

Your Guise 1011

Chapter 1011

Pearl didn't expect to see Silas there.

"Surprised to see me?" Silas looked dashing in his refined suit, his demeanor exuding nobility and elegance.

"Well, you must have a reason for being here," Pearl replied calmly. As they spoke, she distributed the dessert and coffee to the nearby employees.

"Yes, I do." Silas moved closer to her and whispered, "I came for you."

Pearl felt a shiver run through her but tried to compose herself. "I'm not sure what you're trying to achieve, but there's no need for this."

Silas's smile faded slowly. "I'm simply glad to be here. No need to get all worked up."

"That's good," Pearl said, handing him a cup of coffee. "Here, have some coffee."

"You're so generous, Mrs. Waldorf. This must be expensive coffee," Silas remarked, shaking the cup. "But unfortunately, I prefer Americano."

"I'll remember that for next time," Pearl said calmly.

Silas couldn't quite figure out why it felt hard to talk to her. Unable to gain the upper hand, he returned to his seat.

Pearl casually inquired about Richard's whereabouts from an employee and headed to his office.

Opening the door, she found Richard engrossed in a document. He looked up, slightly annoyed at the lack of a knock, but his expression softened when he saw Pearl.

"What brings you here?" he asked.

"Just thought I'd surprise you since I've never visited while you're working. Also, I wanted to make sure you weren't secretly causing trouble," Pearl teased.

Richard leaned back. "What else could I do to upset you? I've even switched to a male secretary since you left."

Pearl chuckled, glancing at the man at the door. "Let's not give people any ideas about your preferences, shall we?"

"They have nothing to doubt. I have a wife." Richard raised his hand before Pearl could respond.

She walked over and settled into his arms. "Who taught you to be so witty?"

"I learned on my own," Richard replied, rubbing her cheek.

"Fine."

"Let's grab something to eat later. What do you feel like? We can leave work early," Richard suggested.

Pearl stood up, surprised. "The workaholic wants to leave early? Isn't that unprofessional?"

"It's not a big deal if it's for my wife," Richard said, standing to grab his jacket, but Pearl tugged at his sleeve.

"Wait, I have some questions for you."

"What is it?"

"Why is Silas at Waldorf Enterprises?" Pearl asked.

At the mention of Silas, Richard's expression darkened. "It's a coincidence. Since you fired him, and Hugo didn't want him, Mister Elijah asked me to take him in."

"You and Mister Elijah know each other?"

"No, it's my father." Richard smiled and caressed her head. "But if it bothers you, I can fire him."

Chapter 1012

"No, I'm not that bothered. I just find it weird."

Richard pulled her into his arms to comfort her. "I know it's not just about Mister Elijah. There's something else going on. And I can sense what Silas is up to."

"Yeah, right."

"So, you don't have to worry. I won't let him off if he's still interested in you," Richard said, sounding jealous and childish.

Pearl smoothed his jacket and playfully pinched his nose. "Don't worry. I know."

They were about to leave when a group of people barged into the office with urgency. Leading them were several police officers accompanied by some nosy employees.

"Mister Richard, we've received a complaint about illegal tax evasion in your business. Please come with us," one of the officers said, flashing his ID.

As a result, Richard and Pearl's plans for a meal were dashed, and instead, they had to accompany the police to the station.

Before leaving, Pearl noticed a smug smile on a man in the crowd—Silas.

She made a mental note of it.

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At the police station, Richard was taken into the interrogation room while Pearl waited anxiously in the reception area.

One of the officers questioned Richard sternly. "Mister Richard, is it true that you've been evading taxes for the past six months?"

"Don't you need evidence before you arrest someone?" Richard retorted, his expression serious.

"We called you in for questioning based on a report we received," the officer replied. He had investigated many people before, but this was the first time he felt nervous.

"Go ahead."

"We received a report this morning alleging tax evasion over the past six months. Upon investigation, we found that you failed to pay taxes on time this month," the officer explained.

Richard asked solemnly, "This month?"

"Yes, the Treasury Department has sent multiple reminders, but you haven't responded."

The officers were well aware of Richard's reputation for being difficult, but due to the report, they couldn't handle the matter discreetly. They had to interrogate him openly.

