. Watch and learn.’

As they stepped into the hall, Stella took out a pair of black-rimmed glasses from her bag and put them on. The glasses had the desired effect, making her look more serious.

It was as if a switch had been turned on. Now, in place of the casual air around her from a few seconds ago was a professional and mature aura. Her shoulders were squared as she stood a little straighter. Victor was impressed with the sudden change.

She walked confidently into the stage, wearing a cordial smile. Then she spoke into the microphone, ‘Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. The Tang Group would like to extend our warmest welcome to each and everyone of you. It is an honor to be the host of this year’s party. I am Stella, the spokesperson of the company. On behalf of our president, Mr. Horace Tang, and our CEO Mr. Rufus Luo, I would like to welcome and thank you all for coming!’ She spoke clearly and steadily, and her presence commanded everyone’s attention.

All eyes were on her. Conversations were brought to a temporarily halt as they listened to her remarks, then an applause sounded as she finished her speech.

Stella accepted the sound of claps and smiled brightly at the audience.

She had always been a good speaker. Years of debate competitions served her well at this time.

Proceeding without a script, she continued to speak, summing up a bit of history, and concluding with optimism for the future of the companies and businesses. Once again, the hall echoed with applause, and the party moved on smoothly.

Victor watched Stella, awestruck and visibly impressed.

She had proven him wrong. At first glance, Stella looked like any other lively girl who had just graduated from her college and those who were around her age who were always laughing and did not take anything seriously.

Now, seeing her confidently speak in front of all these people, calm and graceful... Victor saw her with new eyes.

*The Storm Kept Raging*

A Maserati was driving fast on the road. In the driver's seat was Rufus, talking on the phone.

'Are you at your studio right now? I am coming with Cassandra. There is a small problem with her dress.'

After these words, he hung up the call, turned his head to look at Cassandra and noticed the little woman was shell-shocked from what had just happened at the party. With a blank look on her face, she said nothing.

Seeing her like this, Rufus couldn't help but furrow his eyebrows. He silently let out a sigh.

There was no doubt, Cassandra was good at her work, and was a nice person to get along with. The only problem was that she was too trusting, almost naive and often let her guard down when around the people she shouldn't trust.

The night was warm, and the city was lit by bright streetlights. A cool breeze blew in the car through the rolled down window. Something unreadable flashed through Cassandra's eyes. She gently bit down on her lower lip and finally opened up to talk.

'The lace strap of this dress couldn't have easily torn by itself. Someone must have cut it.'

From her small but firm voice, Rufus knew she was thinking through. A hint of anger flashed through his eyes, the corners of his mouth lifted. But he said nothing. He just hummed, letting her know that he understood what she was thinking.

It seemed that the little woman finally registered what had transpired. By now, she was calm enough to rationally think. Yes, Cassandra might be trusting and naive, but it didn't mean that she was stupid. What had just happened wasn't accidental. It was not that easy. Someone must have intentionally cut the lace strap of her dress to embarrass her. But who was it? Who would have wanted to do this to her?

Closing her eyes, she racked the brain for who would have a motive and the chance. It couldn't be Michelle Ling, because when the dress was delivered, Cassandra took enough time to confirm it was intact. There was no way Cassandra could have missed any sign of damage then.

Besides, Michelle Ling was a name synonymous with quality, class, and professionalism. The dress couldn't be of low quality that the strap would tear in the middle of the party. Who else could it be? Rufus? No, there was no way he would stoop that low to embarrass a woman. Not especially a woman that he loved. There was no chance in hell when the same dress had cost him a pretty penny. He wouldn't have a reason to pull such a lousy stunt. Then...

Cloris!

Cassandra couldn't help but shudder when her sister's name crossed her mind. Carefully, she thought back of the details when Cloris was with her.

A terrible hunch began to eat at her heart. She didn't want to accuse her sister. But the more she remembered what had happened when the two of them were together alone, the more she believed Cloris was culpable. Suddenly, without any good reason, Cassandra's head started to hurt.

With her fingers she rubbed her temple, trying to relieve the pain. It didn't work. What was worse, she even wanted to throw up.

'Stop the car,'

She demanded, out of the blue. Startled, Rufus glanced at her and realized she wasn't kidding. Right now, she looked so beat, that Rufus immediately pulled over to the side without a word.

As soon as the car stopped, Cassandra quickly opened that door and got out of the vehicle to stand by the roadside.

The cool breeze blowing on her face helped her feel less dizzy and nauseated. But at the same time, her heart grew cold. If Cloris was here, Cassandra feared she might have committed a felony.

Cloris was her biological sister for God's sake! Why did she have to do that to her? Cassandra's head began to spin again. She frantically tried to find a motive behind her sister's actions.

By that time Rufus had also gotten out of the car and walked to stand beside her. He reached out and steadied her wobbling body, his eyes full of worry for her.

‘What is wrong, Cassandra? Is it carsickness?’

asked a panicked Rufus in a gentle tone that pulled Cassandra out of her trance. They locked eyes as she lifted her head. That was when she finally understood why her sister would ruin her evening.

The very first time Cloris saw Rufus, Cassandra knew that she liked him. So coming to the party, the naive girl must have thought that he was going to pick her over Cassandra, for a dance. It hurt her to see the man she liked give all his attention to Cassandra.

The now jilted girl must have come to the party fantasizing about Rufus, only to realize that she didn’t feature anywhere in his plans.

But Cloris overreacted in throwing such a childish tantrum. A rather foolish move, taking that

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Uncontrolled anger would trigger his asthma.

Walking up to Horace’s side, she gently patted his back, and whispered something into his ear, to calm him down.

‘Horace, it has already happened. There’s no way you can go back in time and change things. On the grounds of your health, you also need to be careful. Getting so carried away by anger will only hurt your health...’



But ignoring her, Horace threw her hands off his shoulder and got even angrier. He was also mad at her.

‘Shut up. And you as well! All these years, I’ve worked hard to provide you two with everything you ever needed. But see, this is the kind of brat you’ve raised! Both him and Rufus are my sons, but look at the big difference between them! Always, Rufus works hard to excel at whatever he does, and forever steers clear of trouble. And your son? He only knows how to waste time and money. Now, by his silly mistakes, he’s put the family business in danger, yet he doesn’t seem to care.’

That comparison offended Jill to the bone. There were few things she hated, like anyone comparing her son to that bastard, Rufus. But she couldn’t say a word at the moment. Horace was just so angry; if she dared cross his line, he’d skin her alive. The wise thing she could do as at now was to calm him down.

