

YOUR GUISE 461

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Hearing that, the lady shook her head in terror. "I'm sorry for disturbing you." After that, she quickly walked away.

Pearl grinned, patting Eric on the head. "Don't be scared, Eric. It's just a woman."

Richard commented calmly, "How boring!"

Enraged, Eric stared at Richard with dissatisfaction. "Could you take it if it were you?"

Pearl thought about it briefly and raised Richard's chin, teasing him flirtatiously, "I have a little money.

Would you like to be with me?"

Richard chuckled. "Of course. But you can't have more than one sugar baby."

Pearl beamed, and she playfully k*ssed Richard on the cheek, even if they were in public.

Seeing that, Eric frowned sadly. "You guys were flirting, but I was harassed by that pervert. How could it be the same?"

After teasing Richard, Pearl was in a good mood. "Let's go to the church now. It's almost lunchtime, and I don't want to be late."

Hiking up the mountain during winter was exhausting due to the low temperatures at the summit. Their breath quickly turned into visible droplets in the cold air.

Eric, excited for his first visit to a Caplein church, forgot about the earlier incident and found the experience interesting.

They hurried to the church, passing through its grand entrance.

At the door, an unusual stone statue caught Eric's attention. "This statue looks quite ugly. Why is it placed in such a prominent spot?" He reached out to touch it in confusion.

Suddenly, Pearl smacked his hand away. "Enough with the criticism! It's an honored old man here. You just have different tastes.

Feeling hurt by her unexpected reaction, Eric retorted, "No, we all think you're pretty."

His compliment earned him a glare from Richard.

Eric found Richard's reaction petty, considering he'd praised Richard's girlfriend.

Pearl was left speechless by their interaction. She decided to move on and walked over to a nearby mimosa tree.

The tree, though not tall, was adorned with wooden sticks carrying written blessings. These blessings

were tied to the tree with red strings, creating a beautiful scene as they rang softly in the wind.

Pearl picked up a wooden stick with a red string, wrote some beautiful words on it, and carefully hung it on the tree.

Richard and Eric were looking elsewhere. When Pearl found that they had not noticed what she did, she left with relief.

Little did she know that Richard had been observing her out of the corner of his eye. When she had left the tree, he went over and carefully looked for her blessing.

Finally, he found a blessing that wished for safety and happiness—Pearl's words. Richard grabbed a wooden stick, wrote something on it, and hung it next to Pearl's. When the wind blew, his blessing was revealed, and the ink quickly dried

[Richard wishes that Pearl can be safe and happy.]

After walking a bit further, Pearl realized that both Richard and Eric were no longer following her. She didn't mind the solitude, as they were usually noisy when together. Enjoying the tranquility, she continued walking.

Suddenly, she heard a faint, pitiful cry. She listened carefully and soon located the source of the sound. With urgency in her steps, she hurried in that direction.

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Pearl found herself in a yard after walking for a while, but the pitiful cry she had heard earlier suddenly stopped. As she turned to leave, she realized that the door behind her had been shut, trapping her inside.

She immediately felt a sense of unease. The people she had encountered earlier might still have ill intentions toward her, and now that she was alone, they might have come up with new plans to harm her.

Pearl looked around, hoping to find a way out. She attempted to climb over a tall wall nearby, but it was too high for her to reach.

Desperate to escape, she decided to explore her surroundings. She passed through a long corridor and crossed a bridge before arriving at a large courtyard. Despite the brightness, an eerie sense of foreboding hung in the air, and the courtyard was filled with lingering smoke. As she cautiously approached, Pearl noticed an elderly man in his eighties. He was sitting on a cushion, dressed in clergy

apparel, and engrossed in prayer

“Sir, I don’t mean to intrude...” Pearl began, but the old man interrupted her.

“Miss, I’ve been waiting for you for a very long time.”

Stunned, Pearl asked, “You’ve been waiting for me?”

“Yes.” The priest stood up and smiled solemnly. “May God bless your soul.”

