

LORI WICK

BAMBOO  
& LACE



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## **BAMBOO AND LACE**

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# Chapter One



## Lhasa, Kashien May

Taking her usual shortcut through the trees, Lily Walsh slipped across the pathway on swift, silent feet. She wasn't in a hurry, but her long legs covered the ground in easy strides, and at the moment there was no reason to dawdle.

Ling-lei Chen's house was in sight just a moment later, and in less than a minute she was knocking on her door. Ling was like family, so Lily didn't wait to enter but slipped inside. She had just shut the door when a toddler and two older children came flying at her. Lily had hugs for five-year-old Hope and six-year-old Faith, but two-year-old Charity had lifted her arms into the air, begging to be held. Not able to resist, Lily pulled her into her arms.

"Hello," the children's mother greeted Lily as she came forward with Charity on her hip. The two women hugged.

"How are you?" Lily asked, knowing her friend was not feeling well during the early stages of her fourth pregnancy.

"I'm all right for the moment, but I'll probably eat the whole time you're here."

Lily only smiled, thinking that Ling could use every calorie. She was a minuscule woman with three active girls.

"Lily," Ling now asked, "has your father given any hints about Hawaii?"

"Not a one. I'm beginning to think he's told my brother no."

“Are you disappointed?”

Lily had to think about this.

“Now that you ask, I guess I don’t actually believe he’s told Jeff no.” The women’s eyes met. “When he does, I’ll be very disappointed.”

“So you think he will?”

“In my heart I do. I’m trying not to get my hopes up, but it’s hard not to.”

Ling desperately wanted to give her friend some hope.

“If it is no, maybe Jeff will come.”

“Maybe,” Lily said with a smile. This had crossed her mind, but she didn’t think it likely. “Let’s get started,” she said in an attempt to take her mind from her own worries.

Lily was teaching Ling-lei to read. Ling had married young and started a family within ten months of her wedding date, and unlike most village families, time had not been made for her education.

“Girls,” their mother said, and the children who had been playing on the floor at the women’s feet stood in a line to face her.

“Lily and I are going to the table to work now. You keep quiet.”

Little heads bobbed, even that of Charity, who was still little more than a baby. She naturally took her cue from her sisters.

After Ling had set tea out for both her and her guest—and a small bowl of thin crackers for her own unsettled stomach—they sat down with the book between them. *Stuart Little* was not what most people would have used to teach reading, but Lily knew that Ling would love the story and not find the words overwhelming. They picked up at chapter 12 where Stuart sets out on his journey. Ling smiled at the drawing of him in the tiny car after he was hired to be a substitute teacher.

“I’ll have to tell the children about this.”

“Read it to them,” Lily encouraged her.

Ling frowned. “I don’t do as well when you’re not listening.”

“Ling,” Lily said with a hand to her friend’s arm, “Faith is only six. None of the children will miss a wrong word now and again.”

"I could read them the entire book," Ling said. "From the beginning."

"I think you should."

Footsteps from without caused the women to stop, eyes lowered, as Lee Chen, Ling's husband, came in the door.

"I wondered if I would find you two together," he teased. Both women smiled. "How is the reading? Will you be much longer?"

Ling answered, although both women continued to keep their eyes lowered.

"We just started, but we can finish if you need something."

"Actually, I just saw Pastor Owen. He's looking for you, Lily."

Lily's eyes came briefly to her friend's, and the two women smiled.

"Thank you, Lee Chen," Lily said as she moved to bid the children goodbye. Usually she had time to play with them, and for a moment they looked confused at her departure.

"Is there bad news?" Ling asked of her husband when they were alone.

"I don't think so, but with Pastor Owen it's hard to say."

The Kashienese man looked at his wife.

"Look at me, Ling," he commanded quietly.

Ling did so without hesitation.

"Is she still hoping for word on visiting Jeff?"

Ling smiled into her husband's eyes before asking, "What do you think?"

Lee smiled back before the children headed their way. Ling once again lowered her eyes—out of habit, but also as an example to her daughters—and for the moment the subject of Lily's trip was dropped.



With its close proximity to Chinese, Japanese, and Taiwanese neighbors, Kashien was a small country whose existence had been battled over many times in the past. Since 1936, however, it had been free and independent. Some areas, mostly in the mountains,

were utterly behind the times, while others, like Capital City, were thriving, bustling places, full of modern conveniences and ways.

