Cleaning With SOAP

by diamonddust131

Summary

Christine is a young spy working for SOAP, Spies Organized Against Peace. A routine undercover mission at Malibu University turns into the adventure of a lifetime, as she is forced to deal with her fair share of pesky WOOHP agents, cooky baddies, and the mean girl on campus, Mandy! Will Chris be able to survive college life? Please Read and Review!

Notes

This story was originally posted to FanFiction.net.

Never did figure out when this story is supposed to take place. Definitely during or after Season 6 of the show, so if you haven't watched that far, there may be some spoilers here or there. I also assume all of you out there are familiar with the characters that have appeared up to that point.

Anyway, please read and maybe even leave a review to tell me how I'm doing. Also, I am new to AO3 and my documents don't seem to format right on here, so if you see something that doesn't look right, that's probably the reason.
A particularly eerie night hung over a strangely quiet metropolis. The moon suspended high above gave off slightly more radiance than usual, and the thick fog slowly wrapping itself around the city bordered on unnatural. The mist ascended into the skyline, reaching the top of the many colossal buildings in town.

From the same height, a person could be seen jumping from structure to structure as if their life depended on it. Perhaps it did. The man, gasping for air, landed on a smaller edifice, losing his footing in the process. The black briefcase he had been tightly clutching to his chest flew out of his grasp as his body rolled a couple of times across the rooftop. He promptly got his wits about him and hastily pounced on the object. There was no way he could lose what was inside the case, he thought. He would rather die than part with its contents.

“...What's going on?” he said, being barely audible. Cautiously, the man's reddened and trembling eyes inspected the shadowy area behind him. “T-There's...no one there...?”

Not having the slightest idea where his pursuer had gotten off too made him more anxious than relieved. His pursuer had been on him like glue mere moments ago. He highly doubted they would let him go so easily.

His fears seemingly held merit when a shadow momentarily blocked out the moonlight hitting him. Someone else then landed a few steps away. He let out a piercing gasp, while a woman in a black catsuit glared at him with cold, blue, and piercing eyes. Because a black ski mask covered the rest of her face, the man now quivering in fear was unable to discern her identity. He supposed it hardly mattered at the moment.

“...You're trying my patience,” the woman declared, noticeably upset with having to play this little game of cat and mouse. Holding out her hand, she added, “Hand over that briefcase if you value your life.”

“N-Nothing!” the man answered, trying to swallow his fear. “Y-You really think I'd give something this important to the likes of you?! I may have no idea who you are, but I'm well aware of who you work for! I'd be jeopardizing the safety of millions by letting your people obtain what's in this case!”

The speech, while riveting, only served to enrage the person after him. She took a step forward, causing him to take a step back. She then took another step forward and he another step backward. This continued until the man nearly stumbled; there was no more rooftop for him to walk on. Although it was a dire situation for sure, he smiled at the fact it was one he could use to his advantage.

“...L-Like I said, I'm not giving you this briefcase!” he exclaimed.

“...You wouldn't seriously jump. Stop bluffing,” the woman replied. Much to her surprise, the man allowed himself to go tumbling off the building as promised, intending to destroy himself as well as the item in his possession. The woman quickly sprang into action by pulling out an expandable
bungee cable from her utility belt and tying it to a nearby chimney. She then jumped toward the ground herself. The man, assured of his victory, was stunned to see her go to such lengths to chase after him. She straightened out her body, which in turn made her fall faster. Afterward, just as it looked as if the two would hit the pavement in bloody chunks, she grabbed hold of the man and dragged him forward through the window of a cake shop. Glass and fallen pastries were strewn about the pitch-black shop. The man with the briefcase managed to get to his feet first, running toward the back exit. The woman broke off her cable and stayed closed behind. Her target in response began knocking things over in an attempt to impede her. It appeared to work; he gained a sizeable lead on her before bursting out the back door and into a narrow alley way.

