

The Enchanted Night – Chapter: 91

The Dream In Her Girlhood

When she was just a little girl, she had a lot of dreams.

Once she had dreamed that she was a prized princess who was about to be wed to a handsome prince. The wedding was grand, no expense was spared. They were locked in embrace in the middle of the huge hall full of friends and family witnessing their union. She looked joyful and was smiling from ear to ear.

When she woke up from the dream, her face had been blushing and scarlet from the romantic event. It had been years that she could still vividly remember that wedding dream.

It was in a frost-touched kingdom, full of snow and ice. Her tiara was sculpted by the finest craftsman in all of the land, made from crystal clear ice. It was inlaid with diamonds which reminded her of the clear and sparkling eyes of the prince.

She was also wearing a long skirt weaved from gold and silver threads, which dazzled in the icy environment.

But now... Holding and looking at the large box containing the precious dress in her arms, a radiant smile graced her lips.

Early morning the next day, Cassandra opened her eyes to the light of dawn trickling from the window blinds. She sat up, rubbed her eyes and stretched her lazy arms before she stood up and groggily went to the bathroom to run a bath. After she was clean, refreshed and fully awake,

she went out of her room, intent on going downstairs to have some breakfast.

Her phone buzzed when she was in the middle of the stairs. She tapped the accept button on the touchscreen and pressed the phone against her ear. Stella's high pitched voice hurt her ear a bit.

'Cassandra, I searched every nook and cranny of the archives center and found something! Get here stat!'

Feeling the intense anxiety in Stella's voice, Cassandra went back to the room to change into her work clothes.

As Cassandra hurried downstairs and proceeded to the door, Horace and Jill were having breakfast at the nearby table. Jill started to mutter in her usual sour tone, glancing at Cassandra from the corner of her eyes, 'Someone's manners are degrading everyday, it seems. She even ignores the in-laws now!'

Horace's eyebrows furrowed in irritation as he turned to look at Cassandra with a scowl.

The main reason why he appointed her as the Tang Group's design manager was because she had won many awards abroad, as well as her impeccable school record. And she was his daughter-in-law, a member of Tang family.

But things had apparently changed now.

Lionel had no love for Cassandra and was having a baby with Ivy now, while Cassandra was in the middle of a shameful plagiarism rumour. At the very least, there was still no evidence that could vindicate her. It was hard to predict how the situation would develop.

It would be good if her innocence could be proven much later, but if not... An icy gleam radiated from his eyes.

He would never feel an ounce

‘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...

the Tang Group and earned her praises from all its members.

But as the rumour about her plagiarizing someone else’s work spread, her honor was diminished.

‘Cassandra, let me know immediately if you find out the asshole. I’ll kick his ass.’

Stella was visibly indignant and her obvious concern for her friend made Cassandra feel warm all over. Aside from Rufus who totally trusted her, she also had Stella.

Suddenly, Cassandra’s guilty conscience reminded her of all the things she had been keeping from Stella.

‘Stella and Cassandra, are you inside?’

A man’s gruff voice can be heard from outside the door.

‘Damn it! How did Victor know we were here? I just went through some files! Does that count as some kind of company rule violation?’

Stella murmured to herself, slight apprehension evident on her expression.

Cassandra and Stella stepped out together. Victor got a bit nervous at the sight of Stella, feeling awkward all of a sudden. He didn’t know where to put his hands.

‘Cassandra, Mr. Luo knows you’re here. He said to meet him at his office.’

Rufus had eyes everywhere in this place for sure. Cassandra took a deep breath.

A disturbing thought crossed her mind, ‘Am I being stalked?’

She quickly dismissed the thought. Rufus would have absolutely no reason to stalk her.

Victor started walking in the direction of Rufus’s office, with Cassandra in tow. When they entered, they found the senior executive facing the window. He turned his head briefly to look at Cassandra, but then looked back out the window again immediately after. She let out a sigh of relief, because he didn’t seem to be in a bad mood.

‘So here I am, Mr. Luo. What can I do for you?’

she said, looking at Rufus’s sculpted back.

Strangely, she could still feel his warm gaze even with his back turned. It felt like sunlight in a cold winter afternoon.

‘Do you like my gift?’ he uttered.

Who Is the Culprit

Cassandra held her breath as she took in Rufus’s figure silhouetted against the soft light—the warm hues traced his skin and gave him an ethereal glow as if she was beholding a vision. Her heartbeat picked up its pace, shivering as the sight of him warmed her.

She looked down at the gift in her hands. At once, pain lanced through her chest.

‘I...I can’t. It’s too precious. I don’t deserve it,’ she said, tasting the bittersweet on her tongue.

The gift was much too priceless, as she knew that it was more than just a present. It was as if Rufus’s feelings were stitched in every thread. Cassandra closed her eyes against the feeling tugging at her chest. She would not be selfish.

He had kept his word. It was more than enough.

Rufus strode to Cassandra with slow steps, carefully coming closer to her.

‘If you really think so, then be mine,’ he said softly, shading her from the sun. It was a futile act—the sun held no comparison to his brilliance.

The nearness of him did not help Cassandra’s pounding chest. She was left at a loss as Rufus once again declared his feelings for her. But he was her brother-in-law. There was no way they could be together.

She stepped back and gathered her emotions, determined to keep them impervious.

‘Mr. Luo,’ she started, ‘I am going to return the gift to you.’

Rufus furrowed his brows at the way she addressed him. A shadow crossed in his dark brown pupils.

The smile on his lips died, like a candle blown out by the wind. Her words fell on him like a bucket of cold water.

It was a puzzle, even to himself, how much this woman would affect him. It was as if his body was automatically on the move even before he could think about his actions. When he learned of the dress, his first thought was to get it for Cassandra.

He knew that Cassandra was feeling depressed. She had devoted all of herself to her design, but all she got was the accusation of being a copycat.

