

Chapter 125

Everyone believed that Pearl's offense was the beginning of Maisie's public revenge.

The corners of Maisie's mouth twitched as she picked up the phone to call Mrs. Santiago.

At about 10:00 a.m., Mrs. Santiago posted a video using Pearl's social media accounts.

Pearl's condition looked very poor in the video, and her gaze was stupefied. She looked as if she had lost a lot of weight overnight, and there seemed to be a huge difference between her current self and the gorgeous selfies and photos that she usually uploaded onto her Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter accounts.

The video was obviously her first online appearance after the incident.

"I was in a conflict with Ms. Vanderbilt, but it was not Ms. Vanderbilt who put me in harm's way. I was taken advantage of that night, which had caused me to believe in others' words too easily. I don't want to cover anything anymore, so I'm posting this video to apologize to everyone."

#Bruised Cheeks#: The actual victim has posted a video to clarify the whole incident. Wake up, you haters. Stop being brainwashed by the designer.

#Studied4Nothin'#: She looks really haggard. To be honest, a young girl got ruined just like this, yet she has to be ridiculed by the public. I would surely kill the culprit behind the whole incident if she was my daughter.

#SexyV#: All of you are just a bunch of f*cking haters! You guys are still trying to defend that woman, too bad the evidence is too evident this time around.

At the Vanderbilt manor...

Stephen slammed the tablet on the table and pointed at Willow exasperatedly. "Look at the things that you've done!"

Leila, who was standing on the side, was frightened. She then walked up to Stephen. "Dear, don't be angry—"

"You, you get out of here." Stephen flung her hand away.

"Look at the daughter that you've brought up. The Santiagos... Are the Santiagos some random family that she can trifle with?" Stephen shouted at Leila.

Leila bit her lip. It was obvious that she felt extremely aggrieved.

'Isn't it all because of that b*tch, Maisie?'

Willow never thought that Pearl would change her mind and side with Maisie.

'This must be that b*tch's idea. It must be her!'

"What does this have to do with Willie? Ms. Santiago was the one who chose to believe in Willie when all Willie did was disclose some information to her very casually. Besides, Ms. Santiago was originally going to harm Maisie. She was the one who's so incompetent that she got one-up by

Maisie—" Leila subconsciously let the scheme slip her tongue.

Seeing Stephen's gradually gloomy expression, Leila wanted to explain more, but that was when a backhand slap landed on her cheek.

That slap almost sent Leila into the air, and she landed on the sofa.

"So Zee was your original target?" Stephen could not believe it.

Leila would always put on a kind stepmother front when he was around, and even Willow would have the appearance of an obedient daughter, but he did not expect that his current wife could say such a thing.

"Dear, I didn't mean that..."

Stephen ignored her but glared at Willow, whose face was slightly pale. "So is it true that you were the one who set Zee up six years ago!?"

"Dad, I didn't! You have to believe me!" Willow truly panicked.

"I mustn't be driven out of Vanderbilts because of this. Otherwise, I will have nothing left!"

"Stephen!" A stern and low voice came from upstairs as Madam Vanderbilt slowly walked downstairs with Linda. "What are you doing? Why are you so furious?"

"Mother, this is none of your concern."

"How can I not be concerned about this?" Madam Vanderbilt took a glance at Leila, who had been slapped, and then looked at Willow. "She's the woman that you insisted on marrying, and she's the daughter that you brought back to the Vanderbilts. And you're starting to feel upset about them now?" she asked.

Willow ran to Madam Vanderbilt and gave off an aggrieved look. "Grandma..."

Madam Vanderbilt looked at Stephen with a troubled expression. "Stephen, no matter what, Willie is still the daughter of the Vanderbilts and my granddaughter. The Vanderbilts still need to rely on her to climb up the social ladder. You've already driven one of your daughters out of the house. Do you plan to chase this daughter away too?"

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To Madam Vanderbilt, benefits always came first. The men would inherit the family business, and the women would marry someone with power and status to help the family.

That was why she would protect Willow—because she had ‘usage’.

Stephen held his fist. “Mom, isn’t Maisie your granddaughter too?”

“Maisie?” Madam Vanderbilt’s temper rose. “She’s exactly like her mother, always the outsider of the family. Why should I rely on her?”

“Didn’t you marry Marina because of how capable she was? Your place in Bassburgh was sealed because of her, but did she respect me? She was immoral for thinking about another man when she was already married to you. The apple definitely doesn’t fall far from the tree.”

