

YOUR GUISE 781

Chapter 781

"If you don't leave, I'll make sure you never get to walk again." James gave his final warning.

The man finally realized he shouldn't challenge him. He just spat and hastily made his escape from the scene.

James arched an eyebrow at Pearl. "I'll need you to take care of the rest."

Pearl was taken aback but nodded. "Alright." She then sent a text to the bar manager.

[Grab the man who just escaped and teach him a lesson.]

When she looked back at James, he had a contented smirk on his face. "I'm relieved that a friend like you is protecting Esther."

Pearl felt something was off with that. Why did James sound like Esther's family member while regarding her as an outsider?

"Este is my friend so of course I'd protect her."

'You're just an outsider so you should back off.' Pearl didn't voice these thoughts, but at that moment, Esther stumbled into James's arms and nuzzled her face against his chest.

"Wow, you're so warm. I'm so sleepy," she spoke drowsily and soon drifted off to sleep.

Pearl was prepared to hold Esther in her own arms, but James scooped her up instead.

"I don't think that's a good idea," Pearl said.

James, being quite tall, found carrying Esther effortless. "Why not? I doubt she'll be comfortable if you carry her."

Pearl agreed with his reasoning and rubbed her nose in helplessness. She let him carry Esther.

"It's getting late, and I think you've had enough to drink. Let me drive you home," James offered.

Pearl initially thought he might intend to take Esther back to his place, given his intentions. However, she quickly realized he was a gentleman. "Alright, thanks."

Pearl picked up the jacket that Esther had removed earlier and followed behind James. But when they reached the door, she noticed a familiar car parked there.

If she remembered correctly, it was Richard's car.

While she was contemplating this, she lost sight of James and began to panic. She didn't have James's contact information, so if he disappeared, she wouldn't be able to find Esther.

She took a step forward when she heard a familiar voice coming from the car.

"Pearl."

This brought her to a halt. The events at Waldorf Residence were still vivid in her mind, and she wasn't willing to pretend she hadn't seen anything.

Looking into Richard's cold eyes, a wave of sadness flooded her heart. "What?"

Richard had no intention of getting out of the car. Just when Pearl thought he was merely calling out to her for fun, he said, "Get in."

Chapter 782

Pearl didn't forget that her mission was to find Esther and James. "I have something important to attend to, and I don't have time for a chat," she declared, prepared to leave.

"No need to search. Esther is safe," Richard responded with a knowing smile as Pearl turned away.

Turning back around, Pearl inquired, "How do you know who I'm looking for?"

Richard found it rather amusing. "Why do you think I'm here?"

He didn't seem to be joking, so Pearl hesitantly got into the car.

Once the door closed, she found herself momentarily captivated by Richard's eyes. However, after a pause, she asked, "I'd like to know how you found out. Did James text you?"

Since James was new money who had recently returned to the country, Pearl couldn't fathom any connection between them.

Richard was uncertain about how to respond, but he didn't want to reveal his source. Instead, he nodded and admitted, "Yes, he texted me."

Though he answered readily, Pearl believed he was bluffing. She couldn't see why Richard, whose brother was engaged to Esther, would assist another man in trying to win her over. "Esther is your brother's fiancée. Why would you help another man steal her away?"

Richard casually looked at her. "That doesn't concern me."

Pausing for a moment, Pearl couldn't help but ask, "Why did you come all the way here to tell me?" With nothing left between them, she was puzzled by his visit.

"I naturally have something to say to you," Richard replied, gripping the steering wheel and gazing ahead. After a brief silence, he said, "I'm sorry."

Pearl couldn't believe her ears and found his apology ridiculous. "Why are you apologizing? What did you do?"

Had he lost his mind?

Richard's eyes remained calm, but a hint of fatigue was unmistakable. "I'm apologizing for my words earlier tonight."

Suddenly, Pearl recalled that he had been somewhat out of line and had made hurtful comments. However, it seemed that he had only apologized to maintain his facade of politeness.

