

Marrying 301

Chapter 301 A Complete Hoax

Lucy nodded and went silent

Rodney lowered his head and sighed.

Cherise furrowed her eyebrow. She could not hear him clearly, but she was certain he mumbled. “What a shame,” when he sighed.

She pursed her lips as she felt even more revulsion for him.

The vehicle began to move.

Cherise leaned against the window, shutting her eyes drowsily.

It had been her habit since she was young. She would drift off on every car trip.

She got better after marrying Damien, as they frequently used the car.

But she could not help herself from dozing off on long-distance journeys.

When she woke up, they were in Sequoia.

Yawning, she pulled her luggage out with her and examined the village.

To her surprise, it was not as charming as the Shaw’s village.

Disappointment crept up in the girl’s heart.

What...

When she saw photos of the place online, she thought that the place was breathtaking-

But now that she was there, it was a complete hoax!

I should have just gone home.

“This is gorgeous!”

“It’s just as beautiful as I expected!”

“Oh my! This is my first time in such a paradise!”

Cherise did not expect all the others to rave about how beautiful the place was.

They even called it a paradise.

Cherise was taken aback. She could not understand.

1/3

Is it... is it that our village is just too beautiful?

This doesn’t look special to me at all...

“Country bumpkin, you’ve never been to such a beautiful place before, have you?”

Jessie glared at Cherise when she stepped off the bus

“What are you staring at Are you thinking that your old home isn’t as stunning? But that’s not surprising at all. It’s impossible for a country bumpkin to visit such a paradise. I’m not surprised you’re stunned”

She pulled Mandy. “Let’s go”

Mandy stepped off the bus elegantly. She looked at Cherise and smiled unexpectedly. “It’s my first time at such a place too.”

She could not avert her eyes from the scenery.

She had not been to such a picturesque place.

Besides, she did not need to be at war with Cherise since Damien was not around.

“What are you saying to her?”

Jessie pressed her lips together and pulled Mandy.

She must have used too much strength as Mandy began to lose her balance. She was about to fall onto the ground.

A man’s hand pulled her in time.

It was Rodney.

Whether it was intentional or not, when he pulled her, she almost fell right into his embrace.

But it did not happen as she held herself up with his arm.

“Thank you.”

Her face was pale.

A hint of red flushed across his cheeks. “No, no worries.”

“How dare you take advantage of Mandy, you creep!”

Jessie glowered at him while pulling Mandy away.

Mandy looked back unconsciously as they left.

2/3

She noticed the excitement and joy in his eyes.

A cold look flitted through her eyes.

That’s Lucy’s boyfriend?

He’s just a random guy.

“Let’s go.”

Lucy frowned while heading toward Cherise with her luggage.

Cherise furrowed her forehead as she joined Lucy with her luggage. “You saw that, right?”

She looked back at Rodney, who was collecting the things on the bus with the other club members. "He could have just supported Mandy's arm if he wanted to help her. Why does he have to do that?"

3/3

Chapter 302 Staying in a Run-down House

Cherise couldn't help but notice how Rodney rushed to Mandy's side and found it inappropriate.

She believed there were more suitable ways to assist Mandy without getting so physically close, especially since Rodney was already in a relationship with Lucy. Rodney's action just didn't sit right with her.

Lucy shrugged and said, "Maybe the situation required quick action, and he didn't have time to think it through."

Cherise's comment didn't faze Lucy, and they all continued walking, with Lucy dragging her luggage. "Is your hometown prettier than this place?"

The mere mention of her hometown got Cherise all excited. She eagerly shook her head, "Absolutely!"

"This place doesn't hold a candle to my hometown!"

Just before they arrived in Sequoia, Rodney and Lucy were told that the photography crew had managed to secure the village's only villas.

However, when they arrived, they were in for a surprise a rich man had snatched up one of the villas, who had paid three times what the photography crew had.

With only one villa left, there wasn't enough room for everyone, so some had to be directed to a nearby, rundown single-story house.