‘Horace, Lionel already knows what he did is wrong. Snapping at him and throwing at him whatever you can get your hands on won’t change the fact. What we should do right now is to find the best way out of this problem,’

Jill said while secretly gesturing for her son to apologize to his father. In contrition, Lionel knelt down on the floor in front of his father, his face genuinely apologetic.

‘Father! I already realized my mistakes! But Ivy has been with me for so many years. It would be shameful to abandon her, especially now that she is expectant with my baby. Also, I can’t dictate to her nor can I divest her of her small wish. In fairness, we shouldn’t take that away from her. Besides, she has promised me that we can keep the child. As soon as the child is weaned, she has promised to leave, go out of the country and

never try to get in touch with us. Once she's gone, Cassandra and I can bring the child up. Nobody will know about this!

Horace's breath was still labored. Anger made his head so dizzy, he almost couldn't breathe.

Somehow, Lionel's words touched the old man.

He also wanted to keep his grandchild. This was his first grandchild after all.

The baby could not leave their family. Memories of how he missed milestones in Rufus's upbringing haunted Horace. Only recently had Rufus come home, a grown man. The same would not happen to his first grandchild.

But there was one thing he didn't like. That was the mother, Ivy. For some reasons Horace just didn't like this girl.

'What's so good about that woman? For many things, I don't approve of her. Partly, I have issues with her family background. But again, I don't understand why you are so bewitched with her, Lionel. You are just out of your mind! How could you abandon Cassandra and get tangled with that low-life kind of woman?'

I Am A Deer

Lionel thought he knew what kind of person Ivy was.

They had been together for seven years now. And for all that time, everything she did was for him.

Even though Lionel would hook up with other women once in a while, Ivy never got mad at him. When Lionel was upset or had issues at work, Ivy would stay with him, and encourage him, giving meaningful suggestions on possible solutions.

He had come to depend on Ivy so much that he thought she could be his best woman ever.

But that was the problem. The reason why Horace didn't like Ivy was that Lionel had a soft spot for her at the expense of his marriage. This woman was the person behind Lionel's mistreatment of Cassandra. It angered Horace that Lionel would neglect the woman that his parents had chosen for him, opting instead to waste all his time, energy and money on Ivy. In Horace's eyes, Lionel was challenging his power.

What the ungrateful bastard didn't realize was that Cassandra was given to him in marriage to entrench the Tang family's economic supremacy. The Tang family had found their son a resourceful wife with better social networks. Cassandra was gifted, professional and beautiful to boot. Why would Lionel leave such a gem for any other woman? It pained Horace to see Lionel, the designated successor to the Tang empire head in the direction he was taking with Ivy. That girl would only waste the family wealth.

Besides, Lionel himself was also not much of a talented person who would greatly benefit from Cassandra's vast skills in managing the company. If he ditched Cassandra for this clueless girl, Horace was sure enough that the whole business would go down. That left Horace with no other option but to entrust Rufus at the helm of the Tang Group. There was no doubt, Rufus was competent, charismatic and hungry for success. Just the right man for the job.

Suddenly, Jill turned around to dry her tears. She choked up, 'To some extent, I know why you have a problem with allowing Ivy into the family. She's a rather uninspiring, ordinary woman with neither education nor family background that the Tang family can approve of. But you don't have to worry about her in the long run, because she'll only be here for a few months. Also, you don't have to be angry at Lionel. It's just that he fell in love with the wrong woman and now he has a whole mess on his hands to deal with and a child out of wedlock, just like you!'

'Just like you!' these three words hit Horace. Painful memories flooded into his head, leaving an empty gaze on his face.

Images of the woman he loved and treasured most in his life started to play in his mind like a slow slide show. Every slide played to the accompaniment of the sweet promises they made to each other.

'Horace, I'll wait for you, no matter how long it will take. Even if you have nothing, I'll still be with you.'

They were so deep in love at that time. Eventually, she got pregnant for him and gave birth to Rufus, a handsome, intelligent boy. But he couldn't bring the boy and his mother home because of Jill. The woman had to bring Rufus up as a single mother. But thank God, she did just fine and even gave the boy the best education she could. Now, Horace had brought Rufus back to the Tang family, in an attempt to make up for his mistakes. Hopefully, she would find the grace to forgive him.

After a long silence, when he looked at Lionel who was still kneeling, his anger faded. Looking back at his own mistakes, he began to understand Lionel. The more he thought about his shortcomings, the more he realized he was no angel to slam Lionel as irresponsible. The only thing that unsettled him was Ivy's ridiculous demands. Whatever she was asking for was just too much.

Letting a pregnant mistress live in the Tang mansion was impossible. That aside, would Ivy be proud of meeting Cassandra, the legally married wife of the man she was chasing after? How would Cassandra feel about that?

From downstairs, he heard servants greet some

‘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...

t. Thank you so much for saving my life!’

The man gave her a smile.

‘No problem.’

Suddenly, something occurred to him. He looked Cassandra up and down. Then he asked with suspicion, ‘Aren’t you the manager of the design department at the Tang Group? What is it that has got you so upset?’

The question threw Cassandra off balance for a moment. The man was a total stranger. How did he come to know she was the manager of the design department at the Tang Group?

Reading her reaction, the man could tell Cassandra was puzzled. An amiable smile beamed on his face as he waved a folded magazine in his left hand.

‘I was reading this in the Starbucks just now. It features an interview of senior executives in the Tang Group. There’s a photo of your side face, but I recognized you anyway.’

Cassandra knew he must be talking about last month’s interview, when some reporters came to the company’s offices. But she wasn’t the focus of the interview.

‘You’re such a keen observer. I’m impressed. It’s a very tiny photo. I’d hardly recognize anyone based on it.’

The man was pleased to hear Cassandra’s compliment. But trying to down play it, he calmly said, ‘No big deal. If you ask me to live with fifty spotty dogs for a few days and then give me a picture of them, I could easily tell them apart. Not to mention a beautiful woman like you!’

His way with words lifted Cassandra’s moods so much that she burst into laughter.

Forgetting about all her troubles, she began to enjoy chatting with him.

‘That’s a clever metaphor you have,’ she said, referring to the man’s claim.

But the man feigned a serious face and said, still with tongue in cheek, ‘Not that I’m so smart with metaphors! It’s just that, I... I’m a lover of animals.’

Laughing again, Cassandra asked, ‘So, you regard me as an animal?’

