

**Client's Original Plot Notes (8 pages) + collected emails + questions between ghost and client author**

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**Chapter 3**

2<sup>nd</sup> day : Sha and Mai join Amy and Viv for breakfast. Let's go to the mountain. Bar in the evening. He asks whether Vivianne wants to learn Mandarin. I'll pay for it, he says.

3<sup>rd</sup> : Some village where we do horse back riding, music show. Bar in the evening. He takes Vivianne's hand and steals a few kisses. Are you married? « I told Amy yesterday but she was too drunk to remember. »

**Chapter 6**

"He a very shweet man," Amy gushed, with a bit of drunken slur, after we'd gotten back to our room, She fell on her bed and then propped herself up with a pillow, while I realised I didn't know one thing from her.

"Which one? Sha or Qiu?" The room was swimming a bit, so I flopped down on my bed, and almost missed! We two were pitiful, drunk, after just two lousy beers, each! But then, those Chinese bottles of beer are huge.

"Sha Guang Xin, the boss. I think he really likes you, Viv."

"Really? Well, you decide whether we see them again or not tomorrow. It's all the same to me." My lie was so blatant I could almost hear a comic gag trumpet sound of wah-wah-wah in the background.

Gratefully, Amy didn't seem to notice. Wrong culture.

"Sha say he take ... he would take us to Jade Dragon Snow Mountain."

"Oh! So, it's not just for breakfast? Jade Mountain, you say? Hm. Sounds good," I added, thinking it would indeed be nice to be shown around, if for no other reason than we didn't have to pull out the travel guides, chose the buses by their fares and destination tours, and pick our own way around.

He knows his way around, doesn't he? Better than we do, anyway.

Plus, and it may sound cold but it's just practical, that he apparently has more cash to spend, than we do, evidenced by his going out with the boys to a restaurant and those imported western clothes he was wearing. If he spent even as much as twenty bucks on us for the day, it wasn't like he was a poor student or a guy with six kids over proud of his country, using up all his eating money just to show us hot women around.

He might not pay for us, and we had money, student money though, but he might pick up the tab (*it could be a business expense, this making new friends*), while impressing and showing the foreigner and her student friend around.

No. It's not lame and cheating, men pick up tabs all the time, even when they can't afford it—and you ladies and gents know that. My friend Dani, while in Austria once

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for the winter semester, spent the day with a traveling Army couple, who picked up said tab. They knew she was a student and challenged for cash. They paid for meals she would have scrimped on and she was good company in return; nothing sinister, it was just as if your big brother paid your way.

Or, maybe, Sha'll turn out to be a budding Chinese gangster and stiff us, just for the fun. Nah, I don't feel that's likely.

Real travellers find their own way, that's how we normally do it, but, maybe, we'll get a few good connections or something out of it, too. When you travel, sometimes you just wing it and we could drop the then outling of travel we'd made and were now too drunk to plan for tomorrow, when we could just wing it to elegant Mr. Sha's wind.

"So we go, ok, Viv?"

"You don't mind that you'll need to translate?"

"That's okay. He said I was 'an assistant to God'." I had started to doze off, but that remark jolted me right out of it.

"He said WHAT?"

"Because I picked that bar, I helped him meet you. He says you and him 'fated to meet'."

"And what does that mean?"

But Amy wasn't listening. She was busy texting Sha, confirming we'd meet him the next morning. His reply came nearly immediately.

"He say ... says he can not wait to see you again," read Amy, from her translation. She offered a bright smile, took off her glasses, and then squeaked out a long yawn and stretch. It was easy to see that she'd had enough of this day's unusual emotion and excitement. "Sweet dreams, Viv."

"You too." We were both still in most of our clothes from the bar.

I reclined in my bed, half asleep, until a thought popped my eyes wide open.

"My wish."

OMG! Oh, my god! I reached over for my camera. According to the time stamp, I'd made my wish at 8:08 pm. So, what's the bid deal? Eight is a hugely lucky number in China. Ooh! And eerier still was, the very next picture was of Sha, reciting his poem, to me. He looked great. He looked infatuated, too.

Okay, I may be starting to obsess.

*Don't let your imagination run wild, girl*, I scolded myself. Now isn't the time to ponder fate or wishes coming true. We had a big day ahead, with strangers in a strange land. So much could happen to a girl; a little adventure, a little granting of a wis—.

I turned out the light and curled up; I really needed my beauty sleep.

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## Chapter 37

### A Prelude to Adventures in Dating:

If it's not, it should be called "coming to a screeching halt"; falling in love—or falling in *strong* like—and then abruptly stopping and pulling out, or away. I felt attached to Sha, still, even after knowing about his wife and his child and his "no divorce."

Maybe it was because he'd paid me such a hefty sum, my "severance package," I didn't even have to work for awhile.

And, on some level, well, actually, on several levels, it's just embarrassing to have the solid earth ripped out from beneath my brand new, high style life. Embarrassed, not that I'd been a fool or truly played for one; but as if a part of me, so deep inside, a part of me that I hadn't known existed, had raised its misshapened head and shocked me to find it there.