Rufus had everything arranged carefully at the auction, taking all the steps he could to win her heart. Moreover, he wanted to show the person behind this that Cassandra was no weakling—she had very strong backing and would fight back.

Rufus looked into her eyes, and at once he knew that he could not push her any further. She looked at him as if one more word would make her break. And he did not want to be the reason for that expression. He took a deep breath and turned to sit in his chair, steeling himself to act professionally.

‘Director Tong and the government of G City are working together to build a super-large-scale nursing home in the suburbs to solve the growing problem of excessive numbers of admission waiting in line. He,

together with other people involved, recommends you as the designer for the nursing home.’

Rufus slowly explained the reason why he called for Cassandra, his face wearing an expression of seriousness.

Jenks Tong had already heard about the reason for Cassandra’s suspension, but he insisted that Cassandra should be the designer for the project. It came as quite a surprise.

It was expected that the group would not get huge profits from such government project, but there were other advantages. Once the news came out,

‘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!’

aven’t seen you for some time. I heard you were not feeling well. Are you better now?’ he asked though his expression laced with worry.

His concern touched Cassandra and she smiled at him.

‘Thank you for asking, Director Tong. I’m much better now.’

As his father ignored him, Dylan touched his nose retreating to the sofa, then picked up a newspaper and began reading it.

It was only an initial discussion, so Cassandra did not mind Dylan’s presence.

‘Director Tong, I would like to ask you about your thoughts on the design of the nursing home,’

Cassandra began, sitting at the desk opposite him and taking out a pen and a pad for notes.

Jenks considered for a moment and then answered, ‘Well, it’s a government project, and there is a large area allocated for it. With the size, one of the main objectives is of its multi-functional feature. There should be with dormitories, canteens, and entertainment facilities. Aside from these, we would also need an outpatient department for the medical staff...’ he trailed off and then turned to her. ‘Do you have any other new ideas?’

Jenks had always regarded Cassandra highly. He thought she was an honest woman and a skilled designer.

When he heard that she was involved in plagiarism scandal and got suspended, he knew there must have been a mistake. She simply did not have it in her to do something like it. He wanted to help her out, so he appointed her as the designer of the nursing home.

‘So here is what I think...’

Cassandra drew on her pad quickly and then showed the sketch to Jenks.

‘I did an ocular check there this morning. As you said, it’s really a big area, but I think it will be wasteful if we don’t make use of the greening area. Why don’t we designate a portion of the space for planting fruit trees or seedlings? The elders who are still able to and interested can help with planting. Products from the trees can help create profits for the nursing home for their use and make the best of their spare time at the same time.’

Jenks listened as Cassandra explained her ideas. A smile formed on his lips. He knew he had made the right decision.

His Intensive Eyes

Seeing the contented smile on Jenks's face encouraged Cassandra to go on with sharing her ideas.

'Nursing homes aren't just a place for elders to kill time. We can build it into a three-bedroom apartment where elders can actually live together, chatting, making friends, and having fun. This will make them feel like they are living in an actual home instead.'

Jenks nodded, signalling his approval.

'I need you to work overtime the next few days to finish the design. Even though I'm appointing you to this case, you still have to work hard and deliver a good design to be able to convince the shareholders that you're the right person for this project. Do your best and show them what you've got!'

'Thank you Director Tong for the opportunity! I won't let you down!'

Cassandra appreciated his confidence in her and it solidified her resolve.

As Cassandra packed her things to leave, Dylon stood up and said, 'Father, I'd like to walk Cassandra out.'

He then left the office with Cassandra.

'Can we have a walk together?'

Dylon asked as he sighed to himself.

The usual smile on Dylon's face was replaced by a concerned look, alerting Cassandra that something was upsetting him.

'What's wrong? You don't look like your usual self,'

Cassandra asked with a hint of worry in her voice.

Dylon had saved her life in the past, so her heart aches as the once cheerful Dylon was now wrapped in worry. She decided to try and take some pressure off his shoulders.

'I was planning to tell my father that I'll be going away for a trip next week. But I don't have the heart to hurt his feelings, he works so hard at this old age,'

Dylon confessed with a rueful look on his face as his mind went into turmoil.

Cassandra suddenly recalled what Jenks said to her the other night, 'My son doesn't want to take over the family business and just keeps to his interest... He wants to go to the tropical forests, the grasslands, and the deserts. He brought his camera equipment and stayed there for months at a time...'

In the past, Cassandra was able to persuade Jenks to accept his son's hobbies and cheer up. Maybe he would change his mind one day and grant his father's wishes.

But the truth was that Dylon really wasn't interested in all about the family business. Jenks had no other choice but to find a new successor which was very difficult for him. He worked all his life in the hospital. How could he hand it over to anyone else other than his son?

He wanted Dylan to take it over. No one else.

But, to avoid fighting with his own son, he did not force the job upon him. This was why Dylan was able to stick to his hobbies all those years.

Cassandra thought about what to say for a minute. She composed herself then said, 'Dylo

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?

me from the door as Lionel walked in on them and explained with a frown.

Jill pulled a long face as Lionel defended Cassandra. She was about to scold Cassandra due to her absence today but didn't expect Lionel to get involved at the moment. It annoyed her so much to see her son take Cassandra's side.

Ivy almost lost her temper as Lionel talked for Cassandra, but she managed to hold it back.

The air in the room was becoming tense and Cassandra knew something was wrong, so she made up an excuse to go back to her room. Jill gave out a snort but Cassandra simply did her best to ignore it.

She had been holding a grudge against Cassandra, and the daughter-in-law just never tried to please her. Even though her parents

married her to Lionel as a trade-off, Cassandra was actually very talented and able to earn her position in the Tang Group. She deserved everything she got and there was no need for her to please anyone.