"I'm not so sure about that. Why don't you let me speak to the head of the finance department at my company?" Richard suggested.

The officer cleared his throat. "Based on the current situation, you've been operating your company illegally. We may need to take disciplinary action."

"What kind of punishment are we talking about?" Richard asked, his gaze steady.

"Seven...three days of detention," the officer replied, adjusting his initial sentence due to Richard's intense stare.

"Three days?" Richard repeated.

"One day will do..." The officer trailed off, feeling guilty.

"Tell me, who put you up to this?" Richard's tone shifted, his whisper carrying a chilling edge.

"Why are you asking that? I'm just doing my job..." The officer answered weakly, avoiding Richard's gaze.

"Nice try. I may be a businessman, but I know enough about the law to know I shouldn't be detained under these circumstances. Who's behind this? Tell me the truth," Richard demanded, his voice low and threatening.

"I swear, it's not... I'm just following procedures..."

Chapter 1013

"Hugo?"

The officer was stunned when he heard that name.

"Silas?"

The officer broke out in a cold sweat. "Mister Richard, please don't joke around."

"I'm not joking. This is serious," Richard insisted.

Finally, the officer's legs gave out, and he began to tremble in his chair.

"Spill everything you know. If not... you know what will happen."

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Outside, Pearl was growing increasingly impatient. She wanted to barge in, but the officers at the door kept blocking her path.

"Miss Pearl, please don't interfere."

"Richard wouldn't evade taxes or run his company illegally. Let me in. I have something to say."

"Miss Pearl, our team leader doesn't like disruptions during interrogations. Please cooperate."

Feeling helpless, Pearl reluctantly sat down again.

Ten minutes passed, and the voices from the interrogation room gradually faded. Soon, there was silence.

"Why is it so quiet? Did something happen? Let me in!" Pearl stood up again, determined to get answers.

This time, nobody stopped her, as the nearby officers also sensed that something was amiss. Just as they were about to enter, the door swung open.

The officer said to Richard with a nervous smile, "It was all a misunderstanding, Mister Richard. I apologize for the inconvenience."

Richard glanced at him calmly. "No problem. I'm just glad it's all cleared."

"Thank you for your understanding. You all, see Mister Richard off quickly," he ordered his fellow officers.

Confused, the two officers complied, escorting Richard out. Once they were alone, they turned to their team leader with puzzled expressions.

"What happened, sir? Why did you suddenly stop the investigation, especially after Mister Silas requested it?" one of them asked.

The team leader sighed, casting a frustrated look at his subordinates. "Idiots! Do you think dealing with Richard is easy? If I had known he was this crazy, I wouldn't have taken Silas's bribe. We're out of our depth here."

"How are we going to explain this to Mister Silas?" another officer asked nervously.

"We'll return his money and offer our apologies. It's better than dealing with this mess any longer," the team leader replied, reluctantly acknowledging his own limitations.

Suddenly, an angry voice interrupted them. "B*stard! How could you accept others' money to do this kind of thing? Don't you know it's illegal?"

"M-Mister Jake... we..."

The team leader turned to face Jake Parker, the furious police chief, nearly dropping his cup in fright.

"I can't believe you would lead them into something like this!" Jake raged. "You all need to write me a reflection paper. Ten thousand words. You're not going home until it's finished!"

The three officers trembled and promptly complied with Jake's demand.

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As Pearl and Richard left the police station, Pearl couldn't help but ask, "What happened in there? Why were you accused of tax evasion?"

"It's a setup by Hugo and Silas."

Pearl was shocked. "Hugo is involved too?"

Richard asked, "What's the matter? You seem to know that Silas has something to do with it."

"I had a feeling Silas was involved when they took you away. He had this smug look on his face," Pearl said seriously.

Chapter 1014

Knowing that the two of them were behind this, Pearl fell into a dilemma. Dealing with Hugo alone would have been easier, but if they were colluding together, it would pose a much bigger problem, even if the Quinton family couldn't cause much trouble.

"I don't want to become his enemy, but it looks like I have no choice."

Richard gently touched Pearl's hair. "Don't worry. Leave these things to me."

Back at Waldorf Residence, they had both lost their appetite. They decided to rest early and go to bed.