“You're seriously wasting your time if you think you can outrun me,” said the voice that greeted him. He was more than a little dumbfounded to see none other than the woman in black lying in wait for him.

“How...?” he began.

“I'm no longer asking for the briefcase.”

The woman reached down to her belt and tossed something at the man. As he braced himself, a thick veil of smoke burst forth from the bombs thrown, completely blinding and confusing him. Grunts, groans, and the sound of flesh being hit then resounded in the alley. One last kick sent the helpless man flying from the smoke cloud and into a nearby brick wall.

“D-Damn it all!” he growled, battered and bloodied. His hands then frantically felt against his person for something that was no longer there. “N-No! T-The briefcase! Where did I...?!”

The woman answered him by holding his prized possession up between her fingertips. The man tried to snatch it back yet got punched right between the eyes for his troubles, ending any hope of a rescue operation.

“Thank you for your cooperation,” the woman stated as she casually walked away. “Despite the trouble you put me through, I won't bother ending your life. You really aren't worth the effort. Just do yourself a favor and stay down.”

“D-Don't think you're going to get away with this, spy! I-I have accomplices! I have allies! We will hunt you and the rest of your comrades down to get that briefcase back if we have to!”

The catsuit clad woman didn't bother with a response, instead firing her bungee cable off at another building, rising up, and disappearing into the fog-shrouded night. Being left behind with nothing but his shattered pride, the man pounded his fist into the pavement.

“Damn you, SOAP!” he screamed, his voice echoing throughout the still city.

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With her mission a success, the woman in black returned to base. The mostly dark corridor she trekked down became more tolerable to maneuver when lights on the flooring lit up the path as she moved. The distinct clatter of her high-heeled boots hitting the ground was the only thing she could hear. With most of her comrades out on missions at the moment, the silence all over headquarters made sense to her.

Eventually, she arrived at the end of the corridor. Walking through some double doors, she entered an expansive, grey, and circular room. Nothing of interest other than a desk at the end and a giant monitor behind it was inside. The woman in black made her way down the lavish carpet leading up
to the desk and got down on one knee, just as someone sitting in a swiveling chair turned to her.

“I’ve come back to report. There were a few minor hiccups, but I managed to complete the mission in the end,” the woman stated, holding up the briefcase.

“...You have done very well, Agent C. Very well indeed. Good work.”

The man, possessing well-kept, black hair, a red scar running down the right side of his face, and a black mask covering the entirety of his jaw, took the briefcase Agent C slid to him and wasted little time in clicking it open. He then greedily pulled a strange, metal cube out of it that was no bigger than his fist. Agent C was, to some extent, surprised to see the thing she had worked so hard to get appeared so unimpressive.

“So, how did the mission go?”

Agent C replied, “Good. Like I said, there were a few hiccups. I had to chase the target through half the damn city. Other than that though, I experienced no difficulties.”

“That’s good to hear.” Even whilst talking to her, the man with the eye patch did not take his lone eye off the strange object in his grasp. Agent C could tell he was even smiling, even though his mouth was hidden from sight. “You must be getting hot in that mask. Why don't you go ahead and take it off. Your identity is safe with me.”

C rolled her eyes at the joke, but did as told and removed the ski mask from her face. From the concealment came the visage of an attractive, caucasian woman who couldn't have been older than nineteen years old. C parted her hand through her waist length, silver-colored hair prior to using a scrunchie to tie it into an equally long ponytail. No matter how many times the man in the eye patch saw her, he was always taken aback by her beauty.

“So...what is it?” C asked, pointing to the mystery cube. “If it's just some fancy kind of Rubik's cube, I'm gonna be pretty ticked off.”

“This...” the man started, standing to allow Agent C to see the white tuxedo he wore. The red undershirt was overkill, in her opinion, but he always dressed like this, so she supposed she shouldn’t have been so annoyed. “...is the Cube of Confusion. With it, our plans to destroy the World Organization Of Human Protection should progress that much smoother.”