It was hard for the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law to get along with each other. There was a long way to go for Cassandra, but instead, Ivy, the mistress was pretty good at it.

Lionel suddenly grabbed the door as Cassandra was about to close it. He stood in front of her with a smile.

Cassandra felt a tingling sensation all over her body. She was uneasy whenever being with Lionel alone and wanted to run away.

‘How come you didn’t tell me you were in trouble with plagiarism? I knew nothing about it until I attended the meeting today.’

Lionel went to meetings according to his changing mood and was not a regular member of the board. It wasn’t until today that he was told Cassandra’s design was plagiarised.

As Lionel’s eyes gazed at her, she felt discomfort building from inside her.

‘I know I didn’t steal anyone else’s idea. That’s enough. I don’t care what others think of me.’

The Deal Provided By Ivy

Lionel couldn’t believe himself. His feelings for Cassandra seemed to change with each passing day. The more he knew Cassandra and her innate kindness, the more he got attracted to her.

As a sought after bachelor, he used to hang out with all kinds of pretty women. Everywhere he went there were always be batches of women prepared to throw themselves onto him.

They loved the money he had more than himself and all the advantages he could provide. At the same time, Lionel was a quite generous man, and he'd never been thrift to them financially. However, his heart was already captured by a woman. Despite being married to Cassandra, he gave all his love to Ivy, who had been his girlfriend for many years.

Surprisingly, out of his expectation, Lionel had been gradually attracted to Cassandra ever since the moment she came back from abroad.

Cassandra, on the contrary, turned down his olive branch, and refused to work in the Group as his wife. It was obvious that she was trying to prove herself in her own way, without his help and influence.

Her stubbornness never failed to piss him off. The dread and annoyance, however, had turned into pity and concern when he heard what happened to her.

Lionel couldn't pretend to ignore her existence as he did before, and he didn't have any clue why.

'I trust you, and time will bring light to the truth anyway,' he comforted her.

The aura of peaceful tenderness on his face was new to Cassandra. She had never seen such an expression on his face before.

It made her felt uneasy, she was desperate to escape his tormenting presence. With one hard push, she wanted to close the door of her bedroom right in front him.

But Lionel stopped her before she could. He pushed the door open forcibly, making Cassandra's shoulders jerk at the loud bang.

'Why are you avoiding me like that? I'm your husband!' feeling humiliated, he shouted with eyes bulging with rage.

He had been used to Cassandra keeping distance with him. But now, when he was trying to be good to her, she refused to give him a chance.

'We're both old enough to know that fairy tales are not true. Are you happy with what was happening between us all this time? We always break up on the verge of a fight. Thus, for your own good, please just leave me alone,' Cassandra said plainly.

She tried hard to close the door, but Lionel was way far stronger than her. He wouldn't let her go.

'Just wait and see, Cassandra! You'll be mine someday. You'll beg me to join you in bed!' he hissed through his clenched teeth.

Lionel withdrew his hands from the door, and it banged close right at his face. Frustrated, he gave the door a good hard kick before he turned around. While holding his sore face, he was surprised to see that Ivy was standing at the other end of the corridor, her hands rested on her belly silently.

Lionel was a little discomfited as if he was caught stealing something.

On the other end, Ivy acted nothing unusual, and she walked toward him with a sweet smile on her face.

‘Honey, your son kicked me several times today, and I can feel that he’s such a strong baby. I believe he gets a pair of long legs just like his father’s,’ she mused as she looked down her belly.

Lionel also spun his gaze at her belly and his eyes turned soft. It was his son, his own blood and flesh. One of his weapons to win over the Group from Rufus.

‘Why do you bother tiring yourself coming up here? The dinner is ready, and you need to stay relaxed,’ he scolded her slightly.

He put his arm around her waist, escorting her to her room.

‘I forgot my phone in my room and I need to get it,’ Ivy responded.

It seemed that she didn’t hear the conversation between him and Cassandra, and Lionel took a deep breath of relief.

‘Okay, go get your phone. I’ll wait for you and then we’ll go downstairs for dinner,’ he said

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.

he assumed that her plan was working.

The last thing that Cassandra wanted to see was a woman’s tears. She took a piece of tissue and passed it to Ivy.

Ivy took the tissue and wiped off her tears, and took a deep breath to calm herself down.

‘Cassandra, I understand that you don’t love Lionel, and thus, I want to make a deal with you,’ she said with a convincing voice.

I would like to claim the title of Lionel’s wife in exchange with anything you want. I desperately want to be his wife legitimately!’ she exclaimed determinedly.

Ivy looked both excited and sincere from the bottom of her heart. She looked into Cassandra’s eyes intensely with the hope that she would give her the answer she expected.

To her disappointment, Cassandra closed her eyes and shook her head slightly.

‘It’s impossible, Ivy. What you are asking me is something beyond my control. You know the reason why I married Lionel. My father’s company needs their backup. Without their help, he wouldn’t have made it the past years,’ she said.

‘If Lionel and I get divorced, my father’s company will shut down in no time!

As a daughter, the last thing I’ve ever wanted for my parents was a safe, peaceful and secured life. It’s not something you can provide and I have nothing to exchange for that,’ she explained remorsefully.

Cassandra thought of the tears on her mother’s face when she begged her to marry Lionel, and it hurt like a sword piercing her heart. She understood the helplessness of her mother.

She was their eldest daughter and it was her responsibility to help them out. She cried, and she complained, but she never regretted. It was her destiny.

‘All of us needs to pay for what we did in the past. Ivy, love is love and it has nothing to do with marriage. You and Lionel have spent so many years together happily even without marriage, and why do you have to marry him now?’ Cassandra asked.

‘If you give up the idea of becoming his lawful wife, you don’t have to be separated from your own baby, and I can assure you that you can see your baby anytime you want, regardless the objection of Lionel’s parents. I won’t say a word,’ she promised Ivy.