The man hesitated, not sure what he should say next. ‘Is she someone that can catch the drift of my joke? Or will she take it literally and get angry at me?’

Someone who takes things literally, will not read it as a compliment if I used that analogy of animals.’ he wondered.

Thankfully, Cassandra had noticed the man was weighing what to say, and she didn’t want to embarrass him.

Reaching into her clutch bag, she took out her business card and handed it to him.

‘I’m Cassandra Qin. This is my business card. If you want to contact me, you can call me or text me on the numbers given,’ she said seriously.

With gratitude, the man took the card and Cassandra was about to say goodbye, when something occurred to her. After a moment’s thought, she said, ‘Well, if I were an animal, I would certainly be a deer!’

*The Smile In Distress Is The Bitterest*

So can you tell me what kind of animal is a deer?

The encyclopedia says, The deer is an even-toed ungulate. They are mammals that belonged to the Cervidae family. Typical characteristics among deers include long, powerful legs, a diminutive tail, and etc. The males tend to be larger than the females, generally, and in most species, only males possess antlers. There is a wide diversity of deers and according to legends, those deers pulling Santa Claus’ sleigh are called elks.

He was beginning to entertain the idea that Cassandra was more like a deer, and he found it interesting. Yet he was at a loss of words to comment.

On the back of his mind, he searched for images of the deer he had seen and looked at Cassandra at the same time. Doing so made his perception even stronger, indeed Cassandra resembled a deer—a graceful and elegant one.

Drowned by the noise of the bustling crowd, he raised his voice and shouted out to Cassandra, ‘See you later! Miss Deer!’

Without turning back, Cassandra placed her hands on her head, imitating the antlers of a deer.

Her silly respond caused him to draw a sweet smile. Looking down at the business card, he couldn’t help but keep on repeating her name on his mind, ‘Cassandra Qin, Cassandra...’

Cassandra, on the other hand, didn’t look back, as her tears had begun to streak down her delicate face.

She didn’t like the idea of crying in front of a stranger. The tears came so suddenly and so unexpected that all she wanted was to be somewhere far from that place.

Having such a shallow tears, she cried at the thought of the deer. She had once watched a documentary about deers.

In the documentary, deer usually inhabited the vast forest.

As beautiful and mild as they were, they were timid but alert at all times.

Poaching the deer’s coat had endangered majority of its species. In order to get the deer’s beautiful fur, poachers exerted a variety of extremely brutal means.

The most brutal one was to take advantage of the deer’s kindness.



The poachers would first hunt a fawn or a baby deer so as to lure the adult deer they wanted to kill. The fawn would serve as the bait to catch the bigger deer.

The deer would be allowed to come near the fawn before finally shot to death.

Cassandra closed her eyes to stop the tears from falling, yet the tears won't stop.

Her heart sympathized the deer. Just like a helpless deer, she was set up by her own sister.

The fawn this time was so dear to her that the moment she caught sight of it, she immediately drew near. She had no idea that there were poachers lurking around the corner waiting to shoot her.

Yet for the deer, its death would be simpler. Whilst on Cassandra's case it was more complicated. The fawns laid in front of her gave her no choice. They all lead to certain death.

She had no options - she was forced to live with Grace Zhang in the small town when she was young; sadly when she grew into a lovely lady, she had to marry Lionel who she didn't love, and become unexpectedly attached to Rufus in an affair, and worst of all, be deeply hurt by Cloris, her own sister.

Why on earth would all the betrayal and misery happen to her? What had she done to deserve all these?

Suddenly, a surge of nostalgia swept over her. She missed the seaside town badly. In that sparsely-populated small town, the salty sea wind kept her company over the whole span of her childhood. Whenever she

dreamed of that place, she could always smell the salty tone of the seawater in the wind, as if calling her to come home.

Grace Zhang had passed away a couple of years

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.

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She struggled and desperately got on her feet. She forced herself to take a step but flopped down on the ground. She fainted.

A silhouette of a man rushed over across the street towards her direction. He was wearing a long and black coat.

‘Cassandra, wake up,’ he called her name anxiously.

But she gave no response. Her body felt cold and rigid all over.

Rufus had watched her across the street for a long time, so long that it felt like an eternity for him. He enjoyed the view of her at a distance, she resembled a priceless masterpiece worthy of adoration.

Just as the thickening snow obscured his vision. Unable to see her face clearly, he could still sense her pain and sorrow.

She did sit in the icy wind for quite a long while, not knowing the consequences it might cause her.

Rufus, in his car, smoked the cigarette one after another to keep himself calm.

He was confused whether he should go over to her or just get away from her. He thought about the incident yesterday, she was such a stubborn girl that she didn't even glance back.

He had wanted to have a word with her in his office, but she evaded him by an excuse. To make sure that she was safe, he had to tag along.

The sight of the stormy snow blowing over her delicate and pale face covered by ice-cold tears broke his heart.

He was hopefully longing to stand in front of her, to hold her shoulders to pull her reasons back, to command her to stop putting herself up with the sufferings, to stop fearing, to assure her that he would protect her forever, as long as she was willing to be his woman...

But hesitation won over him. His eyes darkened, at the thought of his mother's photo on the tombstone, and his vow before her grave.

However, seeing her fainting down, he couldn't contain his feelings anymore, jerked open the door of his car and rushed over to help her up.

Holding Cassandra in his arms, it was the first time that Rufus panicked this way. He carried her to the car and drove hastily to the nearest hospital. He didn't step on the brakes even when the traffic lights turned red.

In the hospital, they had Cassandra's body temperature and blood pressure measured, and her blood samples drawn...

After a series of inspections, Cassandra was sent to the emergency ward for observation.

Viewing the medical record, the doctor asked Rufus in a cold tone, 'Is she your wife?'

*Lusting For His Warmth*

Squinting slightly, Rufus turned to gaze upon Cassandra, lying on the sickbed with a strange flush covering her cheek.

Suddenly standing up with his tall and strong figure, Rufus responded in his deep and velvet voice, 'Yes, she's my wife.'

Upon hearing this, the doctor's expression turned colder, and displeased with the man's lack of care for his own spouse.

'What are you doing? Do you have any idea how long she stayed in the wind and snow? Why didn't you stop her? She's barely wearing enough clothes for the weather! Even if you quarreled with her, you should, at the very least, pay attention to her health. She's too weak with a low blood pressure. It's so cold outside that she can't stand it at all.'