Lily Walsh had only heard about the past wars and unrest. Her life in the village had been one of tranquillity and peace, something she took for granted as she left the Chen home and made her way along the river toward the small house she shared with her father. The village of Lhasa, which sat high in the Katoose Mountains, was spread out on acres of terraced land. Lily gave sights that she'd seen since birth little notice as she thought about what her father might want. His looking for her in the middle of the morning meant neither good news nor bad, but it meant something.

"Lily," another friend called to her as she passed her field, "come for tea."

"My father is looking for me, Rika. Thank you, anyway."

Rika waved her off in understanding, and Lily kept on her way. Just a few more minutes passed till her house came into view, and Lily entered as she always did, eyes down with respect in case her father was at home. He was.

"Come in," he told her, his voice giving nothing away.

"Lee Chen told me you were looking for me."

"I was, yes. Were you and Ling having your lesson?"

"Yes," Lily spoke as she took the seat across the small living room from him. "She's over halfway through the book. We'll be going onto something more difficult very soon."

"Good."

Lily nodded, her eyes still lowered.

Owen Walsh was from Chicago, but since his wife, Cathleen, had died almost 12 years earlier, he had taken on more and more traits of those who lived in the village. Having been born there and only away from Kashien for six months as a little girl, Lily thought nothing of it.

"Don't be afraid to introduce her to something more challenging, Lily. Ling is a quick study."

"Yes, she is," Lily was swift to agree. "Although I think she's still working to understand that. Just today she figured out she could read *Stuart Little* to the girls. I was going to mention it to her a few weeks back, but I'm glad she came to it on her own."

"I've decided that you're going to visit Jeff."

Lily was so shocked by this announcement that she forgot herself. Her lids flew up so she could see her father's face. It was not a happy one.

Brow lowered in offense, Owen snapped his fingers loudly as Lily dropped her eyes.

"You forget yourself, Lily Cathleen," he said, a distinct chill in his tone.

"I'm sorry."

The room was quiet for a moment. Lily's joy over the news had been greatly dampened by her father's disapproval. She knew he would not cancel the trip. He wasn't spiteful, but he was a fanatic when it came to propriety in the village.

"Look at me, Lily," he commanded, his voice still a bit stern.

Lily would never have disobeyed such an order, but only years of training in keeping emotions from her face hid the turmoil inside.

"I know you are excited, but that is no excuse. There will be many exciting things in the months to come, but you must not forget yourself. You must not shame me. This is not a pleasure trip, Lily, but an educational one. I expect you to return to me full of knowledge and report on the things you learned. If this is not the plan, there is no reason for you to go."

Lily did not agree but kept her opinion to herself. She would work hard and learn a lot, of this she was certain, but she would mostly enjoy time with her brother and being a part of his world. Had she not made her father angry, she would have asked when she could go and for how long, but such questions would need to wait.

"Why don't you head to your room now and take some time to think on what your mindset needs to be when you go."

“Yes, Father.”

Lily rose and left on nearly silent feet. She slipped into her own bedroom, the cloth door covering falling back in place behind her. Her bed was a low wooden structure, just a foot off the floor, but Lily was used to sinking down to lie or sit on the village-made mattress. She sat on it now. She stared out the small window across from her and tried to be repentant. It didn't work. Knowing that her father took some things much too seriously, Lily grabbed her pillow so she could scream into it. She was going to see her brother! It was almost too good to be true.

*I didn't dare to hope, Lord. I wanted to but...* Lily couldn't go on. She had asked the Lord to let her go. She had petitioned Him many times, all the while working to accept whatever His will for her might be. A trip to Hawaii to be with Jeff sounded wonderful, but in truth, she wasn't God. She didn't know what might be awaiting her. As much as she wanted to see her only sibling, she didn't want to be in Hawaii unless God wanted her to be.

Lily suddenly came to her feet. She hadn't been in her room long at all. She found her father at the kitchen table and approached him as she would at any other time.

“I'm going for a run.”

Owen looked at her. He had meant what he said. He wanted her to think on this upcoming trip and to take it seriously. But looking into her face, even with her eyes down, he was reminded of what a wonderful daughter she was.

“Will you be back for lunch?”

“If I'm not, everything is ready in the cupboard.”

“Very good.”

Lily left silently, starting to run almost as soon as she was out the door. Her stride was smooth and graceful. Lily loved to run with all of her heart. It helped to clear her head, and often she prayed. She also slept better at night if she ran at some point during the day.