“Enough!”

Stephen’s sudden outburst stunned everyone. Even Madam Vanderbilt looked at him like he was out of his mind. Her son had never yelled at her.

“You have no right to talk about Marina like that.” Stephen stomped upstairs right after he said that.

Leila, who still had her hand to her face, turned pale when she saw Stephen yell at his mother because of Marina. Stephen had not let go of Marina even years after her passing.

That was why he wanted to revise his will. He was obviously trying to let Maisie inherit Vaenna! No, she wouldn’t let that horrible woman take anything from her!

“Mom, we need to talk...”

Leila could only talk to Madam Vanderbilt since she would definitely not agree to leave Vaenna to Maisie!

...

When Pearl’s explanation video was posted, a lot of netizens sympathized with her.

From her rude actions to being tricked, and with the statements by the few people involved, all the mistakes pointed toward the culprit—Willow.

Even People’s Daily of Bassburgh made a statement supporting Pearl, indirectly criticizing Willow’s actions and saying that she should lose her status as a renowned jewel designer.

After the news came out, the loss that Vaenna suffered was devastating. Even clients who had pre-ordered jewelry from them requested refunds to avoid getting involved.

Willow’s fame had just started, but she became the most hated person in town before she could enjoy it. That was going to anger the Vanderbilts.

“I didn’t expect Mrs. Santiago to be able to convince Ms. Santiago to come out. This seems to be the nail on Willow’s coffin.”

Unless Willow could show some proof.

Maisie leaned back on her chair. "Mrs. Santiago wants to clear her daughter's name, and I have evidence of her colluding with Willow. She would of course choose to help me."

As for Willow...

She probably never expected to be framed. If Willow was smart, she would accept it and be good until all this blew over.

Of course, if she chose to go against Pearl and expose her plan with her, she would get into the bad books of the Santiagos.

She had no proof. The netizens would just be annoyed by her attempt to explain.

However, Maisie didn't anticipate Willow's Twitter being suspended. It was obvious that Mrs. Santiago was behind it.

Suddenly, her phone rang. It was Leila.

Was this about Willow?

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Maisie laid the phone down on the desk and turned on the speaker. Leila's voice floated out. "Maisie, your grandma wants to see you..."

When the call ended, Kennedy was worried. "Do you think Madam Vanderbilt wants to see you because they have some plan? Do you want me to go with you?"

Maisie smiled. "No, Uncle Kennedy. There's a lot to be done at the studio. Madam Vanderbilt and Leila wouldn't be too much of a problem."

Maisie arrived at Sunrise Restaurant. It was odd that Madam Vanderbilt and Leila hadn't asked her to return to the Vanderbilt manor but wanted to meet her here instead. What could be the reason?

She saw Madam Vanderbilt and Leila sitting behind the table when she got into the room.

"Grandma, you asked to see me?"

Madam Vanderbilt wasn't happy at all, seeing that Maisie wasn't showing her respect and had a cold attitude. "I heard that your father has transferred the ownership of Vaenna to you?"

Maisie paused, curious. "Why didn't I know about that? Doesn't Vaenna belong to Willow now?"

She looked toward Leila while answering.

Leila was quiet and looked at her with a complicated look. Was there a hint of... resentment?

Madam Vanderbilt scoffed and said, "Even though Vaenna is a company founded by your mother, it's under us Vanderbilts now. It belongs to us."

"You're just a woman. You'll marry one day, and Vaenna will be none of your business then. I won't agree if your father changed his will so that you inherit it."

Madam Vanderbilt's speech surprised Maisie.

What did she mean? Had her father changed his will so that Vaenna would go to her?

How would that work?

"Maisie, I want you to give up on Vaenna." Madam Vanderbilt sounded like she was commanding Maisie to let go of Vaenna.

Maisie's eyes turned dark. "Grandma, I respect you but don't forget that since Vaenna belongs to the Vanderbilts, it will have nothing to do with you as well."

Vaenna now belonged to her father. It would be reasonable for him to decide who it went to. Her grandma, Madam Vanderbilt, would have no power in this. She had no right to ask her to give up on Vaenna.

"I'm the Vanderbilts' elder!" Madam Vanderbilt raised her voice.

"It doesn't matter. You still have no right."

Maisie didn't show any mercy, and her attitude was clear that she would not give up.