Jessie was frustrated.

She dropped her luggage and exclaimed, "What's wrong with them? Why must Mandy and I stay in this rundown place because we registered late? Can't they assign us based on the order we signed up?"

"This is unfair!"

"What's your problem?"

One of the girls in charge couldn't stand Jessie's arrogance. "We're all city folks, and that nearby house is so sorry that nobody wants to stay there. It's simple first come, first served. You were the last one here, so it's only fair that you get what's left."

The group of people all seemed to agree with her. Jessie clenched her teeth and looked at Mandy. "Mandy... say something!"

Mandy didn't mind at all. After all, she had been through her fair share of tough nights with the Wool family.

Staying in a rundown countryside house was nothing to her. But Jessie was doing this for her sake,

1/2

so she cleared her throat and suggested, "Everyone, I think drawing lots would be a fairer way."

Mandy carried on saying. "We found out about this field trip later than you all did. I don't think the information lag should be a valid excuse to divide the rooms unfairly,"

She didn't have high hopes for her words to carry much weight. But, to everyone's astonishment, after Mandy spoke, Rodney, one of the photography association's top dogs, pursed his lips and gave a nod. "I believe she's got a point."

A hushed silence settled over the group, and the same girl who confronted Jessie sighed and gave in. “I guess we’ll have to draw lots, then.”

Among the dozen people, six would have to make do with accommodations in the other rundown house. With nightfall approaching, the drawing of lots was a quick affair.

The outcome? The girl in charge, Lucy, Cherise, Rodney, and a couple of other students would be staying the night in the rundown house.

As they walked away, Jessie couldn’t resist a sly comment directed at Cherise, “Seems like that rundown house is tailor-made for you! Aren’t you from the countryside? You must’ve been used to living in a shady quarter like that!”

Cherise gave a frosty side-eye before she joined Lucy and the others, carrying their luggage along.

Once they were out of earshot, the girl in charge couldn’t help but vent her frustration. “Come on, Rodney! You could’ve scored the best hideout for you, your girlfriend, and her friend. What were you thinking?!”

”

2/2

Chapter 303 That’s Unfair!

“Why did you go along with her proposal of drawing lots?” The girl ranted.

Rodney looked visibly irritated, pursing his lips. “I thought it was the best and fairest way

to do so.”

“Fairest?” The girl shot an angry glare at the shabby house before her. She sneered, “So it’s fair to have such a lovely young lady like your girlfriend sleep out here in this rundown place huh?”

Rodney knitted his brows, dropped his luggage in the dusty courtyard of the house, and reached for Lucy’s things. Simultaneously, he commented, “Honestly, I think Mandy is lovely and beautiful too.”

“If I hadn’t supported the drawing lots idea, she might also be stuck here.”

He added with a hint of admiration, “She’s refined, clearly from an affluent background. Having her stay in this shady place would be even more inappropriate and unkind.”

The girl widened her eyes and was left speechless. Ultimately, she shot Lucy a cold glance and asked. “Is he your boyfriend?”

Lucy smiled and shrugged nonchalantly, “Yup. He thinks what he thinks.”

The girl rolled her eyes and didn’t say anything further.

The interior of the house was covered in dust, a clear sign that it hadn’t been cleaned in quite a while. Cherise and Lucy spent the entire afternoon sweeping and cleaning it up.

Once the packing was done, Anissa, the same girl known for her exceptional photography skills, came over for one last check.

She looked at the sleeping arrangements of Cherise, Lucy, and Rodney and shot Cherise a sly wink. “So, what’s the plan for tonight? Is it you and your buddy in the inner room while her guy crashes outside? Or are the two lovebirds claiming the inner room, leaving you to handle the great outdoors?”

Cherise folded her bedding. “Of course, Lucy and I will sleep in the inner room, and Rodney will take the outdoor shift.”

‘Clang!’

As Cherise spoke, the dish Rodney was washing crashed to the ground. He quickly crouched down to pick up the shattered porcelain pieces. "Hey, isn't that unfair?"

