

YOUR GUISE 121

Chapter 121

Richard frowned. "Win your heart? Why?"

"Because you have feelings for me, but I haven't agreed to it."

Pearl thought about it. After enduring Richard's bullying for so long, she finally had the chance to turn the tables.

"I've never done that." It was something he hadn't experienced before.

Pearl obviously didn't believe him. "Never? How's that even possible? Weren't you in a relationship before this?"

"She confessed to me, and we got together because I like her too."

Pearl was excited when she heard that, and she smiled. "So, I'm the first person you've truly fallen for?"

What an honor."

"So what?"

"So, I'm giving you permission to pursue me."

Richard didn't know how to react to that, but seeing her smile, he decided to embrace the opportunity.

“Fine.

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Pearl couldn't help but laugh at his awkward expression. “I never thought I'd see you with any expression other than cool, indifferent, or annoyed.”

Richard suddenly leaned in and playfully pinched her chin, his usual cold expression returning. “Say that again.”

Pearl froze. “No... nothing.” She wasn't about to fall for that.

“Alright, I need to go back to the office for a meeting. Rest well.” Richard let go and took a few steps back, giving her space.

“Alright.”

Once Richard left, Pearl called Wayne. “Hey.”

“What's going on? Are you in trouble?”

“Is Fortune Hospital the one Cerubleu invested in?”

Wayne didn't understand why she was suddenly asking about the hospital, so he asked, “Yes. Are you sick? Why are you asking about a hospital?”

“I need to transfer someone’s mother to that hospital, so I need you to help me contact the director.”

Wayne was still confused but did as he was told.

After hanging up, Pearl switched on her laptop and bypassed the hospital’s firewall, then accessed the intranet. She tried to search for information about Renee and her mother to facilitate the transfer, but after searching for a long time, she couldn’t find anything.

What was going on? Could it be...

She had a bad feeling but also considered she might be overthinking things.

After leaving the intranet, Pearl planned to visit the hospital’s Information Department in person, but she ran into Hugo at the door.

“Where are you going?”

Pearl stretched and pretended nothing was going on. “I was just taking a walk.”

“How did you manage to find your way here during a casual walk? You’re quite the wanderer.”

Hugo clearly didn’t buy her explanation and appeared to be aware of her intentions, but he chose to observe for now, not wanting to expose her.

“Alright, I’m going back to my room to take a nap.” Pearl chuckled and began walking away.

Chapter 122

“Hold on, I’m your boyfriend now. Shouldn’t we be spending time together?” Hugo wasn’t going to let her go, so he grabbed her wrist and whispered in her ear.

Pearl felt uncomfortable with his touch and tried to break free, but his grip was firm.

“I know you don’t have feelings for me, and you know why I’m with you.” Unable to escape glared at him.

his grasp, Pearl

“I know. I’m trying to make you fall in love with me,” Hugo whispered in her ear and smiled. “Pearl, don’t

make me angry, or you might regret it.”

Pearl couldn’t help but think that this man was crazy. “Why are you so stubborn, Hugo? What have you turned into?”

Hugo looked at her in disbelief and smiled. “Could it be that I’ve always been like this?”

Pearl froze, not understanding what led a person who grew up in a perfect family to turn into someone like him.

“Alright, let’s forget about it. You didn’t go out with me last time, but you can’t turn me down again.”

Hugo was about to lead her out the door when his phone suddenly rang. It was an emergency surgery.

The patient’s condition deteriorated, requiring immediate intervention.

“I guess I won’t be able to go out with you this time either.” Hugo sighed with disappointment.

As for Pearl, she sighed as well, but it was a sigh of relief. She smiled and waved him off, “Go ahead,

Hugo. Better not let your patient’s condition worsen.”

“It’s too early to celebrate, Pearl. This is just a minor surgery that will be done in two hours.”

After Hugo left, someone walked into the information department, and the door was left ajar. Seeing her

chance, Pearl slipped in without being noticed.

With Hugo occupied in surgery, Pearl had the opportunity to search for the information she needed.

The challenge was figuring out where it might be stored.

Carefully avoiding any staff in the department, she moved stealthily, making no noise.