Pearl grinned. “Logically speaking, I don’t trust this kind of thing.”

A different expression appeared on the priest’s face.

“I came here because I heard a strange voice. I wasn’t here to see you, sir.”

The priest’s smile stiffened.

“But I’m all ears if you have something to share,” Pearl added with a harmless smile, though the priest

became increasingly reserved.

“It’s just that it’s been a long time since anyone visited. I thought it would be nice to have a chat with

you, since you’ve suddenly appeared...”

This wasn’t what Pearl had anticipated. She initially thought the priest might be a fortune-teller who

could reveal secrets or hidden knowledge. Now, she was puzzled by his guarded demeanor.

“Aren’t you going to tell me some secrets?” Pearl regarded him suspiciously.

“Miss, I’m just an ordinary man, and I don’t possess any secrets,” the priest admitted. “We should trust science.”

“Trust science...”

The leader of the church asked Pearl to believe in science.

Resigned, Pearl gave up. “Alright, I don’t even know how I ended up here. Can you please tell me how to leave?” Glancing at the peculiar old man, Pearl felt an urgent need to get out of there.

The priest seemed disappointed. “It’s been many years since someone accurately found their way here. Can’t you stay and chat with me for a while?”

“But...”

“It’s going to rain cats and dogs in an hour. No need to rush.” The priest gestured for her to take a seat.

Pearl reluctantly sat down and tried to call Richard and Eric, only to discover that her phone had died.

Panic began to creep over her,

“Miss, is your phone out of battery?”

Pearl nodded.

“Give it to me. I’ll charge it for you.”

Pearl found their conversation rather weird, but she handed her phone to him nonetheless.

“You seem like a friendly person. I’m sure you’re blessed.”

Pearl faked a laugh. “Thank you, sir.”

“Let me make a guess: your surname is Leighton.”

Since he knew her surname, he might also know her name. “Do you know me, sir?”

“Yes, I surf the Internet.”

Pearl was rendered speechless.

“But you look like the woman who used to frequent my church to make donations twenty years ago.

“The priest gazed at her as though he were seeing someone from the past

“You’re talking about...”

“I’m guessing that person might be your mother, Miss Beah.”

“You know my mother? What else can you tell me?” Pearl’s disappointment was replaced by hope as

she eagerly awaited any information.

The priest shook his head. "I'm not certain about your mother, but I can tell you that sometimes people are destined to meet again. There's no need to rush things."

His words were useless, making Pearl's lips twitch. "Can you at least tell me something about my mother? Maybe it will give me some leads."

The priest hesitated to dampen her excitement and curiosity. "She was a very gentle woman. For three years, she regularly visited our church to make donations. Everyone in the church remembers her."

"And then?"

"After that, she began bringing a little girl with her on her visits. Eventually, she came less frequently and then stopped coming altogether. I assumed she might have become busy."

Pearl's disappointment was palpable as she hung her head. "No, she's gone missing."

Yet the priest remained composed. "Everything and everyone have their reasons. There are secrets that cannot be spoken of, and you must uncover the answers for yourself."

"Are there no other options?"

After a brief pause, the priest continued, "Sometimes, what seems distant is actually quite

near.”

Pearl took a deep breath and suddenly grasped something. “Thank you, sir. I think I understand now.

Can you show me the way out?”

The priest heaved a sigh. “Very well, I’ll guide you out of here.”

Following the priest, Pearl navigated the winding corridors until she reached the tree where it all began.

After bidding farewell to the priest, she started searching for Richard and soon found him at a nearby pavilion.

During her absence, Richard had called her numerous times, only to find her phone turned off. When he spotted Pearl, he rushed over and tightly gripped her shoulders. Anxiety and concern had replaced his usual composure. “Where were you? Do you realize how worried I was?”

Touched by the worry on Richard’s typically calm face, Pearl said, “I’m sorry, my phone was off. Plus, when I entered a place, someone suddenly closed the door behind me. I had no idea where I was.

