

The Plan
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By: J.T. Lozano

J.T. Lozano is a writer of Psychological Horror and Thriller stories. He has been writing since 2010 and has amassed a total of seven published books along with some works in anthologies. J.T. writes poetry occasionally as a way of dealing with whatever is going on in the world. Besides writing stories and poetry he enjoys staying home and watching television with his fiancé, mainly shows about the paranormal. J.T. joined the "Let's Write A Story" team to showcase a small sample of his writing style in hopes of gaining new friends, fans, and readers for his works.

The flashing lights subsided as quickly as they began, and Forest pushed the door open. He stepped through and looked back at Mary who was uncertain of what to expect on the other side. Cautiously her head poked out, followed slowly by the rest of her body. Mary's eyes scanned the room as she exited what she believed was her closet.

"This isn't my house," she muttered to herself.

"Of course it isn't," replied Forest to her surprise. Mary was certain she had whispered her comment to herself. "I told you we needed to come to Cine El Rey, so here we are." Mary looked back as the door closed and noticed they had come out of a janitor's closet. Her lips trembled as she fought to get some words out.

"I don't have time to explain it to you right now. Come on, we are already running behind schedule," Forest said as he checked his watch. Grabbing Mary's wrist, he rushed her into the theater.

Before Mary could ask anything, Forest took her to the darkest corner and pressed his index finger up against his lips. He then pointed towards the theater door and very faintly whispered. "Don't make a sound. Just watch and listen."

As her back pressed against the wall, Mary was flooded with memories of coming to this majestic theater with Sylvia and other friends on several occasions. It was in this very theater she attended rock concerts. She remembered laughing on Wednesday nights while she listened to comedians like Mario "Superstar" Salazar, Mark Mayhem, Freddy G, and many others. Her smile widened at the thought of watching live wrestling with great athletes like Shooter Roberts, putting their bodies on the line to entertain the crowd. This place held many memories for Mary, and she hoped to be able to come back someday and make many more.

Her eyes stared at the theater door they had just walked through and within seconds it burst open. Jing Liu walked in and following her was Michael. Jing Liu was obviously agitated, and Michael was in a foul mood.

"What do you mean you can't find it?" Michael practically screamed at Jing Liu.

"I mean it isn't where I had last seen it."

"Well, we need the Golden Sassafras, Jing Liu. Without it we can't put our plan into action."

"I know that, but what do you want me to do? Elly doesn't have it and she obviously doesn't know where it is. If she did, she'd have told me."

“Yeah, well, now there isn’t a way to find out if she was lying to us or not.”

“Hey, you were the one who kept pushing her. I told you to back off a bit, but you didn’t listen. I told you her heart wasn’t strong, but you just had to keep pushing until it nearly gave out. Now that she’s under the watchful eye of her physician, we can’t get close.”

“Look, it isn’t doing us any good to be here bickering with each other. Is there anyone else who might know the location of the Golden Sassafras?” Michael asked as he strained to calm down.

Jing Liu thought for a moment then she looked at Michael and grinned. “Yes, there is someone, Sylvia. How could I forget? She was also with us the day we were given the Golden Sassafras. She and Mary. One of them is bound to have it.”

“Ok, I know where Mary is thanks to my sweet, naïve, and gullible Vanessa. Or Mrs. Vargas as she is known around here.”

“Luckily for us, they both happen to still be living here in the Valley, but I’m not exactly sure where Sylvia is. It might take me a while to find her, but I swear I will. Sylvia would be the most likely to have it. I say we go after her first; besides I never really liked her. Mary was a little more tolerable.” Jing Liu said with a snicker.

“Hurry up and find her. In the meantime, I’ll keep playing nice with Vanessa in order to keep tabs on Mary. Who knows, Vanessa might be useful in more than one way,” Michael grinned as he spoke. The gleam in his eyes and the way his teeth bared when he smiled sent an uneasy feeling throughout Mary’s body.

“I like the way your devious mind works, Michael,” Jing Liu commented with a wide smile. “Use them and toss them, that’s what I always say.”

“Let’s just find the Golden Sassafras as quickly as possible. Once we get it, we can unleash this virus into the world. We will have the only cure, and everyone will be at our mercy. They will have no choice but to pay our price.”

“Are you sure that setting things off in China first is the best way? Couldn’t we just set it off in every corner of the world at once?”

“A tsunami begins with a small ripple in the water,” Michael said as he smiled and walked out of the room. Jing Liu stayed behind for a moment before she followed him and left the theater as well.

“I can’t believe what I just heard,” Mary said dumbfounded as she stepped out of the darkness. “It was all some scheme for what, money? Oh my, Mrs. Vargas, she doesn’t know about Michael. I must tell her.”

“You can’t tell her anything about what you just saw and heard,” shouted Forest. “You can’t tell anyone.”

“Fine,” Mary huffed. “What can I do to keep this from getting started?” Mary was about to walk out of the theater when she turned to Forest. “Wait a minute, *when* are we?” she asked, wondering if she was in a moment before the virus had gripped the world and flipped it on its head.

“We are in September of 2019. Exactly one month before the first case sees the light of day.”

“So, what we do from here on out determines if this wildfire burns out of control?”

“Hopefully it won’t burn at all,” responds Forest with a nervous smile.

He walked out of the theater with Mary following close behind.