Ivy looked at Cassandra resentfully. She understood Cassandra’s side as she had explained it clearly. It was her greed that trapped her in this situation. She mocked herself that she lifted a rock only to drop it on her own feet.

‘I understand Cassandra, but since you turned my deal down, I swear, I won’t let you and your parents live in peace from this day on. Just wait and see!’ Ivy threatened Cassandra.

A Meeting With Ladies

The sound of heels clicking on the tiled floor faded as Cassandra watched Ivy’s receding figure down the hall. When she was out of sight, Cassandra suddenly felt quite tired.

It was said that people always sympathized with the weak, and in this case—she felt sympathetic towards Ivy. Cassandra had truly felt sorry for her, yet she had no choice but to decline her request.

The heavy feeling in her body made her heart sink, but Cassandra tried to cheer herself up and continued to work on the design of the nursing home. Her attempt was successful as a few hours later she got so engrossed in her work that she even forgot to eat her lunch, which had been sent to her office earlier. Fortunately, her efforts had paid off. When it was time to get off duty, the brief draft was almost completed.

She had just ironed out some details in her work when the door burst open to reveal Victor, who looked cold and emotionless like usual.

‘Manager Qin, please get yourself tidy up a bit. There is a meeting to discuss about the application of the Director of the Union. Mr. Luo wants you to go with him,’ he said in a flat voice.

Cassandra simply nodded in understanding.

Ever since Rufus had entered Tang Group, he had been gearing up for the set-up of the Union of Real Estate in G City. In his opinion, the possibilities were endless when many businesses came together and united. Many hands made the job light, after all.

The board was optimistic about his idea as well, thus, the whole process had been bouncing along.

Now, all the members had been already confirmed. The only thing left was the appointment of the Director of the Union, which would be decided by voting.

The high position was actually just a mere title, but winning it would elevate Tang Group’s reputation.

Ultimately, only the strongest group in G City could gain recognition from the most members and win power through the ballot box.

Cassandra knew how much time and energy Rufus had devoted to preparing for the application. She understood that it was a crucial time for the leaders to discuss the matter.

After she finished getting ready, Cassandra went down to the ground floor lobby and walked out of the building. Rufus's Rolls Royce Phantom had already been waiting outside for her.

Upon getting in the car, she was surprised to see someone else was sitting inside as well.

'Michelle! Why are you here?' Cassandra asked. Michelle whipped her head around from the passenger seat.

Her lips curved into a smile, the shocked expression on Cassandra's face making her quite happy.

'Would you mind if I join you? Rufus, let's move!' Michelle said friendly.

Finally, the car engine started and they drove off to their destination. The trip was fairly quiet, but a thousand questions boggled Cassandra's mind. She managed to refrain from asking any of them.

It was apparently Rufus's idea to ask Michelle to accompany them. Although she didn't know why, she still trusted him and thought that to stay silent might be a good choice.

After some time of driving, the car finally halted near the gate of a five-star hotel. Rufus signaled for them to get off, then drove away without a word.

'What? Isn't Mr. Luo going with us?' Cassandra couldn't get more confused. She was told to go with him for a business appointment.

However, Rufus just drove away without any explanation. Why did he leave? So...what now?

A soft hand held Cassandra's arm. She turned around to see Michelle, with a smile painted on her face.

'You are the only one we need. Let's go,' cheered Michelle.

Cassandra follo

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...

ey say that never judge a book by its cover.

'We have included all the basic facilities a nursing home should have, but I add a new idea. We could spare a piece of land for a special purpose to enrich the elders' lives. My suggestion is to use this land to grow some fruit trees. Everyone could enjoy the fruits and feel the happiness of harvesting.'

The mayor's wife nodded in agreement.

'That's true. The elders are most afraid of the boring life in the nursing home. This idea would give them the chance to stimulate their minds and do some proper exercises. It's a great idea,' she said.

Suddenly, she pointed at one tile Michelle had discarded and happily clapped her hands.

‘Cassandra! You can claim the tile to win! It’s Michelle’s tile!’

In reality, Cassandra was clueless. She just followed the guidance of the mayor’s wife.

‘Oh! No way! Bad luck for me!’ Michelle whined, but a smile rested on her face.

She secretly winked at Cassandra, who was smart enough to understand everything quickly. Michelle had done it on purpose.

‘You are such a good teacher! As for your student, she had won so quickly!’ the director of the secretary’s wife praised Cassandra.

Shortly after, another round began.

It was easy to establish a relationship in the mahjong game. Some people won while some people lost. Under the guidance of the mayor’s wife, Cassandra won the most money in the later game.

She was aware that this outcome might have had something to do with the mayor’s wife who had the highest status among them. Now, Cassandra learned that diplomatic strategies also existed in a mahjong game.

During the whole time, Cassandra behaved quite well. She was natural and gracious, and all the other women were full of praise for her manner. When talking about a professional topic, Cassandra explained it to them in simple words that the ordinary person would understand. She spoke about lots of interesting facts in the field of design, from home to abroad, and all the ladies drank in her every word.

After the game was over, everyone was ready to leave. Michelle and Cassandra said goodbye to them at the hotel gate.

When the ladies had left, Rufus's car came over. Michelle opened the door and motioned Cassandra to get in.

'Rufus, you didn't leave and waited here all the time?' Michelle asked. Then she added, 'Don't worry. Cassandra did a perfect job today!'

Vernon In Trouble

The faint smile on Rufus's handsome face, gave him a more relaxed look.

Michelle didn't leave with the two, and was picked up by a deep green Land Rover.

Cassandra bit her lower lip as she got in the passenger seat, fumbling for the safety belt.

For some inexplicable reasons, she felt so nervous that she couldn't plug the belt in. Sweat was formed on the tip of her nose.