The person who had entered before her had taken a bag of documents and left, closing the door

behind him. That’s when Pearl reemerged from behind a bookshelf.

There were about twenty cabinets in the office, so Pearl had no idea where to start looking.

She went through a few cabinets, and an hour had already passed. If she continued at this rate, finding what she needed seemed unlikely.

Pearl sighed and was considering an alternative approach when she noticed a pattern in the way information was stored. The first ten cabinets were arranged alphabetically, but the remaining ten were organized by family names.

Her eyes brightened as she had an idea of where to begin searching. However, after checking the cabinets that might contain the files, she came up empty-handed.

If her hunch was correct, the file she needed might be in Hugo's office.

Realizing that Hugo might have caught onto her plan, she gave up her search, returned the cabinets to their original state, and left the department.

She then proceeded to Hugo's office and thoroughly combed through it. Two hours passed, but she still couldn't find what she was looking for.

"Are you looking for this?" a voice suddenly asked.

The voice came from above her head, causing Pearl to freeze. She looked up and saw Hugo holding a file between his fingers, wearing a smug smile.

“Yes...” Pearl retracted her hands and frowned at Hugo. “I told you, Hugo, I have no feelings for you.

Why are you making things hard for me?”

“But you’re the only one I want.” Hugo placed the file aside and slowly walked over to the other side of the

desk where Pearl was.

Pearl caught an unexpected scent of orchids in the air, which made her feel somewhat uneasy.

“Do you think this is how a gentleman should behave?”

Hugo’s eyes turned cold at her words. “Why not? Who gets to decide that? Ruthless Richard?”

Pearl could sense Hugo’s hatred for Richard. “He’s not what you think...”

“Yes, you’ve all been blinded by him and falling head over heels for him. Of course you can’t see it.”

Taking advantage of Hugo’s distraction, Pearl raised her foot and stomped on his foot.

“Ouch!”

Hugo jumped away in pain, and Pearl seized the opportunity to grab the file. She quickly made her escape, leaving Hugo behind with a cunning smile.

Pearl rushed back to her room and, to avoid Hugo catching up to her, locked the door and switched on her

laptop.

She quickly began transferring the information. Surprisingly, everything went smoothly, almost unbelievably so.

As soon as the data transfer was complete, Pearl called Renee to inform her and coordinate her mother's

transfer to another hospital.

Renee didn't fully understand the situation but trusted Pearl unconditionally because she knew Pearl was trying to help her mother.

That night, Hugo had another surgery, granting Pearl enough time to arrange the transfer of Renee's mother. However, just before she could reach the room, she received a call from Renee.

"Something happened, Pea!" Renee's voice trembled with tears. "My mom's condition has deteriorated.

She coughed up blood just a while ago and is now unconscious!”

“What? Have you told the nurses?”

“I pressed the call button about ten minutes ago, but no one came. Do you think my mom will make it?”

Pearl’s mind went blank as this wasn’t part of her plan. The situation was spiraling out of her control.

She contemplated calling Hugo to understand what was happening but remembered he was in surgery,

likely with his phone turned off.

She hurried to the doctor’s office area and grabbed a nearby doctor to ask, “Where are all the

surgeons?”

“I have no idea... I’m not a surgeon...”

She asked around and realized all the surgeons in the hospital were mysteriously missing.

She then called the nearest hospital to send an ambulance, but was informed they wouldn’t accept

patients transferred from another hospital. They were unfamiliar with the patients’ conditions and didn’t

want to assume responsibility.

As a last resort, she called Richard.

“Stay there. I’m on my way.” Richard, who had just left Susan’s room, saw Pearl’s pale face and understood the gravity of the situation.

“Let’s go to Renee’s mother’s room, and I’ll bring her to the nearest hospital.”

Chapter 124

Pearl nodded and went to Renee’s mother’s room.

Inside, Renee was crying as she called out to her mother.

“Alright, I’m going to take Jennifer to another hospital now,” Richard said. He carefully lifted Jennifer onto his back, then gently placed her in the back seat.

He took the wheel and drove to the nearest hospital with Renee and Pearl accompanying him.

Upon arrival at the hospital, they encountered resistance from the staff, who were reluctant to accept the

transfer due to hospital rules.

