

Your Guise 961

Chapter 961

But Hugo's words failed to provoke any reaction from Richard. If Hugo truly orchestrated their separation, then he had to admit Hugo was not as dumb as he had imagined.

"So, Rick, it seems you and Pearl aren't meant to be. Why don't you just step aside and let me take care of her? You don't have to worry," Hugo suggested, a smirk playing on his lips. He knew exactly which buttons to push to rile Richard up.

"Don't hold your breath. Pearl would never choose you even if it wasn't me," Richard retorted, confident in Pearl's feelings for him.

Hugo's smug expression faltered as he gnashed his teeth. "Don't act so cocky. You're not right for her. But I'll make the most of this situation once you two break up."

"You've got quite the imagination," Richard remarked dryly before turning on his heel and leaving.

Hugo seethed with frustration. Richard's calmness only served to annoy him further.

But Hugo wouldn't give up. He knew exactly what he needed to do next.

Observing from a discreet distance, Hugo waited until Richard had left the hospital before making his way to the investigation room.

Entering quietly, Hugo caught the doctor off guard. "Mister Hugo, what brings you here?" the doctor asked, surprised to see him.

Hugo was renowned as one of the most distinguished seniors during his college years, achieving a level of success unmatched by anyone who followed. Lecturers often displayed his photograph with pride, some basking in the glory of having taught or interacted with him.

Moreover, his good looks garnered him an extensive fanbase. Indeed, it was rare for anyone not to be charmed by someone both gentle and attractive.

Rumor had it that numerous young women enrolled in his course simply because of his presence, willing to endure the rigorous demands just to be near him. The situation was, admittedly, quite intense.

Hugo, however, eventually ceased practicing medicine and vanished from the professional scene.

Nonetheless, the doctor was overjoyed to see him.

"Just here to pick up some medication," Hugo replied with a charming smile, sensing the doctor's eagerness to assist him.

The doctor quickly offered him a seat and poured him a glass of water. "If there's anything you need, Mister Hugo, please don't hesitate to ask. I'll do everything in my power to assist you."

Hugo waved off the offer. "No need for that. I just wanted to ask if my brother was here earlier."

Brother?

The doctor recalled Richard's visit for a DNA investigation. Indeed, the person who came for the registration was Hugo's brother, the eldest son of the Waldorfs.

"Yes, he provided me with the necessary data to conduct the investigation. He seemed quite determined to know if the two people are biologically related," the doctor confirmed, curious about Richard's inquiry. "But what does he want to investigate? Does your family have other kids?"

Hugo couldn't help but smile at the doctor's curiosity. "Let's not get ahead of ourselves. No need for gossip," he replied cryptically, deflecting the doctor's questions.

The doctor nodded, expressing his agreement.

Satisfied with the response, Hugo changed the subject. "May I see the data?"

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The doctor seemed conflicted by Hugo's request, furrowing his brows with hesitation. "We have strict rules about confidentiality here. I can't simply show private investigation results to others."

Hugo's disappointment was obvious, but the doctor quickly backtracked, fearing he had offended him.

"However, if you're insistent, Mister Hugo, I suppose I can make an exception," he relented, knowing he couldn't afford to defy Hugo. "But you must promise not to tell this to anyone else. I could lose my job."

The doctor glanced around nervously before retrieving the data Richard had provided. "Please make it quick. The dean will be conducting an inspection soon, and it might not look good if he finds us," he cautioned.

Hugo nodded appreciatively, taking a cursory glance at the report before returning it discreetly. "Understood. Just put it back."

Relieved that Hugo hadn't caused any trouble, the doctor sighed in relief. "Of course, Mister Hugo. Feel free to come here if you need anything else."

Hugo nodded, then suggested, "Why don't we exchange numbers? We can talk if I need your help."

The doctor, flattered by the request, quickly obliged, failing to see Hugo's smirk.

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Meanwhile, Pearl and Richard kept a respectful distance from each other over the following days, awaiting the results of the investigation.