Being the rather strong and intimidating figure he was, Rufus had never been blamed and chastised by others, much less a woman, in such a harsh tone. Faced with the blame the doctor placed on him, though, he was not angry at all.

In the doctor's eyes, Cassandra and Rufus were merely a young and carefree couple, making it easy to put the blame on him.

'When will she wake up?'

Without commenting on her scolding, Rufus didn't say anymore as he just wanted to know of Cassandra's physical state.

With a roll of her eyes, the doctor tapped the case folder to show him.

'Look at this case! The diagnoses and treatments are all recorded online now. Looking at her hospital admission records, she's been hospitalized with a fever so often in the past six months. She gets sick so easily. And now, seeing you, her husband...I'm curious about how you take care of her. Her physical condition is poor. When she gets discharged and return home, you need to nurse her body very carefully. I can't emphasize enough how you need to pay attention to her physical state. You need to be vigilant in taking care of your wife's health. After all, she's so weak that the wind could practically blow her over,' the doctor explained reproachfully.

In the midst of the little sermon, a nurse came in and went to the doctor in a hurry.

'Doctor, the patient in bed 27 on the 7th floor vomited again. The doctor on duty is asking you to have a look!'

Upon hearing the news, the doctor quickly signed the current diagnosis and hung it on the bedside table. Even as she turned away and followed the nurse out, her grumble could be heard from far away.

'There is no need for the patient in bed 27 to hurt himself. Even if his family doesn't come to see him, he should know enough to take good care of himself. I've tried to persuade him a number of times, but he kept refusing my advice. Goodness! I wonder what's going on in the heads of young people now...'

After she left, Rufus simply stood next to Cassandra wearing a gloomy expression as he looked at her, who was passed-out with her eyes closed shut. Faced with such a situation, Rufus had no idea how to make her regain consciousness as soon as possible, so he only stared at her with a worried expression.

Standing beside her sickbed, Rufus thought about how little attention he had paid to Cassandra, since she'd been to the hospital so often. A trace of remorse sparked in his heart.

Although she was in a coma, Cassandra slept uneasily.

Her body shook from time to time - her face twisting into a frown and the sweat trickling down her forehead, as if she was being plagued by a nightmare.

All the while, Rufus held her hands, bringing them up to cup his face so that he could warm them up. Still, her hands remained icy cold.

'Cassandra, I'm here. Don't be afraid. I will always be with you.' His deep voice was soothing.

Regardless of Rufus' words of comfort, Cassandra still suffered the nightmare.

Having stayed up late to take care of her, Rufus's eyes had already turned red. By midnight, her fever turned even more severe than earlier. Being worried about her condition, Rufus abruptly grabbed the arm of a nurse passing by.

'Where is the doctor? She's been passed out for such a long time, why hasn't she woken up yet?'

Unsurprisingly, a flush crept into the nurse's face as she looked at the handsome man who grabbed her.

'I'll find the doctor for you,' she whispered.

Upon saying it, the nurse shyly walked away. After a short while, she came back with a doctor, who happened to be the one checking up on Cassandra earlier.

Before Rufus could say anything, the doctor examined Cassandra immediately and chattered again, 'Her fever has gone up to 39.5 degrees. It's not easy to bring down a hig

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?

sed, her face turned red and got more and more flushed.

It was when Cassandra finished speaking that Rufus understood her behavior. 'It's no wonder it looked like she was trying to say something earlier...' he thought.

It's really no big deal if she could just directly tell me she wants to go to the bathroom...'

Suddenly, the two heard a sound from inside the ward. Splash! A middle-aged woman next to Cassandra's bed was having breakfast.

Apparently, upon hearing what Cassandra had said, she spit out and sprayed the food from her mouth.

With the woman's reaction, Rufus looked rather flushed and was at a loss for what to do so Cassandra wouldn't feel embarrassed. After clearing his throat awkwardly, he murmured to her softly, 'Uh...do you want me to come with you?'

Cassandra's eyes were full of frustration and glassy with tears as if she was about to cry. Shaking her head hurriedly, she thought, 'Every time...every time I'm in trouble, he's by my side.

Even when I need to go to the toilet, he would want to accompany me.'

'Then why are you waiting, just go quickly then,' Rufus said hastily.

Reaching his large hands out to stroke her long hair, he reveled in the feeling. Raising his brows, he was rather amused.

'What a silly woman you are. There's no need for you to ask my permission to go to the bathroom,' he thought.

Slowly, Cassandra got out of the sickbed. As soon as her feet touched the floor, she felt weak at her knees, wobbling and barely able to stay upright. Seeing her struggle, Rufus quickly went to support her waist with worry flashing across his handsome face.

'You're such a silly woman,' he said with a light chuckle.

Raising his lips, he suddenly reached his arms behind her knees and picked her up with ease as soon as he made his remark. Ignoring others' eyes, whether full of awe or judgment, he carried her to the restroom.

'Woah! Rufus, what are you doing? Hurry and put me down!'



Cassandra's face was clearly flushed as she clenched her thin hands, unsure of where to put them. After some struggle, she finally gave in and let them rest on his chest. Her burning cheeks made her feel a little light headed.

Completely ignoring Cassandra's complaints, Rufus simply strode towards the bathroom.

'Shut up. You talk too much,' all he murmured.

Though she opened her pink lips as if to say something, Cassandra couldn't utter a word. Lying in his arms, Cassandra inhaled his unique scent, calming herself down, almost like a kitten. As she closed her beautiful eyes, her lips curled naturally into a sweet smile while she savored the feeling.

'Earlier, my heart didn't feel so open...I was even a bit cold, maybe, but what Rufus has done for me keeps warming my heart over and over again,' she thought.

In truth, Cassandra wanted to relish in the feeling of being in his arms for as long as she could. If she was to be completely honest with herself, she had to admit that she absolutely lusted after his scent and warmth.

The Start Of Nightmare

It was in the Tang Group.

The door of the CEO office was pushed open. The thrust echoed through the office as Lionel stormed towards Rufus, who was signing off some document. The loud noise made him look up from the document and gaze

at the approaching figure of Lionel. He stopped in front of Rufus's desk, then slapped hard on it with his palms, making it shake under his hands.

'Rufus Luo! What on earth do you want?' Lionel questioned, his voice trembling with rage.

Rufus stared back at him with a rather nonchalant look. Refusing to pay any heed to Lionel's intimidating demeanor, he turned his head towards Leo and instructed, 'Send this document to the human resource department. Tell them to complete all the procedures within a week.'

