

Your Guise 841

Chapter 841

Winona panicked as the plot that seemed to be falling into place took an unexpected turn.

"Dad, my friends already know about the wedding. The invitations have been sent out. If we back out now, it'll be a scandal for our family!" she protested desperately.

Martin took a deep breath, struggling to control his frail heart. "So you understand the stakes here! It's not just your reputation on the line, it's the honor of the Jesselton family!"

Winona's expression wavered. "Dad!"

Martin turned his attention to Richard, who remained calm, and forced a faint smile. "Mister Richard, I need to speak with Winona privately. I'd appreciate it if you could give us some space."

Richard discerned the gravity of the situation and acquiesced with a slight nod. There was no doubt that this was a request for him to leave.

He nodded slightly, glanced at Winona, and made his exit.

As Winona watched Richard leave, a pang of uncertainty hit her. Was Richard upset with her? Was her father being too harsh on him?

Her father's sudden shout snapped her back to reality. "Come with me!"

It was rare to see her father so enraged, and Winona couldn't help but feel apprehensive as she followed him into the study. Once inside, she spoke timidly, "Dad, I know I made a mistake..."

"You've always been my pride and joy, Winona. I don't want to see you suffer. Look at Richard. Does he truly care about you? He married you just to get you to help that woman with her illness. There's no room for you in his heart."

Winona couldn't help retorting, "But once we're married, won't he belong to me?"

"Marriage? You're making it sound too simple." Martin chuckled coldly. "If you think getting married is all it takes to tie down a man, then be prepared to discover him seeing another woman one day."

Confusion clouded Winona's mind. "But why not?"

Martin's eyes betrayed a hint of inner conflict before settling into resolve. "Because I don't want you to end up like your mother."

Winona was taken aback. "Are you telling me you were forced to marry Mom?"

Admitting to this was a bit embarrassing for Martin. "Yes, I didn't love your mother then. I had feelings for someone else, but she fell ill. I agreed to marry your mother in exchange for her help in curing the one I loved."

This revelation left Winona reeling with a mix of shock and empathy. "And then?"

"Unfortunately, things didn't go as planned. The person I loved couldn't be saved and passed away. But I kept my promise and married your mother."

A whirlwind of emotions stirred Winona's heart. "Are you saying you never truly loved Mom?" She couldn't help but feel sorry for her mother.

Martin cleared his throat softly. "Not at first. But over time, I grew to care for her. Otherwise, I wouldn't have had you."

"Then why are you telling me all of this? What's the point?"

Martin's gaze turned cold. "If you want a real future with Richard, you need to get rid of that woman from the picture. Make sure she can never interfere again."

Winona contemplated her father's words with a mix of shock and fear. Did he mean he wanted Pearl dead?

"Dad, I don't think that's necessary. Pearl hasn't done anything too extreme. Killing her seems—"

Martin's stern gaze silenced Winona mid-sentence, leaving her feeling unsettled. "You're too soft! You won't get anywhere with that attitude, nor will you keep a man by your side."

After a moment, he sighed, disappointed that his daughter lacked the resolve he and her mother possessed. "Just do as you please. But remember, you represent the Jesseltons. Always be prepared and avoid unnecessary complications in everything you do."

These words were like a reassurance to Winona. Feeling bolstered by her father's encouragement, she nodded determinedly. "I got it, dad."

"Good." Martin stroked the stubble on his chin with a satisfied smile.

It didn't matter even if Winona couldn't do it. He was prepared to take matters into his own hands and deal with Pearl personally.

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Pearl had been Howard's apprentice for two weeks now.

The Jesseltons' medical approach differed from what she had learned under Simon. While Simon focused on practical medical knowledge, Howard delved into peculiar cases. Simon's fame eclipsed Howard's due to his expertise in common ailments, with rare diseases being less common.

"Pea, did you get what I explained today?" Howard smiled, stroking his beard as he glanced at the book.

Considering whether to speak up, Pearl found Howard's explanations clear and comprehensible. "Absolutely."

Howard looked pensive. "I never imagined encountering someone so naturally gifted in medicine. No wonder Simon was so fixated on you. If he learns I've taken you under my wing, he might be furious."

He paused, raising an eyebrow. "You've been here for a while now. Hasn't that old man reached out to you at all?"

Pearl felt a bead of sweat form on her forehead. "He's probably busy playing chess, not thinking of me."

Simon, who was miles away, suddenly sneezed.