Luckily, a priest helped me get out.”

“Someone locked you in?” Richard’s brows furrowed.

“Yeah, I found it weird too. I had a feeling that some people were planning to ambush and harm us.”

Richard nodded. "Alright, let's head down the mountain now. We have a shoot at night."

Since their plan was to visit the Sanctuary of Passion in the morning and then proceed to Luisford for nighttime filming of a k*ssing scene, Pearl had not expected such an unexpected turn of events at the sanctuary.

"Okay, we've finished our prayers. Let's head back."

Eric had just come out of the restroom and was relieved to see Pearl safely return. "I thought you got lost. Richard and I have been searching for you for a while, and then we waited for you here at this conspicuous spot just in case you couldn't find us when you got back."

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Pearl snorted. "As if I would get lost."

"Yeah, Richard said the same thing. He knew you'd find your way back. I thought he was joking, but he really knows you well. I'm glad you're safe," Eric replied.

He had the urge to pat Pearl on the head, but Richard pulled him along, saying, "Let's get back quickly.

We have a shoot tonight."

Eric reluctantly agreed, feeling somewhat frustrated by Richard's possessiveness.

On their way back, Pearl asked, "Richard, did you write a wish on one of those wooden sticks for a good relationship?"

Richard nodded. "Yes, I did."

"What did you write?" she inquired, curious.

"It's a secret."

This response only piqued Pearl's curiosity further. "Tell me, or I'll go back and check it myself." She even began to turn around as if she intended to go back to the sanctuary.

Surprisingly, Richard didn't stop her. "Go ahead. We're only halfway down the mountain. You might as well spend the night up there if you go back now."

She snorted and complained, "You're so netty! You won't even tell me."

He teased her, "If I tell you, your wish won't come true. Can you tell me what you wrote?"

This caught Pearl off guard. She hesitated for a moment before casually replying, "I... I wrote something simple, just wishing for safety and happiness."

However, Richard was unaware that Pearl had actually written two wishes and hung them in two

different spots. She had another secret wish, one she had no intention of sharing with him.

"I kept it simple too, much like yours."

Pearl decided not to dwell on it any longer. "Fine, I'm not curious anymore. Let's keep going."

The weather was cool after the rain, and the descent was not tiring. When they arrived at the shooting location, Eric insisted on accompanying them.

Pearl teased him, saying, "We're going to shoot a k*ssing scene. Can you handle it?"

Eric scoffed. "It's none of your business."

In the end, the three of them headed to the film set together.

Upon their arrival, the director was engrossed in explaining the film to Esther. When he spotted Pearl, he hurried over. "Miss Pearl, you're back. Please get ready. We'll start shooting soon."

Pearl nodded and made her way to the dressing room to change into her costume.

in the dressing room, she received the costume the director had prepared for her. As she removed her clothes and picked up the school uniform, something felt off. The outfit seemed

www.sally light, raising her suspicions.

Turning it around, she discovered that many layers of fabric had be

Loner part

of the plaid shirt had been replaced with a low-cut top. She tried to find her previous clothes but realized they were missing.

Pearl wondered if someone was trying to frame her. Keeping her composure, she found no other clothes in the dressing room except for the altered outfit she now held in her hands.

Time passed by. If someone other than Richard came later, she would be exposed.

Suddenly, an unknown actress outside screamed. "I've lost my bracelet!"

Losing a piece of jewelry wasn't a major issue, and the director would likely replace it to calm the actress down, as long as it wasn't too valuable.

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"But I got the bracelet from my grandma. It's very precious. I must find it!" the actress pleaded desperately.

"We're going to start shooting later. We can talk about it after that," the director replied, clearly irritated

by the commotion.

“But I must find it. It’s a memento I got from my grandma. Please, I’m begging you. Help me find it!”

The actress’s voice cracked as she cried piteously, as if she were on the verge of collapsing.