Leo took the file and paced towards the door. But before he could even reach the door, he found Lionel standing right in front of him. In one smooth move, Lionel blocked his way out of the room and grabbed the file from his hand.

After that, he slapped the file back on the desk so hard that all the contents inside the file came out and got scattered on the floor.

Lionel's eyes fell on a piece of paper on top and his pupils got dilated. It was a dismissal notice.

Picking up the note, he thrust it back in front of Rufus and shouted with disbelief, 'He is the marketing manager of our company! How can you just dismiss him! Have you ever considered the consequence?'

Rufus did not reciprocate to the temperament displayed by Lionel. Rather he maintained a calm and cool composure. He just leaned back to the backrest of the chair, folded his arms as he maintained the indifferent gaze on Lionel. It was as if he wasn't a part of the quarrel and he was just watching the episode as an outsider.

Rufus's cool and adamant behavior frustrated Lionel all the more.

‘Rufus Luo! Right now you are too much indulged in your role as the CEO of the company! Don’t forget the person who granted you the power! If father ever realizes that you are dismissing the employees at the management level randomly as per your own whim, which will adversely affect the company, he will take his action against this!’ Lionel attempted to threaten Rufus.

However, Rufus looked completely disinterested in getting into a confrontation. He even refused to utter a single word in retaliation to Lionel’s threat. Instead, he lifted his head, and gave a cold stare at Lionel.

‘This is the decision of the board of directors, not me. We had a vote. As the marketing manager, he didn’t actively establish relationship with new clients, which was part of his responsibilities. Moreover, some of our regular customers even turned to our competitors because of him! How can we continue to hire such a worthless man?’

Lionel’s rage was showing in his eyes which were literally burning. He was aware of the meeting, but wasn’t informed that it was about human resource management. Busy with Ivy, he decided not to attend. Now he regretted, and attempted to revoke this decision.

‘He was hired during father’s term. Now you want to fire him, but you haven’t asked for his approval!’ Lionel brought up the topic once again to negotiate with Rufus.

Rufus’s silence was getting on his nerves by now. He brought up the name of Horace once again and tried to suppress Rufus.

Rufus then stood up. With his height and build, he was firm and unwavering.

‘When you referred him to father, you had never mentioned that he was Ivy’s cousin,’ Rufus stated coolly.

This sentence, though not long, thumped on Lionel’s heart heavily.

Indeed, this person was suggested by Ivy. After talking to him for several times, Lionel felt that this person could possibly be hired for the manager’s role. And it happened that there was a vacancy for marketing manager. So, he suggested his name to his father.

In order to avoid suspicion from others, he had never revealed this fact to anyone else. How could Rufus possibly know about the secret!

Yet Lionel wasn’t ready to give up. Suppressing his voice low to sound firm, he warned Rufus, ‘You know that Ivy is pregnant with the eldest grandson of the Tang family. If she gets to know that her cousin is fired, she may get agitated, which in turn would probably affect the baby. Do you think you can escape from the blame?’

Rufus smirked at Lionel in a s

Drugged one night by her ex-boyfriend, a mysterious man took advantage of her in an ecstatic night filled with sex. To take her revenge, she married the man, and used him. ‘As long as I’m alive, I’m still his legal wife, while all of you are just his mistresses.’ She remained adamant even when he was involved in scandals with other women...

Rufus aspire to become the right hand man for Horace. His purpose behind joining the Tang Group was different. He had a very discreet vision in his mind when he joined this company.

He was here to make Horace regret. Yes! He wanted to make him regret the choice he had made. Horace deserved it. He should regret choosing

Jill over Rufus's mother. He should regret devouring all his love on Lionel instead of Rufus! Rufus gritted his teeth, and his jaw line stiffened as he thought about it.

He could not wait for the time when he would make Horace aware, that his return wasn't the hope of Tang family. Rather, it was the start of a nightmare!

At the hospital, Cassandra looked out of the window wistfully. Pristine white snowflakes transcended from the sky and touched the ground. The view was extremely soothing and she could spend hours looking at this surreal phenomenon.

It had been five days since she was hospitalized. No matter how upset, how bored she felt, she never mentioned about getting discharged from the hospital.

When the female doctor with a poker face checked on her, she whined once, 'Everyone wishes to get out as soon as possible. This girl is so special. She loves staying here instead of going home.'

Cassandra just laughed helplessly as the doctor stroked the tip of her nose and said that she was just feeling sick.

But in her heart, she was still dreadful at the thought of getting back to Tang family.

Except for Horace and Rufus, no one in the family would be kind to her. The very thought of it made her shudder.

This was especially the case with Jill, who had never given her a smile since the first day they met. The old woman sincerely disdained the girl who got married to her son only to save her own family.

Lionel was enjoying his life with his old girlfriend Ivy. He never developed any attachment towards Cassandra.

As for Ivy... It was better for Cassandra to stay away from that woman. As the faces of Jill, Lionel and Ivy flashed through her mind, she could feel the coldness inside her heart. All these people were so distant from her without a touch of warmth, care or concern.

After a few days of hospitalization, she had recovered completely from the fever, but Rufus insisted that she should stay in the patient ward.

He was trying to protect her as he feared that she would be ill-treated in the Tang family.

Cassandra was moved by Rufus once again. The care and concern that she could not find in her family came to her from an absolutely unexpected corner. She had never expected to get solace and a sense of warmth from Rufus.

Her eyelashes quivered and she closed her eyes to control the tears that began to surface on her eyes.

'Rufus, what shall I do? Every time I want to push you out of my mind, I feel your love for me.

How can I make up my mind to stop thinking about you?' she asked herself.

*A Simple Dream*

On a warm, winter afternoon, the soothing sunshine found its way into the patient ward, lighting up the dull, off white walls, filling the space

with life. There was Cassandra, lying on her bed, just having prepared a cup of coffee for herself. She looked out as the sun shone in between the gently moving leaves, falling quietly in a daydream with her eyes open.

The hot Yirgacheffe, with its flower-like fragrance, induced warmth to her cold hands.

Quietly, the door opened, snapping her out of her reverie. She saw Edith walking in.

She wore an extravagant, pink fur coat which looked very warm apart from making her look absolutely gorgeous. Cassandra didn't remember her mother to be very fond of such fashionable clothes. Perhaps, it had been too long. She had no clue when and how things had changed so much.

But then again, maybe all women secretly wished to live an opulent and lavish life. No wonder when her father's company was on the brink of shutting down, she was sacrificed to trade for the wealth of the family.