Her normal route took her up a small rise, and as she bent a little with plans to sprint to the top, she did what she always did:



thought of Jeff. She wondered if he might be running too. Had she stopped to think about the time difference, she might have had her answer. But even if her brother was asleep, Lily was talking to him.

*I'm coming, Jefferson. I don't know when and I don't know for how long, but Father said YES!*



"I made him cross, so he didn't tell me the details until evening prayer time, but I'm going as soon as I can book the flight."

"And for how long?" Ling-lei asked next.

"Three months. Jeff wanted me for six, but Father said three was enough."

Ling bit her lip in excitement and asked, "You'll write to me?"

"Yes, and after I do, you'll know my address and write back."

Ling looked at her.

"I'll miss you, but I wouldn't want you to stay."

"Thank you, Ling."

As the women embraced, the children came over, and for a time the five of them talked about Hawaii. Lily told them all she knew, and realized it wasn't much. She knew the facts and figures about the fiftieth state and even the layout of Jeff's apartment, but not much else. It didn't bother her, though. It was just a matter of time until she would have more to tell than she could imagine.



## August 31

The trip to Capital City from Lhasa had been long and hard enough, but nothing at all compared to what Lily's journey would be once she started flying. According to her itinerary, the flight from Capital City to Tokyo would take three hours and 15 minutes. She then had an unavoidable seven-hour layover. After that, the flight from Tokyo to Honolulu would take seven hours and 15 minutes. To top it off, the flight crossed the international date line, bringing even more confusion into the matter. Her body

would be telling her that twenty-four hours had passed, but the calendar and clock would show only 35 minutes elapsing.

Owen and Lily arrived in plenty of time to have something to eat and spend some time alone. Owen had been quiet for most of the time, and his daughter wondered if this trip was bothering him more than he let on. He hadn't even noticed that Lily had been carrying her own bag until they were inside the terminal.

"I can get it," Lily assured him when he tried to take it, but Owen took it from her anyway.

Not prepared for the weight, his entire right side sank down as he took the handle in his grasp. He looked at Lily to find her standing quite still. He set the bag down at his side and faced her squarely.

"Look at me, Lily," he said quietly.

She would have given anything to disobey. If she had to leave Kashien after one of her father's scowls, she didn't know what she would do. Always a little unpredictable, his mood swings had been off the chart since he had given her permission to leave: laughing and joking with her one day and utterly quiet the next.

Knowing she had no choice, Lily looked up.

"What's in this bag?"

"My books," she whispered.

Owen melted his daughter's heart by giving her a small, tender smile.

"So like your mother."

"Well, the flight from Tokyo is very long," she felt free to tell him, "and so is the layover. I can pick something up in Hawaii for the trip back, but I thought I needed plenty now."

"So these are just books to read on your trip there?" he asked, a slight tease in his voice.

Lily smiled. "Plus a few of my favorites."

Owen gave her an indulgent look, lifted her bag, and started down the corridor of the terminal. Lily easily kept pace with him and followed as he found the gate for her to check in. That done, he led them to seats in the waiting area. Lily glanced around at the

busy terminal, but Owen took out his newspaper and began to read.

From her place across from him, Lily took the opportunity to covertly study her father. He was not a young man. He had not met and married her mother—who had been much younger—until he was nearing his mid-forties. Jeff had been born to them when Owen was 45; Lily, four years later. Lily had just turned 24, making Owen 73. He didn't look or act old, but the sagging flesh around his face and neck and the full head of white hair did make him look more like her grandfather than her father.

While Lily was still thinking about her patriarch, Owen put the paper aside and tapped the seat next to him. Lily moved and, with her face in profile to him, began to listen to his instructions. Much of what he was saying—urging her to work hard and learn a great deal—he had said before, but his voice sounded tense now. Lily wished she could look into his eyes, but she didn't dare. She didn't know if she felt rescued or cheated when they called her flight, effectively cutting her father off.

Lily stood, feeling the separation for the first time and not knowing quite how to handle it. She stole a peek at her father, but he was looking stern, so Lily dropped her eyes.

"Thank you for bringing me, Father."

This said, Lily lifted her own bag and moved into line. Her face was as calm and serene as though she were home resting in the village, but inside she was suddenly afraid. What if she never saw him again? What if he never wanted her to leave but couldn't find the way to tell her?

Lily's tumultuous thoughts halted when she realized he had come to the line with her. Even risking his wrath, she stole a look at his face. For the first time in years their eyes held.