"Yeah, back then, he was quite the chess enthusiast. He'd play for days," Howard reminisced with a nostalgic smile. However, his tone changed as he added, "Look at you, becoming his apprentice only to be neglected. With me, it'll be different. I'll do everything I can to cure your illness."

Did they really use to be best friends? It seemed unlikely. Pearl silently lamented this realization.

Suddenly, the phone rang and interrupted their conversation. Howard assumed it was Simon calling and said, "Speak of the devil. It must be that old man calling you, right?"

Pearl thought the same. After all, he was the only one in her circle who would call her. However, when she picked up her phone and saw the name flashing on the screen, her expression changed instantly.

Howard noticed it and stood up, preparing to leave. "I won't intrude on your call then."

Pearl nodded, locking the door behind him before answering her phone. "What's up, Damian?"

A deep, slightly nasal voice greeted her from the other end.

Chapter 843

"Where are you?"

"I can't disclose the exact location, but I'm safe. Don't worry." Pearl was surprised by Damian's call. They hadn't been in touch for months, ever since he went overseas to confront Katie about her pregnancy.

"I'm back. Let's meet up if you're free." Damian's voice sounded hoarse and impulsive, as if he had been drinking.

"Have you been drinking?" Pearl frowned. Damian wasn't the type to get drunk easily.

"Yeah, but that's not the point. I've taken care of things on my end. Can we meet?"

Pearl sensed there was more to the story than Damian was letting on. "What's the outcome?"

There was a long pause before Damian finally responded, "She's dead."

Dead? Pearl's heart sank. "What happened?"

Damian sounded uneasy, as if he thought Pearl might suspect foul play. "She had health issues, and the pregnancy was risky. There was an accident that caused her to miscarry. She was really worried and... she passed away a few days later."

Pearl silently mourned for Katie. "What about Jenny?"

Damian's tone turned cold. "She's gone too."

Pearl was speechless.

After sharing the news, Damian's tone changed. "So, when can we meet?"

Pearl hesitated, frowning. "Not yet. I have some things to take care of first. Let's wait a little longer."

Although she sounded calm, Damian sensed a hint of indifference in her words. "Are you upset about Katie being pregnant with my child?"

Pearl hadn't even thought about that. She had liked him before, but that was when they were young and naive. As time passed, their relationship evolved into a deep friendship.

"No, you're overthinking it."

"Yeah, I guess you're right," Damian replied with a bitter laugh. "You've moved on so this doesn't matter to you."

"You're drunk," Pearl said softly.

"Actually, I replied to all the love letters you sent me, right on the back of each one."

Pearl was taken aback by Damian's revelation. She had assumed her letters were returned unread, taking it as rejection. She had never thought to check the back of the letters.

Chapter 844

Pearl hadn't brought anything with her when she was taken to the Jesseltons, so it was nearly impossible to verify the contents of those letters now.

But she trusted Damian. Reluctantly, she replied, "I understand."

"No, you don't. If you did, you wouldn't treat me like this and wouldn't have fallen for—" Damian stopped abruptly, realizing he was going too far.

But Pearl understood what he meant. "It's been a long time. Let's leave the past behind. Keeping it in our hearts can be a beautiful memory."

That was truly how Pearl felt. Though she now knew Damian's feelings, it was too late. Her heart belonged elsewhere.

"Is that really how you feel?" Damian's voice couldn't hide his disappointment.

"Absolutely. As I said, we're good friends now, and friendships can last forever." Pearl laughed, trying to lighten the mood.

But Damian, fueled by a few drinks, was intent on expressing his feelings. "I've liked you for so long, even before you liked me. I kept it to myself, hoping you'd focus on your training. When I saw your letters, I was thrilled. I wrote replies on the back, unable to sleep from excitement. I thought your indifference meant your feelings had faded. I didn't bring it up, assuming you had seen my replies. I never imagined you hadn't."

As Damian spoke, his voice softened, and Pearl could imagine the disappointment on his face. But her feelings remained unchanged by his heartfelt words.

"Thanks for telling me."

Pearl struggled to respond to this unexpected confession. But then Damian suddenly laughed, catching her off guard.

"Just take it as me being honest with you. No need to say anything," Damian said. At this point, he didn't seek her response; he simply wanted her to know how he felt.

Pearl felt relieved to hear this. "Are you out drinking?"

Only then did Damian realize he had called while tipsy. He replied softly, "Yes, I'm out for the night."

"Well, make sure to get some rest after. I've never seen you drunk."

Damian nodded with a mischievous chuckle. "Are you worried about me?"