“WOOHP,” snarled C through clenched teeth. “As much as the thought of that organization being destroyed sounds good, you still haven't explained how this so-called 'Cube of Confusion' is supposed to help us do the deed.”

“That’s classified information, Agent C.”

“'C-Classified information?!' Scar, I'm the one who went and got the stupid thing for you in the first place! Don't you think I have a right to...?!”

Scar interrupted C's rant. “Agent C, what does our organization stand for?”

“...What?”

“I'm asking you what we're all about!”

“...W-We're out to destroy WOOHP, right?”

Scar shook his head and sighed. “You are only half right, my dear! Our elite group of operatives,
Spies Organized Against Peace, is not only out to get rid of WOOHP, but any organization hell bent on preserving peace!” In dramatic fashion and forcing a bead of sweat to roll down the back of C's head, Scar added, “That is our sole reason for existing! Once our ambitions are realized, Agent C, Jerry Lewis and accursed groups such as his will be thoroughly cleansed from this world!”

There was a break in the conversation.

“...That was probably the lamest thing I've ever heard,” said C in a deadpan manner.

Scar's expression fell abruptly. “...C-Come again?”

“I-I mean, I agree with the whole 'destroy WOOHP' part, but after all these years, don't you think having a group called SOAP is a bit silly?”

For a moment, Scar wanted to get angry. He wished to lash out and berate his agent for once again criticizing the name he had come up with many years ago. Time and time again, he had explained that the label of their faction wasn’t important. The cause was. However, that wasn’t the point at the moment, he thought. Clearing his throat, he managed to contain his frustrations with her.

“While we're on the subject of our organization, I have a new assignment for you, Agent C,” he stated calmly.

“So long as it's for the benefit of SOAP, I'll do whatever is asked of me,” said C.

Scar grinned. “My, my. Aren’t you the little patriot? That's exactly what I like to hear though. Anyway, your mission this time around will be to go to Beverly Hills, California and go uncover as a normal university student at the local school of higher learning: Malibu University.”

Though C had stated she was willing to do anything, this was a bit much. She honestly presumed her superior was joking at first. “Huh?! You wanna repeat that?! W-Why do I have to do something like that?! I don't understand!”

“Relax, agent.” Scar held up his hand to silence her. “There is a perfectly good reason I’m having you do something like this out of the blue. I can assure you that much. You see, there's a quantum physics professor who works at the school who's latest invention I believe would help our organization greatly. His name is Dr. Heisenberg. The project he is working on at the moment is one that will somehow allow the user to move at the speed of light. That's about all the intelligence we’ve managed to gather right now, so it will be up to you to not only learn more about this invention, but to steal it when the time comes.”

“I...see.”

It made sense to C why SOAP would have interest in a device like that. Moving at the speed of light would give anyone an advantage over their enemies, yet there was still one thing about this mission that was bothering her.
"I don't understand why I have to go undercover," she declared. "Would it not be easier for me to just go and steal the invention outright? Why even bother with formalities?"

"Hmph. You would have a point if it weren't for the rumors of WOOHP agents attending Malibu University. It would be far too risky for you to go after Doctor Heisenberg directly if that's the case."

C smacked her lips. This whole matter was becoming more bothersome for her with each shred of information she was given. "I-I suppose. I...guess I have no choice. Fine. I will go to Malibu University and go undercover as a college student. I-I'm not sure I'm the right choice for this mission though, Scar. I mean, I don't know the first thing about being an ordinary college student."

"Oh, I'm sure you'll catch on fast," Scar replied with a reassuring smile. "I've already sent the university your 'transfer papers.' We've given you the highest grades, the highest recommendations, and stated you were one of the finest students at the prestigious SOAP University before your transfer."

"...You don't have much of an imagination, do you?"

The lights in the room brightened, and Scar pressed another button on his desk, revealing a host of items sitting on a panel. Agent C did not recognize any of them.