Pearl felt a surge of anger. She waved dismissively and feigned indifference. "No need to apologize. It's fine. I'm just an outsider so it wasn't my place to get involved in your family's issues. I should be the one apologizing."

Richard's eyes narrowed. "Just listen when I'm apologizing. Don't say anything."

Pearl was taken aback and felt uneasy, so she raised her voice. "If you're apologizing just for the sake of it, there's no need to come all the way here. I don't accept your apology, and I don't have the right to forgive you." With that, she opened the car door and stepped out.

"Very well, I need to remind you, Mister Richard," Pearl turned around with a smile, her tone firm. "Please avoid meeting me alone from now on. I wouldn't want Miss Winona to be upset."

Richard struggled to find words, but seeing the frostiness in her eyes, his heart ached. "Understood," he replied, lowering his head to conceal his emotions.

"I'm leaving now." Pearl took a deep breath and smiled gently.

"Sure." After taking one last look at her, Richard drove away without hesitation.

Pearl felt her strength drain from her body, and she nearly collapsed to the ground.

Chapter 783

The exhaustion didn't overwhelm Pearl as she remained unsure about James's true intentions; he could be hiding something. Her priority was finding Esther.

On the other hand, James wasn't entirely at ease either. After placing Esther in the passenger's seat, he returned to look for Pearl but spotted a familiar man approaching her—Mister Richard of Waldorf Enterprises.

He wasn't concerned since they knew each other, so he returned to his car to take Esther home.

He had ulterior motives, hoping for some alone time with Esther, but she wasn't sound asleep. She shifted in her seat and suddenly opened her eyes.

Meeting her clear, bright gaze, James was captivated and felt a pang of guilt. He worried that Esther might think he was a pervert, thinking of him negatively.

"I was just about to—" Before he could finish saying "take you home," Esther suddenly chuckled.

"Why are you so happy?" James was surprised by her laughter.

"Did you know? I finally broke up with him," Esther mumbled. Though she chuckled, tears streamed down her cheeks. "I've been holding it in for so long. He cheated on me and slept with another woman."

Esther lowered her head and wiped her tears. "I'll never forgive him for what he did. I'll never get back with him."

James's heart ached when he heard that. "Yes, he's a terrible person. You shouldn't consider going back to him." Placing his hand on her head, he felt warmth through his palm and sighed. "I'm sorry for showing up late and causing you pain."

Esther shook her head. "What does this have to do with you? It's all my fault. I shouldn't have pretended not to know about it."

Pretending not to know was the most painful part. She had endured it for too long, and today, she had finally reached her breaking point. "Do you think it's because I'm not good enough? That's why he went to another woman." Her tears kept falling.

James gently wiped her tears away. "Nonsense. Lots of people love you."

"But he doesn't..." She then closed her eyes and drifted back to sleep.

A surge of anger welled up in James. He tightened his grip on the steering wheel and took deep breaths.

Mobius... He wouldn't let him get away with this.

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Pearl stood up, and her phone suddenly chimed with a text from an unknown number. She opened it and recognized the place in the photo—it was Esther's home.

[I've safely dropped Esther home. I'm sorry, Miss Pearl. You might need to get home by yourself.]

Pearl was relieved that Esther had made it home safely. [Great. Thanks for doing that.]

Chapter 784

Pearl arrived at the office early the next day, but before she could step inside, Silas grabbed her wrist, visibly angry and eager to vent.

"What's going on? You never contacted me anymore after you left my place." Silas was frustrated, noticing that she had been avoiding his texts, with two days having passed since her last response.

Pearl remained calm and simply smiled when she saw how upset he was. "I didn't think there was anything worth discussing, so I didn't."

Silas felt helpless and reluctantly released her wrist. "It was all Yelena's fault," he explained, looking at Pearl with guilt and hope. "My family found out about this, so they want you to come to my home so they can apologize."

Pearl immediately declined his invitation to visit his home. "I don't think that's necessary. It's not a big deal, it's normal for girls to have their moments." She was indirectly turning him down.

