

Destined To Be His wife by L.T. Marshall Chapter 3

TangShi tried not to fiddle with the thin belt of her simple white dress and stood upright and poised for fear of her father's anger this morning. They had been waiting around seven minutes in the bright, sunny hallway, for the arrival of the Leng grandfather, master of the family Leng, and his entourage. She had already experienced so many harsh words. Just by being present it seemed she irritated his mood. Her stepmother glared her way, not bothering to conceal her dislike when in the presence of her husband and her sister sneered at her for her chosen outfit.

"You couldn't have dressed up and made an effort? Are you trying to make us look poor?" her nasty tone fell over TangShi, igniting no response, because she refused to engage. Biting on her lower lip and turning her chin down as she looked over her clean and pressed dress. She had learned over the years to never talk back, never defend herself. It would pass quickly if she submitted to silence and let them say whatever they wanted without looking their way.

Her dress was a basic and long classic style, one of her favorites. She had never been given any kind of allowance by her father to indulge in personal things, so all she owned she had to buy for herself. Clothes of decent quality were not cheap, and she tried to spend a little more to buy things that would last. The dress wasn't that bad. A stark contrast to her designer clad sister who was blinged out and looked ready to walk a runway.

She had been selling her art in the form of prints for a number of years online, and it afforded her small luxuries. This dress was not the cheapest, it was a good quality fabric in a nice timeless cut, but compared to her female kin, she looked like the poor relative. It was not flashy, provocative, or gave an impression of being a daughter of Lei. It wasn't this seasons style or a named brand, it wasn't even a trending colour.

Her hair was pulled back into a simple ponytail today, with delicate dark brown curled tendrils framing her face. Revealing a pure expression with bare hints of makeup and rosy lips. TangShi always liked to stay natural, as she felt it was when she looked her best, but it only seemed to anger her father who turned his attention to her. Pulled by his daughter's criticism as he appraised her outfit, he barely gave two glances when she came down here so hadn't noticed.

"You should have told me you needed a dress for this. I can't have you mocking our family by dressing this way. It's too late to change but go get a shawl or something to cover up. Juefeng find her something of yours, quickly." he clapped his hands together, urging Juefeng to jump to it, and she knew better than to argue with him. He was a bad mooded man, quick to flash tempers and even Juefeng was wary despite being often indulged by him. TangShi's father had no qualms about hitting the women in his life.

Juefeng rolled her eyes, huffed at being ordered about, and ran off quickly for fear of igniting their fathers rage further. TangShi ignored the sizzling atmosphere, and the

angry tension aimed her way and focused on the marble floor instead. Counting down the minutes until this torture would be over.

The hallway was grand, wide, and well-lit by the large south facing windows across the front of the entranceway. If it wasn't for all her bad memories in this place, it would be a beautiful place to live. Grand and opulent with classy décor. Her family were rich enough to be important anyway.

Her nerves were already frayed as they stood here watching the clock tick slowly on. Their guests due at any second and her heart was thundering behind her rib cage in anticipation. Waiting for the first moments of meeting her fate and tying herself to the Leng family for the near future.

She had spent last night by herself after getting back here, browsing the internet for more confirmation that YuZhi might be Yoonie after all and gave up. Unable to take the pain in her heart any longer by stoking embers of unwanted memories. She had to forget that night, what his kiss and words had done to her soul. It was all a lie and maybe he just resembled him, and it was just a coincidence that he was so like him. Fate taunting her with her old scars. The chances of him being Yoonie, in a population the size of China was slim. Yoonie hadn't even met her in Shanghai, but in Beijing instead.

She often wondered what she did wrong in a previous life to attract so many bad things in her short years on this planet, and it had created a quiet personality who endured far more than any other would have. TangShi had been suppressed for so long that she no longer knew how to fight back or stand up for herself. She had become an accepting and empty shell who never spoke up about the mistreatment she received and instead graciously accepted it with little emotion. It was said she had been ground into a sense of nothingness and her heart no longer knew how to soar.

