As Romantic as her mother liked to make it sound, studying abroad was much more of a baleful obligation than the wonderful opportunity that she had been promised.

Zhen Chen, Nian, had always been an excellent student—perpetually looking towards each new opportunity from the top of every class. She worked diligently in her assignments, studied voraciously, and had a natural affinity for language. She had won a less than modest amount of scholarships from her extracurricular activities and the various institutions from which she studied or took part in. With her perfect record and test scores, she could have had her pick of any university in China.

And if she’d had it her way, she would have done just that—picked a *Chinese* university. She never would have set foot on Western soil, if it hadn’t been for her mother.

Even from a young age, she had always thought of America (and by extension, most of the Western countries, but America especially so) as somewhat superfluous and wasteful when compared to her homeland. Always a proud and studious child, even in primary school, she had bristled at the thought of needing to pick out an “English name” so that the Westerners would be able to address her. It made no sense that *she*—who spent hours in afterschool courses each week learning another language—had to change *her* name so that people who already spoke English would be able to pronounce it. And though many of her classmates warmed up to the Western countries as they grew older (after all, her philosophy was hardly the popular opinion on the matter) Nian was no less ecstatic that she was going to chase the setting sun across the horizon in Business Class than she would have been had her parents informed her that she would have been doing it by boat.

And of all the places she could have been sent—why, oh why, did it have to be a dialectic region?

“Hey~y!” the door to her dorm room opened with an accent that was like nails on a chalkboard, “You must be my roomie!”

“I must be.” The small Chinese woman managed a puckered smile as she wheeled in her luggage, “A pleasure.”

“Cool, cool…” the already present occupant said with an awkward smile before continuing, “I’m Kaycie! Are you… True?”

A derisive snort flared her flat nostrils—they had her rooming with a true blue American girl, didn’t they? Barely twenty years old and she was already bigger around the hips than most Chinese women could have ever dreaded to become.

“My name is Chen Zheng, Nian—my American name is Trieu.” She said with a forced, but no less appropriate, smile as she extended one hand from her carry-on to shake Kaycie’s hand, “It’s nice to meet you.”

She had picked the name for several reasons—not the least of which was that it had been the name of one of her favorite historical figures. Lady Trieu, of Vietnamese history, had been her first choice in choosing a meaningful name that would still present herself as strong and capable in the face of opposition. Opposition in this case being the invading Western world and its cultures, rather than the invading Chinese army in pre-colonization Vietnam. If she was going to call herself by another name, it might as well have been one that she respected.

But hearing it mangled by that southern accent, she found herself appalled.

“Alright then—that’s a pretty name!” the pair of hams stacked underneath a spare tire said with a smile, “Trieu—like true!”

“Yes.” Trieu grumbled a bit under her breath, “Now… if you don’t mind?”

“Right! Right, you’ve probably had a really long flight.” Kaycie said with a smile, “Jetlag and all that.”

“Which room have you picked for yourself?” Trieu offered with a vague gesture of her hand, “I would hate to intrude, of course.”

“Right, I took the one on the left, so that means—”

“The one in the West. Of course.” Trieu’s tiny hands white-knuckled the handle of her suitcases, “Of course I get the west room…”

★

In her days at a prestigious school that had catered to her and many of her other home town’s gifted, affluent students, Trieu had roomed with six other girls since the age of thirteen. While she’d had her own room back in the spacious apartment that her parents owned, she had never truly been able to enjoy it. During the brief instances she was home—holidays, long weekends, and the like—she was always hunched over one surface or the other studying or practicing… *something* that had gotten her to where she was today. She barely had the time to make any sort of attachment to her surroundings, let alone relax with her future looming just out of reach overhead.

She hadn’t collapsed onto a bed in *years*.

It felt good—the western style mattress allowing her tiny shape to sink deep into its fluffy white contours. It had been the one thing that she’d admit, begrudgingly, that she preferred over the traditional Eastern way of doing things. A nice, soft bed to come home to was infinitely more inviting than the tiny cot that had awaited her after a long day of toiling away at school, or even the full-sized slab that had been her sleeping arrangements at home.

*Some* things, she supposed, the Americans knew how to do right.

Letting out a low groan, she pressed her aching back against the pillows, unwilling to get up. After the four flights it took to get to literally the furthest point she could get from home and an unbearable taxi ride (here they called them Ubers) it was all she could do but to keep herself from falling asleep right then and there. Not even snuggled up—just knees bent at the foot and arms spread wide across the berth of her new, infinitely more comfortable bed…

Unfortunately—she had other things to do. Like unpacking.

