

YOUR GUISE 791

Chapter 791

[What's with all the commotion? Pearl's the smart one here. She hasn't spent a penny on the ad, and she's already made a whopping 41 million dollars. Do you think she's dumb?]

With a toothbrush in hand, Pearl casually scrolled through the comments, nodding in satisfaction. She didn't mind the chaos in the comments. The more lively it became, the more attention the ad would get, which would help boost sales.

After a quick shower, she applied some makeup and changed, getting ready to meet two people she didn't really want to see.

Earlier that morning, Hugo had messaged her about discussing a collaboration. Hugo was a smart guy, and Pearl had always found excuses to avoid meeting him. This time, however, she couldn't come up with any excuses and had to meet him willingly.

Not only that, but she also had to meet Richard. With the three of them meeting, who knew what awkward situations might arise?

The more she thought about it, the more awkward it seemed. She decided to stop thinking about it altogether.

Pearl put on some bright and fabulous lipstick, hoping it would make her appear more confident. She then drove to the cafe where they had agreed to meet.

As she arrived, she saw two people standing very close to each other.

Hugo hadn't arrived yet. Only Richard was there, and he had brought Winona with him. They were being very affectionate with each other and didn't seem to be embarrassed even in public.

Pearl adjusted her sunglasses and walked past them. They seemed to have eyes only for each other and probably didn't even notice her.

Just a few steps away, Pearl was stopped by a flirtatious voice from behind.

"Hey, Pearl. How can you not say hi when we meet?" Winona, with one arm around Richard, smiled boldly at her, a smile that made Pearl uncomfortable.

Pearl couldn't help but frown and replied with a polite smile, "My bad. You two were so cozy. I thought some crazy couple was going wild here."

When Winona heard the first part of the sentence, she thought Pearl was jealous. She was about to assert dominance, but the word 'crazy' changed her expression completely. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"What do I mean? Isn't it obvious?" Pearl replied. "I don't think it's that hard to understand. Did you struggle in English class, Miss Jesselton?" Her words were full of sarcasm.

Winona hadn't forgotten the time when Pearl slapped her for no reason. She had hoped to get along with her in front of Richard, but Pearl's disrespect caught her off guard. She tried to make amends, but Pearl brushed it off.

"Miss Pearl, isn't your way of speaking a bit harsh? I had no issue with you. How could you say something to embarrass me like that?" Winona said, sounding frustrated and with tears gleaming in her eyes, making her look pitiful as if she expected others to feel sorry for her.

Richard's expression turned cold in an instant. "Miss Pearl, mind your words, please."

Pearl removed her sunglasses, and the icy glare in her eyes matched his. "I can speak for myself and say what I want. I don't need anyone to tell me what to do."

After saying that, she glanced at Winona beside him, who still kept her eyes lowered as if she had been deeply hurt. "If Miss Jesselton can't handle this, she can cancel the deal. After all, the money hasn't been received yet, and there's still time to back out."

Winona had initially come here to annoy Pearl. How could she give up halfway? She wiped her tears and said, "Alright, I won't dwell on this with Miss Pearl."

"Hey, are we having a tea party today? I could smell the drama brewing from a mile away before even stepping in."

Hugo suddenly appeared, and his first sentence changed everyone's expressions except Pearl's.

Chapter 792

When Winona looked at Hugo, smiling confidently, her eyes immediately welled up with tears. She asked, "What do you mean?"

Hugo opened his mouth slightly, looking somewhat surprised. "I didn't say anything specific. Why are you assuming things, Miss Jesselton?"

Indeed, she had jumped to conclusions too quickly!

Winona was mad but couldn't find words to argue. She could only force an awkward smile. "I might have overreacted."

"Yeah, relax, Miss Jesselton. Not everyone's out to get you," Hugo said teasingly.

Winona was speechless and turned to Richard for support, but he remained silent. He kept his lips sealed, as if he hadn't heard a thing.

"Alright, let's not waste more time. We're here to talk business, so let's go in."

Pearl felt relieved to see Winona lose her ground. However, she didn't come here to argue with this woman. She had two important contracts to sign.

Richard didn't say much and seemed uncomfortable with the situation. He led the way inside.

Seeing that Richard had no intention of going in with her, Winona got nervous and hurried after him.

However, Hugo, as composed as ever, took his time. He shot Pearl a sly look and said, "I never thought you, the fearless one, would get teased in front of your ex like that. Your comeback was weak."

Although his words seemed harmless, the underlying meaning was that Richard watched someone else mock her without caring, implying he didn't love her.