"Despite the fact that this is an undercover mission, you're still going to need gadgets. This time, however, I've had to design them a bit...differently. They're intended to be just as functional as you're used to but look like common items a regular college girl like you would have." Scar laughed at his own remarks, but C simply glowered. "Here, we have the All Purpose Fountain Pen Laser. It's not only handy for taking notes during lectures but also blasting right through diamond and lead like they were mere paper."

C took the black pen and noted that it really did look harmless. Had Scar not told her it was a high-tech gadget, she likely would have accidentally cut her hand off.

"Next, we have the Knockout Gas Apple Earrings. I think the name alone would give you an idea of their function. Basically, they release a sweet-smelling gas that puts anyone unfortunate enough to breathe it in asleep. Oh, they'll likely look good on you as well!"

"...You do know my ears aren't even pierced, right?" said C.

Scar ignored the remark. "Our next gadget is the Faux Silk Invisibility Scarf. As soon as you wrap it around your neck, your entire body will be invisible to the naked eye for a brief amount of time. It's a shame though."

"What's a shame?"

"It's a shame no one will be able to see how stylish you are since they can't see you!"

"...I-I don't care about idiotic stuff like that! The gadget works, right?!"

"D-Don't get so bent out of shape! Of course it works! All my gadgets work! Unlike that nincompoop Jerry Lewis' inventions!"

"Oh no..." Chris mumbled, understanding that she had committed a huge mistake. For the next couple of minutes Scar began ranting to no one specifically about how his creative genius was ten times that of WOOHP's leader. C recurrently sighed at the display, forgetting that agitating her boss by dismissing his work always had dire consequences.
“And *that's* why his Lip Lock Laser Gun *pales* in comparison to my own Tongue Tied Beam Rifle!”

“...Okay. Sure. Why not? Is that all the gadgets you have to give me or what?”

Scar, fixing his tie, regained his composure. “N-No. There's one more. This one is an old favorite: the Expandable Bungee Cable. I saw no reason to alter the design of this one since I can't honestly imagine you carrying around an inconspicuous bungee cable around with you.”

C agreed. “Well, if that's everything, I better...”

“WAIT!!!”

The room actually shook rather violently in reaction to Scar's command. Nearly falling over in her chair, C dared not move until her leader got through saying what he wanted to say.

“...I nearly forgot one last item,” Scar, picking up some fallen over family portraits on his desk, said, “Here. Take it.”

He tossed Agent C a small, black, and rectangular object she couldn't discern at first. It was solely when she opened it did she realize picking it was a compact mirror, the sort of things girls used to apply makeup and check their complexion using the reflective surface inside. Strangely, the one she was given was different from the norm, containing a very sophisticated bottom with buttons and a mirror that doubled as a display.

“...You do know I don't use makeup, right?” she said.

“Yes, I'm aware. It's such a shame too. You're not the prettiest sight to behold first thing in the morning...”

C angrily slammed the device shut and restrained herself from strangling Scar to death using her bare hands.

“It's not actually a compact, despite its looks,” Scar stated. “It's called a Z-Powder, and it's more or less a communicator. It's how we'll be able to talk with one another while you're undercover. It does a lot more than allow you to speak with me though. With one push of a button, it can also change what you’re wearing. Rather handy for slipping in and out of your catsuit or even switching into a nifty disguise. It also has a couple more features, but I think I'll let you mess with the thing and figure them out yourself.”

“A little unorthodox, but I suppose it will have its uses.”

“One last thing, agent. For this mission, you won't be using any code names.”

One of C's eyelids rose upon hearing this. “...What do you mean?”

“You're going to be using your *real* name.”

That was the last thing Agent C had expected to hear at this briefing. Well, that *and* having to go undercover at some college. She honestly found herself speechless for a bit.

“...I-I don't understand! You want me to go around using my real name?! Wouldn't it be smarter to use a cover name?!” she cried, becoming visibly upset.