"I just don't want you getting into trouble in my territory, and then I'd have to bail you out." Pearl rolled her eyes. "Alright, it's getting late. If there's nothing else, you should get some rest now."

Damian suddenly noticed the time. "Okay, goodnight."

"Goodnight. Don't forget to head back and rest up." Pearl ended the call.

On the other end, Damian listened to the dial tone and felt deflated, the smile on his face slowly fading.

Empty bottles surrounded him. He continued drinking until his face flushed red.

As Damian teetered on the brink of consciousness, a woman stumbled into his arms. He couldn't help but grin slyly as he held her close.

"Do you like me?"

Chapter 845

With his naturally attractive appearance, Damian's smile made the woman's heart skip a beat.

"Y-Yeah."

Damian tilted her chin, his gaze fixed on her rosy lips. "Tell me. What do you like about me?"

The woman blushed at his direct question, feeling flustered. "Because you're good-looking."

"So you like me just because I'm good-looking? Would you like anyone who's good-looking then?"

The woman vigorously shook her head. "No, not just anyone. It's because you're exceptionally good-looking, that's why I like you."

"So, you only prefer exceptionally good-looking men?"

The conversation still felt a bit awkward to the woman, but at this point, she could only reluctantly nod.

Damian clicked his tongue, his hand reaching to gently stroke her cheek. "Unfortunately, you're not pretty enough." As his fingers trailed down her neck, he continued, "You don't have big boobs."

A mix of emotions filled the woman's face as Damian's words humiliated her like never before.

"You don't have a slim waist."

On the verge of tears, the woman felt utterly ashamed and hurt.

Damian raised an eyebrow, his voice turning cold. "Aren't you going to leave?"

With those words, the woman hurriedly turned and left.

She wasn't her.

Damian's mind was a chaotic mess. He had almost succumbed to his desires, prepared to spend the night with her.

He could easily dismiss her with money after satisfying his desires. But at the last moment, Pearl's smiling face flashed in his mind, stirring guilt within him and quelling his wicked intentions.

Despite being rejected, he felt remorse for his impure thoughts. It was a confusing mix of emotions.

Struggling to stand, Damian's drunken state caused him to stumble and collapse.

"Who would have thought Mister Damian, once esteemed, would be in such a miserable state today, and that I'd be the one to witness it?" A familiar voice pierced through the air, laced with sarcasm and pity.

"Are you here to mock me too?" Damian faced the woman before him, Natalie, his junior with whom he often clashed overseas.

"Of course not. I'm here to take you back."

"I didn't realize we had such a close relationship." Damian wanted nothing to do with her, even if it meant struggling to leave.

"I can't believe you can't tell that I like you." Natalie's voice softened. "For three years, there has always been only Pearl in your eyes. Even when I deliberately argued with you to get your attention or returned to the country with you, your focus was always on her. What's so special about her that you can't forget her?"

Chapter 846

"It's none of your business."

Natalie couldn't contain her laughter. "Oh my! Guess what? Richard is the one who's got her heart now. She's moved on from you."

Damian stroked his chest and said softly, "I know."

"Well, if you know that, why still hold on to her? Damian, would you ever consider being with me instead?" Natalie was always straightforward about her feelings. If she wanted something, she went for it, no holding back. Men were no exception.

"I don't have any feelings for you. It wouldn't work between us." With that, Damian walked away, cutting off the conversation.

"Even if you don't feel anything now, I'll make sure you do," Natalie muttered through clenched fists.

Damian paused for a moment, realizing that Natalie was quite persistent. He then casually grabbed a girl from the crowd and kissed her without a second thought.

"See? I'm just laid-back like that."

Natalie hadn't expected him to do that, and her eyes welled up with tears. "If you're so laid-back, why can't you just like me easily?"

Damian's expression darkened. "I can like anyone, but not you."

Natalie felt a pang of humiliation. She never expected Damian to use a bar hostess to spite her feelings for him. "How dare you use her to mock my feelings for you! You'll regret this!" she spat, storming off with a heavy heart.

Damian watched her go indifferently. But as he was about to apologize to the girl from the bar, he suddenly recognized her face.

"You're..." He was certain he had seen her somewhere before.

"I..."

Recognition dawned on Damian. "You're the girl from the Jordans'..."

Standing before him was indeed Gigi, looking somewhat timid. She was dressed differently from her usual style, wearing a mini skirt, but still captivating.

"I remember you went abroad with Madam Beah for treatment. Are you currently staying with her? Do you know where she is?"

His questions caught Gigi off guard, tears welling up at the mention of Beah. "I... I can't say."