"That's none of your business."

Pearl was ready to enter when Hugo abruptly cut her off, wearing a sly grin. "I just did you a favor. Can I get something in return?"

Seeing the smug look on his face, Pearl acted without hesitation, ruthlessly stomping on his shoe. "Move!"

Hugo's smile disappeared instantly. This time, it genuinely hurt, and he was torn about whether to speak up.

He gritted his teeth, stood tall, and his clenched fist showed that he was in pain. "You're just taking advantage of my kindness."

Pearl sneered, giving him a sidelong glance. "Did I ask for your help?"

Hugo was infuriated but had no choice. He could only watch her confidently stride in, her back graceful, without even a glance back to comfort him.

Frustrated, he endured the pain in his foot and limped inside.

Now that everyone was inside, it was time to discuss the contract.

Pearl took out two copies of the contract from her bag and gave one to each of them. "Take a look at this contract and let me know if you have any questions. Otherwise, you can sign it now."

Then, she took out two pens from her bag and handed them over.

Richard read through the contract and didn't find any issues. He was about to sign it when Winona suddenly pressed his hand.

"Wait. Can I review this contract first?"

Chapter 794

Winona was suddenly speechless. She had planned to argue but realized that what Pearl said seemed to make sense.

The Waldorfs were actually wealthier than she thought. If Richard wouldn't spend this money on her, how could he show affection for her? She heard he didn't think twice about spending on Pearl.

With this in mind, Winona bit her lip and looked at Richard shyly. "What should we do, Richard?" Letting him decide also allowed her to gauge his true feelings.

Richard understood what was going on, so he stopped arguing. He responded confidently, "The Waldorfs can afford 40 million."

Hugo laughed. "You're always so generous, bro."

Pearl joined in on Hugo's teasing, nearly giving herself away. "Well, since Mister Richard is feeling generous, let's not drag this out," she said, pointing to the contract. "Gentlemen, let's sign."

Richard didn't want to engage in further conversation and quickly signed, passing the contract to her.

Hugo was about to sign but suddenly stopped. "Wait a minute. Why did you only ask Rick if he had any objections to the contract? What about me?" His smile faded.

Pearl had wanted to create tension between Richard and Winona but didn't have any special plans for Hugo. Since he had helped her, she decided not to make things difficult for him now.

"What do you think then?"

Hugo took his pen, pointing to a clause. "Why can't I be present during the shoot?"

Pearl's expression changed. This rule was set to keep things smooth during shooting and limit interactions between Winona, Hugo, and Richard. She tried to slide this rule in, but Hugo caught on.

"So, can you give me a reasonable explanation?" Hugo asked in a flat tone, clearly displeased.

"The reason for this rule is simple," Pearl said, straightening up and explaining confidently, "to avoid disturbing the actors. Think about it, if you were to visit the set frequently, the actors will surely lose focus, and it'll affect the shooting schedule."

Despite what Pearl said, she knew it was to keep Winona from flaunting her power and influence. As for Estrella, she hadn't gotten to know her and wasn't sure about her motives, so Pearl decided not to focus on her for now.

Pearl's explanation sounded reasonable.

Hugo frowned. He couldn't argue with that.

But his initial intention was to have more intimate interactions with her. With this rule, his 11 million-dollar investment seemed wasted.

"So you're saying that I spent 11 million, and I don't even get the privilege of visiting the set?"

Pearl sneered. "Mister Richard spent 40 million and hasn't complained yet. Why are you so impatient?"

Richard chimed in, "I don't agree either."

This was all thanks to Hugo's sharp eye. 51 million wasn't a small amount.

Pearl was at a loss for words.

She didn't want to break the terms, so she had to find a compromise. "The shooting is split into three sessions, each lasting about half a day. How about you visit the set for an hour during each session?"

Chapter 797

Esther turned away stubbornly and dialed James's number. Despite knowing him for so long, she suddenly realized she hadn't even saved his number.

Someone picked up the phone and sounded like they had just woken up, their voice slightly hoarse. "I was busy last night so I just woke up. What's up?"

Esther struggled to find the right words. After a while, she blurted out, "It's nothing. I just wanted to ask if you're free."

There was a hint of amusement in the voice on the other end. "How could I not be free when you're asking me out? What time?"

Esther was afraid of being rejected in person, so she cautiously said, "Well, let me tell you now on the phone so you won't regret it later or make a wasted trip."

Stretching lazily, James smiled. "You don't have to tell me. I already know."

"Oh? What do you know?" Esther was puzzled.