“Okay, okay, stop making a scene. I’ll help you find it,” the director reluctantly agreed, unab to withstand

her crying.

People nearby began assisting in the search, scanning the area for the missing bracelet. Despite their efforts, they came up empty-handed.

Frustrated, the actress turned her attention to the dressing room. “Maybe it’s in there. I want to take a look!” Before anyone could react, she pushed the door open with a creak.

“No, Pearl is still inside!”

Esther suddenly remembered that Pearl was in the dressing room changing her clothes, but it was too late. The actress had already opened the door, revealing a shocking scene inside.

Richard had positioned himself in front of Pearl, shielding her from view. Pearl’s hair was disheveled, and only half of her face was visible. Both of their lips were unusually red, leaving little to the imagination. It didn’t take long for everyone to piece together what had transpired.

Unfazed, Pearl didn't blush. She lazily rubbed Richard's earlobe and remarked, "Look. They're staring at us."

"Do you have nothing better to do?" Richard shot a disdainful glance at the onlookers, exuding an intimidating cold aura.

Pearl gave Esther a knowing look, and Esther quickly pushed the actress away, slamming the door shut with a loud bang.

"What are you staring at? Haven't you seen a couple sharing a romantic moment before? Have some shame!" Esther scolded the gawking crowd.

Reality snapped back into focus for everyone. Even the actress who had lost her bracelet turned beet red. But disappointment shone in her eyes. She wondered why it would turn out this way and when Richard got in.

She then looked around at the scattered crowd. Even if she was indignant, she could only let it go helplessly.

Meanwhile, inside the cramped and dimly lit dressing room, Pearl's n*ked b*dy was faintly discernible, with their bodies pressed closely together, radiating heat.

“Richard, how did you know something was wrong?” Pearl inquired with surprise, realizing she hadn’t even called him. She wondered how he had known she needed help.

“You’re never this slow,” Richard replied with a knowing smile.

Pearl chuckled. “You know me well.”

“Put on your clothes.” Richard handed her a second set of clothes he had procured and turned around.

“I’ll guard the door.”

Efficiently, Pearl got dressed and gently poked Richard’s back. “I’m done. You can turn around now.”

In her school uniform, Pearl appeared pure and cute, prompting a sudden laugh from Richard. “It would have been nice if I had met you in college.”

Pearl playfully hooked her arms around his neck and adopted a seductive tone. “It’s not too late now.”

Richard responded with a light k*ss. “I know. I’m very lucky to have met you.”

“Let’s go out now, or else they’ll start assuming things,” Pearl suggested with a smile. “And I want to find out who framed me.” She knew that her reputation would be tarnished if the schemer managed to concoct other tricks to deceive her.

Richard smirked. "Okay."

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Pearl followed Richard out, maintaining a calm expression as if nothing had happened.

Observing Pearl, the actress who had been frantically searching for her bracelet breathed a sigh of relief, assuming that Pearl wouldn't seek retribution.

But Pearl looked around and asked calmly, "Who was so eager to find their bracelet just now?"

The actress felt a shiver run down her spine, and an awkward silence settled over the room.

Slowly, Pearl approached the actress and examined her fair, delicate face. "What kind of bracelet did you lose?"

The actress's expression underwent a dramatic change. "It was an accident, Miss Pearl. My grandmother left me that bracelet. I... I was really anxious to find it. I didn't mean to offend you."

Framed in that light, Pearl would appear unreasonable if she pressed further. Hence, she smiled. "It appears I may have misunderstood you. What's your name?"

"I'm Ada Dawson, Miss Pearl," the actress replied, her confidence returning. She didn't expect Pearl to hold her accountable after her apparent act of goodwill.

Pearl nodded thoughtfully. "Ada Dawson... That's a lovely name."

Ada assumed that Pearl was trying to get closer to her and continued to smile. "Thank you, Miss Pearl.

But your name is even more lovely."

"So, the young lady of the Dawson Group has become an actress," Pearl remarked casually.