Rufus found it amusing, and the smile on his face widened to a glee. He turned towards Cassandra and lowered his head to help her with the belt. They were so close that Rufus's warmth made the little woman blush.

When he was upright again, he found the mild redness on Cassandra's face so alluring. Under the dim light of the car, her skin looked pure white. Her glow attracted him even more.

‘Luckily Michelle was there. Or else I wouldn’t even know how to deal with them,’ Cassandra started, breaking the romantic atmosphere.

As she remembered playing mahjong with the ladies in the high class, Cassandra pitied herself for she realized that she lacked skills in socializing.

‘Michelle is older than you. Surely she is more experienced. She has lots of connections. If you make friend with her, you can learn from her in the future,’ Rufus stated.

He had arranged the session, especially for Cassandra. She could remind the ladies of the Tang Group and potentially build up the profile of the company. This was also a good chance to build her own connections and widen her network, which would most likely be useful for her career development.

There was no doubt in her technical skills. The four years of studying in Rome had definitely equipped her with the necessary knowledge to do her job well. The only problem that she had was that she didn’t know many people in G City. Cassandra was not a people person, which was parallel in significance with skills when it came to business.

Now he purposely created the chance for her to establish more connections and associations so that her road to the higher level would be easier. After all, one more friend meant one more opportunity.

Cassandra’s repeated rejections made him more determined to protect her, in a way that she would accept—the independent woman wouldn’t want to rely on him.

Rufus wanted to protect her perseverance, her helplessness, and everything about her.

Abruptly, Cassandra's phone rang. It was from Edith. Curious at the rare call, she asked, 'Mom, what happened?'

The person from the other end of the line couldn't stop herself from weeping. In a voice mixed with crying and shouting, she told Cassandra, 'Cassandra! Your dad has been whistle-blown! They say he bribed officials! He was taken away by the people from the prosecution for investigation!'

The words cast a gloomy shadow over Cassandra. She could see nothing except for darkness. With her entire body trembling, she muttered, 'Mom... You... Just wait for me. I... I'm coming back now.'

Barely able to control the shaking of her hands, she failed to grip the phone, which dropped onto the car floor with a loud thud.

'What happened?'

Rufus asked with so much worry and concern, as he sensed that something was wrong with Cassandra.

'My mom... My mom said that my dad had been arrested for bribery,' Cassandra stuttered in a weak

'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...

Edith dashed towards her last hope, and pulled Cassandra's arms, not letting her savior go. Before she could say anything else, she started to sob again.

Cassandra supported the woman who had lost her strength due to excessive crying, and cheered herself up in heart forcefully before she started to console the desperate woman.

'It's going to be alright. It's just an investigation. If he is innocent, everything is going to be fine. He will come back after the investigation!'

These were the only words that she could find to pacify the sorrowful woman.

However, it didn't help. Instead, it intensified her despair.

'Your father was too ambitious. He was so head-on to bid for that project. Now the project has gone wrong. Many people associated with this case are arrested. Even if he didn't bribe anybody, he can't excuse himself from it!' her mother explained in tears.

Cloris also stood up. Her eyes were already sore.

'Cassandra, ask Uncle Horace to get dad out. We talked to him about it over the phone, and he seemed reluctant to help. But now, the only solution is the Tang family. Ask a favor from him, please!' the young girl pleaded.

There were still traces of tears on her face, which were left from the time Vernon was taken away. Cloris had witnessed the entire event.

'I understand. I will ask someone to find out how dad is now. Don't worry. Tidy up our house. Don't panic. We should calm down first and

think carefully of what we are going to do,' Cassandra assured the other two women.

In front of her sister and her mother, Cassandra was as calm and composed as she could make herself be. Now in this family, she was the most powerful woman who could block all the pressure from outside. The strong image portrayed by Cassandra finally brought temporary peace and assurance to the two women in despair.

After they have recovered a little bit, Cassandra led them to clear the mess inside the house. And when they finally finished, it was already one o'clock in the morning.

'Have some rest now. I will try to pay a visit to dad. Hopefully, they will allow me in. I think I need to get things clear with him personally!'
Cassandra stated.

An Unpeaceful Winter

All of a sudden, Cassandra became the backbone of the whole family. She stayed calm as much as she could. Edith and Cloris finally managed to calm themselves down. They listened to Cassandra and went to the bathroom to wash up before going to bed.

When Edith and Cloris left the living room, and she was left alone, Cassandra felt that she had been drained with all her strength. She lost her balance and fell down on the floor with a loud thud.

Cassandra was bothered however, why the heating machine inside the mansion wasn't turned on. Strangely, all the servants were gone too, the tables and the pieces of furniture were covered with dust. It seemed that it hadn't been cleaned for a long time.

Just half a year ago, the Qin family was very wealthy and decent. How come the luxurious mansion turned into such a shabby, deserted house overnight?

Although their business wasn't doing great, at least they were still earning profits. They didn't need to be this wretched.

Cassandra walked out of the house while holding her throbbing head. She found Rufus beside his parked car by the gates. He had been waiting for her, still.

As he saw her coming, Rufus lit a cigar and puffed a heave of smoke from it. He was smoking heavily and there were butts everywhere.

Cassandra thought Rufus had left after what seemed like eternity dealing with her mother and cleaning up the mansion. She didn't expect him to wait for her.

She walked towards him very quietly. He was looking at the sky so she lifted up her head too. The sky was filled with stars tonight and the moon cast a shy glow that illuminated the ether.

'It's late now. Why don't you just come inside and stay for the night? Our guest room is comfortable enough. You can leave the next morning.'

Thinking about how Rufus drove several hours to bring her back, Cassandra felt grateful and moved.

'Thank you, but I'm fine. I'll be staying in my car.'

To Cassandra's surprise, Rufus rejected her.

'Although the heating machine is out, I can give you an electric blanket. You won't feel cold.'