1/2

Cherise furrowed her brow, feeling a bit irked. What did he mean by 'unfair'?

He and Lucy had only been dating for less than a month, and during this time, he hadn't shown the same level of affection towards Lucy as he did while pursuing her.

What entitled him to ask Lucy to sleep in the same room? Even if their relationship had advanced, who was he to assume she'd sleep outside while he and Lucy took the inner

room?

Anissa settled down beside Cherise, asking. "Are you serious? Why's this seen as unfair?"

"If it weren't for the fact that there's another girl in my room, I'd have come over to switch. with you and stay with the two of them."

As he cleaned up the shards, Rodney said, "Lucy and I are a couple. I want to sleep with her. What's the problem?"

If it weren't for wanting to make things official with Lucy, he wouldn't be going through all this trouble to join this photography association field trip!

"Sure, no problem, but can't you save the romantic stuff for after these two nights?" Anissa rolled her eyes at him. "And, honestly, I don't see you and Lucy being all that romantic either."

"Plus, because of you and that Mandy, Lucy has to spend the night in this rundown. shack..."

"If I were your girlfriend, I'd give you the silent treatment all day!"

Cherise backed Anissa's point of view and shot Rodney an icy look. Then, she got up and went to the courtyard with Anissa to find Lucy.

Meanwhile, their dinner was a laid-back barbecue by the stream at the village entrance.

A group of college students who rarely explored the countryside sat by the river, enjoying barbecue, sipping beer, and chatting, creating a unique and enjoyable atmosphere.

2/2

Chapter 304 Clumsy Mandy

Cherise was new to such an occasion, and the setting was unexpectedly different. While the experience was fresh and fascinating, she also felt drained from it all.

"Hey, I got you this non-alcoholic drink," Rodney offered, handing a beverage to Cherise. "I wasn't very kind to you this afternoon. I hope you can forgive me."

Cherise frowned, recalling when Rodney called her out for being unfair. She pursed her lips and reluctantly accepted his apology, "Then, make sure you appreciate Lulu more, and I won't hold it against you."

Cherise couldn't help but notice that Rodney's attention had been almost exclusively on Mandy since they started eating.

"Well, she's my girlfriend, and I want to treat her like a queen," Rodney replied. "I've decided that you and Lulu will sleep inside tonight, and I'll take care of things outside."

Cherise pursed her lips and finished her drink. "Sounds fair to me."

But after downing her drink, she felt a heaviness in her head. She hadn't eaten much and wasn't feeling well, so she asked Lucy to rest inside.

"Cherry, can you find someone else to keep you company?" Rodney furrowed his brow and held onto Lucy. "I need to discuss something important with Lulu."

"Can Anissa take you back?" Cherise pursed her lips and glanced at Anissa, who was still waiting for her friend. "She has to wait for her friend."

With that, she beckoned and said, "No worries, I'll return on my own. I grew up here, and it's fairly safe in the countryside. I can find my way back."

"I'd like to head back as well." Overhearing the conversation from a nearby group, Mandy gracefully rose and walked over to Cherise. "Shall we return together?"

"Jessie is missing, and I don't know where she has gone. It'll be good to have someone. accompany me back."

Their villa was next to the one where Cherise and her friends stayed.

Cherise frowned. Despite her reluctance, she couldn't decline Mandy in front of so many people. Furthermore, she was more familiar with navigating the countryside at night than Mandy, so she wasn't concerned about any tricks Mandy might attempt.

"Fine then." She hesitated for a moment and glanced at Lucy. "Make sure you head back right after dinner, okay?"

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Lucy furrowed her brow, nodding slightly.

way

Mandy grabbed her small backpack, and together with Cherise, they made their way towards their accommodation. The rural night enveloped them in silence, broken only by the sounds of flowing water, rustling leaves, their footsteps, and distant barking dogs.

Drawing a deep breath of the clean air, Mandy felt her spirits lifted as she asked casually, "I heard you also grew up in the countryside, right?"