Understanding that what had happened had been traumatic for Pearl, Silas didn't want to push her and suggested that they talk about it later.

He had initially approached her in anger but left feeling disappointed.

After their conversation at the door, Pearl went to see Rosalie. Over the past few days, the latter had become more familiar with the office, and Pearl had asked Wayne to keep an eye on her, allowing her to learn a lot.

When Pearl showed up, Rosalie was studying how to create video content. Pearl could tell that Rosalie had matured in the short time she had been there.

"How's everything going, Rosalie?"

Rosalie greeted Pearl with a smile. "I've learned a lot, Miss Pearl."

"That's great," Pearl replied.

Suddenly, Celine approached them. "Miss Pearl, have you seen the news today?"

"Not yet. Why?" Pearl asked.

Celine seemed surprised. "You should take a look. A new company for influencers launched today, called PeaBleu or something like that. I heard the president is from Sapphire Group, and they just signed a famous influencer named Estrella Ford, the one who recently returned."

The sudden influx of information caught Pearl off guard, but she managed to pick out a few key words: PeaBleu, Sapphire, Estrella Ford.

Hearing PeaBleu combined with Hugo, Pearl immediately realized that Pea was connected to her. It sent shivers down her spine.

She didn't care about Hugo working with influencers. Richard thought it was a challenging industry to enter, but Hugo clearly disagreed. He would do anything for profit.

As for Estrella...

Chapter 785

Pearl immediately remembered the girl who had been sent to the hospital—it was most likely Estrella Ford.

"Alright, thanks," she replied dismissively.

Celine didn't seem pleased with Pearl's lack of reaction. "Miss Pearl, they're trying to undermine us. If a big company like that becomes our competitor, are you not going to do anything to fight back?"

Celine was less concerned about the competition and more upset that Sapphire Group was investing so much in Estrella, while Pearl had only found a replacement to share profits with her. She felt slighted, believing she was just as attractive as Estrella, if not more so.

"So do you have any suggestions?" Pearl inquired, sensing that Celine was scheming but not wanting to confront her directly.

Celine, having a plan in mind, nodded eagerly. "I think they'll be hosting some events. Shouldn't we have one as well?" She felt she was losing out on resources and needed to fight for them.

Pearl agreed to the idea. "Sure, let's do that. Cerubleu has designed friendship rings, and I want a few people from our company to endorse them so we can gain visibility. How about you team up with Rosalie for this?"

Celine was initially thrilled about modeling for a prestigious brand like Cerubleu. However, when she heard that she'd be working alongside Rosalie, a newcomer with fewer fans, her enthusiasm waned.

Why would Rosalie, someone who just started and didn't have a lot of fans, get to be in an ad campaign with her? They were on different levels.

Celine shot a hateful glare at Rosalie. "Rosalie has only recently joined us and is not very experienced. She might mess things up if she takes on these jobs."

Even Rosalie thought Celine's words made sense. Putting jewelry that was so expensive on her would be a waste. She was planning to decline when Pearl casually said, "You need to understand that I believe Rosalie's beauty suits this jewelry collection. Your involvement is only because it's a friendship pair. If you don't want to do it, I can find a new partner for Rosalie."

Even Rosalie was shocked, let alone Celine. Celine was the spare?

Celine turned purple but refrained from arguing further. She politely responded, "I apologize, Miss Pearl. I was hasty in my judgment. We should give newcomers a chance. When do we start shooting then?"

She didn't want to risk losing this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity by arguing with Pearl. She hoped to mend the situation.

Pearl crossed her arms and smiled casually. "Why the change of heart? You said you didn't want to work with Rosalie. If you're not comfortable with it, I won't force you."

Celine froze, caught off guard by Pearl's unexpected response. "No, Miss Pearl. I was just thinking about the company's interests. Rosalie doesn't have a large following so she might not contribute much to sales."

Pearl touched her chin. "She'll start gaining followers after participating in this event. You don't need to worry about that. Focus on your own follower count."