'Right. Who could deal with poverty after living such a luxurious life?'

She shook her head, clearing her thoughts, wondering what had brought her mother, an infrequent guest, here. Inquisitive, she asked, 'Mom, what brings you here?'

Edith wore a grim look. Without reacting, she took off her coat and placed it casually on the couch near the door. Now she walked towards Cassandra, already beginning to scold her harshly, 'Have you taken a look at yourself? What sort of nonsensical attitude is this? Can you at least refrain yourself from your outrageous behavior? Have you completely forgotten you represent Qin family? Don't lose your status,

you dumb girl!’ She threw a folded newspaper in Cassandra’s direction as she finished.

The newspaper flung open, and landed on Cassandra’s lap.

It was a local newspaper, and the page in front of her had a section called, ‘Unreliable Rumors’, which targeted at the scandals of the celebrities of G City. It was clear this wasn’t a trusted source and only curated news for gossip.

Cassandra read the highlight. It was about the on-going affair between the head of a well-known company and his sister-in-law. Indeed, it was fancy and scandalous.

Soon, her eyes reached the part that mentioned about the wardrobe malfunction that had occurred to Cassandra at one of the parties. Her gown had almost slipped down her body but Rufus had pulled it up in time.

Well, this was true. She couldn’t deny it, even though the extent of exaggeration was a little too much.

Sheepishly, she forced a smile, pretending not to be bothered by the news. She crushed the paper into a ball and casually threw it into the bin across the room. Feigning a light tone, she answered, ‘Mom, do you really believe this fake bullshit? It’s clear they write just about anything for more readership.’

Unconvinced by her explanation, Edith scoffed, ‘Yeah, I don’t want to believe in it, either. But news like this never rises from thin air. I’m sure some fishy business might have occurred to spark a story. You better mind your behavior, and don’t lose the respect your father has earned.’



Cassandra's eyes blinked repeatedly, trying to cope with what her mother had just said. Her heart clenched at the mention of her father.

'Did someone say anything in front of dad? Just take it like a pinch of salt and forget about it.'

Edith was still pissed. It seemed like she hadn't finished with this just yet.

'Cassandra, I have looked at the evaluation of Cloris's internship. The final grade was not A. She cried for so long after she came back. What happened? Why didn't she get the best grade?'

Cassandra could easily picture her sister

Drugged one night by her ex-boyfriend, a mysterious man took advantage of her in an ecstatic night filled with sex. To take her revenge, she married the man, and used him. 'As long as I'm alive, I'm still his legal wife, while all of you are just his mistresses.' She remained adamant even when he was involved in scandals with other women...

you feel now? Better than before? When can you be discharged?'

'Discharged?'

Cassandra thought in her heart. 'I would rather hide in the hospital forever than to face the Tang family. Even lying on the bed like a dead body was better than living there.'

Unwilling to reveal her true intention, she just answered ambiguously, 'The doctor said I would still need to stay for a few more days till I fully recover. It depends, really. Can't say for sure.'

Edith nodded and reached out for her hand with an amiable look, saying, 'Cassandra, try to develop a good relationship with Lionel. You are young, and try to have a child as soon as possible. When your baby is

born, your status in Tang family will enhance even more. And then, even if you resign from the post, they will still treat you well.'

Cassandra could understand her mother's concern and that she meant well - she only hoped that her daughter would have a better life in Tang family, but...

When she thought of the fact that Ivy had moved into the Tang family house, expecting a baby, the light in her eyes ebbed away.

Baby... What a distant dream!

Her dream was different than her mother's, and much simpler. All she wished for was to be an ordinary person, to be in an ordinary marriage with no complications involved and then maybe to have a little daughter.

Daughter, yes. Whenever she thought of having a kid, she always hoped it would be a girl. She would give her all the love she could summon. They would wear the same clothes, watch the same shows, listen to the same music. Her daughter would basically be a mini version of herself, yet, better.

It was common for daughters to sympathize with their mothers. She imagined a future where she did not feel lonely, given the presence of her daughter around her all the time. Whenever things would bother her, her daughter would be there to listen to her. The soft, beautiful girl would console her, hug her and expel all her fatigue and worries.

Cassandra appreciated these small bits of love from her mother but did not feel they were intense or unconditional. In fact, they felt flawed, limited and fabricated.

She wanted to give her daughter all the love she herself had craved for all her life, so that she would grow up without any gaps or regrets in her heart.

But, sometimes, this felt like an unattainable dream. She was afraid she would never get that chance.

For no other reason but the fact that her husband was Lionel Tang.

*Better To Be Pregnant Than To Marry Well*

After Edith left, Cassandra pulled the quilt over her head. She had no desire to get off the bed.

With her face facing the wall, tears slowly started to slide down her cheeks. Now that it had begun, there was no way of stopping it. Her tears seemed to be endless.

In her parents' eyes, she wasn't gentle or sweet. In fact she was a cold lady when compared to Cloris. Therefore, she never received the attention from her father which she had always craved.

This world now seemed like a bleak and hopeless place. People often preached about doing good deeds anonymously. However, after one had done a good deed in secrecy, they wouldn't regard you as a good person. People had a way of taking advantage of those who were kind.

Life wasn't fair and people who didn't deserve the love often ended up getting it.

While Cassandra was drowning in her misery, she felt someone lie beside her. He slowly stretched his arms and closed them tightly against her

body. His hug was quite strong and Cassandra could feel her body temperature notch up.

Without even turning she knew it was Rufus.

In the past few days, every time he came to visit her, he would silently watch her for a while before leaving the bedroom. But this hug came as a surprise. She was shocked to see that he had come to bed to be with her tonight.

Anxiety started to rise in her body and she wanted to move free from his hug. Rufus, however, assumed that she intended to run away. In order to stop her, he held her even tighter.

‘You know what will happen if you continue to move!’

he whispered into her ears. This was a warning and his lips curved into an evil smile. Now Cassandra held her breath out of fear. She didn’t dare to move or make any sort of noise.

She didn’t know how long it had been since his warning. But Cassandra didn’t relax until she heard Rufus’s slow and steady breath. ‘He has fallen asleep!’ she thought with relief washing over her.

Carefully, Cassandra turned and now they were face to face.

‘He is handsome. But keeps furrowing his brows even when he is sleeping. This is such a bad habit, ’ Cassandra thought to herself.

In spite of his frown, there was something very peaceful about watching him sleep. It made Cassandra feel secure and protected.