I'd really been with a married man, some little girl's father....

That's not me. Or so I'd thought, as I settled into my new life in Beijing; after a quick note off to my folks and Danni.

"Deal off with Sha. On my own again, living near Amy, in Beijing. Love it here."

So, despite a tendency to obsess, just a bit, upon some things, I thought it best to forget luck, fortune, and deceptive wishes on a river and take matters more into my own hands.

Oh, and do remind me never to wish again for a "husband," since that was *exactly* what I got—another woman's husband.

Fate does have a wicked sense of humour.

I'm not burnt on Chinese men; but I want one of my own. There are one billion Chinese, right? And most of them are men; so, there has to be a few who speak English or who aren't *presently* married.

The Chinese take marriage seriously, even doing astrological charts before the wedding to see if the two individuals would make a good pair together.

Oddly, Sha and my combined chart shows we'd work well together, if we'd work on our problems; but that, I think, means he'd have to divorce that wife he says he's no longer interested in.

But, I don't need to think or care about that any longer.

There are online websites for love matches and matrimonial agencies all over Beijing, people to match you with a good mate, for those who are serious. I love China, it feels more like me and more home than Canada or anywhere else I've lived.

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I'm serious about my love affair with China and its people, as my online hits kept  
me busy, with my "Adventures in Dating," in the auspicious new year.

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## Chapter 46

February

I returned north to China from the Malaysian Peninsula, flying into Shanghai, on China's eastern seaside, for a few days, so I could meet face to face a Shanghai guy, from an online dating site.

Yes, I was getting back on the horse.

15 Feb.

Ting Ting, a.k.a. The **Correspondent**, Shanghai, China

Ting Ting interested me for both professional and personal reasons. He was cute, with a Woody Allen underdog kind of way about him. Unfortunately, though, I found that was a little too true.

He's **the top correspondent**, of a **regulations periodical**, having one occupied a **highly important oversight** position with the official **PRC (People's Republic of China) information broker**, before losing his job over his **"discordant views"** with higher management, concerning September 11, 2001's **information coverage of the** New York and Washington **DC bombings**.

As usual, I still don't know what is true and what's not about him, but our email exchanges were pretty convincing. He seemed sensitive, a bit intellectual, and a **writing** master in his own language, but not in the **difficult** world language of English.

And probably unhappy that he's not.

Ting Ting sent me a text message **to my mobile confirming** our lunch the next day, **and added the usual Chinese wish**.

"However, I hope to become your friend."

What does **"however"** and **"friend"** mean? We'd met online at a dating site. So, had he **suddenly** found a girlfriend since our last email exchange?

Not at all. **He had other issues, as his reply to my query about his girlfriend status cleared up**.

"He loves me very much."

**Hmm, okay, not so cleared up.** Our luncheon date **was promising** to be pleasant and full of misunderstandings.

It turned out that Ting Ting didn't write so badly in English, provided he had access to a **particular** translation tool. I reckoned, **making** the quality of his text messages average, but his spoken English a disaster.

We were supposed to meet at a subway exit.

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I was late, so I wanted to take a taxi and texted Ting Ting to text back to me our meeting spot, in Chinese, so I could show the driver the address. But, this simple request led to an incredible series of blunders, so great that the whole lunch hour went by and Ting Ting had to return to his office without us ever meeting face to face.

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Making it date number zero, I guess.

I then proposed, by text, to visit him at his office. Alas, ...

"the office, not allowed to enter frngs"

"Frngs"? What the hell?

Too bad! Still, half an hour later, he sent his full office contact details, and added: " Now i face your photo in dazing. Feeling great pain my eglish too bad"

Poor thing! Feeling compassionate, since my own Mandarin probably sounded ed similarly, I go there. And, indeed, "frngs" – foreigners! – cannot enter the building. Ah, communist sensitivity is still prevalent, despite their slipping deep into capitalism and consumerism.

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So, I sat in a little cafe with no name, almost just in front of the building, and notified Ting Ting by SMS text where I was.

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Again, a series of misunderstandings!!!

He sends a final message: "I deside to give up, sorry"

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Well, me too, I'd had enough.

I believe Ting Ting must have felt that he'd utterly lost face, at least as a journalist, who need to be clever and resourceful to work through obstacles to people, in order to get their stories. And to communicate, clearly.

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Indeed, as far as resourcefulness goes, a big zero here. Not to mention communication. Wait, I just did.

Too bad! I tried to enlist the help of the waitress in the cafe. But, the idiot woman refused to take my mobile in her hands, and I had to stick my phone to her ear, for her to help me, as I spoke to her and her to him, explaining my whereabouts. At least, I'd presumed that Ting Ting would eventually ask her who she was, and then she could explain where she was. With me. Across from his place of business.

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I guess he didn't.

To top it off, the restaurant's cashier tried to grossly overcharge me on my (yucky) meal. Actually, I had just wanted to order a drink while waiting for Ting Ting, but I never could find the section in the menu. When I gestured I wanted to drink, the waitress brought me a glass of hot water.

I ended up pointing to a dish that was the only thing that appeared edible based on the menu pictures.