Seeing her reaction, Damian sobered up. "She's not doing well, is she? If you're hiding her for her sake, please tell me where she is."

"She's at the sanatorium."

Damian's eyes lit up. "You mean the one here in Enswood?"

Chapter 847

Gigi nodded firmly and dropped to her knees with a thud.

Surprised by her sudden move, Damian asked, "What are you doing?"

"I'm begging you to please help Aunt Beah. She's in critical condition..."

Damian helped her up, sat her on the nearby couch, and gave her a tissue. "Don't cry. Take your time and tell me everything."

Wiping her tears, Gigi began, "We agreed to keep it a secret from Pea and came back home to hide safely. But Aunt Beah's really sick. We're running out of money for her treatment. I had to take this job to make enough money."

Listening, Damian felt guilty for his impulsive behavior earlier. "I apologize for kissing you like that."

Gigi blushed at the memory. "It's okay. I mean, it happened so fast. I didn't even have time to react... I mean, I don't mind. It's fine." She was inexperienced with relationships and caught off guard.

Seeing how hard she worked for Pearl's mother, Damian was moved and patted her head. "Don't worry. Tell me where she is, and I'll cover her expenses. I'll also find a great doctor for her. But, you shouldn't work here anymore."

Gigi's eyes lit up. "Really? But Aunt Beah will scold me when she finds out."

Damian felt a wave of warmth for her bravery. "She'd be more upset knowing you work here for her sake, and she'll refuse treatment even more."

Gigi, anxious, nearly dropped her drink. "Can you please keep this between us? Promise you won't tell Aunt Beah."

"If you accept my help, it's a deal."

Gigi gritted her teeth and said, "Deal."

Damian smiled, then noticed her exposed skinny legs. He removed his suit jacket and draped it over her legs. "Make sure you stay warm."

Gigi was touched by the gesture, leaving her speechless and holding onto the jacket tightly.

"Would you like a ride back?" Damian offered.

Gigi almost nodded but declined, shaking her head. She was worried it might be inappropriate.

"Then be careful on your way. I've had a few drinks so it's better if I don't drive." Damian's friendly demeanor vanished as he stood up, turning back into the stranger Gigi first met.

Watching him go, Gigi felt a mix of emotions. The intimate moments they shared were like a dream, yet real. Memories from her youth resurfaced, as if a dormant part of her woke up, leaving her startled and a bit scared.

Shaking off these thoughts, Gigi quickly cleared her mind. "What am I thinking?"

She quickly got up, clutching the jacket, and hurriedly left.

Chapter 848

After over two weeks of treatment, Pearl's body was finally free of toxins.

One day, waking up feeling almost back to normal, Pearl's excitement was evident during Howard's routine check-up.

"You seem to be doing better," Howard noted.

Pearl, sharing her joy with Esther on the phone, turned around with a smile when she heard Howard's familiar voice. "Yes, sir, I'm almost back to normal. I owe it all to your care."

"Since I'm your mentor now, it's my duty to care for you," Howard replied, secretly pleased.

"By the way, sir, you promised to release me once I recovered," Pearl reminded him.

Howard's expression shifted subtly. He had indeed made such a promise, but releasing her early could complicate things with Winona. "Pearl, do you really have to leave so soon?"

"You can't break a promise. Your word must mean something," Pearl insisted, shifting the conversation to logic.

Howard had hoped for some negotiation, but Pearl's response left no room for it. Feeling cornered, he sighed. "Winnie visits you every day. It'll be hard to explain if you leave early."

Pearl snorted. "I don't care. A promise is a promise, sir."

Howard sighed again, feeling a headache coming on. "Help me come up with a plan then, something that will let you leave without raising suspicion."

Pearl's eyes lit up with an idea. "How about this? Say my face is deteriorating due to my treatment, then use bandages to cover another girl's face and pretend she's me."

Howard considered it. "That might work."

Looking at Pearl's smiling face, he resolved to do this plan.

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Three days later, with Wayne's help, Pearl smuggled in a woman resembling her closely. The latter seemed composed and used to missions, and they shared a similar look in their eyes.

"Sir, take care of her for a few days. Once I find my mother, I'll come back," Pearl instructed Howard. As she spoke, she knew deep down that returning after leaving this place would be challenging.

Looking at the fake Pearl and observing her frosty demeanor, Howard realized his task wouldn't be easy. "Alright, go now."

Pearl bid farewell to Howard and gave some instructions to the girl, preparing to sneak out into the crowd.

Approaching the security checkpoint, Pearl caught the guard's attention.