“I’ll give you three minutes to reconsider. Either help her or get out of our way,” Richard warned, his imposing presence making them hesitate.

Dealing with the well-known Richard Waldorf before them, they softened their tone.

“Mister Waldorf, I...”

“Three minutes.”

“Alright, alright, please calm down. We’ll admit her to the emergency room right away,” one of the doctors relented, smiling awkwardly and signaling his colleagues to assist in moving Jennifer to the emergency room.

As they waited outside, Renee paced nervously, her eyes tired and ringed with dark circles. Pearl felt a wave of sympathy for her.

“You’ve been looking after your mom tirelessly. You must be exhausted. Why don’t you sit down and rest for a while?” Observing Renee’s worn-out appearance, Pearl couldn’t help but feel a sense of sadness.

“I’m fine. I’m going to wait for her to come out.” Renee shook her head and refused to take a seat.

The surgery seemed to drag on forever, and when the red light finally turned off, Pearl’s legs were numb from standing.

Renee immediately sprang to her feet, anxiously awaiting the doctor's exit.

The doctor, wearing glasses, looked around and asked, "Is there a family member here?"

Renee rushed forward. "I'm here!"

"Unfortunately... the patient didn't take the correct medication after her surgery. This caused her to cough up blood. The medication she took ended up causing severe damage to her b*dy, so... I'm sorry, we did everything we could."

A heavy silence fell over them after the doctor's announcement.

After a long pause, Renee's voice trembled as she spoke, "Wrong medication? How is that possible?"

The doctors provided all the medication she took, and I personally watched her take them. How could she have taken the wrong ones? You're not lying to me, are you?"

The doctor frowned, growing impatient. "Please don't question our findings. Please get ready to sign some release papers."

"You're lying! My mom can't be dead!"

Renee's emotions spiraled out of control, unable to accept that her mother had passed away under her

care.

Pearl sensed that something was amiss, and unsettling thoughts began to take root in her mind. Could

Hugo have been involved in this?

She immediately called Hugo, and after several attempts, he finally picked up, sounding tired. "What's

wrong?"

"Hugo, did you switch Jennifer's medication and cause her sudden death?" Pearl asked, her voice filled

with suspicion.

Chapter 125

Hugo was surprised. "She died?"

"Stop pretending. You better tell the truth, or I'll get to the bottom of this," Pearl declared, her to the

despairing Renee, her anger rising.

gaze shifting

"Pearl, that's a wild accusation. I have nothing against her. I've been using her as leverage over you, so

her death wouldn't benefit me in any way," Hugo explained, but Pearl didn't buy it.

Suddenly, a message from Wayne popped up on her screen, revealing that the information Pearl had

sent him wasn't about Jennifer but rather someone with the same name who was also admitted to the hospital.

Pearl felt her strength drain from her b*dy, and her voice quivered as she spoke, "Hugo, it was you. You killed Jennifer."

Hugo was perplexed because he could sense that the situation was far more complex than Pearl's accusation implied.

"I didn't do it, so I won't admit to it," Hugo retorted before abruptly hanging up.

He had manipulated the information to prevent her from transferring Jennifer, but who was responsible for swapping Jennifer's medication? Hugo pondered this as he called Abby.

"Did you have a hand in this?" Hugo raised his voice at her. "Did you switch out the medications? She's dead now. Did you do it?"

Amused, Abby chuckled. "Hugo, what are you talking about? Who's dead?"

"Abby, I agreed to work with you because I believed we had the same goal. But if you've turned against me, this partnership is over," he warned.

While Abby had a reputation for ruthlessness, Hugo's threat caught her off guard. "Hugo, there's no need to worry. This situation actually benefits you. Pearl currently suspects you, but she won't find any evidence. She'll eventually realize she was mistaken about you, and it might even bring you closer together."

Abby's reasoning made sense, but Hugo disliked that she had made such a significant decision without consulting him. "I won't reveal anything this time, but if this happens again, I won't hesitate to sever our ties."

Unaccustomed to Hugo's assertiveness, Abby began to feel anxious. "Alright, Hugo, don't worry. This is just a simple medical mishap. You can just get some nurse to take the fall. Relax."