Dear Ting Ting was very Chinese in the matter, meaning that since he couldn't get his communications right – despite being fluent and erudite in Mandarin, and probably Cantonese, too – but not his English, he'd lost face with me and so he couldn't show his face to me.

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So, no meeting cute and intelligent Ting Ting face to face and no date, either, just a stomach ache.

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## Chapter 67

I think, perhaps, my friends are psychic to certain things. Guess who sent messages for me to read first thing in the morning, after I arose from the long, muscular arms of male beauty and sweetness? Amy, Danni, and Sha Guang Xin.

"You home soon? You and Andrew sleep together? Was it good? Say it better than that too much money not enough love Sha with his lap dog Qiu Mai hanging around outside your door."

—Amy

"I had a dream that you were riding a horse, cher, and that it was black haired and beautiful—and looked like your guy Andrew's pic.

"Then a gopher suddenly popped out of the desert floor trying to frighten your horse, well, you off your Andrew horse. The gopher was wearing some expensive sporty wear, and he had a happy squirrel sidekick that never left his side.

"But, you kept riding cause you were really having fun on that horse. So, how was he?"

—Danni

"Lali, I miss you. I know you having exquisite enjoyment on your tour but forget not your decision to make to be mother of my boys. They will be beautiful with your green jade eyes. Such good luck!"

—Sha

I didn't answer anybody, as Andrew and I danced around each other getting dressed and out for breakfast. There was nothing to talk about, yet, not with my girlfriends, and certainly not with Guang Xin. Plus, we didn't have time at the present, while still on the tour's schedule.

He'd told me something highly important and I'd, we'd found comfort in each other and moved to the next level of friendship.

At breakfast, I shot off brief answers to everyone.

"Life is like business, Sha. I have more than one decision to make, especially with such a large matter. My time's not up. Be patient, please."

"Danni, you're a Creole Voodoo witch! He's wonderful!"

"Amy, what can I say? An elegant-minded man of literature, who makes me tingly and breathless, has tons of money, and you don't like much. Or a gorgeous, sweetie with decent money but he'll both have to work, and he's.... I'll tell you after I get back tonight, sweetie."

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We were back on the bus and the tour guide was more disorganized than she'd been the whole weekend. It was like she'd unravelled. She constantly had to borrow a pen from people, because she didn't have one. Then, she made us wait for another bus after lunch because she didn't have enough money to pay the road tolls.

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We stopped for our last special destination and went camel riding.

### Camels.

It was great, riding, well, lurching backward and forward, on the gangly, noisy, and smelly beasts. I felt very French Foreign Legion, though, and Andrew was in a very happy mood – so was I. He even looked younger, brighter, as if a darkness he'd held inside was gone now, leaving him lit up from within with happiness.

I hoped I was that happiness; which sounds greedy, I know, with my two men, but I didn't care. Neither would you, not when that contented.

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And so there was nothing else to complain about on our weekend, which seemed longer, tour trip; except that our tour was coming to an end and that there would be no more lying warm and cozy in a twin bed, in the middle of nomad nowhere, with two someones down the hall arguing in the hall in Cantonese versus Arabic.

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### End of the road.

Our return to BJ took twelve hours, that's half a day (instead of normal five to six hours), because of traffic; it was a long Chinese holiday weekend. After a few hours of our extended road trip back, our unravelling tour guide gave up entertaining and informing us and handed her microphone to anyone who was willing to sing.

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We became a loud Karaoke on Wheels. Terrible!

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Why do Asians – I know that's generalizing, but the Chinese and the Japanese seem to almost all really love karaoke *so damn much!* And I see and hear no reason for the off-key madness that it is. Maybe it's because these cultures have put so much gravity into doing their duty to long dead family, to knowing their place and staying in it, and never losing face and humiliating themselves.

Except in karaoke, where all bets are off and it's okay to be silly, inappropriate, and a star on stage, who doesn't need to worry about the family name for five minutes of their performance. But, we actually did have one really good singer from Cairo. Hm.

And, no, we did not sing. What can you do with Singaporeans and French Canadians who travel together, arrive late and won't screech through karaoke? Not much. The weekend was over, no one cared anymore, as we all waved goodbye and went on to our next adventures.

\*\*\*

Andrew and I got back to my place and two things happened:

He looked down at me and said this, "Vivianne, will move in with me, as soon as possible in Singapore?" He then joked about giving me at least five or ten minutes to throw away my urine shoes, before I needed to answer, as threw his stuff by the sofa, not assuming fully that we'd sleep together overnight. His plane home was in the morning.

I picked up his bag and took it into my bedroom, and checked messages, while he dumped my shoes to the flat bin outside.

And a message burned up my voicemail from Amy:

▲ "Viv, I make mistake! Sha call me. Asking many question about you and your 'handsome friend.'

▲ "I sick of his questions and..."

▲ "I stupid, say bad ... wrong thing, that Andrew your boyfriend, and better than dirty old man with too much money and wife, treat you like..."

▲ "Sha real quiet and hung up on me. I greatly sorry."

▲ -Amy

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