The biggest problem was not the divorce but how to make the Waldorf family accept their impending divorce. Luckily, Dustan and Susan were away on a trip, and the other Waldorfs were not home. This allowed Saule to stay there with peace of mind.

When the results were finally ready, Pearl and Richard headed to the hospital together.

As they entered the investigation room, they were greeted by the doctor, who handed Richard the report. "Mister Richard, here are the results."

Before Richard could read it, a familiar voice interrupted them. "What a coincidence, Rick! Meeting you here again."

Turning, Richard's expression soured at the sight of Hugo, whose presence Pearl instinctively recoiled from.

Hugo immediately noticed her reaction, and a sense of desolation hit him. Pearl wanted nothing but to stay far away from him.

"I don't want to see you," Richard declared to Hugo without hesitation.

"Just passing by. Didn't expect to find you here, the DNA investigation room, of all places." Hugo feigned ignorance.

Richard dismissed him with a terse reply. "It's none of your business."

Intent on avoiding further interaction with Hugo, Richard placed the report back in the envelope and decided to examine it later.

Hugo, however, persisted. "Come on, Rick. Let's see what the report says. We were brothers, after all."

Pearl rolled her eyes and said rudely, "There's no need for such disgusting comments at this point."

"Pearl, how could you say that? I'm just concerned about Rick." Hugo remained indifferent, knowing their moods would worsen after reading the report. He was not one to care about the people he had defeated.

"Thanks for your concern, but we're leaving," Richard replied, taking Pearl's hand.

But Hugo stood in their way. "Rick, since you have the report, why not take a moment to look at it?" He was insistent on them reading the report then and there.

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Pearl retorted, "Why do you care about us reading the report?"

"Why can't you accept the truth?"

Hugo's condescending click of the tongue only fueled Pearl's anger. "This is none of your business. Stop meddling."

"Uh-oh, are you mad?" Hugo shook his head, indicating he wouldn't give up easily.

"Let him read it if he wants to," Richard said impassively, tossing the report to Hugo.

Pearl had yet to read it. Glancing at it briefly, her heart sank at the words "biologically related."

As expected, they were cousins. Disappointment overwhelmed her.

Hugo didn't bother to read carefully. The mention of being biologically related was enough fodder for his mockery. "See? I told you. You two aren't right for each other. But you didn't listen. What a ridiculous joke for Enswood, a couple who are cousins with a marriage certificate."

Despite Hugo's sarcasm, Richard remained unruffled, much to Hugo's annoyance.

"Rick, when are you getting a divorce?" Hugo teased provokingly.

"Is that any of your business?"

"Of course, it is. Once you're divorced, I can pursue Pearl, right?"

Pearl scowled. "Stop being disgusting, Hugo."

"Don't worry. We're not getting divorced," Richard said.

Pearl looked at Richard, confused. Had he said that to provoke Hugo? After all, the report stated they were cousins.

"Rick, you know you're related. If you don't get divorced, people will laugh at you." Hugo assumed Richard was being stubborn, and he grinned smugly and waved. "It's okay. Getting a divorce isn't embarrassing."

"I said we won't get a divorce."

Hugo's expression changed, sensing something off. "Why not?"

"Because we're not related."

Pearl and Hugo were both stunned. They had seen the report, and it clearly stated they were cousins. Why did Richard say that?

"Why are you in denial, Rick? You can't fool yourself," Hugo insisted, convinced Richard was refusing to face reality.

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"Have you actually read the investigation result?" Richard's voice was steady as he questioned Hugo

Hugo picked up the report and read it, his expression changing drastically.

"I'm sorry to disappoint you. But this is the result between Pearl and her mother."

Pearl subconsciously let out a sigh of relief upon hearing that it wasn't the result between her and Richard.

"How dare you!" Hugo's gaze darted to the nearby doctor, who looked lost and fearful. It dawned on Hugo that he hadn't asked for the percentage of similarity.

The doctor texted Hugo that morning to simply inform him that the two people were biologically related. Hugo had overlooked it, so he didn't ask about that.

Snorting, Hugo redirected his frustration. "So what? Since they're related, and your uncle had an affair with Pearl's mother, it means you and Pearl are cousins."