Pearl implied that Celine should mind her own business and work on improving herself.

Chapter 786

Celine didn't know what to say and just forced a smile.

Rosalie hesitated, wanting to say something to Pearl but ultimately changed her mind, seeing the look in Pearl's eyes.

"Alright, it's a happy decision. This ad campaign will start shooting in about two days so you should get ready," Pearl instructed. She then turned her attention to Rosalie. "By the way, you should start an account and gain some followers."

Rosalie nodded. She had been focused on learning about video shooting and hadn't had the time to create an account. However, she immediately decided to do so.

Upon returning to her seat, Rosalie hesitated before creating her new account. She had another account under the name "Actress Rosalie," but it only had a few tens of thousands of followers. Nonetheless, they were loyal fans who appreciated her talent.

Looking at her old account, Rosalie deleted it, selected a few attractive photos from her gallery, and posted a video on her new account.

After two hours, Rosalie's phone started buzzing. Initially, she assumed it was a series of text messages and decided to enable the "Do Not Disturb" mode to concentrate on her work. However, when she checked her phone later, she was astonished.

In just two hours, her video had amassed over a million likes, and all the comments were overwhelmingly positive.

[Wow, a new account.]

[I love hot women. Her body is incredible, and her face is stunning. So gorgeous. Will you marry me?]

[She appears shy in real life but confident online. She's mine!]

[After spending too much time online, I've lost my humanity. Hi, wifey.]

[Did you not realize she was an actress?]

[Actor Rosalie. I know. I loved her acting. She didn't have much screen time but her acting is top- tier!]

Rosalie chuckled as she read the comments. This group of internet users seemed entertaining.

However, one particular comment had risen to the top: [Did you notice she looks exactly like the influencer Celine?]

That comment sparked a discussion among them.

Rosalie had anticipated this and patiently awaited responses. People started pointing out the striking resemblance between her and Celine, though they noted they had different styles.

[She's obviously copying Celine because she has a lot of fans. She's trying to get more fans with her looks.]

This critical comment seemed to tarnish her image.

[I don't think it's that bad. Celine's videos are cuter, and she enjoys that style, but Rosalie is clearly taking on the cool and sexy persona. Look at that slender waist, impressive. I wouldn't even dare to edit my pics to look that way.]

Chapter 787

That comment wasn't exactly supportive; it was more of a neutral observation. However, it quickly came under attack.

[Rosalie is just some bullsh*t!]

Seeing this person's critical comment, Rosalie felt her anger flare up. She was about to respond when someone leaned over her shoulder.

"What's going on, Rosalie? You look upset. Is something bothering you?" Celine held a coffee cup and wore a seemingly innocent smile.

"Oh, it's nothing," Rosalie replied, tucking her phone away as Celine approached.

"You've just created a new account, and I bet your video has gone viral by now. I remember when I posted my first video and got a few million likes too," Celine said, maintaining her smile but concealing her envy.

She believed Rosalie was incredibly lucky, with the viral video and supportive followers. However, she couldn't help herself from undermining her success by paying some people to leave negative comments. Even if Rosalie became famous, it would be for the wrong reasons.

"Thanks for the compliment," Rosalie replied, though she detected a mocking tone in Celine's words.

Celine patted her shoulder, her eyes filled with coldness. "But... the comments don't seem very nice, do they? I've been around longer than you, so it's only natural that this happened. Don't worry, once it settles down, I'll speak on your behalf."

Rosalie met Celine's awkward smile with a glare. "You don't have to be so concerned because I don't really care. You know it's a misunderstanding, and the truth will come out one day. I won't be

discouraged because of this."

"If you're that confident, I'll cheer you on from the sidelines," Celine said naively, underestimating the power of the fans. She then turned and left.

In reality, Rosalie wasn't as confident as she appeared. This was her first encounter with online hate, having been a relatively unknown actress before.

However, her situation had changed dramatically after joining the company due to the president's influence, and she was well aware of Celine's animosity toward her. She suspected Celine would plot against her behind the scenes.