Cherise, leading the way with a flashlight, furrowed her brows. "Yep."

"Actually, it feels so much better to live in a place like this," Mandy remarked with a smile. "I prefer this freedom over the constraints of the city."

She wanted to say more but abruptly held back her words.

Just outside the villa they were staying in, a small ditch obstructed their path. Despite Cherise holding Mandy's hand and guiding their way with a flashlight, Mandy twisted her ankle when attempting to cross.

"Ouch!" Mandy's cry was soft but filled with discomfort.

"Seriously?" Cherise muttered in frustration. "How clumsy! Urgh!"

She looked at the dimmed villa; none of the others had returned yet.

With a sigh, she suggested, "Let's head to my place first."

If her memory served her right, Frances had packed some first aid supplies in her luggage in the morning.

Chapter 305 Safety Check-in Call

"Thanks," Mandy said with a smile. She sat down on the neatly made bed Cherise had prepared, her pink lips pursing slightly as Cherise gently applied ointment to her ankle.

This field trip was Mandy's way of taking a breather. Before this, Mandy's take on Cherise was heavily influenced by what others had told her. They described Cherise as a rustic, rigid who had a penchant for wealth and prioritized it over everything else.

While observing Cherise right now, Mandy struggled to match her with the image painted by others. Cherise was kind, loving, gentle, and radiant, completely at odds with the harsh, ruthless portrayal by others.

Mandy closed her eyes and sighed. She was starting to like Cherise. Who could blame Damien for falling for her?

"Tired, huh?" Cherise asked, taking in Mandy's drained appearance and the constant sighs. She glanced in the direction of the distant villa.

"Looks like they won't be back anytime soon," Cherise said with a touch of reluctance, realizing that Mandy shouldn't be left alone in that unfamiliar, sprawling house. With a deep breath, she pulled back the covers. "if you're exhausted, you can rest here for a bit."

"I'll head outside to make a quick call. When they return, I'll wake you up and take you

back."

Mandy considered it for a moment. "Alright."

Cherise nodded, settling Mandy in before exiting the room.

“Cherise.”

Mandy called just as Cherise turned away. Cherise furrowed her brow and turned back to her. “What is it?”

“I...” Mandy bit her lips, took a deep breath, and summoned the courage to smile at Cherise. “I actually don’t have any hard feelings toward you.”

Cherise was puzzled by Mandy’s sudden remark. She offered a reassuring smile. “Well... I’ll catch with you later.”

up

With that, Cherise slipped her phone into her pocket and walked away.

It was already eight o’clock. She’d promised Damien a safety check-in call at seven o’clock and was now a full hour late. She worried about how he would react.

1/2

Cherise leaned against the wall in the yard and discreetly retrieved her phone to dial Damien’s number.

On her left, the villa rented by the Photography Association stood in shadow. To her right, the villa reportedly rented by a local tycoon gleamed with light.

On the latter’s balcony, Damien sat in a chair. He glanced at Cherise standing in the moonlight and then at his phone with a faint smile.

“You’ve finally decided to get in touch, huh?”

“Honey, I’m really sorry,” Cherise immediately made peace with the man. “I didn’t mean to forget to check in with you...”

In fact, Cherise had planned to head back from the barbecue before it hit seven o’clock. But with Rodney holding Lucy back and the whole situation with Mandy, she wound up being an hour late.

Damien’s reply carried a faint smile, “No worries, love. How’s Sequoia treating you?”

“It’s alright,” Cherise replied with a casual shrug. “nothing like my hometown, though.”

“Did you drink?”

“No, I didn’t. I didn’t want to risk Rodney trying anything with Lulu. I needed to stay sober just in case.”

Cherise’s innocent tone brightened Damien’s mood. “So, are you keeping her company right now?”

Chapter 306 Fire!

“No,” she said with a somewhat weary look, lowering her head. “I don’t know why, but today I feel unusually tired, so I decided to come back early to get some rest.”

Damien inquired, “What about your place of stay?”