Ada had always displayed arrogance and a sense of entitlement on set due to her family background.

She mistakenly believed that Pearl was trying to win her favor, even after being exposed. Quick to

respond, she said, "Yes, I can act without any worries thanks to my family's support."

She then glanced at Pearl, who appeared unperturbed, and continued, "I'm glad that I became an

actress because I got to see your great charms."

It was obvious that she was trying to flatter Pearl. Others who hadn't gotten along with Ada rolled their

eyes at her pretentiousness.

Pearl, meanwhile, sneered and cast an appraising look at Ada. "But... I've chatted and had tea with

Mister Gideon, yet I wasn't aware that Missus Hailey's mother had passed away."

Pearl's statement left everyone stunned.

"I..." Ada hadn't expected Pearl to be privy to her family's affairs. She awkwardly chuckled and tried to

save face. "I misspoke. It was my paternal grandmother instead."

"Oh?" Pearl didn't press further but instead opened her laptop, searching for information about Ada's family background and various details, including her date of birth.

"Mister Gideon's mother is still alive. Are you implying that you've cursed both your grandmothers to death, Miss Ada?" Pearl questioned.

Ada was struck dumb when her lie was exposed. She had believed that Pearl was attempting to befriend her and gain her favor, only to realize that Pearl had been waiting for the opport moment to reveal Ada's deception.

In the wake of this revelation, the others in the room shot contemptus glares at Ada

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Ada started crying and tried to play the victim. "I'm so sorry, Miss Pearl. I wasn't thinking straight. I just wanted everyone to help me search for the bracelet, and that's why I said those things. I wanted people to pay attention to me, but I truly didn't mean to lie."

Her lie was outrageous, and her explanation didn't make her situation any better. If Pearl were to report this to her father, given his short temper, he might lock her up and prevent her from pursuing an acting

career.

“Why didn’t you just say that instead of trying to play mind games?” Pearl raised an eyebrow, glaring at

Ada. “Do you realize who you’re dealing with? I can dig out every detail about your family history.”

Ada began to cry even harder, and the coldness in Pearl’s eyes made her afraid. “I... I...”

“I might consider allowing you to remain a part of the cast,” Pearl said nonchalantly, blowing on her

nails.

“Alright, I’ll confess. I was envious of your beauty and wealth, and the fact that you’re with Richard, so I

resorted to such low tactics-cutting up your costume and stealing your clothes. I wanted you to feel

humiliated... I’m sorry. I know it’s my fault, and I shouldn’t have done it.” Ada was indeed envious of

Pearl. The latter excelled in everything, even her luck, and anyone would feel jealous.

“You knew what you were doing was wrong, but you did it out of jealousy, right?” Pearl questioned.

Ada froze, unsure of how to respond.

“Well, since you’re so envious, I’ll have the director arrange a scene where you’re incredibly jealous of

me. How does that sound?” Pearl’s tone was ironic.

Ada shook her head vigorously. "No, Miss Pearl. I won't do this again!"

"It's great that you've seen the error of your ways," Pearl said, smiling but with a harsh tone. "Since you've apologized, you should write an apology of about... ten thousand words. Come back when you're done."

Ada's eyes went wide. Ten thousand words? That was pretty much telling her to leave and never come back.

Seeing the fear in Ada's eyes, Pearl nodded cheerfully. "Alright, Miss Ada. I hope you stop causing problems. I've recorded everything you said just now, so if you ever make me uncomfortable again, I'll send this to your father and see how he deals with it." She waved her phone and smiled cheekily.

Ada turned pale. "My dad..."

"Yes, your dad," Pearl confirmed. "Don't even think he'll take your side. It's a choice between teaching his daughter a lesson or losing the contract with Cerubleu. Any smart person wouldn't choose the second option."

she then walked over to the director and smiled. "Shall we continue with the shoot? Delaying this any further will mess up my sleep cycle."