After Mobius's passing, the Waldorf family was shrouded in gloom and silence. Dustan took Susan on a trip to lift her spirits, leaving the company in Richard's care. Hanzel rarely came home, opting to stay in another villa with Feather. This left Pearl and Richard alone in the house.

That night, Pearl was startled awake by the sudden thunder. Not being a deep sleeper, she found herself restless in bed, counting each thunderclap until she finally sat up at the fifty-ninth.

Turning on the light, she made her way downstairs for a glass of water, only to bump into Richard on the stairs, who was heading to do the same.

"Why are you still awake at this hour?" Richard handed Pearl a glass of warm water, which she sipped to calm her nerves.

"The thunder's too loud. I can't sleep," she explained.

Richard glanced out the window. "The forecast says it'll last another half hour. It should calm down after that."

"It's just so annoying." Pearl ruffled her hair in frustration.

"Why don't you come to my room for a chat?" Richard suggested suddenly.

Despite the suddenness of the offer, Pearl agreed, unable to sleep herself.

In Richard's room, Pearl, shy about getting into his bed, settled for the couch.

Richard took his place on the bed. "It's cold tonight. Want to get under the covers with me?" he offered, patting the bed.

Pearl hesitated but eventually moved to join him under the blanket. It was winter, after all.

As they lay side by side, Richard read a magazine while Pearl scrolled through her phone. The comforting scent of tea emanated from the blankets, lulling Pearl into a drowsy state.

"Feeling sleepy?" Richard asked softly.

For some reason, Pearl's drowsiness disappeared at his words. "No, not really," she replied, opening a video on her phone. She burst into laughter while watching.

"What's so funny?" Richard asked, leaning over to see.

Pearl was dazed when Richard wrapped his arm around her and drew her close. Then, he took away her phone and locked the screen, prompting Pearl to realize his intentions.

"Hey, why did you do that if you wanted to watch the video?"

Ignoring her question, Richard smoothly placed her phone on the nightstand.

Pearl tried to retreat but found herself trapped as Richard held her firmly in place.

"What are you doing?" she demanded, feeling like a mouse being toyed with.

Looking at Pearl with a mix of desire and hesitation, Richard swallowed hard before speaking hoarsely, "Do you remember what you promised me the other day?"

Chapter 1015

The thing she promised the other day? What was it?

To... have a baby?

Suddenly remembering her conversation with him at the hospital, Pearl said tentatively, "I think it's too sudden. Can we delay it and talk about it more?"

She hesitated. She wasn't mentally prepared for such a big decision.

But Richard couldn't wait any longer. He covered her eyes with one hand and pulled her into his arms with the other, planting gentle kisses on her lips.

"Pearl... let's have a baby."

Pearl's heart raced as she moaned softly, succumbing to his touch. He moved on top of her, his gaze intense.

She closed her eyes, lost in the moment, as the thunder roaring outside masked the intimate moment in the room.

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The next morning, Pearl woke up feeling sore all over.

She silently cursed Richard for his intensity the night before. He had been insatiable, calling out her name repeatedly as if he wanted to drown her thoughts.

As Pearl lay in bed, lost in her thoughts, Richard entered the room carrying a tray of breakfast. On the tray, there was an exquisite sandwich and a glass of warm milk.

"You're awake? Did you sleep well last night?" he asked, trying to gauge her mood.

Pearl shot him a glare, knowing he was well aware of the answer.

Richard didn't say much, knowing he was in the wrong. He climbed into bed and hugged her gently.

Pearl winced. "Don't touch me. It hurts."

Richard felt guilty. "I'll be more gentle next time," he promised softly.

Next time? They're going to do that again?

"I think we should wait at least a month," she suggested, her tone solemn. She wasn't keen on repeating the experience anytime soon.

"A month? Can't we make it shorter?" Richard hugged her from behind, sounding disappointed.

Pearl shook her head. "A month is already pushing it for me. I was thinking more like six months."

She was adamant about giving her body time to recover from the pain. The pain was so intense that she wept, her sobs masked by the thunder. Despite her cries becoming hoarse, Richard showed no mercy.

"Be lenient." Richard nudged her back, his hair tickling her neck.