Hugo didn't want to continue the conversation, so he hung up.

Meanwhile, Pearl remained convinced that Hugo was involved, but her priority was comforting Renee.

"Renee, are you alright?"

Renee remained silent, sitting on the floor with vacant eyes.

"Even though... your mother is no longer around, she still loves you. Every life has to come to an end eventually, and this might be a peaceful release for your mom, right?" Pearl embraced her gently,

offering soothing words.

Renee burst into tears, sobbing uncontrollably. "My mom... she told me to be strong, no matter what happened, but she's gone now. I don't know what to do..."

She cried and clung to Pearl's sleeve, who comforted her by patting her back.

"Don't worry, I'll help you so she can rest in peace."

Chapter 126

Pearl helped Renee with the funeral arrangements and then texted Hugo, requesting a meeting.

Hugo knew she wanted to talk about Jennifer, so they arranged to meet at a nearby cafe.

As Hugo walked into the cafe, his eyes immediately found Pearl. She was seated not too far away, her long hair cascading gracefully over her shoulders. She wore a black dress that beautifully accentuated her figure.

Pearl appeared to be sipping her coffee casually, and Hugo couldn't help but wonder if the sadness had left her feeling numb.

"You know why I wanted to see you," Pearl stated, placing her cup down and fixing her gaze on him.

"I need to explain myself. I really have nothing to do with it."

Pearl scoffed. "Nothing to do with it? Hugo Waldorf, do you expect me to believe that? Who else would have done this?"

Hugo seethed, and Abby's name nearly escaped his lips, but he held his tongue.

"I'll say it again, I have nothing to do with this. Go ahead and investigate if you don't believe me. If it turns out I'm responsible, I'll accept whatever punishment comes my way."

Pearl didn't appear convinced. She scrutinized his face, sensing that it wasn't the first time he swore in his life.

She clenched her fist. "Whatever. I'll look into this. If I find any evidence linking you to this, I'm not going to let you off."

"Calm down. Don't forget that you're still my-"

"Girlfriend?" Pearl cut him off. "Our agreement ends now, Hugo. You're not just a pervert, you're shameless."

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Pearl shuddered at the memory of this killer's touch. Hugo's indifference to her words only fueled her

disgust.

Hugo, however, seemed unfazed and found her reaction adorable. "I didn't know you could be this interesting, especially when you speak like that."

He touched his chin, savoring the moment.

"Enough, I don't have time for this nonsense. I'm leaving." Pearl was just going to warn him, but seeing how he wasn't bothered, she thought she was just wasting time.

"Wait."

Pearl turned around to see Hugo standing with a half-smile, causing her to feel nervous.

"What?" she asked tersely.

Hugo crossed his arms. "Jennifer passed away, but Renee is still here..."

His words sounded like a threat, but they were more of a reminder.

"Don't you dare touch her," Pearl said coldly, fear evident in her voice.

"Why can't I? I don't want you to leave me."

Previously, Hugo's efforts were about keeping her by his side. But now, seeing her annoyance, he had a different idea. How satisfying would it be to crush such an arrogant flower in his hands?

He slowly smiled, his eyes filled with passion as he looked at her.

“You’re crazy, Hugo.” Pearl glared at him before leaving for Renee’s home.

Renee’s safety was no longer guaranteed at her current residence, so Pearl needed to find her a new

place to

stay.

As she drove to Renee’s home, she repeatedly attempted to call her, but the calls wouldn’t go through.

There was no reason for her phone to be off in the middle of the day.

Chapter 127

No matter how many times she called, she couldn’t get through to Renee.

Renee’s home wasn’t too far away, so Pearl got there in around ten minutes. She rushed out of the car

and

knocked on the door, but there was no response.

She suddenly remembered the spare key Renee had given her and quickly used it to unlock the door.

She was shocked by the messiness inside, with blood stains covering the floor.

Pearl cautiously entered the house and saw someone lying behind the couch, their hair and clothes

disheveled. There was a deep cut across their throat, and it appeared they had suffered humiliation.

Pearl checked for signs of breathing, but there were none. Her tears started falling.

The person she had sought to protect had met a tragic end.