Madam Vanderbilt slammed the table. "You can have Vaenna over my dead body!"

Leila wasn't expecting Madam Vanderbilt to be so worked up, but what she said reminded her of something.

Madam Vanderbilt just wanted Vaenna. She wouldn't give it up to either Maisie or Willow. Leila was just using her to push Maisie back. When Maisie gave up, and when the old woman passed on, Vaenna would belong to her daughter.

Maisie and Madam Vanderbilt stared at each other, their lips pressed tight. "You're threatening me with your death? But why do you think I would be affected by your passing?"

"You really are exactly like your mother!"

Madam Vanderbilt sounded sarcastic, obviously unhappy with this attitude she shared with her mother.

Maisie's face was sunken. "Too bad my mother passed too soon, or else she might just have made you implode."

"Maisie! Is that how you speak to your elders?" Madam Vanderbilt's anger was at its peak. She almost threw a bowl on the table, but she held back when she remembered that she wasn't at home.

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"I'll treat my elders how they treat me. You've never treated me as your granddaughter since I was a child anyway. Why do you think I should be nice?"

Madam Vanderbilt had never seen nor carried her since her birth just because she was a girl.

She had still been young and didn't understand much then. She would still return home for Thanksgiving with her parents. However, she had seen and remembered how Madam Vanderbilt treated her mother.

Marina would be calm and not care much about Madam Vanderbilt. Maybe that was the reason Madam Vanderbilt thought that she was a lot like her mother.

Maisie had been under the impression that her mother's coldness to the Vanderbilts was mainly due to her father's infidelity with Leila.

"Zee, how could you argue with your grandmother?" Leila was still trying to stay in Madam Vanderbilt's good books and acted as the good daughter-in-law.

"I'm just being honest." Maisie crossed her arms and said bluntly, "It's impossible for me to give Vaenna away. Even if Dad didn't leave it to me, I'd still find a way to take it back."

No one could stop her.

"How dare you!" Madam Vanderbilt sneered.

"Why wouldn't I dare?" Maisie said that in a resolute tone, turned around, and left.

Right after she left, Madam Vanderbilt lost it and started shattering all the dishes on the table. Leila was startled but tried to console her. "Mother, don't be angry. We'll find a way to take care of her."

Madam Vanderbilt calmed down after hearing what she said. "This girl really has Marina's blood. You're right. We'll find a way to take care of her."

Maisie walked out of the restaurant, but she suddenly stopped at the car park, turned around, and looked at a Porsche in a flirty color.

She looked at the license plate.

Wasn't that Ryleigh's car?

Ryleigh loved bright-colored cars—red, purple, and sometimes she would change them to green too.

Maisie picked up her phone and called Ryleigh, and it was picked up very quickly. "What's going on? Are you at Sunrise?"

Ryleigh was stunned. She lowered her voice. "How did you know?"

"I saw your car. Why are you whispering? Are you meeting a man?"

"No, I—"

"Ms. Hill, we can talk another day if you're busy."

"No, I'm not. There's no need to postpone it." Ryleigh laughed dryly at the man sitting across from her and mumbled into the phone, "I'll explain later."

She hung up.

Maisie stood there. A man's voice? This girl. Was she forced to go on a blind date by her father again?

At the Blackgold Group...

Nolan walked out of the elevator. Before Quincy could react, Nolan bumped into a woman, but when he looked closely, it was his woman.

Maisie hadn't been paying attention. She had been walking too quickly and hadn't seen him, so she walked into him. She was going to apologize, but when she saw that it was Nolan, she didn't feel like it anymore.

Seeing her walking away when she saw that it was him, Nolan furrowed his brows, put out his arm, and blocked her. "Are we pretending to be strangers?"

Maisie looked around and gnashed her teeth. "Mr. Goldmann, this is the main hall. There are a lot of people around."

The people coming and going were very busy, and the two of them were blocking the entrance to the elevator. Nolan's identity pretty much meant they were under the spotlight.

People were looking over every now and then.

72. The Beginning

Morgana

Night had fallen, Kian and I were seated with Azrael and Anastasia having dinner, although it was only Kian who had food considering how scarce it was in the kingdom. Kian looked at his plate of rabbit meat with some vegetables, compared to the food in the Clair De Lune kingdom, the three-course meal was very small.