Like right now, waiting patiently to be sold off in the name of business. No thoughts to refuse because she knew her father would only make her living life worse than before. No real obvious reaction to it on the surface, as her feelings didn't matter. She always knew she was a prisoner in the family Lei, an object they would cash in on one day. What could she do if not obey?

She had nothing and nowhere to go that her father would not chase her down and punish her. Over the years he had no qualms in beating her, locking her in her room, or taking his anger out on her when he deemed it necessary. She was the family punching bag so many times in so many ways.

The doorbell rang loudly, and everyone jumped to attention, instant nervousness on show. Straightening postures, smoothing clothes, and plastering smiles on their faces as Juefeng came skidding back with empty hands. A look of disdain on her annoyingly pretty face. Her dark eyes glowing with mischief.,

"I had nothing" She sneered TangShi's way and shrugged to her father as way of an apology. A clear lie. She wanted TangShi to stand out and be embarrassed by her lack of showiness, her simple outfit that Juefeng deemed unworthy. She smirked to herself that she was dressed far more proactively and eye catching than her older sister. She wondered if the young master would fall in love with her on sight and beg to switch the two, although she had no intention of being tied down so young. She had her choice of men, but she still liked to have them chase her.

The butler opened the door and the Leng crowd of three was greeted warmly by the Lei family in all its glory. Standing to attention and eager to show their respects. An impressive presence as they crowded in the large opening and strolled inside like they owned the room around them. Each was intimidating in his own handsome way, clearly of the same family, and stood tall and strong despite differing ages.

TangShi was pushed to the rear by her stepmother, harshly elbowed back as they greeted the newcomers and led them in. Somehow, she found herself trailing behind like a servant and no one noticed her at all in the babble of chatter and greeting. A swift moving of bodies like a perfectly synchronized wave as her mother enthusiastically greeted them verbally.

TangShi was unable to get a glimpse properly and treated as an unwanted guest in a house she had known as her home. Her parents pawed and fawned over the new arrivals and led them to the sitting room, ignoring her completely, where food and coffee was lavishly laid out for this meeting.

Juefeng was all over one of the men in the group before TangShi, grasping his arm and acting over provocatively and demure. Her shrill voice sounding babyish as she flirted, giggled loudly in a dramatic way at something he said, and her father threw her a cross look which left her scurrying to go sit down. It was obvious this was the betrothed and her sister was making a play for him in a bid to show how much more worthy she was than TangShi. She loved her little games.

TangShi meandered behind, sighing heavily at Juefeng 's obvious shamelessness, never able to behave in the presence of handsome men. Her sister disgusted her with her brazenness sometimes, but she would never verbalize it. Juefeng was a spoiled and narcissistic brat.

TangShi's eyes were trained on the floor as she was accustomed to doing when home and walked into the back of a suddenly halted dark figure by accident. Distracted with her own thoughts and foolishly clumsy to do such a silly thing. Banging her forehead against a solid mass that startled a reaction out of her.

"Ouch!" she muttered under her breath and stepped back in alarm, bowing slightly towards the person she collided with. An apology on her lips as heat overtook her face and sheer shame washed over her. Her cheeks flushing at her own clumsiness and knowing her father would go crazy at her for it.

“Stupid girl, go sit down” her father cursed her before she had a chance to speak at all, and upon lifting her chin was met with the icy cold snarl of her victim. He was turned her way in annoyance and frowning at her with piercing green eyes under furrowed brows.

It was YuZhi Leng, and this close, basking in the pale beauty of his eyes, a scowl formed on his chiseled lips which somehow enhanced his masculinity, she stopped breathing. It felt like the world stopped turning completely. Rabbit in the headlights or a defenseless small prey caught in the talons of a precise and experienced hunter.

His nearness, his familiar scent borne from old memories, and the way he towered over her in his strong form, scratching at forgotten interludes. Something about him pulled back the night of the dancefloor and cemented a visual of him eight years ago right there in her head. It had to be him.