The director paused, then nodded. "Alright, let's proceed." He glanced at Ada and added, Ada, Miss Pearl was offering you advice for your own benefit. If you still wish to continue acting, I will consider rehiring you in the future."

After all, Ada was just a side character. It was better to offend her than Pearl.

Ada couldn't hold back her tears and ran away crying.

On their way to the set of "The Melody of the West," Eric couldn't stop talking. He was curious about Pearl's decision.

"Pearl, she apologized, so why did you still send her away?"

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"You're so naive," Pearl teased.

"How?" Eric looked annoyed and turned to Richard. "What does she mean?"

Richard calmly said, "Expect the unexpected."

Eric, not being fluent in Capleiner, became even more confused after Richard's reply. "The way you

Caplinese speak is so weird. It's always so mysterious."

"You're just not very bright." Pearl rolled her eyes. "You need to stop talking when we're in there, or I'll

get someone to throw you out.”

Eric felt bullied. He was the son of an oil baron, and his family’s wealth surpassed the GDP of some countries. Not only did Pearl not care about him, but she also wanted to kick him out.

He decided he wouldn’t play along with her anymore!

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The director of “The Melody of the West” waited at the door, and when he saw Pearl, he walked over.

“Miss Pearl, you’re finally here! I’ve been waiting.”

Mister Derek scoffed at how the director was bootlicking. “Destined to be a servant.”

The director, named Nicholas, and Derek had attended film school in the same year but had never gotten along. They were like water and oil, never mixing well together. Their working relationship became even worse when it came to financial matters.

After hearing Derek’s remark, Nicholas also scoffed. “I wonder who begged Miss Pearl to work with them.”

Nicholas was always annoyed at the thought of Pearl choosing to work with Derek. He wasn’t too bad,

so why would such a talented actress choose to collaborate with someone like Derek?

“Why didn’t you manage to secure her for your project? Maybe you should try to get her to work with you. Even Mister Richard brought funds to the crew. Are you upset about that?” Derek had a knack for getting under people’s skin.

Seeing Nicholas’s worsening expression, Pearl intervened. “Alright, let’s save this discussion for later.

Please, let’s not argue until after the shoot, alright?”

Derek looked away dismissively. “I’m not going to waste my time on him.”

Nicholas appeared somewhat relieved. “I have no interest in arguing with him either.”

“In that case, let’s go in and start the shoot.”

Derek nodded. “Alright, I won’t waste any more time on this talentless man.”

Nicholas, who had initially let it go, suddenly exploded. “What are you saying, Derek Fumero?

If you keep this up, I’ll tell everyone about the time you tried to woo the hottest girl in our year and ended up being chased down by a group of thugs and stepping in dog poop!”

Eric chimed in, “But you just did.”

Pearl burst into laughter.

Derek rolled up his sleeves, ready for a fight, when Richard spoke, "If you two keep arguing, I'll withdraw the funds."

The threat acted like a bucket of cold water being poured over them. Richard had invested several million dollars in two shows. If he got upset and pulled out his investment, they wouldn't have a way to raise that much money in such a short time.

Derek and Nicholas immediately backed down, knowing it was in their best interest to do so.

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"Shoot and say nothing else."

Everyone walked in together.

This scene in the show involved the third male lead confessing his love to the third female lead while they were on a boat passing under a bridge on a lake. However, the female character fell into the water during this romantic encounter.

But let's be honest, the story sounded quite absurd, didn't it? They shared a k*ss, and then she fell into the lake. Was the guy some sort of lake monster?

The director explained that it was all about their confession of love, and after the woman fell into the

lake, the man would search for her desperately, intensifying their romance.

Pearl could swim, so she didn't object. However, Richard was uneasy. "Is it safe for her to be in the lake?"

Pearl reassured him with a smile and a pat on her chest. "Don't worry, I had professional swimming lessons. If I hadn't been so focused on my studies, the coach might have recruited me for the national team."

Richard was still concerned and took the director aside to request boats and lifebuoys as a precaution.