Just when she was feeling overwhelmed, she received a call from the president's office. Seeing Pearl's name on the screen, Rosalie gathered some courage to answer. "Yes, Miss Pearl?"

"I saw the comments on your video. It seems like everyone is attacking you," Pearl remarked.

Rosalie nodded. "Yes, but—"

Before she could finish, Pearl interrupted, her voice unwavering. "Don't worry, let them."

Rosalie was shocked. "But if this continues, won't it damage my reputation?"

Pearl's voice sounded firm. "Don't worry. I'll handle this for you. The internet always forgets."

Chapter 788

With Pearl's assurance, Rosalie felt much more at ease.

She sat up straight and continued editing her photos, surprising her coworkers who had expected her to be upset or distressed. They couldn't understand how she could remain so calm and happy after experiencing cyberbullying.

However, Rosalie paid no attention to their curious glances. Pearl had promised to protect her, so she was determined to stay confident and wait for the positive outcome.

As expected, a huge announcement shook the online world. Cerubleu, a renowned jewelry brand, was launching an influencer campaign, and the list of potential endorsers had been revealed. Aside from Esther and another attractive actress, the list included Celine and Rosalie.

This news marked Cerubleu's first venture into influencer marketing, creating a buzz of excitement among netizens. When they noticed Rosalie's name on the list, they were shocked.

[No way. How can a woman like her be part of Cerubleu?]

[Why not? She's beautiful, and her style fits perfectly with their jewelry line.]

[This influencer company is under Cerubleu. Do you think the president is trying to make Rosalie famous?]

[Look! Rosalie's name is listed before Celine's, and her poster is larger and more beautiful. Clearly, they're pushing Rosalie!]

[Tsk tsk. Rosalie is getting a lot of help right off the bat. She doesn't need to copy Celine, who can only pretend to be cute.]

[Rosalie is stunning. That short Celine has nothing on her.]

[You can keep arguing. I'm going to follow her and become one of her earliest fans. When she becomes famous, I'll be her OG fan.]

[No way! I want that too!]

The comments had taken a positive turn, and Rosalie was amazed by the power of resources. She couldn't help but wonder how Celine would react to this development.

The situation eventually calmed down as an influx of positive comments flooded the discussion. Celine even posted a comment, appearing supportive by stating that Rosalie was new to this and deserved room to grow, emphasizing that she wasn't copying her. However, her intentions were to create a favorable image for herself.

After the online buzz had settled, Pearl received a message from Hugo. She was puzzled since she had blocked several of his phone numbers, wondering how he had obtained yet another one.

[You there?]

Pearl frowned and replied with a single question mark.

[I have a new idea for your jewelry endorsement.]

Pearl couldn't help but mock his shamelessness. [What does my company's jewelry have to do with you? If you care so much, you should endorse it yourself.]

Hugo seemed to have anticipated her response. [I'll pay you four million dollars. Just let me finish.]

[Four million? There's not much to hear then.]

[Seven million.]

Pearl began to type a response but deleted it, considering her options. Eventually, she typed a different reply. [You might actually have some new ideas. Let's hear it.]

Hugo's lips twitched when he saw the reply, then typed back, [I want to talk in person.]

[I don't. Forget it.]

Hugo realized he couldn't rush this, so he agreed and texted, [Sure, I'll just text then. I want Estrella from my company to endorse your jewelry. You can name the price.]

Chapter 789

Estrella?

Pearl had a faint recollection of this person, but she couldn't fathom why Hugo was willing to invest so heavily to have her as the ambassador for a relatively small ad campaign.

[Are you interested in her?]

[Are you jealous?] Hugo shot back.

Pearl rolled her eyes and replied with a shrug emoticon.

[Just tell me if you're jealous. I can forget about her.]

Pearl clenched her jaw and smirked. [No need for that because I'm not interested in you.]

[Fine then. What do you think about my suggestion then?]

Pearl pondered the idea of Estrella being the spokesperson. [Don't think that's going to work, because I've already selected my candidates. There are only two spots for influencers.]