He settled into a more comfortable position on the balcony, watching her petite form near the wall. “Is staying in the grand villa more comfortable than at home?”

Cherise responded, telling a little white lie to spare him any worry, “It’s about the same. It’s quite spacious here, and everyone has been kind to me.”

Changing the subject, she asked, “Are you done with your work?”

“Yeah, I just saw Lenn off.”

“Lenn?” Cherise furrowed her brow. “He came to our place?”

“Yes, but he had left because he got distracted by a woman.”

The man chuckled softly, remembering the anger that washed over Lennon’s face when he saw Rodney attempting to tamper with Lucy’s drink while Lennon was keeping a close watch with binoculars. It had been twelve years since Damien had seen Lennon that. incensed.

“Hmph! A real playboy!” Cherise pursed her lips. “Thank goodness Lulu didn’t end up with him!”

Cherise’s anger flared each time she thought about it. “I used to think he was a good guy!”

“Look at him now! If it weren’t for his rejection, Lulu wouldn’t have to date that hideous Rodney!”

Thinking about Rodney’s unfair comment in the afternoon, her anger surged even more.

Damien sighed but was about to say something when he detected a suspicious figure lurking in the dark.

He was on the third floor, while Cherise stayed in a single-story house. From his elevated. position, he could clearly observe a woman in sportswear and a cap holding something resembling a water bucket, discreetly sprinkling it around the rundown house.

Damien furrowed, and his voice turned inexplicably profound. “Are you the only one there right now?”

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Cherise bit her lip. “There’s also Mandy; she twisted her ankle...”

Just as she finished speaking, Damien saw the woman behind Cherise's house retrieve a small object from her pocket.

—

Damien's eyes narrowed. He could see it clearly it was a lighter!

The woman nonchalantly tossed the lighter onto the gasoline-drenched ground, and in an instant, flames shot up!

The fire began behind the house, and Cherise, who had been facing away from it, was blissfully unaware.

Damien clutched his phone, urgently commanding, "Run!"

Cherise hesitated for a moment, bewildered by the sudden urgency.

Instinctively, she spun around to see the blaze roaring skyward. The entire house. appeared to be swallowed by an invisible behemoth!

With no time to lose, Damien dropped his phone, leaped from the balcony, and yelled, "Cherise, run!"

But the woman standing by the house appeared unfazed, seemingly oblivious to Damien's words. She swiftly removed her coat, dipped it into a nearby water tub, and wrapped it around her nose and mouth. With determination, she darted into the blazing structure.

Mandy was still in there, sound asleep!

Cough, cough, cough...

Surrounded by the intense heat and thick smoke, Mandy awoke, startled by the pungent fumes. Her twisted ankle was momentarily forgotten as she tumbled from the bed, struggling to regain her balance..

Cherise, in her desperate haste, stormed into the room. The encroaching flames brought Mandy face to face with the impending danger.

Without a moment to spare, Cherise urged, "Get up! I'll carry you out!"

Mandy, bewildered by the sight through the dense smoke, asked, "You... you came back for me?"

"Quit the chatter!" Cherise's urgency grew. She snatched the camera bag and backpack from the bed. "Get up now!"

2/3

Mandy hesitated, her lip quivering. "You wouldn't be able to carry me, I..."

Chapter 307 Why Are You Here?

"I could even carry my grandma, for heaven's sake!" Cherise urged frantically. "Hurry up!"

Biting her lip, Mandy climbed onto Cherise's back.

Cherise proved her words true. With their belongings in tow, she sprinted toward the exit.

'Bang!'

As they dashed through the rooms, a burning wooden beam crashed to the floor behind them.

Cherise promptly backtracked, ensuring neither of them was struck.

Nevertheless, the flames were relentless, swallowing everything in their path.

In front and behind, the raging inferno blocked their way.

Mandy perched on Cherise's back and whispered, "Put me down..."

Cherise was agile enough to flee alone without endangering herself for others.

