

Wife Mask 321

Chapter: 321

Every guest's attention snapped to Hailee with laser focus, while visible panic flickered across the faces of both the Craig and Sampson family members.

Hailee swept her gaze across the Craig and Sampson families with deliberate mockery before addressing the captivated audience, "Whether those videos contain truth or lies, the police will determine that through proper investigation. This isn't about which side commands more supporters or who can shout the loudest. Facts don't bend to anyone's will."

After letting her eyes linger meaningfully on Boris and Hester, Hailee's voice turned arctic and _ razor-sharp. "People who commit crimes face consequences today. The law treats everyone with equal measure. Are you two prepared to spend your engagement night behind bars?"

Hester's complexion drained of all color, and she cast a desperately pleading look toward Boris.

Boris finally emerged from his stunned stupor, no longer staring at Hailee with that pathetic, lovesick expression.

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Elliana gripped her champagne flute with such intensity that her knuckles turned bone-white, preparing to leap to Hailee's defense. But observing Hailee's remarkably calm and controlled demeanor, she forced herself to remain still.

Elliana suddenly understood that Hailee wasn't crumbling under Hester's fabricated character assassination. Hailee possessed a strategic counterattack ready to deploy, and this moment belonged entirely to her. Elliana decided not to steal her well-deserved spotlight.

Hester practically glowed with malicious satisfaction as she continued her vicious assault, "Hailee spent every single night at Royal Club, entertaining different men with disgusting intimacy. Who could possibly count how many patrons she had accompanied? This woman, despite her polished appearance, is nothing more than a _ glorified prostitute!"

"Stop this immediately!" Boris suddenly erupted with surprising fury, his voice cutting through Hester's tirade. "Keep your filthy mouth shut this instant!"

Boris knew the absolute truth about the situation. He had maintained surveillance on Hailee throughout their relationship, and she remained completely untouched by anyone. Hester's accusations were nothing but pure, calculated venom.

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When measured against the Blakely empire's staggering wealth and influence, both the Craig and Sampson families resembled mere drops in an ocean. The instant Merlin's arrival registered, representatives from both clans surged forward like eager courtiers seeking royal favor.

Even Boris, whose shoulders had sagged under mounting pressure mere moments before, swallowed his hesitation and stepped into the advancing throng.

Abandoned in the sudden exodus, Hailee's eyelashes fluttered with nervous energy. Merlin's presence invariably unsettled her—every encounter dragged her thoughts back to that mortifying yacht incident. The memory left her scrambling for solid ground, uncertain how to navigate their next inevitable meeting. Guilt carved hollows in her chest. For countless sleepless nights, she had tormented herself wondering whether the wound on his wrist had mended properly, yet cowardice had sealed her lips against asking anyone for updates.

Now, watching Merlin's confident stride carry him deeper into the room, Hailee's gaze automatically sought his wrist. The black fabric of his tailored suit concealed everything, offering no glimpse of healing flesh or lingering damage. Within heartbeats, the crowd had consumed him completely, erasing even the faintest outline of his figure from her view.

While Hailee stood suspended in bewilderment, Elliana materialized beside her like a phantom.

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Hailee had witnessed Elliana's formidable capabilities with her own eyes—few adversaries could match that particular brand of fierce loyalty.

While their hushed conversation continued, the Craig and Sampson families maintained their suffocating circle around Merlin, pouring honeyed words over him like sacrificial offerings. Merlin absorbed their praise with the enthusiasm of granite facing rain, utterly unmoved by their desperate attempts at ingratiation.

Boris approached with practiced diplomatic grace, his movement calculated to project confidence despite the tremor in his hands. Merlin's response shattered the evening's carefully maintained veneer—his fist crashed into Boris's jaw with the precision of a sledgehammer meeting glass.

"Ugh!" The sickening sound of impact reverberated through the hall as collective gasps erupted from the witness circle. Bodies instinctively retreated, creating a widening arena around Boris's crumpled form.

Years of disciplined training had transformed Merlin's hands into weapons that could splinter bone. The single blow left Boris retching crimson onto the pristine marble, his body convulsing in waves of agony.

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Boris's heart shattered with those cold words. There was a time when everything about Hailee belonged to him—her gaze, her thoughts, her entire world orbited around him. But now? Nothing she did, nothing she felt, had anything to do with him anymore. She refused to share even a fragment of herself.

"Hailee!" Boris's voice cracked as he grabbed her shoulders, desperation raw in his eyes. "Please, listen to me! I've made mistakes—lots of them—but don't turn your back like this. Don't make a scene here. Just go back and wait for me. I swear, I'll come find you."

Hailee frowned upon his touch, her face twisting with disgust. She struggled to break free, but his grip was ironclad. No matter how much she twisted or pulled, she couldn't escape. Just as she opened her mouth, eyes blazing with fury, ready to curse him for the scumbag he was, Merlin strode over. Without hesitation, he delivered a brutal kick to Boris's side. The impact sent Boris flying.