"Richard, you didn't watch your strength!" Pearl huffed.

"It was my first time. I'll be careful next time," Richard explained gently.

His words caught Pearl off guard. "You're a virgin?"

Chapter 1016

Richard felt uncomfortable with the term Pearl used. "Can you say it differently?" he asked awkwardly.

Pearl was speechless. She couldn't believe Richard, who was often surrounded by women, had never slept with any of them.

"I didn't expect you to be so... innocent," she said, struggling to find the right word.

"What do you mean?" Richard frowned. He didn't think his lack of experience was something to be praised, judging by Pearl's laughter.

"It's nothing, forget it," Pearl said quickly, trying to hide her amusement.

Despite the awkward moment, she felt a surge of happiness. Her eyes sparkled as she realized that last night's discomfort was acceptable.

Richard, sensing her joy, didn't press further. Though he was confused, he was content to see her happy.

Lost in thought, he remembered their intimate moments from the night before, and his gaze intensified.

Pearl blushed as she felt his gaze on her. "What are you—"

Before she could finish, Richard silenced her with a kiss.

"We're going to have a baby," he whispered hoarsely, the loving atmosphere enveloping them once again.

Pearl couldn't help but melt into his embrace, unable to maintain her glare.

Darn it, he was good at this!

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Esther had been trying to get closer to James at the law firm for a week.

Every morning, she pretended to bump into him, hoping to strike up a conversation. But James remained distant, neither interested nor repelled by her presence.

Feeling disheartened, Esther quickly cheered up and resolved to keep trying, believing in her own resilience.

On the seventh day, she approached James again, this time while he was having coffee and a bun.

"Can you please stop coming here?" James finally spoke up, his tone firm.

Esther shook her head stubbornly. "No, I like you. I want to get close to you."

Her open confession didn't soften James's expression. He remained cold and aloof, which only added to Esther's despair.

"Why are you acting so distant? You weren't like this before." Esther squatted by the road and bit into the bun. Unfortunately, she nearly choked because she took too big a bite.

"Did my previous enthusiasm give you the wrong impression? I'm not obliged to be enthusiastic to you always. "

His aloof words stunned Esther. Her eyes welled up with tears as she struggled to speak through a mouthful of bun. "I..."

Feeling hurt, she choked back her sobs as James delivered the final blow. "Please stop hovering around me. You're becoming annoying."

Chapter 1017

Annoying?

Esther looked down at her feet, feeling the weight of James's rejection.

"Okay, I'll stop pestering you," Esther replied calmly, turning away.

James snorted at the sight of her slouched shoulders. He inexplicably gritted his teeth. "If you can't handle it, then stop. I've never seen someone try so hard to win someone over."

What did he mean by that?

Gathering her resolve, Esther turned back to face him, her eyes sparkling with determination. "So, you admit I'm trying to win you over?" she asked eagerly.

Despite his harsh words, she sensed he was trying to keep her around. It sounded awkward, almost like she was being a suck-up.

James ignored Esther's question. He walked past her with a stoic expression and entered the law firm.

Despite his cold demeanor, Esther felt a newfound sense of optimism. She even started humming a tune happily.

She watched James disappear upstairs before turning to Summer, offering her a cup of coffee and a bun.

As always, Esther brought breakfast for Summer whenever she visited. Summer accepted it with a smile, tearing off a piece of the bun and munching on it.

"Wow, this bun is delicious! It's so sweet," Summer exclaimed.

Esther beamed with pride. "Yeah, it's a new find. Pretty tasty, huh?"

It was the best bun she had found after trying out all the nearby stores. Naturally, it was not bad.

Summer nodded in agreement before changing the subject. "So, how are things with you and Mister James? Does he still hate you very much?"

Esther had yet to swallow her bun before she fiercely snatched it from Summer. "What did you say? When did he hate me?"

Summer, taken aback by Esther's reaction, quickly backtracked. "No, no, I didn't mean that. But what is it then?" She bowed down for the sake of the tasty bun, but she couldn't lie and say something else.

"It's like a game of cat and mouse!" Esther interrupted, feeling defensive.

Cat and mouse?