"I won't turn my back on anyone who needs help!" Cherise proclaimed, her eyes filled with determination and her voice unwavering as she readied herself to dash out of the burning structure.

I'm a medical student! And a doctor in the making! She thought to herself.

"Cherry!" A man called out frantically.

Cherise was caught off guard by the voice...

Before she could respond, Damien had braved the peril of the flames, risking his life to enter the burning building for her.

She expected Damien to carry Mandy as she had or perhaps cradle her as he usually did with Cherise but to her surprise...

Damien grabbed Mandy's collar, lifted her like an item, and walked right out.

Cherise was dumbfounded. She watched her husband carry Mandy out as if she was a sack of potatoes.

This... Physical contact during a life-saving situation is normal and acceptable to me, okay? Is he worried that I'll be jealous, or what?

1/2

When they emerged from the fire, the villagers were already and the

n the scene, photography association members had come back. The villagers were busy battling the

flames.

Lucy rushed forward with red eyes. "Cherry!"

Damien carefully laid the unconscious Mandy on the ground and urgently instructed, "Get a doctor."

Anissa nodded quickly. "On the way now!"

The fire continued to spread, growing more ferocious.

The group retreated to a narrow path outside the yard. Cherise cradled her most valuable photography equipment.

"How did a fire break out all of a sudden?"

Anissa moved about restlessly, her anxiety plain to see. "This mountain area is usually quite damp and humid; fires don't typically erupt out of nowhere!"

Damien wiped soot from his face with the towel Lucy handed him and remarked, "It makes sense because this is arson."

“Mandy!”

Damien had just finished speaking when Jessie hurried into the scene from the crowd. She quickly seized Mandy’s hand, her clothes scorched from the fire. “Oh no, Mandy! What happened?”

She was only aware that Cherise had returned early to the villa for some rest; she had no clue that Mandy was there.

As Damien discarded his scorched suit jacket and surveyed Jessie, dressed in a black-and- white tracksuit and a baseball cap, he lifted his gaze slightly and turned to Anissa. “Are you the one in charge here?”

Anissa nodded in a hurry. “I am.”

He pointed at Jessie. “Get her to the police station. Maybe we can find out how this fire started.”

Jessie’s eyes widened, and she immediately let go of Mandy, dashing away.

Anissa swiftly ordered Rodney and the others to chase after her, but Jessie had already vanished into the distance.

www.

2/2

Chapter 308 The Implanted Surveillance on Mandy

“Ah!”

A shrill female scream echoed from where Jessie had fled. Under the moonlight, Lennon. snatched Jessie's collar and yanked her back. "Is she the arson culprit?"

"Yeah."

"I swear it wasn't me!"

Jessie fought desperately. "There's no proof!"

Damien smirked. "You sure about that? Just because you deny it, don't believe for a second. that this isolated mountain and peaceful location won't have an issue with you."

The man carefully pulled Cherise closer, gently wiping the black soot from her face. "Unfortunately, the place where Cherry and the others stayed had security cameras."

"All your actions, from carrying gasoline to lighting that fire, have been recorded."

The man's plain statement drained the color from Jessie's face.

The bystanders were equally stunned.

Cherise and the rest resided in a dilapidated one-story house. Why on earth were there surveillance cameras?

"I installed the surveillance."

Witnessing the skepticism in the crowd, Lennon flung Jessie to the ground and shot Lucy a cold look. "I installed it yesterday to monitor someone's safety."

When Lennon and Damien rented one of the two villas, they asked the landlord about the accommodations. They requested added surveillance to all the accommodations for the Photography Association.

Lennon was troubled for Lucy. He knew Lucy had seen through Rodney's malicious intentions, yet she had chosen to go with that repugnant man to the mountains. Lucy had intended to offer herself to Rodney, but Lennon was steadfast not to let Lucy waste away

like that!

Lucy's face darkened upon hearing Lennon's explanation, and she turned her head away to avoid his gaze.

"Is everyone okay?"

1/3

Damien cradled Cherise in his arms, gently patting her head.