They started shooting shortly after. Pearl and Richard stood on the boat, and the lake was calm. If they weren't on a set, this night view would have been perfect for a date..

Since it was a long shot, Pearl smiled and leaned closer to Richard, looking into his eyes. She decided to speak from the heart instead of following the script. "Richard, isn't the moon beautiful tonight?"

Richard gazed up at the radiant moon, then back into Pearl's eyes, feeling his heart skip a beat. "Yes, it's very beautiful."

"That's not how you do it!"

Richard didn't understand how sweet-talking worked, so he asked, "Why not?"

Seeing his innocent expression, Pearl chuckled and explained, "When the writer Natsume Sōseki was a teacher, he asked one of his students to translate 'I love you,' which a man had blurted out while walking with a woman under the moon. The student translated it as 'I love you,' but Sōseki thought it wasn't poetic enough. He suggested translating it to 'The moon is beautiful, isn't it?' It was demure yet touching, basking their love in the moonlight.

"It really is beautiful." Richard understood what she meant and smiled.

"So, if someone says 'The moon is beautiful, isn't it?' to you, it means she really likes you. If you feel the same, you can reply with 'The wind is gentle too,' which means 'I feel the same for you.'"

Richard thought about it. "I get it now."

Pearl sighed again. "What did you get?"

He gently turned Pearl's face to look at him and spoke with sincerity in his eyes. "The wind is gentle too."

That declaration instantly melted Pearl's heart and made her feel liligirl with a crush.

Forgetting they were on a set, Richard leaned closer and planted a gentle k*ss on her l*ps. It was a

heartfelt and sensuous k*ss.

The wind gently brushed against Pearl's cheeks, adding a touch of romantic allure to the moment.

"Richard, I love you," Pearl whispered his name, and he responded with a deeper, passionate k*ss.

Once they broke apart, Pearl was left slightly breathless as she leaned into his arms. "Alright, we need to get back to acting," she said, playfully rocking the boat, then 'accidentally' fell into the lake!

She splashed around in the water for a bit and called for 'help' a few times.

A moment later, something strange grabbed her foot and pulled her underwater!

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Richard felt something was wrong when Pearl remained submerged in the water for an unusually long time. He knew Pearl wouldn't play such a prank, especially in deep water like this. She wouldn't intentionally stay underwater for so long.

Worried and sensing an emergency, he urgently waved his arms to get the camera crew's attention.

Meanwhile, the crew members had discreetly averted their eyes when they witnessed the passionate k*ss between Pearl and Richard. Esther, in particular, couldn't contain her excitement and exclaimed,

“That’s so sweet! I can’t handle it. I ship this couple!”

Eric, on the other hand, wore a disappointed expression as he watched the couple’s intimate moment.

Mobius, a bit exasperated, patted Esther’s head. “Can’t you have some decency, girl?”

“What do you mean decency? It’s not like I’m not getting k*sses. I have an on-screen k*ss with Hanzel!”

Mobius, recalling the scene, couldn’t help but look annoyed. “Is that going to be your first k*ss?”

“Yes, my first on-screen k*ss was with Hanzel- Mmph!”

Before she could finish speaking, Mobius pulled her closer and k*ssed her.

“What are you doing!” Esther wiped her l*ps, flustered and panicked.

“I just wanted to help you get used to it by giving you a k*ss myself,” Mobius replied confidently.

He sounded very sure of himself which made Esther angry yet helpless. “Well since you k*ssed me, does that mean you want to be my boyfriend?”

Mobius calmly answered, “We’ll see.”

Esther was infuriated and wanted to lash out, but then Derek suddenly exclaimed, "Oh no!"

Both Esther and Mobius immediately stopped bickering and leaned close to him to see what was going on.

"What happened?"

Derek stared at the black screen, his lips twitching in frustration. "The camera malfunctioned. I'm not sure if we saved the footage we just shot."

Esther shrugged dismissively. "Well, if we have to reshoot, it's not a big deal. Those scenes weren't too difficult. I just need to see them together a bit more."