"Take care of yourself," he said quietly, speaking to her for the first time in English. "Give Jeff my love."

Lily smiled up at him with such relief that Owen hugged her. "Come back to me, Lily," he whispered into her ear.

"I will, Papa," she whispered back and watched as he slipped away into the crowd.

Heart pounding again, she turned back to see that only 20 people stood between her and the portal that led to the plane. She held her boarding pass outside her bag and noticed that it shook a little. She remembered little about her only other flight and honestly didn't know what to expect this time.

A glance behind her brought no sign of her father, so she assumed he had gone on his way. Lily felt slightly let down over this, but thought it might be best. At the moment she was having second thoughts.

Suddenly it was time to hand over her boarding pass. Lily did so, not aware that the kind smile of the airline worker stemmed from what she saw on Lily's pale face. Lily walked aboard, found her seat, and settled in. Before she was ready, the plane was taxiing down the runway and lifting into the air. It occurred to her as the aircraft jetted into the sky—with a good deal of noise and movement—that she didn't really want to do this. However, it was much too late to turn back.



## Honolulu, Hawaii

In the morning bustle of the airport, Jefferson Walsh watched passengers emerge from the customs area, his eyes scanning each one. He thought it odd that Lily had not appeared. He knew she would pack light and could only hope there was no problem with her passport.

He was getting ready to ask the security guard at the door about going in to have a look around when he spotted her. Standing out of the flow of traffic, eyes down, bag at her feet, she did not look up as Jeff approached.

"Excuse me," he began, "I'm looking for a slim woman with dark hair and green eyes. Have you seen anyone like that?"

"Oh, Jeff," she whispered just before his arms came around her.

Not given to tears, Lily was amazed at how much she wanted to cry. Having slept little in 24 hours probably didn't help, but seeing her brother for the first time in three years was also a major factor.

"How are you?" Jeff asked and watched her keep her eyes down as she answered.

"I'm all right. The flight was long."

"Look at me, Lily."

His voice was so like her father's that it startled her.

Jeff waited until her eyes came to his and then shook his head. Her eyes, nearly black with fatigue, stood out all the more against her pale features. Jeff lifted her bag, put a hand to her upper arm, and started to lead her down the corridor.

"We have a number of things to work on, the first being that you're not going to lower your eyes for the next three months. But before we do that, you need some sleep."

Jeff glanced down to see Lily nod, but as he expected, her lids were down so she would not meet the eyes of any man. Jeff could only shake his head. It might take awhile, but before he was done, his sister would be stuck having to completely retrain herself when she got back to Kashien.



Lily woke slowly, her head fuzzy and disoriented. The pillow was soft against her cheek, and the mattress was so comfortable that she never wanted to move. She lay facing the wall, her gaze taking in a white blur. The sound of something mechanical suddenly came to her ears, and a cool breeze blew over her.

Lily's eyes opened fully, and she smiled as she rolled to her back.

"This is your bedroom" had been Jeff's words when he had brought her into his second-floor apartment and directly to the room where he told her she could sleep as long as she liked. It wasn't fancy, but Lily didn't have painted walls at home, so

reaching out and touching their smooth white surface was a delight.

Lily was still touching the wall and trying to make herself move when she heard the door open. Jeff peeked in and then swung the door open wide.

"I wondered if you were ever going to get up," he teased.

"How long have I been asleep?"

"Almost six hours."

"Oh, my," Lily said as she tried to sit up. Her back was stiff, and she couldn't get one foot out of the sheet.

Her brother laughed at her and turned away.

"I've got something for you to eat when you feel like it."

"Thank you. Jeff?"

"Yeah?"

"Where is the bathroom?"

"Out your door and to the left."

"In the apartment or out?"

"In."

"Okay."

Lily hurried that way but came to a complete stop when she got there. Having gone to Capital City with her father over the years, she had certainly seen indoor bathrooms with flush toilets, showers, and tubs in them, but this was Jeff's. It was clean and white and shiny with dark green towels that looked soft, but it was more than that. It was her brother's bathroom, and he was family. She could use it all she wanted for the next three months.

"Are you all right?" Jeff had come to the door that Lily hadn't even bothered to shut.

She turned to him and smiled, her eyes meeting his for only a moment.

Knowing that her pleasure would be hard to explain, Lily said only, "I'm just fine," before she shut the door to make use of the facility.