

---

TRUTH AFTER ABUSE

# *The Dream I Was Sold*

---

*Chapter Three: The First Meeting*

**Loraine Marshall**

A free chapter from the memoir

## **A note before you read**

---

I wrote this chapter about a lunch date in 2009. At the time I thought I had met someone remarkable. I had - just not the way I meant.

What I didn't have in 2009 was a framework for understanding what I was experiencing. The term "love bombing" barely existed in mainstream conversation. Coercive control would not enter English and Welsh law for another six years. I was working with the experiences I had already lived. I had a good heart, a trusting nature, and a grief that made me more open than I should have been.

I share this chapter because so many women have told me that reading it was the first time that they felt truly understood. That they recognised the lunch. The list. The careful performance of honesty. The feeling of being seen. Before realising that you were being read.

If any of this resonates, you are not alone.  
And it was not your fault.

Lorraine Marshall 2026

## Chapter Three - The First Meeting

He was everything I had written on that piece of paper.

I need you to sit with that for a moment before we go any further. Not almost everything. Not most of it. Every quality I had written down on that piece of A4 paper, late at night in my office in Sunderland, found its apparent reflection in the man sitting across the lunch table from me in March 2009, a week or so after my forty-eighth birthday.

Kind. Generous. Confident but not overpowering. Someone to laugh with. In business for himself. A strong man. He even used the term himself, alpha male, with the relaxed certainty of someone who had said it many times before and never been challenged on it.

I noted it. I moved past it. I was, after all, impressed.

I know the word for what I was experiencing now. It's called love bombing: the careful, calibrated warmth of someone who has learned to become whatever the person opposite them needs to see. It doesn't feel manufactured because the best performers don't experience it that way either. What they cannot sustain is the second act. Or the third. Or the eleventh year.

But in March 2009, there was only the first act. And it was, I will give him that, a very convincing performance.

I had done my research before we met. He had told me to, which I found reassuring at the time, and find considerably more interesting now.

He suggested I look him up, do my due diligence, tell a friend where I was going and when. Sensible advice. Caring, even. What I have come to understand is that a man who tells you exactly where to look has already decided what you'll find. He was managing the discovery before we had even spoken in person. Giving me just enough to feel informed. Not enough to feel alarmed.

I put his name into Google and found his business profile. But I kept going, I always do, and within a few more clicks I found him back on Informed Consent, the site where we had first connected. His profile was still active.

So was another profile. His wife's.

She called herself Slave Tsina.

I sat on my bed with my laptop, reading her profile with a mixture of shock and something I can only describe as morbid fascination. She wrote openly about their relationship, a dynamic that included a ceremony known as collaring, a formal ritual within the BDSM world signifying ownership and commitment between a

dominant and a submissive partner. It was, to put it plainly, a great deal more than I had bargained for when I typed his name into a search engine.

He was, it turned out, still married.

I thought about cancelling the lunch date. I didn't. I want to be honest about that, the way I am trying to be honest about everything in this book. I still wanted to meet him. Something - curiosity, loneliness, the particular stubbornness of a woman who has already committed to a thing, kept me going. I decided I wouldn't mention what I had found. I would simply meet him and see.

Now I realise that this is a red flag. Overlapping relationships, starting a new relationship before the current one has closed out. A repeating pattern. What he told me over lunch, voluntarily, was this: yes, he was still married, but the relationship was over. She had moved out. He was on his own now. His birthday was in February, just a few weeks before mine, and he had spent it alone. He was honest with me, he said. He believed in honesty.

I want to be precise here because the timeline matters. She was not the mother of his two sons — that had been a marriage of eighteen or more years, long since over. He had told me about that relationship over lunch with the measured candour of a man performing

honesty. He had been, he said, a serial adulterer throughout that marriage. He said it plainly, without apparent shame. He offered it as confession, as evidence of his openness, as proof that he was the kind of man who told the truth.

I was impressed by his honesty.

I have written that sentence before in this book and I will likely write it again, because it is the sentence that contains everything I didn't yet know how to see. What he was doing, I understand now, was not confession. It was calibration. He was placing information in front of me, specifically, damaging information about himself, and watching to see what I would do with it. How much I would absorb. How much I would rationalise. How much runway he had.

Slave Tsina was wife number two or maybe number three, the relationship that followed the divorce. They had been together three years, married for six months, when I met him. He told me over lunch that she had moved out, that it was over, that he was navigating the divorce.

I believed him. I had no reason not to. He seemed, in every visible way, to be a man in transition. Starting again. Being honest about his past. Doing the work.

What I could not have known, sitting in that restaurant in March 2009, was that the cast of this story was already larger than I could see. That there were women in his past whose stories rhymed uncomfortably with mine. That there were, already, shadows at the edges of the picture he was painting, details that would only come into focus years later, some of them delivered to me directly, by the women themselves.

But that is not this chapter.

This chapter is the beginning. The lunch. The easy conversation. The man who seemed to have arrived, improbably and perfectly, in answer to a list I had written alone in my office two months earlier.

He also told me, matter-of-factly, that he had diabetes and Crohn's disease. His body, he explained, had been significantly affected. The functioning alcoholism came later.

I forgot to write *healthy* on my list. Healthy in body, in mind, in spirit. I know now that wasn't carelessness. I simply didn't know yet that those things needed to be said out loud, that wholeness in a partner had to be named explicitly or the universe — or men who read women like open books — would find the gap and fill it with something else entirely.

I went home that afternoon thinking I had met someone remarkable.

I had. Just not in the way I meant.

I didn't know that. I had no framework for red flags in 2009. The term barely existed in mainstream conversation, and coercive control would not enter English and Welsh law for another six years. I was working with the experiences I had already lived. I had a good heart, a trusting nature, and a grief that had made me, without my knowledge, more open than I should have been.

He also told me, that first afternoon, that he had diabetes, which had significantly altered his life, and Crohn's disease. His body, he explained matter-of-factly, was not entirely well. The functioning alcoholism came out later.

I wrote on my list that I wanted a kind and generous man. I forgot to write that I wanted a healthy one, healthy in body, in mind, in spirit. I know now that the omission wasn't careless. I simply didn't know yet that those things needed to be included in my list on What Type of Man?.

---

***A note I want to add here, from 2026.***

*His previous wife, Slave Tsina or Jenny, may well have read my first book. He told a court that she was the person who reported it to Amazon, the complaint that effectively buried its visibility. I don't know if that's true. What I do know is that he is a man who lies with great fluency, who manages people's perceptions as naturally as breathing, and who had been doing both long before he met me. If she did read it, I hold no anger toward her.*

---

She was, in all likelihood, navigating the same web I was, just from a different position inside it.

We were not enemies. We were just two women who had trusted the same man.

Loraine Marshall

---

**Want to read what happens next?**

The full memoir is coming. Join a community of women rebuilding their lives after Divorce, Death, or Discard, and be the first to know when it is available.

**After The 3 Ds - Rebuilding Your Life Your Way.**

[truthafterabuse.com](http://truthafterabuse.com)

[1:1 Mentoring with Loraine](#)