Cassandra thought Rufus was afraid of being cold since the heating machine didn't work.

Cigarette smokes rose up in the air as Rufus put out his cigar. His face went serious after hearing Cassandra's words.

'Afraid of feeling cold?' he thought. Of all the things to consider, he wasn't bothered by the thought of a slight chill. Rufus was not afraid of the cold at all.

He wasn't a spoiled son from a rich family who hadn't been through any difficulties. Rufus used to sleep on bare concrete floors and all he got was a thin mat. The mat, however, didn't help him stay warm during those cold nights.

Even though he was very tired and sleepy, all he could do was take some naps. He couldn't sleep well because he kept on shivering.

Unlike Rufus, Lionel was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. When he was a child, he was surrounded by a bunch of servants. He got the best meals, the best clothes, and the best education. Besides, there awaited a large company for him to inherit.

Sadly for Rufus, it was the other way around.

He went into the training camp. Those years which he had spent there were so painful that he could never forget that experience for the rest of his life.

He shed more sweats and tears more than Lionel ever had in his life. The difficulties he had overcome was much more than those of Lionel. If he were on his place, Lionel could never have endured what Rufus had gone through.

Thus, there was no way for Rufus to be afraid of the cold.

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...

arm, letting Jill give his arm a rub-down.

'You're right. So I am not going to get involved in this. What I could do is to connect Cassandra with the police. She has to solve the problem on her own.'

Jill's massage skills were great. Horace was very relaxed.

Seeing Horace so chilled and unperturbed, Jill felt happy too. This was one of the many rare occasions that he was not contradicting her opinions. She thought, 'So, the massage is working.'

Ivy was the one who suggested the idea of giving Horace a massage to Jill. She told her that she learned it from a famous Japanese masseuse. Moreover, she hyped that aside from the relaxation and relief the massage would ignite the cold treatment Horace had for her. She assured Jill that Horace's passionate feelings for her would be restored anew.

Jill was fond of massages. She frequently visited wellness spas to relieve herself from stress. But by herself, she knew nothing about those skills and would never offer to learn them.

However, Ivy told her that she once gave the massage to Lionel, and he enjoyed it very much. Lionel even would ask her to do it for him once in a while.

‘Thank God, I’m pregnant now. Otherwise, I have to massage him again. Auntie Jill, why don’t you learn the skills and use on Uncle Horace? I’m sure he will be very happy if you do that for him,’ Ivy cheerfully suggested.

Horace sat in front of a chair the whole day and was always busy with his work. He used to find a masseuse twice in a week. Thinking about this, Jill thought if she learned the skill, she could not only help Horace ease the burden but also enhance their relationship. ‘So why not?’ Jill thought.

After learning the craft from Ivy, she decided to give it a try tonight. Horace was impressed.

He praised her by saying, ‘You really impress me, honey. I didn’t know you know how to massage.’ Moreover, to show his genuine happiness, Horace even bought her two limited edition bags from abroad.

Jill gave the bright colored one to Ivy. She thanked her for teaching her the massage skills and was beginning to like her even more.

As for Cassandra...

she walked out of the detention center and headed to another building, looking for the official that Horace had mentioned to her.

The bright skies of the day gradually turned dark. ‘It must be an unpeaceful winter,’ Cassandra concluded.

The heavy cloud cast a gloomy shadow on the ground. The wind started blowing in the cold weather. A few crows could be heard crying in sorrow. It seemed like they were cursing the freezing winter.

Cassandra had just walked out from the office. In the corridor, the wind squeezed its way through the window.

This was an old building which was going to become obsolete soon. People had been moving out hence only a few rooms were occupied.

Not far from where she was, there stood a new building. It was constructed by Vernon's own company.

This thought sounded hilarious to her. Her father sent himself to the detention house that was built by himself. The idea of him living caged in something built with his own money was ironical.

Last night, she didn't manage to get a good sleep. And today early in the morning, she had to play smart with the foxy officials. This indeed drained all the energy out of her.

Feeling a bit dizzy, she headed to the washroom at the end of the corridor. Quickly, she scooped some water and splashed it on her face. Deep down she hoped this would relax her mind.

The piercing coldness was indeed effective. Raising her head, she squinted her eyes and tried to see herself in the rusting mirror. In a low voice, she said to herself, 'You can do it.'

The old washroom wasn't equipped with light. In the dimness, Cassandra felt frightened.

Walking briskly out, she wanted to reach the place where sunlight could touch her face. All of a sudden, she was pulled back by a strong pair of hands.

The strong hands pulled her into the darkness, away from sunlight. Under his control, she found it hard to move.

As she was about to shout for help, his hand pressed against her lips. With her mouth covered, her scream turned into broken whimper.

The fear for darkness and the pain from the grip made her eyes wide open. Yet the dimness made it hard for her to recognize the attacker's face.

So far, she only knew that the man was tall and strong. She felt him breathing fast. Without any mercy, he pressed Cassandra against the ice-old cement wall.

The corridor was invaded by yet another gust of wind which messed up her tidy hair. Though her vision was a bit clouded by her hair, she knew the man was drawing closer to her as he felt his rapid breath against her face.

'Why are you always with Rufus?' the man asked with fury.

Gnashing his teeth to squeeze while he spat these words out, Lionel looked like a demon to her.

Cassandra's heart sank into a state of hopelessness.

She instantly deduced where his fury came from. It was certain that Lionel must have heard that Rufus had accompanied her. His self-esteem must have been shattered. And now he decided to explode his intense emotions on her.

The shabby building was empty, and she was aware she couldn't match up with his strength. 'I am doomed!' she thought.

Shaking her head violently, Cassandra attempted to shake his hand off her face. But he was strong beyond her imagination and she couldn't manage to escape from his control.

After some time, she was accustomed to the darkness and the distinct features of the man began to become clear.