Though uneasy that the result wasn't what he expected, Hugo remained adamant. The truth couldn't be avoided.

"What if it's uncertain?" Richard asked.

Hugo scoffed. "No, that's impossible. I know you just don't want to accept this reality, but it's the truth. Stop avoiding it."

"Maybe it's not as simple as you think." Richard chuckled. "Maybe you've got it wrong."

Hugo struggled to accept the possibility. Deep down, he knew Richard wouldn't make such a mistake.

Could it be... Richard and Pearl were not really cousins?

"Then prove it," Hugo challenged.

Without hesitation, Richard made a call, and soon a person arrived with a paper bag.

"Mister Richard, this is the investigation result you requested," the person informed Richard.

Hugo was stunned. He hadn't expected Richard to conduct the investigation elsewhere to keep him from prying.

Richard took the bag and offered it to Hugo. "This is the result between Pearl and me. See for yourself."

With doubt gnawing at him, Hugo opened the bag. As he read the report, he shook his head in disbelief.

"No, you two are related. You must have tampered with this," Hugo insisted, unable to accept the truth.

"I wouldn't stoop to such tactics," Richard retorted dismissively, turning away from Hugo.

"How is this possible? You should be related," Hugo muttered, grappling with his emotions.

Meanwhile, Pearl was relieved. She was grateful not to be biologically linked to Richard.

This meant they could avoid the divorce and the scrutiny of public opinion, a cause for celebration indeed.

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"We can do another test if you don't believe this, as long as you promise not to tamper with it," Richard agreed openly to another test.

Hugo finally accepted the truth, but self-doubt gnawed at him. What had gone wrong?

But Richard had no time to entertain Hugo's thoughts. He neatly stowed away the reports and led Pearl out of the room.

Excitedly, Pearl wrapped her arms around Richard's neck once they were outside. "What's going on? Why aren't we biologically related?" She found it incredulous. It felt like a miracle that they weren't related.

"I'm not sure, but the fact remains we aren't biologically related," Richard replied.

Puzzled, Pearl frowned. "It's weird. I'm Mom's child, but I'm not your cousin. Could it be..."

A sudden realization dawned on both of them at the same time.

"We might be onto something," Richard acknowledged, sensing Pearl's train of thought.

"Do you remember what Mom told me? She went missing after jumping off the building. Maybe something happened when she was unconscious," Pearl suggested.

Richard considered this. "It's been too long. We might not get answers, and I'm not sure if she can handle it. I'll look into it discreetly."

Pearl nodded and smiled. "Regardless, I'm very happy we're not cousins."

"Me too." Richard bent over and pecked her cheek.

Pearl felt a warmth spread through her at the gesture. She was no longer repulsed by his touch; instead, she felt an overwhelming happiness.

They made their way home quickly.

Saule was watching TV, but her expression soured when she saw them holding hands.

"Didn't I tell you? Given your relationship, you can't keep doing this," she scolded. While she generally refrained from meddling, she felt compelled to reprimand Pearl on this matter.

"Mom, you don't need to worry," Pearl reassured gently. "We're not biologically related. We can still be together."

Saule stood up in astonishment. "How can that be? I... Richard's uncle took advantage of me, and you were born. How is it that you two aren't related?"

Pearl shook her head and retrieved the reports from her bag, handing them to Saule. "We're not sure of the details, but the reports say Richard and I aren't biologically related. However, you and I are."

Saule found this hard to believe. Another possibility struck her. "Are you suggesting that I might have... had you with another man?"

The thought was devastating for Saule, shattering the acceptance she had found after so many years. Moreover, it seemed highly likely that she had been with this other man while unconscious.

This revelation was a fatal blow for her.

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Saule staggered and slumped onto the sofa, her face drained of color and struggling for breath.

Pearl quickly sat beside her, gently rubbing her back. "Mom, don't stress too much. It might not be as serious as it seems."

Richard offered his reassurance, "Ma'am, there's no need for worry. Pearl is outstanding, so her biological father must be a decent man, given how amazing she is."