"You called me about Sanders Group, right?" James responded.

Had she lost all her dignity? Esther asked dejectedly, "Well, now that you know, I won't beat around the bush. I'd like to ask for your help. Can you do me a favor, or do you have time?" Honestly, she couldn't tell from his tone if he was willing to help.

"Of course, but I have one condition."

As expected, he was laying down conditions.

"Go ahead. As long as it's not too much, I can agree," Esther said, determined, like someone embarking on a mission.

"No need to make it sound so dramatic. I won't force you to do anything," James reassured her with a chuckle. His voice was charming, refined, and noble, like a graceful cello in a Vienna theater.

Esther felt a sudden calmness wash over her. She took a deep breath and asked, "So, what do you want me to do?"

James casually twiddled his fingers. "Well, nothing much. It's just that my law firm could use an extra hand, and I was wondering if you could drop by every day to help out. Of course, I understand you have your own job, so if you're busy, you can skip a day."

His request didn't seem to have any hidden agendas. After giving it some thought, Esther nodded. "Sure, sounds good."

"Awesome! Let's meet up later, and you can fill me in on the details."

There was some activity on the other side like he was getting ready for the day.

Esther felt a spark of hope and exclaimed, "Okay. See you later!"

After hanging up, she turned to Pearl, grabbing her hand excitedly. "I did it, Pearl!"

Pearl chuckled and playfully tapped Esther's forehead. She couldn't help but think Esther was a naive kid, still going along with it after they had gotten her. "Just be careful and don't get taken advantage of, okay?"

Esther was confused. "What's wrong? Why would you say that all of a sudden?"

"Can't you tell what his intentions might be?"

Esther blushed suddenly. "I can sense something, but I think he's just intrigued for the moment and might lose interest later."

"Alright, you better go get ready."

Esther nodded and excitedly went upstairs to change.

Pearl watched her leave, lost in thought. It was time for her to investigate James thoroughly.

Chapter 798

Pearl couldn't help but worry when Esther headed to see James.

Upon Pearl's strong insistence, Esther brought her along to James's law firm, which happened to be close to Esther's place.

Esther noticed the spacious office with only a few people working, which puzzled her. "Why are there so few people here?"

"Probably because there isn't work every day."

Right after Pearl dropped her sarcastic comment, James showed up with a friendly smile. "Hey, what brings both of you here?"

"I'm here to keep Esther company, making sure she doesn't get caught by the big bad wolf," Pearl said protectively.

The comparison was clever, making James chuckle. "Okay, come on in."

He led Pearl and Esther to the couch and went straight to the point, "Alright, tell me in detail what's going on."

Esther couldn't hide a grimace as she recalled recent issues in her family's business. "It was just a few days ago when my brother finally told me the truth. Our business hit a rough patch, and I had to practically force him to confess."

She sighed and continued, "He said Lawson Enterprises played dirty, framing our company and pushing us into a contract breach. Now we have to pay a hefty penalty and deal with a lawsuit."

James remained silent, maintaining his smile.

"Don't just stand there smiling and saying nothing. Tell me what I should do," Esther urged, her patience running thin.

"Getting all worked up won't solve anything," James replied.

Hearing this, Esther stood up abruptly. She placed her hands on her waist and pointed at James. "I don't have all day. If you say something like that again, I might lose my temper!"

James stood up slowly, placing his hands on her shoulders to calm her as she sat back down. He spoke gently, "Okay, no need to get all worked up. I never said I wouldn't help you. I just meant I have things under control, so don't worry."

"So, you're going to help me?" Esther's anger, which flared up a moment ago, vanished instantly.

"Yeah, as I mentioned on the phone, I'll help you." James grabbed a teacup and handed it to her with a warm smile. "Have some tea to relax. No need to be so hot-headed. It can cause wrinkles, you know."

Esther suddenly felt embarrassed, clutching the teacup and feeling a little awkward.

"I'll handle this issue for you."

His words were comforting. With widened eyes, she asked excitedly, "Really?"

"But there's a condition. You promised to come help out at my law firm. When can you start?" James asked in return.

Without hesitation, Esther set the tea aside. She picked up a cloth from the nearby desk and took on a very humble demeanor. "I'll show up whenever you need me, Mister James. Just say the word."

James looked at her innocent, puppy-like eyes with a touch of mischief and found himself intrigued. He smiled, his voice carrying a mystical tone, "Well, your first task now is to join me for tea."

Suddenly, Pearl felt like she was out of place here. Something seemed off between these two.