She could even see his eyes ablaze with wrath and fire.

'Cassandra! You are my wife and only my wife! No one else is allowed to touch you! Do you get it?' the man roared.

Lionel was like a trapped beast and he used his strength to the fullest which caused Cassandra's eyes to well up with tears. The pain was excruciating.

Unable to move, she resorted to biting. As soon as she

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.

life. It contained his sweat and tears. If his company's assets were confiscated, he would lose all his hope.

Moreover, if everything was sold, then the house of Qin family would also be gone too. 'Where will my mother and sister live? How can they support themselves?' she asked herself with frustration.

Even though Qin family had been having a tough time, they still maintained their lavish lifestyle. She could sense that from the time she last visited her parents. The living standard was way higher than that of a middle class family.

'If father loses everything, how can Cloris and mother manage to live? They have been wealthy for so long, after all. Can they get used to poverty?' Her mind was now jumbled with these questions.

With all the different thoughts swirling in her mind, her brain was in a total turmoil. Resting her head on the seat with her eyes closed, she tried to come up with a solution.

Rufus knew what Cassandra was going through. He could tell her mind was filled with questions that needed solution. The weight of the entire family had landed on her slim shoulders. She had already sacrificed everything she had for Qin family and now this new burden had befallen her. As if to make it worse, her career as an architect was also in danger now.

There was simply too much burden for her to carry. It was much heavier than what a girl of her age could bear. She was like a camel with heavy weight, trudging in the desolate desert with an unknow destination.

If it was possible, Rufus would be willing to help her carry this burden. He wished to help her during this tough time. He hoped himself to be the stars above, so that when she was lost in the sand storm, she could still find the right path. He hoped himself to be the Noah's Ark, so that when her entire world collapsed, she could board the boat and survive.

When these thoughts passed through his mind, the little woman's breathing became soft and steady. With a quick glance he realized she was asleep.

Rufus stopped his car at the side of the road, walked out, and lit himself a cigarette. Fixing his gaze on the Sleeping Beauty, he had an inexplicable feeling rising in his heart.

It seemed like he could stand there and watch her forever. It was a sight he wished to behold. While sleeping, she looked peaceful. Her burden wasn't visible and it made him happy.

A Second Round Negotiation

Cassandra had been busy running around for Vernon's case these days. This had left her exhausted and she assumed she had lost a few pounds in the process.

However, her efforts did not pay off. The fact still remained that a lenient sentence would cost the confiscation of his property, or a whopping penalty. This was the final conclusion and now Cassandra was in a dilemma.

It turned out that the amount of the penalty was far beyond what the Qin family could handle. In that case, sacrificing the company was the only choice left.

Cassandra announced their decision to Edith and Cloris. Her sister went wild when she heard this decision.

'No way! We can't give up all our properties! This is not going to happen!' she screamed.

This news turned her face pale. A strand of her hair waggled as she shook her head to show her disagreement in this matter.

‘That’s the only solution we have. If we don’t do this, we’ll have to pay the penalty, which we are unable to afford. It is going to be a huge amount of money.’

Cassandra closed her eyes and tried hard to make Cloris understand the seriousness of this matter. If she continued screaming, Cassandra might lose her temper.

‘Can’t you ask help from someone? You might know someone who is more powerful. Wait..why don’t you talk to your father-in-law? He could be of some help!’ Edith pleaded.

Deep inside, even Edith did not think they should abandon all their properties, especially the company. It was the fundamental foundation of the Qin family and losing it hurt her a great deal.

If the company got sold, then she and her daughter, Cloris, would have no source of revenue to live a good life. Even if Vernon got a lenient sentence, he would still have to be in prison for at least a few years, which meant they would have to live a few years without him. Edith had been a housewife for many years. She had lost the motivation to work a long time ago. In that situation, she wondered who would be accountable to pay for their daily expense. ‘The company could not be sold,’ thought Edith.

‘Yes! Mother is right! You can turn to Uncle Horace for help. He is your father-in-law, hence he is bound to help us. Anyway, there’s no way we will give up our properties. Even father would be sad when he gets to know about it. You have to remember that this company is his life!’

Now Cloris nodded her head to show her agreement with Edith. There was no way she would go along with Cassandra's proposal.

'Cassandra, please. Talk to your father-in-law. Or you can send Lionel to talk to him. Borrow some money from the Tang family for the penalty and keep the our company safe. I'm sure your father will rise from the ashes. He has the ability. We can pay back the money when your father succeeds again!'

Edith stared at Cassandra, expecting a positive reply from her.

Cassandra lowered her eyes silently when she realized what Edith and Cloris were expecting from her.

She comforted herself by telling herself that Cloris was still a young and naive girl who couldn't differentiate between right and wrong.

However, she was bitterly disappointed at Edith who was being so unreasonable.

If Horace genuinely wanted to lend a hand to the Qin family, then he would have easily done that using his connections. However, in reality, he chose to do nothing which made it evident he had no interest in helping.

He merely gave her some directions by telling her who she could talk to. In short, he kept himself as an outsider and didn't have any interest in actually helping them.

Everything Horace did suggested that he decided to stay away from this mess. There was no way he would offer any further help to the Qin fami

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 ?

he sharp teeth of a serpent to Cassandra. Cassandra's heart prickled as she listened to Ivy's hurtful words.

'I'm warning you, Ivy! If I ever discover that you have something to do with this then I'll never let you go!'

Cassandra looked at this hypocritical woman coldly and threatened her.

'Oh my god! I'm so afraid of you. You won't let me go? Oh, sure. I'm just a weak woman who is incapable of escaping from you,'

Ivy teased with a disdainful and cunning smile.

'Let me make it clear to you, Cassandra. You want to save your family, right? But I know you don't have the money it takes to do it. It is going to be impossible for you to borrow it from others. Guess what, I have got the money. I have enough to pay for the penalty. Now you go ahead and think about it carefully, Cassandra. Are you sure you don't want to accept my offer? If I were you, I would think...really quickly...and say yes. The clock starts ticking now.'