[11 million for one endorsement.]

Hugo was too happy to throw money around.

Pearl contemplated the offer and recognized the underlying conflict of interest. She finally responded, [Deal.]

If that was the case, she had to let Celine go then.

To avoid casting herself as the villain in this scenario, she posted a notice online, disclosing Hugo's offer of 11 million dollars for Estrella to become the spokesperson. Since Celine posted the

comment about giving the newcomers a chance, they decided to let Rosalie and Estrella take the jobs.

When Celine found out, she turned purple from anger. If she had known this would be the outcome, she would never have posted that comment. Now she had to relinquish her spot to Rosalie, leaving her feeling despondent.

Despite Celine's sorrow, the online community remained cheerful, with most of the attention focused on Hugo and Estrella. People were speculating that Mister Hugo was willing to pay millions of dollars for a beautiful face.

Hugo paid little attention to the comments. He knew the money was spent primarily to bring him into proximity with Pearl, which he found amusing. He relished the idea of working with her and witnessing her attempt to put on a friendly facade.

In his eyes, it was a worthwhile investment.

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Pearl thought the situation had reached a satisfactory conclusion, but that night, she received an unexpected call from Richard.

"Pearl."

His tone was cold, devoid of any warmth, leaving her wondering why she hadn't blocked his number as well.

"Mister Richard. Why are you calling me in the middle of the night?" Pearl responded politely.

Richard ignored her tone and got straight to the point. "I want to talk to you about your company's celebrity endorsers."

"Does your girlfriend want to get involved too?"

The term "girlfriend" wasn't a good word, and it soured Richard's mood. After a brief pause, he calmly replied, "Winona said she wants to be an ambassador for your company's jewelry too."

Chapter 790

As expected, the only person who could make Richard do anything in the middle of the night was Winona.

Pearl smirked. "If that's the case, I wonder if you'd be willing to pay the amount that's on my mind."

"Name your price," Richard replied.

"30 million," Pearl stated confidently. She wouldn't have agreed for anything less than that, even though Hugo had paid 11 million.

Richard hesitated, saying, "Isn't that too much?"

Pearl was surprised, and her tone became sarcastic, "Is it? If Hugo can spend 11 million on Estrella, an influencer he's interested in, then why wouldn't you, with your huge company, be willing to fork out 30 million for the woman you love?"

Pearl's words drew a clear line between a crush and true love, insinuating that if Hugo could spend such a sum on a crush, Richard should certainly do the same for the woman he loved.

Richard went silent.

"If you don't think it's a good deal, let's forget this then. Please don't call me about it again." She was ready to hang up and go to bed.

"Wait." Richard then slowly said, "30 million then."

"Oh, I didn't know you were such a generous person." Pearl couldn't help but sound a bit jealous. Richard, known for his strict financial discipline, wasn't one to waste money. Yet, now he was willing to spend such a considerable sum on a woman.

"You're right. Spending a little money for the woman I love is fine." He then hung up.

'For the woman he loves? Sure, you rich bastard!' Pearl hid under the blanket.

The next day, Pearl replaced the other lesser-known actress with Winona and posted a notice with similar information. The internet went crazy in response.

[Richard Waldorf truly is the most famous eligible bachelor. The way he treats his fiancée is to-die-for]

[30 million! Who would spend so much money just to make the person they love happy?]

[So what if it's 30 million? Would that bother me with a 2000-dollar salary? Does it affect my microwave dinners for months?]

[I'm so jealous. Why am I not Winona Jessleton?]

[Hugo spent 11 million for his crush and now we have Richard spending 30 million for his fiancée. I don't understand how the rich think.]

[The Waldorfs are definitely the romantic type.]

[But... Isn't Cerubleu's president Richard's ex-fiancée? Isn't it awkward for them?]

[Can't you see? Winona must be trying to show Pearl who's boss because Richard treated Pearl really well too...]

[Oh, the show is starting. I have my popcorn ready.]