This was more than just a similarity, or a thinking he shared small resemblances. His entire presence, the lordly aura of a rich master of a powerful family she had sensed that night, though never asked him about. His eyes eating through to her soul, under straight dark brows, that had once captured her across a dancefloor in the same way. That jawline that weakened her knees and made her almost sway in reaction back then, and again now, when faced in the flesh this way. She would never forget how she trembled in his presence when he approached her and stole the very breath from her lungs. Much like he was doing now.

“Can you go sit? I don’t like you being too close to me.” His frosty tone and unexpected harsh words made her blink back in shock. The unfriendly command piercing her heart, bumping her back to earth and reality, and she stammered for a second, as though she hadn’t heard him properly.

“Par... Pardon?” She acted like a clueless fool who had forgotten how to listen, and it only seemed to pull an angrier expression from him. Turning her blood cold and leaving her stricken with so many mixed emotions.

“Sit down, TangShi. Stop being foolish” her stepmother snapped, and TangShi was quick to remove herself and hurry to a nearby seat. Unable to continue to look him in the face as her embarrassment tinted her temples. Dazed at his words and complete rudeness.

The room became instantly quiet and tense as the butler began to dish out coffee to all those finding a comfy place to sit, and the older man of the three, leaned in with a smile. Looking like a king among mortal men and it was obvious he was used to having great power and command of all those around him.

The family Leng was known to be the number one wealthy family in China, with their fingers in so many enterprises, that they had built a formidable empire. Lei family was honored to become a connection in this way, so it was no surprise her father jumped at

the chance to strike this bargain with them. Compared to them TangShi's family were small fish with hardly any notable wealth.

"We shouldn't beat around the bush. We all know why we are here, and this is just the final formality to finally meet the young Miss to proceed. My grandson and your daughter are to be wed, provide an heir to our two families, and bring Leng and Lei under one roof. It is good that we were swift to agree and come to this outcome." The older man, with his greying hair and long distinguished beard, eyes twinkling under thick brows, was just as intimidating as his grandson, and the family resemblance was strong. TangShi glanced at him quickly. Unable to stop herself looking to YuZhi and meeting an angry frown which made her crumble.

He seemed to sense her wandering gaze his way and had counteracted with a haughty response of 'leave me alone'. She looked back down into her lap, blushing fiercely and unable to ignore YuZhi's dislike of her. He wasn't happy about this arrangement at all, and he seemingly had already decided he didn't like her. She was a burden to him and probably the source of many family disagreements behind closed doors before this meeting.

Disappointment flooded her heart that he didn't even seem to recognize her in the way she had him, or maybe he did. Maybe he had just toyed with her that night, and he didn't want to be bothered by her in this way. TangShi wondered if he too remembered anything that night, but his cold mood and piercing glare didn't tell her either way.

"Two years, right? A child to be conceived quickly and born before they can separate?" TangShi's father sounded overly excited as he tossed away his daughter's freedom, careless with her feelings. As though talking about the weather. This was the first she was hearing the details of what was expected of her, as he refused to discuss anything when she returned yesterday. It seemed she was not important enough even in the planning of her own life. She inwardly smirked and sneered at just how miserable her family made her.

She was sent to her room alone when she arrived, not even allowed to attend dinner at the family table last night. Such was her lowly position in this place. Only the servants had ever shown her any kind of compassion in the past and even now, most of them had been replaced over the years and she was mostly ignored by new ones. It seemed that any who had shown warmth to TangShi was chased out by Ava or Juefeng. They lived to make life as difficult as possible for her.

"Two years unless no child is born, in which case she will have to try harder. After two years, proving she has given YuZhi an heir, she shall be compensated and set free, and the child will be raised in the family of Leng. I expect quick results given her age and your reports showing her good health. I want a child as soon as possible. My grandson is twenty-six, he is not going to be young forever." The old man threw a disinterested look over Juefeng, then TangShi, sitting quietly off to one side, appraising her and nodded with satisfaction. He seemed to like the overall presentation of herself enough

to not refuse or mention her simple attire. Although he did gaze back at Juefeng for a long second and TangShi wondered if maybe she had an opportunity to be let go if they chose her sister instead. She hadn't allowed herself to really feel much of anything about this whole thing until now and was holding her breath in hopes she could get through this by some miracle and find a way out the other side.