James noticed Pearl's discomfort, and his gaze subtly shifted. "Miss Pearl, the matter is resolved now. Do you have other matters to attend to?"

In other words, he was telling Pearl that she could leave.

Pearl scrutinized James's attractive yet mysterious face. So far, this man was harmless.

Chapter 799

Seeing this, Pearl could be relieved for now. "If there's nothing else, I'll take off now." She got up, composed and courteous.

"Bye." James grinned, knowing he and Esther were about to have some alone time.

Pearl looked at him, her eyes narrowing slightly. "But I'd like to have a word with Mister James."

"Please go ahead, Miss Pearl," James replied.

"Este is very simple-minded." Pearl's gaze shifted between them. "I hope you won't have any bad intentions or do anything inappropriate, Mister James. If you do, I'll hold you accountable."

James gazed at the lovely woman before him and smiled. "Don't worry, I won't give you that chance."

"Great." With that, Pearl felt reassured and left.

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Winona was worried that Richard might be unhappy about the 40 million. So, she followed him back to the office.

"Rick, I sensed you weren't pleased when we signed the contract just now," Winona said anxiously, walking beside him and keeping up with his pace.

"Nope, you're overthinking it." Richard continued to walk ahead briskly, showing no intention of stopping and waiting for her.

"40 million is quite a hefty sum... How about I talk to my dad and have him cover it?" Winona was concerned about how Richard might perceive her. She didn't want him to think she was materialistic

just because she didn't stop him from spending the money.

Also, she couldn't tarnish the image she had just built, even though she knew her father would be furious if she told him. It was 40 million! Most projects were worth much less than that!

"It's okay," Richard replied in a slightly cold, flat tone.

"Please don't be upset, Rick. I know it's my fault. I shouldn't have let you spend this money—"

Winona wanted to continue, but Richard interrupted her, "Alright, I've already told you that this has nothing to do with you." There was a trace of anger in his voice.

Seeing he was upset, Winona felt helpless and decided to play her trump card. "Richard, I know you might not like me. If being with me makes you unhappy, then let's—"

Before she could finish her sentence, Richard suddenly stopped walking. He turned around, his face no longer showing any anger but rather a sudden yet somewhat gentle smile.

"Don't say such silly things."

Chapter 800

Winona felt a mix of emotions seeing him like this. She knew Richard didn't want to end things but dared not speculate why. She was afraid that Richard might be with her just for...

With this in mind, she summoned her courage, stepped closer, and boldly hooked her arm around his neck. "Do you like me, Rick?"

"Of course," Richard replied with a steady gaze.

Strangely, Winona didn't feel happy when she heard that response, so she made a bolder request. "Then kiss me."

They had been dating for three months, and Richard had shown little desire for physical intimacy, which made her unhappy. She had been in relationships before and knew she was attractive—men couldn't resist being more physically affectionate with her.

But Richard behaved like a true gentleman, showing no signs of desire in his eyes. It was only now that he made a move.

However, it was a step back.

"I think it's a bit too soon."

Winona found this explanation somewhat far-fetched. She refused to believe it, and she looked hurt. "Tell me the truth, Rick. Why did you get together with me?"

Seeing Richard step back, it felt like her heart was breaking. But now she was almost sure that Richard didn't like her.

"Don't overthink it. That was just an additional request. If you're not comfortable with it, I won't bring it up again." Richard stepped forward and hugged her.

His hug was gentle but distant, leaving Winona with a bittersweet feeling. It felt like the first time Richard had initiated a hug.

"I'm sorry."

Those words completely melted Winona's heart. "Don't be. I know I was being stubborn and doubting your feelings. It won't happen again. You can trust me, and I'll also help with your request."

How could she watch Richard, usually so confident, apologize to her?

"You're amazing, Winnie." His hug tightened.

"Don't worry, Rick. I'll treat you well from now on." Winona smiled, her eyes narrowing, lost in his hug.

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Three days later, the advertisement officially began shooting.

Winona and Estrella were both late on the first day.

As for Esther, she had family matters to attend to and was helping at the law firm, so Pearl gave her the day off and rescheduled her part for later shooting.

After a while, Pearl was notified that Winona had taken a day off due to period cramps.

Now, only Rosalie and Estrella remained on set. This was also Pearl's first time meeting Estrella after that incident.

Estrella was different from what Pearl expected and didn't quite match her photos. In the photos, Estrella always had an aloof and indifferent demeanor. Pearl didn't expect her to be such a gentle young lady.

Estrella appeared to be around eighteen, with a cold yet youthful look. When she smiled, it felt like a mannequin coming to life.