Rufus had an outstanding facial features. Watching his gorgeous face, Cassandra really hoped that she could spend the rest of her life with him.

As she watched him, she drifted off to sleep. Tonight she didn't have any nightmare. It was a peaceful night.

The day before she moved to the Tang mansion, Ivy was extremely excited. Her excitement reached a level where sleeping became impossible to her.

Her thoughts revolved completely around Cassandra. She was planning and plotting what she would do when she could finally confront with Cassandra. Her dream was to challenge her status in the Tang family. But when she moved in, Cassandra wasn't at home. Ivy felt a surge of disappointment. That was when she learned that Cassandra had a fever hence she was staying in the hospital.

Horace thought that Cassandra was finding an excuse to escape. But his disappointment was gone once he realized that it would be very difficult for Cassandra to accept the fact that Ivy would be around.

In a sarcastic tone, Jill said, 'Well, she is aware that she can't give birth to a child. I guess she is too ashamed to face us.'

However, Lionel didn't find Jill's words funny. Instead he found it extremely harsh. He never had sex with Cassandra so he knew why she wasn't pregnant yet. Therefore, when Jill accused Cassandra of being infertile, he had an urge to defend her.

But a

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.

Something to hurt her baby, she would lose everything.

Ivy didn't know what Rufus thought of the baby. Hence she wasn't in a state to take risk.

The worst was yet to come. Cassandra knew that sooner or later she would have to go back and face Ivy. She had stayed in the hospital for more than a week. There was no reason for her to stay there any longer. If she did, it would certainly raise suspicion.

Rufus helped her complete the discharging formalities. Once he was done, he went and picked her up. Cassandra was nervous and he could tell it from her expression.

As Rufus drove to the Tang mansion, Cassandra found herself fidgeting and sweating.

'I am Tang family's daughter-in-law. Ivy is no one! I am the one who is married to Lionel, not Ivy. Why should I be nervous? If anyone must feel nervous then it should be Ivy,' she told herself inside her mind.

Glancing at her, Rufus stretched out his hand and patted on her shoulder. Although he didn't utter a word, his action somehow calmed her.

'You got this, Cassandra. There is nothing to be afraid of,' Cassandra told to herself internally, trying to cheer up.

When she walked into the living room, Horace wasn't there. She was brought face to face with Jill who was sitting on the sofa.

When she saw Cassandra, she passed her a quick look and then brought her attention back to the TV which she was watching.

Taking a deep breath, Cassandra began to greet her, 'Mother, I'm back.'

Jill sneered at her and continued to watch her drama. She didn't think Cassandra deserved a reply.

Watching this rejection, Cassandra felt a little humiliated. With no intention of trying again, she started walking towards her room. When she was about to walk in, she heard someone walking behind her.

She turned around and saw that it was Lionel and Ivy.

Cassandra couldn't help but notice Ivy's growing abdomen. Ivy was wearing a tight dress like she wanted everyone to notice her tummy.

It was a common knowledge that pregnant women would prefer loose clothes because their figure would be out of shape during pregnancy. Ivy, however, took pride in it.

This baby was her ploy to gain respect and replace Cassandra in the Tang family, therefore she couldn't wait to flaunt it.

While walking past Cassandra, Ivy put one hand on her belly and looked coldly at Cassandra.

'It is better to be pregnant than to be married,' Ivy said with a smug smile.

*You Are Nothing But A Mistress*

Ivy's sarcasm could be felt throughout the room. Jill, in the meantime, continued watching TV, unfazed by the scene unfolding around her.

Cassandra clenched and unclenched her fists, tempering her anger. Her lips curled into a disdainful smile.

‘Well, even when you do give birth to the baby, you will still be nothing but a mistress,’ she hissed.

This wiped the smile right off of Ivy’s smug face. Cassandra had to admit that Ivy’s audacity did not surprise her. It seemed that the world was littered with such wretches already.

She watched Ivy’s face darken as animosity welled up in Ivy’s eyes.

Ivy was well aware of the terms that she had agreed to: she would give birth to the baby and immediately hand it over to the Tang family, after which she was to leave the country and never return.

She bet, not only her future but also her baby that she was going to win in the end.

She was confident that Lionel loved her more than he did his wife, and this was her most powerful bargaining chip. She was also banking on Jill’s dissatisfaction with her daughter-in-law who tended to be stubborn and overbearing. These gave her hope. Ivy was willing to sacrifice everything for the chance to be part of the Tang family and replace Cassandra.

Her best years had been devoted to Lionel whom she had loved for the longest time. Handing him over to another woman now was the last thing she could ever do.

Walking towards the main lobby at that moment was Lionel who entered afterwards. He caught a glimpse of Cassandra and his eyes immediately lit up.



Her days in the hospital did not seem to make her tired or weary. On the contrary, it was as if she glowed with life.

The white dress she was wearing suited her so well that it almost felt as if it were part of her.

Cassandra smiled when she spotted her husband carrying a pile of baby products.

Never had she imagined to see him like this and the sight amused her.

As Horace came out of his study, he gave Cassandra a warm smile. He was happy to see that she was home.

‘Are you feeling better now, Cassandra? I asked the cook to prepare your favorite silverfish soup for dinner. It will be great for your health as well!’

Upon hearing this, Jill sprang up from the couch. She turned to Ivy with a motherly smile fixed on her face.

‘Ivy, I ordered the silverfish specially for you. They are fresh and just got delivered here this morning. As an expectant mother, you need more nutrition and they are great for you. I will also remind the cook to use less salt. Eat as much as you want,’ she said.

Although Jill was speaking to Ivy, Cassandra knew that the words were meant for her. Ivy felt a glow inside her, feeling more confident about her position in the family compared to Cassandra, because she had Jill on her side.

With an equally warm grin, Ivy walked to Jill and twined her arm into the older woman’s. She even went as far as to lean her head affectionately on her shoulder.

‘Thank you, Aunt Jill, for being so considerate and caring of my health. I am sorry that the rest of you have to compromise for my taste,’ she said.

Jill looked at Ivy and rubbed her back tenderly.

‘You are carrying the eldest grandson of Tang family. Who else but you would deserve such a special treatment?’ Jill replied tenderly.

Even Horace, who was usually oblivious to such things, noticed the tension among the three women in the room.

It was the battle of three women—looking at the other two who were clearly in alliance, Cassandra was left alone.

During the course of this conversation, Rufus returned. With keen perception, he took in the situation as soon as he entered.