Pearl felt an overwhelming sense of guilt, and her hatred for Hugo deepened. She immediately called

him, her voice breaking. "Hugo Waldorf, you're a murderer!"

"What?"

"Why did you kill Renee?"

"I didn't."

"Who else would have done this?"

Hugo shook his head. "I can't tell you."

"Are you trying to show that you have a conscience, but it's not that great?" Pearl chuckled bitterly, her

grip on the phone tightening. "Thank you so much for warning me that she was going to be killed."

"Pearl, don't overthink it. She was never related to you in the first place."

Tired of his bullshit, Pearl hung up.

Renee's passing left Pearl sleepless for several days. After Richard learned about the tragedy, he assisted with Renee's funeral arrangements and, upon discovering that she was recovering well, discharged her from the hospital. He didn't want her to be reminded of the painful memories associated with the place.

Pearl asked Wayne to investigate the murders of Renee and Jennifer, but the perpetrator had covered their tracks well. The hospital claimed it was a medication error by a nurse, resulting in the hospital paying a substantial settlement. On Renee's side, there were no apparent traces left behind.

Pearl knew that finding the killer wouldn't be easy, so she instructed Wayne to continue the investigation while she returned to work.

Abby had managed to build good relationships with her colleagues, and it seemed they had forgotten her past misdeeds, growing closer to her once again. However, this was typical human behavior.

"I'm glad to see you back, Pearl. I thought you were seriously ill since you haven't been at work for the past few days," Abby said, her words carrying a hint of sarcasm, implying that Pearl was simply lazy.

"Richard neglected his work while taking care of you. That's something I've never seen before," Abby

added,

teasing Pearl.

Pearl had no patience for this kind of banter, especially after witnessing two deaths. “What’s the point of all this?”

“Don’t be upset, Pearl. I was just joking. I’ll stop if you’re annoyed,” Abby replied, feigning tears.

Others who witnessed the exchange came to Abby’s defense. “Miss Pearl, Abby was just concerned about you. Don’t be angry with her.”

Chapter 128

Only Abby knew if she really was concerned about Pearl.

Pearl cast a cold glance at Abby before heading to her desk. Her desk, which had previously been cluttered with stacks of work, was now empty. She furrowed her brows and asked a colleague sitting nearby, “Where are my files?”

She worked really hard to get all those files, and many of the documents were only partially completed. Why were they missing?

Her colleague looked at Pearl and explained, “Abby took them because you’ve been absent for a while.

She helped you finish all the work.”

Did Abby intend to take credit for work that Pearl had already completed? This infuriated Pearl. She took a deep breath, preparing to confront Abby, but Abby beat her to it.

“What did you do?”

“Calm down. I finished all the work, but it’s for your own good. I’m sure you don’t want the company’s work to be delayed because of your absence. Since I didn’t know when you’d return, I didn’t want to risk delaying our progress. I didn’t think you’d want that responsibility.”

Pearl scoffed. “I know the project timeline and whether I’d cause any delays. There’s no need for you to worry.”

“I’m doing this for the company. It’s one thing if you were absent, but we’re a team, and this agreement requires teamwork. Are you truly fine with potentially causing delays for everyone else?”

The tension in the room escalated. Pearl realized that since her return, Abby had become cleverer with her

words.

Pearl looked around. "If anyone here thinks I've caused any delays, please let me know. That way, I

won't

need to ask each one of you."

Abby's face froze. "Anyway, there's no need to be upset. Even though I finished the work, I submitted it

under your name, so there's no reason to worry."

Pearl looked at her suspiciously, as she doubted Abby's intentions were entirely benevolent.

As expected, Pearl suddenly received a call from the investors, informing her that there were issues

with the design and the numbers didn't add up. It was impossible to use the products.

Pearl froze because she knew this was coming.

"I'm glad I hadn't started mass production and only created a sample. If I had initiated production right

away, we could have faced huge losses," the investor said, sounding displeased.

"I'll revise the design and send it to you by tonight."

Pearl switched on her laptop, only to discover that her backup files were missing. Had Abby

orchestrated this as well? She clenched her teeth in frustration, but the urgent need to create a new

design left her with no time to dwell on Abby's actions.