“You sure do always look quite volatile whenever we discuss your real name...Christine,” Scar answered. His mouth twisted itself into a rather satisfied smirk. Apparently, he had been garnering
“D-Don't call me that...” Christine mumbled, snarling under her breath.

“Well, whether you like it or not, I've already written the name 'Christine' on your transcripts, so it's far too late for me to change anything.”

That was it then. Begrudgingly, it seemed Christine had no choice but to accept the circumstances. She wouldn't have minded them so much if hearing her actual name didn't always stir up so many painful memories inside of her.

“Are you all ready to go then?”

“H-Huh?” Scar's abrupt question snapped Christine from her deep thinking. “Y-Yes. I suppose so.” Standing and saluting, she added, “If it is for SOAP and its goals, I am willing to do anything. Guess I already said that, but I just want to make sure you get that. Leave Heisenberg and whatever invention he has to me, Scar.”

“Yes, yes. I really do enjoy your unbridled enthusiasm. Good luck out there, Christine! I'm expecting good result from my best agent!”

“Eh? Didn't I already tell you not to call me...!”

Scar pressed yet another button on his desk, and another trap door on the floor opened, this one causing Christine to fall straight down into a crevice. The sound of her surprised screaming dissipated soon afterward. Scar went back to admiring the Cube of Confusion in his fingertips.

“As much as I detest Jerry Lewis, I see now why he enjoyed WOOHPing his agents so much...”

#

The still shrieking Christine fell straight out of the sky and crashed down into a large bush, scattering green leaves all over the place. It took her a couple moments, but she managed to stand, groan, and wipe herself off. She then glanced upward at the blue and cloudless sky, baffled at how she could have been dumped off in the middle of nowhere from SOAP headquarters.

“...Where am I? And how the heck is it suddenly daytime again?!”

One thing was for sure: Christine definitely wasn't at SOAP anymore. The vast amount of young people walking and talking everywhere made her confident of that. The open area she now occupied was enveloped by a multitude of buildings, all sized and shaped differently. Christine quickly surmised she was at Malibu University, in part because of the sign that said so in the distance. The trek to the institution might have been rough, yet she certainly couldn't complain about the speed.

“Good. This save me the trouble of having to ask around to find this place. Now then, the sooner I retrieve this Doctor Heisenberg's invention, the sooner I can get this asinine mission over with.”

Of course, that was easier said than done. She might have been in the right place, but finding one man on an expansive campus like this without directions was going to be a challenge. Christine wondered why Scar hadn't simply told her of the good doctor's whereabouts before sending her on her way.

“...Whatever. There should be a school directory or something similar around here. I just have to...”

Without warning and scaring the living daylights out of her, an incredibly high and nasally voice
“Well, well, well, what do we have here?! Were you hiding in that bush because you dropped something or because you don't want anyone to see that hideous outfit you're wearing? You really should consider shopping somewhere other than the flea market! Ahaha!”

Christine moved her head up toward the young woman insulting her, uncertain what to make of her nasty remarks. The girl, in a thoroughly good mood, laughed a couple of times in the same obnoxious manner as she spoke. Christine figured she might as well have been listening to nails against a chalkboard.

“...And just who are you?” she asked in a serious tone.

The girl gasped in response to Christine's question, apparently offended such a thing even needed to be asked. She flipped her wavy, waist-length black hair back before smiling, exposing her flawless teeth. For reasons Christine couldn't understand, this simple gesture caused her irritation to increase.

“You don't know me?! Everyone on campus knows me!” the girl exclaimed. The mole under her left eyelid twitched. “I'm Mandy! What, are you new to Mali-U or something? Ha! You must be! No one attending this school on a long term basis would ever be caught dead in an outfit like that!”

It was only when Mandy poked fun at Christine's clothing a second time did the latter realize she was no longer dressed in her spy catsuit, but an outfit befitting that of a normal girl her age: a white blouse, a black, denim jacket, and a matching skirt. There was no doubt in her mind Scar was behind the abrupt wardrobe change.