Saule glanced at Pearl, trying to comfort herself with the thought. Indeed, having such a wonderful daughter implied the father was remarkable too.

Yet, for Saule, the idea that she had a child with a man unknowingly was deeply shameful.

"I hope you're right..." She sighed deeply and began to cry.

"Mom, don't worry. I'll find the truth about what happened back then," Pearl promised.

Saule hesitated, uncertain if the truth should be sought.

If Pearl couldn't find it, perhaps it was for the best. But what if she did? The father might not recognize them or be the person they hoped for. Worse, he could be deceased.

Imagining various outcomes, Saule concluded it might be easier not to search for him. Discovering his identity could lead to more complications.

"Just let it go. Let bygones be bygones." She was hesitant to revisit the affair.

"But we can't just ignore it now that we know. It's better to solve this mystery," Pearl argued, believing Saule was concerned about the difficulty of the search. "Don't worry about finding him, Mom. I'll take care of it."

"Pea, do you really want to find your father?"

Saule's question caught Pearl off guard. She realized she hadn't considered Saule's feelings, who might not want to relive that ordeal.

Pearl gently placed her hand on top of Saule's. "If you're against it, we won't search for him, Mom," she reassured, touched by the sight of Saule's tears.

"Ugh... Let me think it over." Saule felt selfish for wanting to prevent Pearl from meeting her father due to her own emotional struggles.

"Okay, take your time. Whatever you decide, I'm with you," Pearl said supportively.

Saule muttered a yes and nodded firmly.

Since Pearl and Richard were not related, Saule saw no reason to oppose their relationship. She wouldn't lose such a good son-in-law, and the thought filled her with gratitude.

"I won't insist on a divorce then. Rick, please take good care of my daughter." Saule looked hopeful.

"Of course, ma'am. Pearl is safe with me," Richard assured, comforting Saule with his commitment.

Just then, Pearl received an urgent call from Wayne.

"Miss Pearl, something's wrong!"

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Wayne sounded unusually distressed, which immediately made Pearl anxious. "What happened?"

"It's Esther. During a rehearsal overseas, she collapsed from a high fever that wouldn't go away. The doctors diagnosed her with leukemia!"

Leukemia echoed in Pearl's mind, leaving her breathless. "How is she doing now?"

"The situation is quite serious. She urgently needs a bone marrow transplant, but they haven't found a match."

Pearl felt a mix of emotions. "Is it possible to find a match here in our country?"

"I haven't checked with our hospitals yet. I'll get on it right away."

"Okay, please hurry!"

After the call, Richard, noticing Pearl's worried look, asked, "Is Esther sick with leukemia?"

"It's so sudden. She was okay before this."

"Don't worry too much. Leukemia can be treated with a bone marrow transplant."

Pearl smiled bitterly and nodded. "I'm aware of that. I'm a doctor after all. But the disease is harsh. I'm not sure if Esther can withstand the treatment."

"Esther is strong and positive. She'll make it through."

Pearl seemed to be beside herself. "I think I should visit her."

Richard patted Pearl's shoulders and whispered, "I'll go with you."

Saule, picking up on their distress, inquired, "Who's Esther?"

"A friend of ours, a very cute young woman."

Hearing that, Saule felt very sorry. "You should go to her quickly. Make sure she's okay."

Pearl nodded, resolving to book their flights immediately. Suddenly, she recalled something and asked, "Mom, will you be alright here by yourself?"

Saule waved and reassured her, "Don't worry about me. I'll be fine at home."

"If my parents come back, just say you're a friend of Pearl's mom. They'll look after you," Richard suggested, ensuring Saule wouldn't have to reveal her true identity and could stay comfortably.

Saule appreciated Richard's thoughtfulness, causing her to like him more. "Alright, I'll do that."

Before leaving, Pearl and Richard made quick arrangements with their workplaces, uncertain of how long they'd be gone. Pearl then thought of James.

"I think I better call James and tell him about this."

Richard didn't object.