Years of combat training made Merlin's strength overwhelming for a man like Boris, who had spent his life wrapped in luxury and self-indulgence.

Boris crashed into a nearby table, sending it crashing down with a loud crash. He collapsed onto the floor in a crumpled heap. Blood seeped from the corner of his mouth as he lay motionless, unable to rise.

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Dunn let out a scream, his entire body jolting as a searing shock ripped through his arm.

Murray couldn't take it. He begged, eyes wide with panic, "He's my only son, Mr. Blakely! I should've stopped him. I failed. He didn't know who he was dealing with. Please, give him one more chance. I'll make sure he changes!"

Not once did Merlin acknowledge Murray's plea. His attention stayed locked on Dunn, and his voice came out like ice dragged over steel. "You used this hand to stir trouble. Consider this your lesson."

Then came the crack. One sharp twist, and Dunn's wrist shattered like brittle wood.

"Ah!" Dunn collapsed, clutching his arm as pain tore through him in waves. Not a single person stepped forward to help— just like what happened to Boris earlier.

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Lucas gazed at Hester with a smile that glowed with fake warmth and held out the vase once again. "Ms. Sampson," he said in a syrupy tone. "Would you kindly complete your act?"

That charming smile was sharper than a knife coated in sugar. Beneath his refined surface, Lucas was as dangerous as they came. At that chilling moment, everyone present understood something with terrifying clarity: anyone in Merlin's orbit was not to be crossed.

No one dared rise in Hester's defense. Even she knew resisting would only make things worse. Shaking with fear, she reached for the vase, holding it against her forehead. The sting in her skull hadn't yet landed when the ache in her chest had already begun. After a brief hesitation and two shaky breaths, she clenched her eyes shut and slammed the vase against her head.

Bang! Fragments exploded everywhere. Hester collapsed instantly, knocked unconscious. A deep cut on her head began bleeding across the gleaming floor.

Nobody rushed to her aid. The banquet hall stayed eerily quiet, as if the very air had frozen. Everyone's eyes darted cautiously toward Merlin. Whispers about his cold heart and quick temper had always floated around, but this moment made those whispers feel terrifyingly real. One shared thought swept through the crowd—it was safer to provoke a monster than to challenge Merlin.

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Slipping into the car, Elliana turned to Paulina without preamble, her tone leaving no room for debate. "Paulina, take me to Willow Lane. I need that spaghetti tonight."

Paulina hesitated for a heartbeat, her reluctance flickering in her eyes. She was keenly aware of how much Cole hoped Elliana would come home early, but her instructions from him were clear—whatever Elliana wanted, she was to make it happen.

After a brief pause, Paulina's lips curled into a polite smile. "Of course, Mrs. Evans." She leaned forward and quietly told the driver to head for Willow Lane. The engine purred to life, and they were off.

As the car rolled away from the curb, Elliana quickly tapped out a message to Cole. "Coley, I'm heading to Hailee's for spaghetti. I'll be home a little late."

She half-expected his usual prompt reply—a teasing quip or an emoji sent in seconds. But tonight, her screen stayed stubbornly blank. Minutes ticked by with no response. Shrugging it off, she figured he was probably swamped with paperwork or trapped in some endless meeting. He always texted back when he could. He'd see her message and reply soon enough.

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Myles froze in confusion for a heartbeat, but quickly scrambled to obey, hurrying out and returning with a whip clutched in his trembling hands.

Cole balanced the whip in his palm, a steely glint in his eye as he spoke with icy amusement. "If she walks through that door by ten, I'll let this slide. But if she dares show up late, I'LL make sure she remembers tonight—right down to the sting."

Myles, Aron, and Hugh all grimaced in perfect sync, exchanging resigned glances. The couple were at it again- another round of marital fireworks was about to explode.

Meanwhile, Elliana strolled through the evening without a care in the world, ignorant of the brewing storm back home. At Loftus's Comfort Eats, she dug into a heaping plate of spaghetti, savoring every bite of Hailee's father's secret recipe. Their laughter mingled with the gentle clatter of dishes, and the hours slipped away faster than she realized.

When Elliana finally pushed back her chair, the night outside had deepened to pitch black. By the time she pulled into Regal Grove, the clock had just struck midnight. A strange hush enveloped the entire estate.

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Cole brooded on the sofa, his gaze thunderous and unyielding. Gripping a long whip, he seemed to radiate an icy, suffocating energy that drove every last servant to scatter like leaves in a storm.

Myles, Aron, and Hugh stood rigid to the side, hardly daring to breathe.

The living room had sunk into a heavy silence, thick with tension.

Suddenly, Elliana crashed into the scene like a bolt of lightning. Ignoring the uneasy stares, she barreled straight for Cole and, without hesitation, threw herself into his arms. "Coley, my love, I

missed you so much! Gimme that gorgeous face-I need some kisses!" she declared, her tone dripping with playful sweetness.

Before Cole could react, Elliana seized his cheeks in both hands and peppered kisses across every inch of his face— forehead, eyelids, nose, lips, and jaw.