“I'm not understanding what my clothes have to do with anything.”

Mandy was both confused and appalled by the statement. “W-What's your problem?! How can you feel good if you don't even look good?! Everyone knows it's what's on the outside that counts!”

She let out another tirade of laughter and Christine found herself wanting to rip the young woman's head off more and more with each passing second. Personal looks meant nothing to a spy like her, though judging from Mandy's overall appearance and demeanor, it seemed to be the only thing that mattered to her. Christine had to admit the girl was rather pretty, having perfectly tanned skin and just the right amount of makeup to accentuate her features. It was just unfortunate her attitude wasn’t remotely as attractive.

“...I can't figure out why you're talking to me right now, so if you don't want anything, leave me be,” Christine then stated. “I have more important things to do than waste my time on the likes of you.”

“W-What?! Y-You can't talk to me like that!” replied Mandy, steaming like a tea pot with anger. “Y-You're just some newbie! You should be lucky someone like me would even bother wasting her breath on the likes of you! Oh, you're so gonna pay for this! TR-EEEEEEE-ENT!!!”

Mandy whistled. Soon enough, Christine could hear the sound of a motor vehicle approaching. Subsequently, a well dressed young man driving a cart for two pulled up, looking both annoyed and terrified to see the woman who called for him.

“Y-Yes, Mandy?” said Trent in a low voice.

“TRENT!” howled Mandy, inducing a jump of fright out of him. “Do something about her!”

She pointed a well manicured finger at Christine, and Trent in turn moved his head to the girl. He wasn't really sure what Mandy wanted him to do. He was only an intern after all.
“Y-You have to be kidding me...” said Christine under her breath.

The stupidity of all this was becoming too much for her to bear. She grit her teeth, and both Mandy and Trent began trembling in fear at the fierce and volatile glare she began giving them.

“Listen here, both of you! I really don’t know who you two idiots are, and frankly, I don’t care! Just get lost this instant unless you want to be eviscerated!”

That was they needed to hear. Mandy quickly hopped inside her personal cart and told Trent to punch it ahead of the vehicle zooming off, leaving a trail of exhaust in their wake.

“...And that’s why I can't stand dealing with other people,” Christine muttered. “Dammit. I should have asked them if they knew where I could find Dr. Heisenberg.”

Something in the pocket of her denim skirt started to beep, so Christine found a safe place to hide before pulling out her Z-Powder and opening it. Scar's face then showed up on the top screen, and he waved to his agent, who rolled her eyes in response.

“Hello, Christine! I'm glad to see you're doing well and have made it to Malibu University unscathed,” he said.

“I thought I told you not to call me that,” Christine said in response.

“Oh, yes. I had forgotten. Silly me.”

“Like hell you did...”

Dismissing the rude statement, Scar asked, “How's the mission going so far?”

“Other than you sticking me in these stupid clothes and making me deal with the imbeciles here, everything is peachy-keen.”

“Ah, about your clothing...you needed to blend in, Agent C, so I took the liberty of picking you out a very cute outfit for your first day of school!”

Christine regretted bringing up the matter entirely after hearing this. “...I haven't been able to locate Doctor Heisenberg yet. I was hoping you could shed some light on that.”

Scar nodded. “Heisenberg should be heading toward the West Hall on campus to start his daily lecture. Fortunately for you, I made sure to sign you up for his class, so you'd better hurry and find his room because class starts in five minutes. You do want to make a good impression on your first day, right?”

Christine, unwilling to hear Scar chuckle at his own corny remarks any longer, slammed her Z-Powder shut post-haste. “...I'm already tired of college life.”

Although being a spy had its perks, it did nothing in terms of helping Christine navigate her way around the expansive Malibu University. Of course, trying to get through crowds of unruly students who seemed to have nothing better to do than impede her path certainly contributed to her woes.