However, James's phone was off, and after several attempts, Pearl decided to wait until they arrived to contact him.

An hour later, they were packed and on their way to Enswood Airport.

The flight to Mernaut was only four hours, but Pearl was restless throughout.

Upon landing, they rushed to the hospital. Entering Esther's ward, Pearl's heart sank at the sight of her frail friend.

Tears welled up in her eyes, especially when she saw James there, equally distressed.

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James adjusted his expression upon seeing Pearl and Richard arrive in a rush.

"How did you find out?" Pearl asked, surprised that James was already there, having arrived ahead of them.

"Esther called me every day, but not today. When I called her, her assistant informed me of everything," James explained, recalling how he broke into a cold sweat upon receiving the news earlier in the day.

He immediately informed the meeting attendees and rushed to the airport, securing a flight at the earliest opportunity.

Pearl asked, "How is she doing now?"

Taking a moment to compose himself, James replied, "Her fever persists, and she's developed a severe rash. The doctor's prognosis isn't optimistic. She urgently needs a bone marrow transplant. Without it, she might not survive another day."

Pearl absorbed this grim news and inquired further, "Are there any suitable bone marrow donors?"

"Not at the moment, but I've instructed my team to expedite the search. They're working to find a match within three days," James informed her.

Considering the urgency of Esther's situation, Pearl shared her own efforts, stating, "My team is also searching for a donor. They'll also take around three days."

James looked over at Esther in the bed. Her lips had lost their color, and her appearance was very frail. The once rosy and plump cheeks had become noticeably thinner, leaving her in a pitiable condition.

"Esther has always been lucky. I believe she'll pull through," Pearl consoled James and herself.

"I believe so too." James held Esther's hand tightly.

Pearl noticed that James was kneeling on the floor to get closer to Esther, tenderly holding her hand to his face. It was a sad sight.

"James, you should rest. Richard and I can stay with her," Pearl suggested, concerned about James's well-being as he appeared exhausted from his rapid journey.

"It's okay. I want to be with her," James insisted, even though his legs were numb. If Esther woke up and didn't see him, she would blame him for not caring about her.

"Then I'll send over some news to find a suitable bone marrow."

Pearl then busied herself at a nearby table, coordinating efforts to find a bone marrow donor. As she worked, her phone rang, and Mobius's worried voice came through.

"Pearl, did something happen to Esther?" Mobius asked anxiously, his concern evident despite the background noise.

"You know about it too?"

Mobius confirmed he knew and asked, "How is she? Where is she? Please tell me the address. I'll come right away."

At first, Pearl wanted to tell him, but seeing James nearby, she hesitated.

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"Pearl, are you still there? Where is she?"

Suddenly, a stern voice interrupted from Mobius's side. "What are you doing, Mobius? The competition is about to start. Stop talking on the phone."

Despite the pressure from his coach, Mobius persisted, pleading softly, "Coach, my friend is sick. I want to go and see her. Is that okay?"

The coach's response was uncompromising. "I've already told you. The competition is starting. This is your debut here. I won't tolerate any distractions. Do you understand?"

With a steely resolve, Mobius removed his racing gear. "What are you doing? Are you defying me?" The coach's tone turned incredulous as Mobius prepared to forfeit the race.

"I'm not defying you. Please, coach, I'm begging you. Let me go," Mobius pleaded earnestly.

The coach shook his head and refused cruelly, "Your race is up next. Focus on that. I don't know who this friend of yours is, but you're not giving up your chance for them."

"Coach, she's the woman I love," Mobius confessed, his words striking a chord with Pearl, who listened in.

"Which is more important to you, your career or your love life?" the coach pressed, challenging Mobius's priorities.

Without hesitation, Mobius declared, "She's more important. She's my everything."

His unwavering devotion left the coach momentarily speechless, though he still insisted, "You can finish the race in half an hour. Can't you wait until then?"

Realizing Mobius's dilemma, Pearl interjected, "Just race. I'll stay with Esther. She'll be alright for now."

Although torn, Mobius reluctantly relented under the weight of his coach's disapproval.