"Who are you? I don't think I've seen you before."

The guard at the entrance, who had clashed with Pearl before, observed her closely. Seeing her with a mask and her head wrapped tightly in a scarf, her evasive expression raised his alarm.

"I'm here to deliver some food," Pearl replied, disguising her voice.

"Take off your mask," the guard demanded. He wasn't convinced and insisted on seeing her face.

Chapter 849

"There's something on my face. Removing my mask might freak you out."

The guard, getting impatient, snatched her mask off. "Let's see what— Ahh!"

As soon as he saw her face, he tossed her mask away in shock. "Your face is so ugly! Are those really pimples? They're leaking pus! Gross! Don't show your face here again!"

"Okay..." Pearl suppressed her laughter and feigned sadness. She picked up her mask from the ground, put it back on, and walked away with her head down.

Once outside, she immediately took off her mask. Then, she loosened her headscarf, letting her hair cascade down. From her pocket, she pulled out a special cream, dabbed it on a tissue, and wiped her face. The pimples and pus vanished in a flash, leaving her skin flawless.

Ten minutes later, she reached the agreed spot with Wayne, waiting quietly for his car.

A car pulled up, but it wasn't Wayne's. The license plate didn't match.

Pearl grew wary instantly. Seeing who was inside, she looked surprised. "Damian, what are you doing here?"

Damian, in his flashy Cayenne, looked eager. "I'm here to pick you up and share something with you," he said mysteriously.

"I'm only interested in my mom's situation right now." Pearl slumped into her seat, rubbing her tired eyes. She had to wear colored contacts earlier to deal with that guard, a discomfort she despised. Taking them off, her eyes felt relieved.

"Good, because I've got news about her."

Pearl perked up at his words, her exhaustion fading. "What do you know? Tell me." Damian wasn't one for jokes. If he said it, it had to be true.

She felt a surge of anticipation. Maybe Damian had found out where her mom was.

"A couple of days ago, I bumped into Gigi at a bar, and she told me where your mom is."

Pearl almost jumped out of her seat. "Where's my mom? Tell me quickly."

"She's currently at a sanatorium in Enswood. But, according to Gigi, her condition isn't great, and she might need treatment."

Prepared as she was, Pearl couldn't shake off the worry. "Can you take me there now?"

Damian revved the engine, saying, "Why else do you think I came here?"

Pearl's eyes lit up. "Great!"

Chapter 850

Pearl and Damian arrived at a sanatorium in Enswood.

Nestled on the outskirts of Enswood, not too far from the city center, the sanatorium sat in a quiet spot, away from the hustle and bustle of the town. Few folks frequented the place.

Pearl hadn't considered this location before. With Beah's serious illness, Pearl assumed she'd be in a hospital. Sanatoriums were usually for those nearing the end of their lives, so the thought of Beah choosing this place to pass away tore at her heart.

She hurried inside, eager to see her mother, but a person at the door stopped her. "Who are you? What's your name? Can I see your ID?"

Pearl felt a bit flustered but tried to stay composed. "My mom's in there. Can I go see her?"

"What's your mother's name?"

Pearl bit her lip, unsure if Beah might have used a different name here. "Beah Jordan."

The receptionist checked the list and then looked grave. "Beah Jordan... She passed away yesterday."

Pearl's heart skipped a beat. "Please double-check. You must be mistaken. How could she have died?"

The receptionist responded calmly, "I get it's hard to believe, but there was a Beah Jordan here. I wouldn't make a mistake about this."

Beside her, Damian couldn't believe it either. "I saw her just two days ago. How could she be gone now?"

The receptionist frowned. "Young man, a person's lifespan is in God's hands. No one knows when it's their time. You make it sound like we're up to something."

Damian realized that his tone had been aggressive and apologized quickly. "I'm sorry, I spoke impulsively."

Listening to this conversation, Pearl's heartache intensified. "Where's her body then? Can I see her room?"

"Miss, we need to verify your identity first before we let you in." The receptionist hesitated. "But there's a chance. If you can prove something that belonged to your mom, we can consider it."

Trembling, Pearl reached into her pocket and took out a heart-shaped pendant, the necklace she had carried when she had searched for her mom.

"Ah, yes. This is the necklace." The receptionist nodded, and his expression changed. "Come with me. I'll take you to her room."

Pearl nodded, and with Damian by her side, they followed the receptionist to Beah's room.

Inside, they found an empty, spotless room. The receptionist left after guiding them there.

Though empty now, Pearl knew with just one glance that her mother had been here.