Drugged one night by her ex-boyfriend, a mysterious man took advantage of her in an ecstatic night filled with sex. To take her revenge, she married the man, and used him. ‘As long as I’m alive, I’m still his legal wife, while all of you are just his mistresses.’ She remained adamant even when he was involved in scandals with other women...

He shouldn’t have meddled with our accounts in his filthy ways,’ Lionel chimed in.

Rufus, then, spoke with a wise assessment, unlike his brother who was merely echoing his father’s concerns.

‘With the current situation, we can confirm that these withdrawals are indeed big losses for us. With the newly-formed Union, even a small company holds a huge influence. It is similar to how the world is divided into so many countries. Even the smallest and weakest countries have

their own rights, no matter how insignificant they may seem. Now, fewer clients mean less support, which could effect our influence in the market.'

Rufus's evaluation of the situation made great sense. With the big picture becoming clearer, the tension of Horace's face gradually faded. Rufus's business sense was always spot-on. Now realizing his younger son's grave incompetence compared to his older brother, Horace began to have displeasure with Lionel's playful and carefree disposition. Heaving a sigh and setting aside his thoughts for now, he decided to carry on with the discussion at hand.

'That's exactly what I'm worried about! Dawn Star Group has come prepared. They planned to start small, thinking that we might not notice. Actually, it is a critical time now for the establishment of the Union, as the election for the Director of the Union will commence soon. If really they win, we will fall into a very disadvantageous situation,' Horace said.

Rufus nodded to show his agreement. Calmly, he went over the things that they had to their advantage.

'I have been keeping an eye on all the members of the Union. After counting, we still have more support from the members. It is impractical and impossible for them to steal our partners away in such a short time,' Rufus concluded.

Putting his hands behind his back, Horace sighed again. It almost looked as if he turned ages older in such a brief moment.

'Arthur is lucky that I'm no longer young and healthy. If I were, I'd show him what happens when he pulls dirty tricks right under my nose. This generation has fallen. They don't even know how to respect their elders!' the old man exclaimed.

A knowing glint flashed in Rufus's eyes as he concealed a mocking curl on his lips.

'Respect for the elderly?' he thought. Indeed, Horace was so old. How could his out-of-date principles work in the current business world?

Moreover, a man like Horace was not even worth any respect!

*An Opportunity To Get Pregnant*

If men were likened to animals, Rufus would definitely be a cheetah.

A cheetah was a master of stealth. It would hide in the jungle and wait silently. The moment it spotted its prey, it would attack and deliver a fatal blow.

Ivy could feel Rufus's coldness as they dined together. She did not dare to even look at him. Instead, she conversed with Jill as an attempt to ease her anxiety.

'Auntie, the world famous dress designer, Michelle Ling, is going to hold a charity auction in G City next week. There is this one dress that everybody seems to be talking about. Rumors say that it was worn by a princess in Europe before it was donated to Ling. The auction sounds fun. Would you like to go?' Ivy asked.

Jill smiled. Her eyes twinkled with excitement.

'Really?' she said. 'I'd love to, but events like those are usually invite-only. I don't know Ling very well...' she said sadly.

Ivy gave Jill a reassuring smile.

‘Don’t worry. I have an invite! You can be my plus-one!’ Ivy replied.

Jill knew that Ivy rubbed elbows with many influential people in the fashion and entertainment industry. Because of this, Jill got to attend fancy events and galas as well whenever Ivy would take her.

After getting married to Horace, Jill spent most of her time playing mahjong, or in the beauty salon talking to her friends about other rich women. It eventually started to bore her. When Ivy moved in, a new world opened up for her. Jill started to become exposed to the world of fashion. It almost made her feel young again.

Luxury brands, limited edition clothes, famous designers, fashion icons...Jill became obsessed with these things.

But then, something occurred to her.

‘I haven’t been to a charity auction before. Is there anything I should prepare myself for?’ she asked, worried.

Before Ivy could answer, Horace furrowed his eyebrows in annoyance.

‘Stay at home! You’re not going anywhere! Ivy, you’re pregnant. Why would you want to go to those places? There are lots of people there. What if you get hurt?!’ he said.

Jill’s face turned gloomy immediately. She looked forward to the auction. But because Horace didn’t allow her to go, her excitement quickly turned to disappointment.

Ivy was embarrassed and didn't know how to react. Lionel tried to lighten up the mood, smiling, he said, 'That's fine, father. I'll go with them. I'll take care of them. Nothing bad is gonna happen, I promise.'

Hearing Lionel, Horace shook his head as he begrudgingly gave his consent. He didn't object anymore.

Rufus, who remained silent the whole time, seemed to realize something.

A charity auction? No wonder he couldn't see Michelle these days. She must be busy with the auction.

When Cassandra woke from her sleep, it was already midnight.

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.

ild. It's not my place to interfere with their marital affairs.

If I did, Lionel might take Cassandra's side. What am I going to do then?'

Ivy was furious and jealous. Then, an idea came to her. She ran down to the living room, got a vase and threw it on the floor.

A loud noise filled the house as the ceramics scattered. Ivy, likewise, 'fell' on the floor.

The whole family woke.

Jill was the first one to come out of the bedroom to see what happened. She looked down to the living room from the third floor. When she saw Ivy surrounded by the pieces of the broken vase, Jill exclaimed, 'Ivy! What happened? Are you okay?!'

She hurriedly rushed down towards the living room.

Ivy put her hands on her belly. She looked as if she was in so much pain.

'I... I couldn't find Lionel. So I came downstairs to look for him and accidentally broke the vase...' she explained.

Jill bent down and helped Ivy stand up. Then, she shouted.

'Lionel! Lionel! Where are you? Come here!' she called out.

In Cassandra's bedroom, she was completely backed to a corner being dominated by Lionel. She helplessly watched him go nearer and nearer with his lips getting closer to hers. The loud noise from the living room startled both of them.

Then, they heard footsteps and Jill's calls.

'Lionel! Come here!' she screamed.

Lionel punched the wall, annoyed. There is many a slip between the cup and the lip. He was that closed to get what he wanted.

He had to let go of Cassandra. Then Lionel turned around, opened the door and looked down at the living room.

Ivy was crying and Jill was anxious. There were ceramics and mud on the floor. Ivy seemed so frightened and in pain as she held her belly with her hands.

‘What are you doing still standing there?! Call the driver! Take Ivy to the hospital!’ Jill immediately instructed.