Cassandra glared at Ivy as she went on with her little speech. Her words had hit Cassandra right where it hurts. At the moment, she was in a state where she couldn't even form a word.

Cassandra felt like Ivy's face was enlarged in front of her eyes which made her feel dizzy all of a sudden.

Seeing Cassandra's hesitancy, Ivy started laughing even louder.

'Don't hesitate now, Cassandra. You married Lionel to save your family. But as you can see, no one in the Tang family is willing to help you. They are staying away from you and didn't even bother to offer any help. I'm sure you have realized your position in this family. You are nothing but a poor beggar here! The Tang family would kick you out of this family when they realize how useless you are! Face the reality please. It's better for you to leave before they show you the door!'

The serpent's bright red tongue hung out, forcing the princess to grant its request.

Its green eyes stared at the princess and its tongue twitched. It was restless and wanted a quick reply from the princess.

However, Cassandra closed her eyes and took a deep breath. When she opened her eyes again, there was no more hesitation or anxiety in those clear eyes.

'You are the poor beggar, Ivy. Everything you have is Lionel's, right? You have nothing of your own. Everything is taken from the Tang family, isn't it? Have you ever earned a cent by yourself? You have been using your baby to earn this position in the Tang family. You are living such a pitiful life.'

Who' s My Hero

Women by nature were ambitious, but there were some that to a rough extent would take advantage of their good looks to attract men. At most, they would even trade their young and beautiful faces for good lives.

Different women, different choices, different lives. Cassandra didn't want to make a comment on this.

But for herself, she would never become that kind of ambitious woman.

'Ivy, I'm not rich, but I'm living a dignified life. You'd better save your tricks and think about how to establish yourself in the Tang family. Whatever will happen, I won't make a deal with you!'

Cassandra threw the words coldly and was eager to escape Ivy's presence. Then she walked back to her room and left everything behind.

Ivy's face was distorted because of anger. The way she clenched her teeth made her look less beautiful as before.

'Cassandra, you were brave enough to reject me. Go to hell!

Let me remind you that you're on fire at both ends now. Moreover, the plagiarist label on you hasn't been lifted off yet.' Ivy thought.

Cassandra, however, closed the door, her face being as pale as a ghost.

Then with her hands still on the doorknob, she slid down from the door to the floor, tucked up both of her legs and buried her head in them.

'Cassandra, you must be strong. You need to work things out yourself,' she encouraged herself.

Her mind was racing as to what were the possible things she should do.

The deadline of the nursing home's design plan was looming and she began to work overtime—even up to early morning.

She hadn't been back to the Tang family for days. Whenever she felt tired, she just slept on the couch in her office with a thin cover to keep herself warm.

Moreover, the burden of the Qin family was all over her shoulder. It made her feel more exhausted than ever.

Even worse, Edith and Cloris kept on calling her from time to time, overflowing her already filled cup of pressure. Her mind seemed to explode about thinking on ways how to deal with her problems.

'Cassandra! Have you told your father-in-law about the penalty? The amount is just a drop in the bucket for him! What's the matter with you? Aren't you going to do something? Your father's trial is going to start next month!'

Edith said furiously over the phone. Her voice was full of impatience.

'Mom. I know. I will seek Horace's help when I get a chance,'

Cassandra lied to console Edith, knowing that if she said that Horace didn't want to be involved in the issue at all might break Edith down.

'Cassandra! We can't wait any longer! You're our only hope for your dad!'

Edith whimpered anxiously. Her persistence annoyed Cassandra very much.

'I'll figure this out, mom. Don't worry.'

Cassandra felt more disconcerted when hanging up the phone. She opened the office windows and the cold wind blew on her pale face. The chill made her shivered but helped her feel more rational.

At that moment, Victor walked in and was surprised at the sight of Cassandra by the window. He thought, 'What's this... Doesn't Manager Qin feel cold by keeping the window open in a winter day?'

'Victor, wha

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.

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long the way. Today, however, she was craving for some sushi so she went to the sushi restaurant nearby. On her way back to the office, she was stopped by him again.

'Let me go. I need to go back to work!'

Stella was exasperated, her face full of restlessness.

'No. Stella. I won't let you go unless you say yes to me!'

The man wouldn't compromise. He was so clingy.

'Let go of her.'

Simple but colder-than-ice words caught both their attention.

Stella was thrilled to hear this, a feeling of bliss flooded her heart. 'It was Victor. What's Victor doing here?' The question lingered on her mind.

The strange man pulled a long face and looked at Victor, who wore a suit that matched his cold eyes.

'Let go of whom? It's none of your business. She's my girlfriend!'

The man was spoiled and behaved disrespectfully. He didn't take Victor's warning seriously.

Victor hated the idea of being shunned. He clenched his fists with his knuckles cracking.

The next second, the strange man was lying on the floor. It happened so fast that even Stella didn't see how Victor's fist landed on him.

Stella opened her mouth in disbelief. She was taken aback at what had just happened in front of her. Her shoulders were trembling with shock.

The strange man placed his hands on his stomach. He was limping in pain and was struggling to get up.

'Don't worry. You will not die. The pain would subside in a couple of minutes.'

Victor threw him a few words. Without looking back, he held Stella's hands and then walked back to the Tang Group Building.

Stella didn't say a word on the way back. Victor took her back to the building and then let go of her the moment they reached the entrance.

'Go back to work,'

Victor said and then turned to walk away. He was always that short-spoken.

Following Victor's back with her eyes, Stella felt the biting cold under her feet.

'Victor is such a man of powerful physique. I should be grateful to him. Luckily he didn't flare up at me when I treated him in a bad way!' Stella mused while walking to her office.