“Just made it,” she muttered as she rushed into Heisenberg's lecture hall and found an empty seat. “...I-Is this what a college classroom is supposed to look like?”

Most of her schooling had been done at SOAP headquarters, even from a young age. There were...
seldom more than a dozen operatives being taught with her back then, so being in a giant classroom with hundreds of other students was somewhat daunting. Her seat was so high up, she could hardly see the older gentlemen scribbling something on a blackboard at the head of the class. He wrote his name down in white chalk and Christine was relieved to see the man was indeed the Doctor Heisenberg she was searching for.

“Now then, where's his invention?”

Her eyes scoured the large room though were unable to find anywhere she thought the professor might have hidden his speed of light project. She guessed that made sense. If it were here at this school, a lecture hall full of students was the least secure place she could think of to hide something so important. She would probably have to procure the invention's whereabouts from Heisenberg himself.

“Welcome to Physics 101 students!” said Heisenberg just in a loud, booming voice. “My name is Professor Heisenberg, and starting today I'm going to be your instructor for the semester! I'm pleased to see so many of you are interested in the wonderful world of Quantum Mechanics! We're going to go through a lot of material this semester, so I hope you're all ready for the daunting task! Today, we're going to start off with a little introduction to Physics before diving into the deeper facets of the study later on this week! Now then, if you'll all open your books to page thirty-five...”

Before Christine knew it, she was taking notes and listening intently to a lecture she had no interest in. Scar certainly hadn't said anything about her having to study like an actual college student. Did he intend for her to finish this entire course before she would be able to get her hands on Heisenberg's secret invention?

“Tch! My talents are being wasted on note taking and formula memorization,” she mumbled, twirling the ink pen in her fingertips around in total boredom.

“Um...excuse me? Do you have an extra pen I could borrow?”

Christine turned to the individual sitting next to her, not comprehending the favor being asked of her at first. A redheaded girl, likely around her age, smiled at her awkwardly. Without saying a word, Christine handed her a spare pen she had brought along.

“I figured I should study up on Quantum Physics ahead of time, so I took down a whole bunch of notes in preparation for this class! You know, just to get a feel of the course,” the girl explained.

“Thanks! I don't know what I was thinking before I got here!” the redhead started. “I guess I was so excited to get to class today, I totally forgot to bring something to write with! A total, airheaded move, right?”

Christine simply nodded at this. Trying to get back to her work, her redheaded acquaintance pulled her away from it again by showing her a stack of papers she had retrieved from her backpack. The sheer amount made the SOAP spy's eyes enlarge.

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“I'm just glad I registered for it on time! Just look at all the people here! A second too late and I probably would've had to wait until next semester!”

“Yes. That...would have been unfortunate.”

Christine honestly didn't see what the big deal was. It was just a class that would likely have no bearings on the future’s of most here. They were likely just taking it because it would look good on
their transcripts. However, that plainly wasn't the case with this girl.

“Oh! My name is Sam, by the way! Nice to meet you!” she happily said. Christine stared quietly at Sam's outstretched hand before deciding it was safe to shake it. Introductions weren't her strong suit, and she wondered why this Sam was being so pushy with hers. The two of them didn't even know one another, and the only thing they had in common was a pen. With that in mind, why was this person being so friendly?

“I'm...” Christine hesitated to say what she knew she was obligated to because of her job. “My name is...Christine.”

Sam, a bit confused at Christine's mannerisms, replied, “Christine, eh? I haven't seen you on campus before. Are you...new here?”

“Y-Yes. I just transferred from...SOAP University.”

The name of the school sounded even more ridiculous to Christine the second time around.

“SOAP University? Can't say I've ever heard of that one...”

“Yeah, it's a rather...exclusive school.”

Sam, though skeptical, bought the story. “Well, welcome to Mali-U, Chris!”

The sound of her name being shortened was strange to Christine. Sam immediately noticed this and looked remorseful.