And messaging her mother—she supposed that there was no reason that WeChat shouldn’t work over here, in America…

She hadn’t brought much with her—she didn’t need much. Her favorite outfits (she’d been happy to leave that ugly school uniform behind) and some personal affectations took up the most space in her checked baggage. Three favorite books, all in Chinese naturally, and her freshly replenished arsenal of makeup made up most of her carry-on. She thought it almost unfeminine of her to not pack to excess as her mother had suggested but, in all honesty, Trieu had never quite seen the point in such sentimentality. She was going to get more clothes, she was going to buy more makeup, and before she had opened the door and seen that bloated brunette standing in the doorway with that cat-yowl southern accent, she had *almost* fooled herself into thinking that she would make some decent memories here in South Carolina that she could take home with her.

Of all the territories in this stupid country, she couldn’t have been put in someplace like L.A. Somewhere where all of the Americans were beautiful, and the scenery was gorgeous. Instead, the people were fat, lazy, and had backsides as wide as woks on each cheek. From the fat lot of locals she’d squeezed herself through at the changeover from Atlanta to Greenville, it was clear that Kaycie was far from the only fat-bellied American that she’d be having to deal with during her internment overseas.

Of course, it didn’t matter *where* she graduated from, so long as her undergraduate degree was from America. That was the big selling point of her Foreign Law degree—that she had studied somewhere foreign. And with how important America was to foreign relations, Trieu never stood a chance of going anywhere else.

Not even Canada—America’s more polite older sister.

How her mother had let her talk her into coming *here,* of all places, she couldn’t understand.

★

For the first two days into her expatriate experience, Trieu spent almost the entirety of it pouting in her own tiny section of the dorm room. It may have been small, but it was a far sight better than having to board with five other girls. Aside from taking some time to get to know the campus by herself, Trieu spent a fair amount of time on her phone and reading through her favorite books. It wasn’t until the fourth day that she and her roommate, Kaycie, actually began to speak to one another on a more formal, friendly level.

As friendly as things got for Trieu, anyway.

“Hey, it’s True—”

“Not True.” Trieu corrected, “*Trieu.*”

“Right. Trieu.” Kaycie visibly clamored at the interruption, “I was gonna go get some breakfast at the CLC—you wanna come along?”

She had made the grievous error of not making sure that the coast was clear before she removed herself from her bedroom. Kaycie had just so happened to have been hanging out in the common area. She’d planted herself butt-down on that poor couch, still dressed in her pajamas. Trieu had always been a fan of short hair on women (though she’d never have shorn her silky black mane) but Kaycie’s messy brown bob was beginning to make her think otherwise.

In fact, looking at Kaycie was not something that instilled Trieu with a lot of confidence. Sitting down, her roommate’s thighs seemed that much wider as their weight spread across the cushions, bulging out from the heroic legs of her shorts to match with the fat belly that rolled out from underneath her shirt. She looked like a pork dumpling—or perhaps, just the pork.

“No, thank you.” Trieu said in a small, but stern voice, “I’m… not really hungry.”

And in that moment, looking at her roommate, it was true.

“Are you sure?” Kaycie pushed against the back of the couch and hoisted herself up to a standing position, “My friends aren’t gonna be able to make it, and I really don’t’ wanna go alone…”

“I really don’t—”

“Oh come *on*, we can get to know each other!” Kaycie said a bit more forcefully, no less vapid and chipper despite Trieu’s lack of enthusiasm, “We can even use my card to get in—{i}pleeeease{/i}?”

And in another lifetime, Trieu might have said no. She really didn’t care for breakfast in the first place—lots of Chinese children avoided the meal all together. Most mornings she had an apple and maybe a slice of fruit bread. The thought of such a small breakfast was obviously foreign to her new roommate but…

She *was* hungry. And she hadn’t eaten much since she’d gotten off of the plane. The rocking motions from the plane’s jetstream had stuck with her well into her past few nights, and she hadn’t slept well. Maybe getting some food in her would do her some good.

And Kaycie was right—they *were* going to be rooming together. It couldn’t hurt to get to know one another.

What was the harm?

★

The truth of the matter was that the University of South Carolina’s Upstate branch had many things to offer—not the least of which were a varied set of body types that ran the gamut from big to small. However, it was a little hard for Trieu to appreciate the variety of volumes that her fellow students provided while she was sitting across from literally the biggest ass that she’d ever seen.

Kaycie and Trieu couldn’t have been more different—as distinct as East and west, one might have said.

Trieu a small, almost birdy woman, perched across the wallowing sow that was her roommate. The truth of the matter was that while Kaycie was more than a little big, weighing in at around two hundred and twenty some-odd pounds that she *did* carry mostly in her lower half, it was Trieu’s shellshocked reaction to the amount of food that Kaycie could eat that had sent her down an especially critical path that morning in the CLC.

Pecking at her own modest breakfast and struggling to make small talk, Trieu had been granted plenty of opportunities to see how Kaycie managed to blow herself up so big. She ate like an ox, elbows on the table, cheeks bulging as bacon and eggs and cheese and grease and fat seemed to dribble from her puckered lips. No refinement, no sense of grace or elegance—that was an American for you!

“So Trieu—” Kaycie smacked her lips as she picked up what she called a ‘breakfast biscuit’ but looked more like a heart attack on bread, “—is this your first trip to America?”