Summer, resigned to losing the bun, wiped her lips with a tissue. "But shouldn't you be realistic about it? It doesn't seem like he can't live without you."

Whenever Summer expressed her doubts, Esther insisted that her past relationship with James was wonderful, highlighting his previous thoughtfulness toward her.

However, over time, Summer grew sick of hearing this. Given the current dynamics between James and Esther, she struggled to imagine the level of consideration James once showed Esther.

Regardless of his past kindness, it remained in the past. The fickle nature of men's hearts made it unsurprising that their feelings could change quickly.

Esther showed the ring on her finger. "We're still wearing our couple rings, see?" she pointed to the butterfly-shaped ring on her finger. "It means he cares about me."

Summer couldn't argue with that, noticing the matching ring on James's finger. "So, what's your next move?" she asked, curious about Esther's plans.

Esther sighed, feeling a headache coming on. She couldn't think of anything at the moment, but she wasn't too worried. If James could say what he did, there had to be something else going on.

As if on cue, James suddenly appeared downstairs half an hour later, looking unusually well-groomed.

Chapter 1018

James left the law firm without even sparing a glance at Esther.

"Eh, where is he going today?"

James usually worked until half past eleven in the morning, and it had only been half an hour since he left. Where could he be going?

Summer checked the appointment list but found nothing. "I don't know. He doesn't have any appointments today. Why would he leave suddenly?"

"I don't know. Maybe it's something urgent. Should I follow him?" Esther suggested, a bold idea forming in her mind.

Summer slapped Esther's head. "What are you thinking? Do you want to make a fool of yourself? You're a star, Esther. Don't you find it humiliating to do this kind of thing?"

She gritted her teeth, frustrated by Esther's infatuation with James despite her obvious beauty. Esther didn't seem to realize her own allure and wasted her charm on someone who didn't appreciate it.

If it were Summer, she'd have moved on long ago and dated other attractive men. What a waste!

Regrettably, she wasn't that pretty. Moreover, she found herself unable to dissuade Esther, that lovestruck fool.

Esther touched her chin. "You're right. I'll wait for him to come back. He'll be disappointed if he doesn't see me here when he returns."

"No, he won't! He doesn't even want to see you now, okay?"

Esther refused to believe it. She convinced herself that James was just testing her. After all, she had treated him poorly in the past, so it was natural for him to be distant now.

Whenever she felt low, she consoled herself in this manner, and it proved to be effective. Over time, she became increasingly shameless.

"What do you think I should do then?"

"You can turn the tables on him. Do the same thing he does to you. Don't you know how to play cat and mouse?" Summer found her idea very good and applauded herself.

"No... I don't think I should do that to him..." Esther hesitated, feeling torn. Using such tactics on James might exhaust his remaining patience with her, making it even harder to win him back.

Summer shook her head in frustration. "He treats you like his little lapdog, yet you still pity him? Isn't it ridiculous? Esther, you're such a pushover. Men love that."

She found Esther very disappointing. If her future daughter behaved like this, she would disown her.

"I..." Esther shook her head before nodding. She felt conflicted but eventually agreed to stop being a kiss-*ss.

Suddenly, Esther spotted two figures at the door.

One was James, who had ignored her earlier that morning. Even from a distance, she could catch a whiff of his familiar woody scent.

But the other person...

Esther didn't recognize her, but she exuded brightness and charm. It was hard not to be drawn to her.

A pang of jealousy hit Esther as she observed James's face. He rarely smiled, but his gaze held a familiar warmth when he looked at the other woman.

It filled Esther with bitterness and sadness.

"This is my workplace. Feel free to look around," James said politely, his smile causing Esther pain.

Summer was flabbergasted, and she nudged Esther's elbow. "Hey, look. Mister James brought a woman here. He's never brought anyone to the law firm before."

Chapter 1019

"I know," Esther replied

James had once told Esther that she was the first woman he had brought to the law firm. Now, it seemed there would be a second.

Esther felt a wave of sorrow and bitterness wash over her, tears welling up in her eyes. She suddenly felt like a joke, an unnecessary presence.

Summer handed Esther a cap and gently placed it on her head. "You can cry if you want to. I know you're hurting. If you can't take it, you can make a scene. It's come to this point, and I think he's moving on..."