He didn't comment on it and simply ate, I appreciated it. He already knew the situation of our people, and I knew he would be willing to open trade negotiations. We had in fact been discussing everything since Uncle's death. The truth was out, and luckily, both kings wanted peace despite their clear dislike of one another.

"You need to call this off. Tell the Fae you will not ride into battle." I said, very aware of Kian's strong arm brushing against my bare one and resisting the urge to shiver in pleasure.

"They aren't so easy to simply say no to, not when we have already made an agreement... One that uncle kept advising me was the right thing. Even when I asked him if he was concerned that you were in Clair De Lune."

"Anything to refuse to go to war, correct?" I asked haughtily.

"Yes sister, I'm a king, made to sit upon my throne, not go to war and risk my neck." He snapped back, glaring at me.

Kian's eyes flashed as he glared at Azrael.

"Respect my queen." He said coldly, his power exuding from him despite his voice remaining low.

Azrael simply frowned.

"If we pull out, they are far too powerful still... In fact I fear they may turn on us..."

"Then join us, we aren't alone, even if you think we might be." Kian said. "We can win if it comes to that."

I watched Azrael frown thoughtfully. Anastasia silently watching him, concern clear on her face.

"The Onis Kingdom offers us nothing in supplies, yet...Clair De Lune does." She added softly.

Azrael simply looked at her with a displeased glare upon his face. He wasn't one who liked women to talk about matters of state, one of the reasons he never liked me.

"My men are already gone, they have joined the Fae's ranks already."

His words sent my heart into worry.

"Since when?" I asked sharply.

"Three nights ago."

I exchanged looks with Kian who frowned thoughtfully.

"Then what will you do?" He asked Azrael.

My brother sighed.

"I will ride with my battalion and I will pull back my troops. I will not join in, that is all I can promise you." He said after a few moments, with finality in his voice.

It wasn't the best, but Azrael's cowardly behaviour was not one that would change. His pulling out was the best we could hope for. Kian nodded as he drank his wine.

"Very well, that is enough."

"How long will you be gone?" Anastasia asked Azrael.

"Not long, but I will return to you and Remiel. This kingdom will prosper." He said, confidently drinking his glass of blood.

I hoped so, because the people of the Sanguine Empire needed it, and although he just expected things to fall into place, I hope he realised he needed to put work in too...

"When are they planning to attack?" Kian asked.

"Oh, in three days' time, I was to set out soon."

"We ride at dawn." Kian said, his eyes shimmering gold as he stared ahead, his brow furrowed.

"We will win this." I said, placing my hand on top of his.

This war was not going to be easy... But we shall come out of it victorious.

Two days had passed, Kian and I had headed back, ready to meet our army and defend our kingdom. Word was sent ahead, and despite the coronation being delayed, everyone already saw me as queen.

We were now at camp, near our chosen location just beyond the borders, awaiting the Fae army. I knew their scouts probably knew we were at the arch of Olen already and our own men were ready for any movement or oddity.

Orrian had also arrived with his men and, to our surprise, was accompanied by an extra ten thousand men given by his father. The captains of the elven army along with our own beta and deltas spent most of the afternoon planning and setting up backup plans, going over everything repeatedly to make sure things were in place.

In the late afternoon, we turned in to get some rest. I wasn't able to sleep, I simply spooned against Kian's chest, knowing that even he was not asleep.

Night had now fallen and I was in our tent, the flickering candles were lighting the tent and casting shadows upon the walls.

I looked at my black tunic with a gold trim and my chainmail made of the finest lightweight gold of Clair De Lune. The roaring wolf on the corner of the tunic made my heart skip a beat. This was it.

Taking a deep breath, I braided my hair, tying it with a black hair tie before I slipped on my black leather pants and shirt, about to pick up my chainmail when I heard Kian enter the tent. He approached me, wrapping his arms around me from behind.

"Are you sure you want to do this?" He asked as I closed my eyes, leaning into him for a moment.

"We are one, where you go, I follow." I stated, picking up my arm guards.

"I know... Surprisingly it fucking shocks even me that I know you are fucking capable of this, and that I'm fucking agreeing." He said, kissing my neck.

I smiled faintly.

"We both know I don't listen."

"That's true." He said softly, before moving away and taking the arm guards from me, slipping it on for me and strapping them shut.

"This armour you got made for me is beautiful." I said softly. ①

"Well, unlike us wolves, you will be in human form." He said, quietly adjusting them and picking up my chain mail before putting it on over my head.