"We're fine!"

The girl reassured him with a smile. "But, sweetheart, didn't you say you'd come tomorrow? How did you end up here tonight?"

"Because someone else around here needed some reassurance."

With that, Damien lifted his hand and affectionately tousled her hair. "And I needed reassurance about your safety, too."

The fire was swiftly extinguished.

The losses weren't extensive because Cherise had plunged into the fire to rescue the photography equipment. However, Cherise, Lucy, and Rodney lost their personal belongings.

Their overnight accommodation had also been reduced to ashes.

Cherise suggested that they all head to Damien and Lennon's rented villa. They also brought the unconscious Mandy back to the villa.

"The young lady has a rather peculiar situation."

The village doctor treated Mandy in the room alone. Then he emerged, holding a small white object in his hand, which he placed on the coffee table. "I removed this from the subcutaneous tissue on the back of her neck."

Lennon furrowed his brow and took the object. "What is this?"

"A surveillance device."

Damien frowned and spoke softly, "A surveillance device?"

Lennon was somewhat taken aback. "What could it have been surveilling?"

"When it's functioning normally, this bug isn't this color; it's almost transparent and barely visible."

Damien's brow furrowed. "The signal might not have functioned well in the mountains, and the device might not have been active."

This kind of bug was a unique, custom-made listening device. Thirteen years ago, his sister had planted one on him to ensure he stayed focused on his studies.

However, why did Mandy have one on her?

“She has several of them implanted in her armpits, back, and lower back.”

The doctor said with a heavy tone, “This girl has likely been under constant manipulation her entire life.”

3/3

Chapter 309 This Is Not a Novel or Drama Plot, Right

“You guys

don’t seem like typical country folks. I’d suggest finding a more specialized. doctor to help with her treatment.”

“It seems like there are some issues with her brain. I’ve tried everything possible, but she just won’t regain consciousness.”

Damien furrowed his brow and urgently called Jacob to the villa. By the time Jacob. arrived, it was already midnight.

Jacob could only do so much alone, but fortunately, Cherise and Lucy, both medical students, were there to assist him.

“This is the twenty-third.”

Cherise accepted the objects Jacob extracted from Mandy’s body, her brow knitting in

concern. “She...”

“These are all just accessories.”

Jacob delicately removed the last crystal from beneath Mandy’s skin. “I hope I’m wrong, but a chip might be inside her brain.”

“These are just components. They’re basically the accessories that receive signals from that chip.”

Cherise was left in shock, unable to find her words. Damien had been correct.

Jacob injected a dose into Mandy’s bloodstream. “Her face certainly didn’t look like this before.”

“She’s undergone at least ten plastic surgeries.”

The medication quickly flowed through her veins.

When Mandy regained consciousness, her gaze fell upon the small cluster of crystals on the table.

She was momentarily taken aback and then smiled. “You...”

Damien sat on the nearby sofa, his brows furrowed as he watched her. “Who did this to you?”

Taking a deep breath, Mandy summoned the strength to rise from the bed and kneel before Cherise and Damien.

She looked up, a glint of despair on her face, mirroring the expression of Danielle Lenoir, who had disappeared thirteen years ago. "Please, save me..."

"I don't want to be a puppet anymore."

She had had enough.

Her memory transported her back to the age of seven when her family had asked her if she wanted to become someone prettier and more powerful.

With enthusiasm, she had agreed.

During those days, the Wool family was a struggling household with no support from anyone. Her father had questioned whether she would improve their family's circumstances, even if it meant enduring hardships.

Once again, Mandy had consented to their coaxing.

From that point onward, she had been chosen to serve as S's stand-in because of her remarkable resemblance to Danielle Lenoir.

As a child, she had been confined to a room by a woman whose face had been disfigured. She had endured whippings and harsh scoldings from her. A chip had been implanted in her body, making her obedient and entirely under that woman's control.

Her facial features had been surgically altered to make her look nearly identical to the woman before her disfigurement

They told her she was meant to become the next Danielle Lenoir.