She revisited the project proposal, which called for the product to be both cold and seductive. The term

"cold

" immediately brought moonlight to her mind. But what about seduction?

As she sketched some lines on a piece of paper, an idea suddenly struck her. Her eyes widened.

A silver fox gracefully strolling beneath the moonlight, its alluring, foxy eyes casting a seductive spell.

She envisioned using blue gemstones for the fox's eyes, with a small diamond embedded at the top.

The moonlight would be framed by silver thread clouds, imparting a sense of mystery.

She had it-the design concept: The Foxy Moon Seduction.

Chapter 129

After coming up with a name and completing the design, Pearl sent it to the investor, who responded

with praises.

"You're truly an exceptional designer. Only you could have come up with a design like this," the

investor's voice came from the other end of the phone. "It was well worth the wait. We'll commence

production based on this design, and I'm hopeful it will achieve record-breaking sales."

“Thank you, sir.”

Pearl’s designs consistently performed well in sales, which was why the investor continued to

collaborate

with her.

On the first day of the new product launch, excitement about “The Foxy Moon Seduction” swept across

the internet as soon as the website announced its availability.

“Wow, this is so pretty. The previous ones were all for couples, so I never had the chance to buy one.

But this one is so beautiful!”

“Why do people ever doubt Pearl’s designs? I’m ready to defend her!”

When Abby heard of the news, she sat in stunned disbelief. She vividly recalled making significant

alterations to the design. It shouldn’t have turned out like this!

Had Pearl truly managed to create an entirely new design in just one afternoon? Was this her talent?

Jealousy surged within Abby as she contemplated how effortlessly Pearl could create such remarkable

designs.

Her immediate concern was locking down Richard as soon as possible, or else Pearl might come between them. All her efforts would be in vain if they ended up together.

Abby made a call to tell Susan she was going over for dinner.

Susan had grown fonder of Abby since her transformation, so she gladly accepted the invitation.

That evening, when Pearl returned home and discovered Abby was there, she couldn't help but frown.

"Pearl, are you upset that I'm here?" Abby noticed Pearl's annoyance and aimed to expose her. "I just came to see Madam and join you all for dinner. It's not a problem, right?" she explained, feigning innocence.

Susan laughed. "You're welcome to come over whenever you like. Who would ever stop you?"

"Of course not. Go ahead." Pearl thought of skipping the meal.

"Even if you don't particularly like me, you should show respect to Madam. She made all this food, so you should have some..." Abby advised, attempting to offer guidance but only making the situation more uncomfortable.

Susan felt disheartened when she sensed the tension. "Yes, Pearl. I put so much effort into cooking this

meal. It wouldn't be right to let it go to waste."

Pearl found herself at a loss as she watched the two of them seemingly team up, so she reluctantly took her seat at the dining table.

Richard returned home shortly afterward, and upon seeing Abby there, he greeted her coldly, "Why are you here?"

Abby hadn't anticipated Richard's frosty reception. She hesitated before replying, "I miss Madam, so I came

over..."

Chapter 130

"Richard, Abby is just being lovely. My love for her since she was a child hasn't gone to waste." Susan

glared at Richard and patted Abby's hand. "Look, Abby is so well-mannered now. Do you want to

consider dating

her..."

"Oh, please don't say that..." Abby blushed, nudging Susan gently.

Richard chose to remain silent, a response that seemed most fitting.

Abby found herself in an awkward spot because of Richard's silence, so she withdrew her arm.

"Richard doesn't have feelings for me now, so there's no need to force it. I don't want it to look like I'm pressuring him."

"Nonsense. Your mother and I had an agreement that the two of you would get married. You grew up together, so how could he not have feelings for you?" Susan reassured Abby, worried that Richard might have hurt her.

Richard finally spoke up, "I'm seeing someone."

Pearl froze, her fork hung in midair.

"You're seeing someone? Who? Not Pearl, I hope?"

Richard nodded. "You're right. It's her."

Abby chuckled awkwardly. "Oh, really?"

"You're not allowed to have feelings for her," Susan blurted.

Richard didn't understand, so he turned and looked at her curiously. "Why not?"