"It's beautiful," I said as he helped me put my tunic on. I looked at the helmet, it was fully covered around the head and framed the face. A black fabric veil would cover my face, leaving only my eyes unmasked. "Will you be in wolf form too?"

"Not to start with." He said, cupping my face. "I love you, if things get rough, I want you to promise me that you will fall back."

"It's war, my love, things will get rough... but I know my carelessness can cost you your life too, and for you, I will be careful." I said softly.

He nodded. I looked down at him in his black tunic similar to mine and pants, his sword at his belt and his boots. He looked as handsome as ever, like the king he was. His head was raised in pride, power and the strong belief to protect his people. My king.

The sound of a howling wolf filled the air and Kian's eyes flashed.

"They're here." He said, making my stomach flutter.

I nodded as he pulled me into his arms, cupping my face as he kissed me hard. His heart was beating fast, my own thumping as I kissed him back, trying to commit the feel of his lips to memory. He broke away, brushing his thumb over my lips, it felt too short...

"I won't let anything happen to you." He said quietly, picking up my helmet and slipping it on.

"Be safe for me too..." I said, quietly gripping his shirt.

"I will be." He said quietly, giving my hand a gentle squeeze.

"I love you, Kian." I whispered. Never had I felt so strongly for anyone. It was... immeasurable.

"I love you too sunshine." He kissed my hands, before he led me out.

A black stallion was waiting for me and he helped me onto it. I was one of the rare ones who would be riding on horses from our kingdom.

The time had come, Kian and I exchanged a final look before we made our way to the front of our army...

The wait for the first attack felt like forever, but it came, just not in the form we expected. The Fae controlled the elements, and with the snow around us, the water elemental Fae took the front, manipulating it. Yet we were ready. The moment the first attack hit, Kian gave the signal motion for the first round of elven archers to shoot.

The moment they fired, and the first line of defence rushed forth to fight, chaos ensued. The sky was ablaze with different coloured surges of power. The narrow entrance made it easier to cut the Fae down as they came, yet they made a blizzard roar to life, blasting us back.

We held our flanks, I sent blast after blast of my own force-field at certain attackers, creating a shield where needed. Everyone had become split, although Reuban and three other of Kian's men flanked me the best they could.

I cut a fae down, seeing Azrael in his red and black talking to a man in deep forest green just beyond the pass.

"What is the meaning of this?" The Fae's icy hissing voice came in the distance, I frowned.

Was he the leader? I couldn't be sure...

I honed in despite being so far, trying to hear what they were saying above the shouts, the howls and the roaring of the blizzard.

"We will not be taking part in this battle..." Azrael said curtly.

"Do you think you can do that at the last moment?!" The man hissed.

I blocked an attacking fae, sending a rush of my own power at them as their flames erupted mid-air.

"I can't risk my men when they have the elves with them!" Azrael retorted. "You never said they had allies!"

"So, you wish to change sides?"

I slammed a fae aside, pulling at my reins, barely missing a ball of flames.

"Not at all. We will simply not be involved." Azrael said. "Move out!"

I glanced at the man feeling his rage as Azrael began to call back his army. Without the vampires, the fae would be weaker, and I was sure it would mess up their plans.

"We will remember this, King Azrael." The man hissed.

"As will I if you cause more problems." Azrael shot back.

I blocked another two fae, running one through with one of my two swords. Swords that were laced with poison to weaken and target the Fae.

I couldn't hear them anymore, but I hoped that the fae would do nothing to him because, right now, the vampires were among the fae army. Attacking him would cause an internal battle on the other side of the arch. If Azrael wanted, they could do severe damage to the Fae army, yet it would cost them many lives too, Azrael wouldn't risk that.

"Look out!" I heard Reuban shout just as my head snapped upwards to see Olen's arch being targeted by the fae.

That was our plan... But looking around, I realised we were the ones closer to the arch. Shit!

My eyes flew open as I turned my horse, to avoid it coming crashing down upon us. The fae were using it against us. I watched as the blocks of ice came rushing towards us, crushing our people beneath it. I raised my hands at the last moment, trying to protect as many of our men as I could that were fighting below it...

Pain shot up through my body and I flinched, almost dropping my sword.

What the...

My stomach twisted as realisation struck.

"Kian!" I gasped, trying to focus through the pain... 1