Eric, overhearing the conversation, looked into the distance and contemplated, "Should we call them back?"

"No." Esther rolled her eyes. "We shouldn't ruin their mood. They won't disappear so there's no need to bring them back. Let them enjoy some time together. You're too nosy."

Eric nodded and quietly walked away. He decided to put on a life jacket and take a boat to reach them. He wasn't about to let them have quality time alone.

Meanwhile, Richard was hearing nothing but white noise from the camera, signaling that something

was indeed wrong with it. Pearl had disappeared barely a foot away from the boat. Determined, he gritted his teeth, removed his shoes and coat, and jumped into the water.

With every stroke, Richard felt a growing sense of desperation. Pearl had seemingly vanished into the lake, and he wasn't an expert swimmer. The effort of swimming about six and a half feet had already made his limbs start to feel numb.

Richard couldn't help but wonder: Pearl jumped in, but how did she just disappear like that?

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Richard struggled in the water, his desperation growing as he attempted to resurface. Just as he was about to break through the surface, a sharp pain shot up his leg, and he began to sink. Panic washed over him when he realized he had a cramp—a cramp that could incapacitate even a professional swimmer.

Richard's face contorted with fear as he struggled against the pain and tried to call for help. However, the only response was a mouthful of water that further hindered his efforts.

Suddenly, an arm encircled his waist, and he looked up in astonishment to see Eric, determination in his eyes.

Eric rolled his eyes at Richard's predicament and began swimming with slow, deliberate strokes, dragging Richard upwards.

Once they reached the surface, Eric threw a life buoy he had brought along to Richard before climbing back into the boat and helping Richard in.

"I came over and saw only your clothes and shoes here, Richard. Did you decide to die for love?"

"Thanks for saving me," Richard expressed his gratitude, running his wet fingers through his hair and massaging the area where the cramp had struck. He was ready to jump back into the water.

However, Eric's response was far from praise. "I didn't save you. I was worried you were going to end your own life. Pearl would be devastated if you died," he quipped, but his gaze swept their surroundings as if still searching for something. "Where's Pearl? Where did you hide her?"

"I was looking for her. Something happened to her."

Eric's smile froze. "Stop playing around, Richard. What happened?"

Richard recounted the events with worry in his voice. "She jumped into the lake but then disappeared. I thought something was off so I jumped in, but I couldn't find her."

Eric stared at him coldly as his chest heaved, obviously furious. "You're such a useless waste of space, Richard!"

"You kept following me around because you wanted to spend time with Pearl. You can trick everyone else, but not me. You have a crush on Pearl, right?"

Eric's frustration erupted in a punch that left a red mark on Richard's face. What's the point of talking about this now? Tell me where Pearl is."

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Richard took a hit, but he didn't plan to hold it against Eric. Instead, he stood up, rubbed his leg again, and took a deep breath. "I'm going back in."

"Enough!" Eric pushed him down. "I'll go." He then jumped into the water.

After about ten minutes, Eric slowly swam back while holding Pearl.

Richard's eyes filled with relief and gratitude. Pearl showed clear signs of choking on water and had lost consciousness.

Eric, ready to perform CPR, paused when he took a deep breath and coldly glared at Richard. "You're her boyfriend, you should do this."

Richard, caught off guard by Eric's words, nodded and quickly initiated CPR. Pearl began coughing and expelling water, showing signs of recovery, but she remained unconscious.

"Pearl is a very good swimmer. This shouldn't have happened," Eric remarked, furrowing his brows.

Richard frowned because Eric was right. Pearl warmed up properly before

jumping into the lake, so she wouldn't have had a cramp like he did. He looked down and saw a red mark around her ankle. He compared the size of the mark to his hand, and his eyes immediately looked cold.

"I'm going to kill the person who did this," he said, his voice laced with both gentleness and vengeance.

Eric noticed the mark too, and his usual smile faded.