But she had no desire to be anyone's second. All she yearned for was to be Mandy Wool.

Previously, she hadn't mustered the courage or the opportunity to share these secrets with outsiders. Because 'she' could hear every conversation.

Yet, at this moment, in this mountain village, those chips and crystals had inexplicably stopped receiving signals from that woman.

A blend of happiness and fear washed over her

She was thrilled to finally have a chance to reveal her ordeal and live her desired life.

But she was afraid that if Damien and Cherise didn't believe her...

When she returned to Adania, she would face even graver consequences. They would implant even more painful devices in her body.

2/3

The villa was so quiet you could hear a pin drop.

"You're not joking, are you?" Standing beside them, Lucy was shocked, and even her

delicate features were distorted.

"This isn't some TV drama or novel plot, right?"

3/3

Chapter 310 High Maintenance Bunch

"She might actually be telling the truth."

Jacob's face creased with concern as he continued scrolling through his phone. "This technology for implanting chips in the brain has been around for quite some time," he pondered. "however, due to the complexity of human brains and their difficulty to control, they had to start implanting them when she was very young."

"They did it to me when I was seven," he revealed.

Mandy turned to Damien with a sincere gaze. I know you've always been curious about the origins of my face."

"I've told you before, it's because of 'S,'" Mandy continued pleading, "I hope you can help me. You're my only hope."

Damien's teacup-clutching hand tensed.

He closed his eyes. "No. I don't want to see her!

If... If she had become the person Mandy described, there was no reason to see her again.

Damien couldn't believe the woman he had once respected had changed drastically. His heart felt like a vice grip, squeezing tighter with each passing moment.

With a deep breath, he set down his teacup and met Mandy's gaze. "Once we return to Adania, I'll have Jacob and his medical team figure out how to remove the chip from your brain. As for the Wool family, you don't have to go back, as it's not safe to stay in Adania. either."

"Alright," Mandy replied, her lips pursed. After a brief pause, she spoke up again. "I have one more condition."

Damien furrowed his brow. "What is it?"

Mandy gestured to her nearly flawless face. "I want to be myself again."

"That might be quite challenging."

Jacob stepped closer, gently lifting her chin for a closer look. "You've already undergone numerous surgeries. Another procedure, and you might end up looking like a stiff plastic doll."

Mandy lowered her head without speaking.

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"I could experiment with different makeup looks on you," Jacob grinned. "just so you know, I'm not half bad at doing makeup for others. Your foundation looks good now, so you can rock any style, and I can help you pull it off."

Jacob had many interests and hobbies; recently, cosmetics piqued his interest. The only thing missing was a willing model, and Mandy seemed to be the perfect fit.

"Alright, it's getting late. Everyone should get some rest."

Damien furrowed his brow, got to his feet, and headed upstairs. "Cherry, I'm heading to

bed."

Before Cherise could respond, Damien had already gone upstairs.

She glanced at his retreating figure, full of contemplation. Still, Jacob held her back, saying, "Let him have some time to come to terms with the fact that his beloved sister has become the antagonist in Mandy's story."

Cherise sighed and stayed in the living room.

Since it was well past midnight, Rodney, who had been outside chatting with the folks from the Photography Association, returned as well.

“Oh boy! I’m dead tired, like super exhausted! I need some sleep now!”

With that, he strolled over to the sofa, hoisted Lucy up, and casually shot Cherise a glance. “Cherry, where’s the room for Lulu and me?”

Cherise quickly raised an eyebrow. “Your room is on the first floor, and Lulu’s is on the second floor.”

Rodney seemed slightly irritated, furrowing his brow and giving Cherise a swift once-over. “I took a look at the villa’s rooms. There’s one for Mandy, one for you and your husband, one for your husband’s two buddies, which leaves just one more. Lulu and I can

make do with it.”

“Your husband and friends and Mandy seem a bit high-maintenance, so I guess it’s better not to squish into a room with the rest of us.”