After ending the call, he donned his racing gear once more, but his thoughts remained with Esther, lying vulnerable in the hospital bed.

Leukemia was not a trivial illness. Esther was afraid of pain, and that illness would bring her a lot of pain.

The conflicting emotions gnawed at Mobius, distracting him even as the race began. He just wanted to get it over with so he could go and see Esther sooner.

Observing Mobius's erratic driving, the coach grew concerned. "Mobius, that's too fast! You'll get into trouble!"

Lost in his turmoil, Mobius failed to heed the warning, accelerating unconsciously until he lost control of the car when he turned the corner.

With a deafening crash, Mobius's car collided with the track barrier, engulfed in flames.

Panic erupted among the spectators as chaos ensued. Dust and smoke billowed, obscuring the scene as Mobius's fans clamored to save him.

Bang!

"Stay back, everyone! The car could explode!" the coach warned, frantically directing the crowd away from the danger.

Amidst the chaos, rescue efforts commenced, with people rushing to get Mobius out of the wreckage. His head was seriously injured, and his right leg was broken.

As he fell unconscious, Mobius murmured faintly, his thoughts consumed by Esther. "Esther... Take me to the hospital where Esther is..."

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Esther lay in the hospital bed, her breathing steady. It seemed like she was out of danger.

"James, you must be exhausted from looking after Esther. You should rest. She wouldn't want you to overexert yourself," Pearl advised, moved by James's dedicated care for Esther.

"I'm alright. I managed to get an hour of sleep earlier."

"You've been here for a whole day and only slept for an hour?" Pearl sighed, concerned for James's well-being.

Before she could continue, she noticed Esther stirring. "Is Esther waking up?" she exclaimed, surprised by the sudden movement.

James, too, noticed it, feeling her hand tremble slightly in his grasp.

After a while, Esther opened her eyes.

"James..." Her voice was hoarse as tears welled up in her eyes at the sight of him, the man whom she had been missing day and night.

James fetched a glass of water from the nearby table, put a straw in it, and offered it to Esther. "Here, have some water. Your throat must be dry."

Esther nodded and gratefully accepted the water, her spirits seeming to lift with the simple gesture.

"You're here too, Pearl?" Her gaze shifted to Pearl, her eyes brimming with tears and longing.

"You had us worried sick. You need to take better care of yourself when you're abroad," Pearl scolded gently. But guilt gripped her at the sight of Esther's pale face.

Esther brushed off Pearl's concern with a smile. "Okay, I'll remember next time."

"There won't be another time!" Pearl's sadness deepened at Esther's response.

After Esther had some water, Pearl encouraged her to rest more. James shared her thoughts. He turned and said to Pearl, "You guys can go and rest. I'll watch over her."

"You should rest instead. We've already rested," Pearl insisted, gesturing to Richard and herself. She then informed Esther loudly, "James rushed over here after learning about your accident. He didn't even rest."

Touched by his concern, Esther mustered her strength to grasp his finger gently. "James, go and rest."

Despite his bloodshot eyes, James was determined to stay, shaking his head. "I can't sleep. I'd be too worried not watching over you."

"I'm okay. But you need to take care of yourself. If you get sick, who will look after you?"

Esther would have scolded him in the past. But now, she could only lay in bed weakly. Even her voice sounded shaky.

James finally heeded her advice, nodding and giving her a reassuring look. "Alright, I'll rest a bit. Let Pearl know if you're feeling sick or if you need anything."

Esther smiled weakly, relieved. "I will, don't worry."

As James stood up, a wave of dizziness hit him, a result of neglecting his own health. He steadied himself and turned to Pearl with a serious request, "Please, let me know right away if Esther's condition changes."

Pearl promised him.

With James gone, Esther turned to Pearl, her voice weary, "I'm sleepy, Pearl. I think I'll sleep for a while."

Pearl nodded. Her heart softened as she touched Esther's hair and said dotingly, "Rest well. I'll be here with you."

As Esther drifted off to sleep, Pearl and Richard took a seat on a nearby couch, speaking in hushed tones as they watched over her.