"Because I said so, Rick. Even if you don't have feelings for Abby, you're still not allowed to have feelings for Pearl." Susan sounded very serious, as if she knew a secret she couldn't tell anyone about.

Everyone fell silent.

The meal seemed tasteless, so after quickly eating, everyone returned to their rooms.

Abby decided to stay for the night and leave the following day because it was late.

Susan entered Richard's room, carrying a glass of warm milk, and knocked on the door before entering.

"Rick, I have something to tell you," she said as she placed the glass on the table.

Richard knew what she was going to say, so he asked, "What is it?"

"I don't want you to be with Pearl because..." Susan sighed, and her thoughts wandered. "Did you know that your father, when he was young, had his first love..."

"What does this have to do with Pearl?"

She hesitated, then continued, "Your dad's first love was Pearl's mother! The person you're seeing

might be your sister!”

“That’s impossible!” Richard thought it was ridiculous.

Susan scoffed. “Why is it impossible? Pearl has your dad’s personality. You should know that when I was pregnant with Hanzel, your dad disappeared for half a year, and no one knew what happened during that time. Look at Pearl. She’s the same age as Hanzel!”

“That doesn’t prove she’s Dad’s child.” Richard found the notion so absurd that he couldn’t take it seriously.

Susan sounded like she was about to cry. “I only found out half a year into our marriage that there was a woman your dad loved with all his heart. I was already pregnant with you at that time, so I stayed instead of getting a divorce. Did you know?”

Richard patted her back to calm her down. “Don’t get too worked up. This might all be a misunderstanding.”

“Misunderstanding? Why would your dad be so nice to Pearl if not for this reason? Do you have an explanation?”

“Dad and Pearl’s dad are best friends. It would be normal for him to want to protect her too.”

“Alright, I won’t try to convince you, but remember, Pearl isn’t a good match for you,” Susan advised.

“Rick, I only have your best interests at heart. The girls I approve of will always be cream of the crop.

You should

understand...”

“Okay, Mom, let me make that decision.”

Richard wasn’t easily fooled. Despite Susan’s serious tone, he still had his reservations. He sent his

mother

out.

“Don’t forget to finish the milk. It’s getting cold,” Susan reminded him before returning to her room.

Richard made his way back to the table, picked up the cup, and downed the milk. Then, he prepared to

sleep.

As he lay down in bed, he felt his b*dy heat up. He lowered the air conditioning temperature, but it

didn’t help. Sleep eluded him as his mind filled with thoughts of Pearl: her captivating eyes, alluring

l*ps, and a smile that could melt any heart.

“Damn it,” he muttered to himself. What was he thinking? His mind was in turmoil when he suddenly

heard

the door handle turn.

In the dimly lit room, he couldn’t see who it was, but he felt a cold hand on his face. Reacting quickly,

he grabbed the wrist and, with his remaining consciousness, asked, “Who are you?”

In the faint light, he could make out that it was a woman. The only person who would enter his room at

this hour would be...

“Rick...” Abby whispered. She felt the heat from his hand, causing her to feel both shocked and

anxious. Was she going to succeed in keeping Richard for herself?

“Abby?”

Abby took a deep breath and k*ssed him, but he pushed her away.

“What are you doing, Abby?” Richard’s breathing was heavy, and he felt drained.

“Richard, I love you, and I want to be with you forever...” Abby began to undress him, her voice

trembling. You only have Pearl on your mind, and I can’t accept that. You’re mine, Rick, only mine...”

“1

Richard tried to calm down and gripped Abby's wrist to stop her. "Even if we sleep together, I won't

marry

you.'

Abby couldn't believe he said that, her eyes widening in disbelief. "How could you do this to me?"

"I know you've changed a lot, and I thought you've moved on," Richard's voice grew colder. "But I never

thought you would resort to drugging me. Abby, that's insane."

Afraid of his anger, Abby's voice quivered. "Please, Rick, don't be angry. I like you so much, but I don't

want you to hate me..."

Richard let go and moved away. "Get out, now."

"Rick..."

Richard hadn't anticipated her persistence, so he grabbed a cup from the table and smashed it against

his own head. He lost consciousness right after that.