Esther felt helpless at Summer's words. She couldn't quite articulate her emotions, but she didn't want to cause a scene.

Quietly, she watched as James introduced the law firm to the other woman. The woman seemed curious and impressed by James, much like Esther had been.

The woman blinked naughtily. "Do you often bring women here?"

James paused, looking thoughtful before responding, "Not usually."

Esther heard that. Luckily, James didn't deny her existence, but it didn't ease her pain much.

"What do you think, James?" The woman's tone turned coquettish, almost pleading.

James maintained his poker face. "Let's not rush things. We can take our time," he replied evasively.

Esther felt a pang in her heart. It seemed they were discussing something serious, perhaps an engagement.

She wondered if James had let her go and wanted to accept another woman.

"Today's blind date... I'll have to talk to my dad about it properly." The woman chuckled.

James simply nodded, his expression softer now.

Their conversation confirmed Esther's suspicions. Not only had James let her go, but he was also considering someone else.

Esther glanced down and noticed that the ring James used to wear was missing. He had taken it off.

Summer noticed Esther's distress and tried to reassure her. "Don't dwell on it. James isn't all that great. He's just handsome, charming, attentive, with a good salary and background..."

"Just stop." Esther could feel her tears, but she stubbornly refused to let them fall. "I know. I won't come again."

At this point, returning would only make her seem desperate. Even if she wanted to, she wouldn't grovel to someone she knew she couldn't win over.

With a sniffle, Esther wiped away her tears and removed the cap from her head. "Thanks, Summer. I think I'll head out now."

Chapter 1020

James was still showing the woman around when Esther quietly left the law firm.

When he finally turned around, he noticed Summer standing alone at the reception, staring off into the distance.

Summer seemed to have noticed James' gaze. For the first time, she didn't look at him with admiration but with disappointment and disdain.

Disdain?

James thought he was mistaken. When he looked over again, Summer had already looked away, focusing on the door intently.

"What are you looking at, James? James?" The woman, Sabrina, waved her hand in front of James to regain his attention.

"Nothing. Sabrina, let's go upstairs."

Sabrina Watson shook her head. "No, someone's waiting for me. Let's end our date here. See you tomorrow, Mister James."

James gently nodded. "Sure, go ahead. Take care."

"Okay, bye."

As Sabrina made her way to the door, she approached Summer. "Who was that girl standing beside you earlier? I felt like she was staring at me."

Seeing Esther as her friend, Summer found Sabrina's inquiry irritating, even though Sabrina had the upper hand. She retorted, "That's personal. Please don't ask about that, miss."

Sabrina was taken aback by her rudeness and awkwardly smiled at James. "James, your employee here is quite something."

James's expression turned cold. "I didn't discipline her well."

Unaffected, Summer shrugged as Sabrina left.

James asked, "Why did you treat her like that?"

"I don't know what you're talking about, Mister James," Summer replied, focusing on the documents in front of her to avoid his gaze.

Frustrated, James narrowed his eyes. "Why did you treat my guest that way? Have you forgotten what I told you?"

"I know, but I didn't expect you to be so cruel and cold. It's disgusting," Summer retorted, finally meeting his gaze boldly.

It was the first time she had spoken so defiantly, and she braced herself for the consequences. She had fought hard for this job, with its high pay and light workload. If she lost it, she could always rely on Esther.

Her actions were driven by a desire for justice for Esther.

James looked at Summer incredulously. In his mind, she had always been obedient and sensible. Her sudden outburst surprised him.

Recalling Esther's recent visits to chat with Summer, James realized they had become friends in just a few days. Esther had managed to turn his employee against him, which was unexpected.

James pursed his lips and asked, "What do you mean by I'm cruel and cold?"

"I mean it exactly as it sounds."

"Oh? Did Esther tell you anything?"

It was Summer who had tagged him with those words. Likely, she and Esther had spoken harshly about him behind his back.

James sighed, wanting to press further, but Summer suddenly became agitated.

"Mister James, I've only just met Esther, but she can't be as shameless as you think. She blushed and apologized when she accidentally bumped into someone. And you, ignoring a shy young woman who fawned over you every day without explicitly rejecting her. Is that appropriate?"