“Yes.” Trieu answered curtly, her hands folded politely in her lap, “My mother and father are frequent travelers, but I’ve always been far too busy with my academics to join them.”

“Oh wow—you must be a great student.” Kaycie prattled on, taking a cheek-bulging bite, “I’ve never been out of the country either. My mom and Dad went to Mexico for their honeymoon, but that’s not really the same.”

“I thought Americans hated Mexico?”

“I mean…” Kaycie swallowed an uneasy look flashing on her face, “*Some* do, I guess.”

Watching this woman eat was like a car crash. Loud, gnashing and lots of bouncing. With every gaping bite Trieu couldn’t seem to pull herself away from the odd sort of spectacle that she was witnessing.

“I suppose that there’s at least *some* things that I got wrong about Americans.”

“I’m sorry?”

“I said, um…” Trieu glanced around narrow eyes widening as they traveled around the busy eatery in search of a distraction before finally settling on the small amount of debris that had settled on Kaycie’s fat, but small chest, “I said that you spilled a little, there.”

“Oh crap, you’re right.” Kaycie’s fleshy face creased at the double chin as she peered down onto her front, “I guess you’re gonna learn real quick that American food’s a bit messier than Chinese food. I don’t suppose rice can really stain.”

“Right.” Trieu said darkly, “I… had better get going.”

“Are you headed back to the dorm room? I need to get this into the washer—”

“No, I think I’m going to take a tour of the campus.” Trieu stood to her pitiful height, straight and stiff

“Okay, if you say so…” Kaycie smiled awkwardly, “I’ll, uh… see you later then!”

★

Rice doesn’t stain.

*Rice doesn’t stain.*

Honestly, when she thought about how much she already hated being here in the so-called Land of Opportunity, it didn’t measure up to how much she already detested her new roommate. What was it about Americans and their generalized notions about how everyone lived their lives? Why were they so pig-headed (and pig bodied!) that they couldn’t go one moment without making an ass out of themselves? Chinese people didn’t *just* eat rice, but what would she have known about proper portion sizes of *anything*, let alone someone else’s dietary habits?

Trieu had spent the whole day since then doing her best to avoid going back to her dorm room. She’d left all of her books back in her bedroom, and she didn’t exactly know what app to use to hail a taxi so she could go explore this particular Hell that she’d be calling home until she graduated.

Trieu just sort of wandered around campus until… well, a *particular* problem emerged. It wasn’t exactly home just yet, but there was only one toilet in America that she was willing to bring herself to sit on. She was just the same back home in China—albeit with a few more options that she felt comfortable with. It was either wet herself or go back to the dorm and brave her boorish broad-bootied roommate.

“Hello?” she asked as she opened the door, “Kaycie?”

The coast was clear. No sign of her pantload roommate anywhere. That big butt of hers was hard to miss, and Trieu was confident that she would have seen her coming. The common area was empty as could be, and there was a clear shot down the hall to their shared bathroom.

Stepping lightly on the cheap imitation hardwood, Trieu pitter-pattered across the floor with an arm extended outwards. She grabbed the door handle, so consumed with relieving her bladder that she hardly noticed the hissing sounds coming from inside, nor the steam rising from under the door.

Their shower had been a modest one—though surely one no less modest than the one she’d used back in No. 47 Middle—in that there was no partition or tub. There was simply a drain in the floor and a nozzle overhead. In a lot of ways, it was very much like the showers that she had become accustomed to back in her alma mater.

This allowed for a prime view of two ivory cushions, shiny and wet, as Kaycie West idled in the shower. From her profile view, Trieu could see the zaftig nature of her roommate’s shape—how *far* she stuck out from behind and how *round* her belly was as it hung low to her fuzzy brown crotch. Her skin was a healthy, rosy pink and reflected the bright white light against her supple curves as the water from the showerhead rolled right off of her enormous hips.

Her sagging belly gave way to Kaycie’s touch as she ran a washcloth over her ample girth, wriggling and bouncing noticeably as she washed.

“T-Trieu?!” the porcine American whipped around in a swift, wobbling motion as she made a vain attempt to cover herself, “Jesus Christ, you scared me!”

“I…” Trieu stared—{i}balked{/i}—at the sight of Kaycie’s fat, American shape glistening in the shower, “Um…”

“Can I get a little privacy here?!”

The smaller girl collected herself after a moment’s hesitation, the signals finally going from her brain to the rest of her body as she whipped into action. She covered her eyes and felt her way out of the bathroom while apologizing profusely—albeit in Chinese.

And as soon as she was back out into the hallway, Trieu leaned against the wall and slowly slid down, down, down to the floor.

She had seen *plenty* of other girls before in the shower. The students in China did everything together, up to and including taking showers. Over the course of her life, she supposed that she might have seen a hundred naked girls growing up.

But never—*never­*—had seeing any of them made her feel quite like this before.