“E-Er...sorry!” she hastily stated. “I-Is it okay if I call you that?”

Chris paused at the question. “I...suppose it's okay.”

That couldn't have been farther from the truth, but if saying so would get Sam to leave her alone for a bit, Chris could live with the circumstances. Nevertheless, her statement had the opposite effect; Sam seemed more interested in her now more than ever.

“So, why did you decide to take Physics 101?” she wanted to know.

“...I don't know. I guess the subject was just intriguing to me,” Chris replied. Her tone was filled with sarcasm, although she hadn't exactly meant for her response to be so snarky. She just really wanted to get back to her pointless note taking. Muttering, she said, “Ugh. Just give me a break already…”

#

Doctor Heisenberg’s lecture was over before Chris knew it. She had been so into watching him write complicated equations on the board and listening to his discussion, she hadn't so much as looked at the nearby clock even once. Only the bell ringing and the shuffling of students entering the hallways told her what was happening. Immediately, she grabbed her stuff and prepared to depart. The entire class period had been a complete waste of time in her opinion. She had learned nothing pertaining to her mission, and the sparse knowledge of quantum physics she now knew would have been totally worthless if it weren't for Heisenberg mentioning something about a pop quiz on Thursday.

“I'll see you later then, Chris! Thanks again for the pen!” said Sam, who ran past Chris and handed her back the writing instrument in question. “We should totally study together some time!”

Chris nodded at her new acquaintance's words, though she really didn't understand them. Why was
she being invited to study with someone when it was more productive to do it alone? As Sam vanished down a corridor, all Chris could really say about the girl in terms of a first impression was that she was quite peculiar.

“...There’s something about her. I can’t put my finger on it…”

Doctor Heisenberg was the last to come out of the classroom, locking the door behind him. Now alone with him, Chris saw her chance to strike.

“Excuse me, Professor?” she began, getting Heisenberg's attention. “I really didn't understand the part of your lecture where you were talking about how heat affects molecules. Would it be possible for you to explain it to me more clearly?”

Heisenberg smiled at her. “Of course! I have some free time now, so we can head to my office! I can answer any questions you have on the matter!”

The way things were turning out was almost a bit too perfect. Chris, unable to contain a very malevolent grin, wasn't going to complain. It would be a simple matter now to interrogate Heisenberg and figure out where he was hiding his research.

“O-Oh no! Look out! Watch it!” said a howling voice that was fast approaching.

Chris moved her head to it and cried, “What in the...?!”

Someone abruptly crashed into her with the force of a bowling ball nailing pins, knocking her right off her feet. Her vision became blurry, and for a moment, she could have sworn she saw birds circling over her head. She then let out a drawn out groan, seeing the silhouette of an individual hovering above her before passing out.

#

The harmonious sounds of birds chirping awoke Chris from a slumber she hadn't planned. She opened her reddened eyes and almost immediately, pain throbbed across her temples. Another moan escaped her person as she gradually sat up from a bed she had no clue how she had gotten into. A white sheet hung on one side of her, and adjacent was a window that allowed her to see the outside of campus Mali-U.

“Guess that means I'm still at school.”

A gentle breeze wafted through the crack in the window. It was soothing enough to ease her anguish somewhat.

“W-Where am I? How did I...?”

One of the curtains blocking her bed off from everything else swung open abruptly. A middle-aged woman with brown and curly hair then grinned at a confused Chris. Judging from the woman's white coat, Chris figured she must have been a nurse, meaning the place she was in presently must have been the Nurse's Office.

“Yo!” the woman said.

“H-Hello,” replied Chris cautiously. She then got a peek at the ID attached to the woman's clothing. “You're...Melody Smith?”

“Yup, that's me! I'm the school's nurse! No need to look so serious! You're fine now!”
Chris took her advice and relaxed. “W-What happened to me? Why am I here?”

Nurse Melody fixed the pair of thick, rectangular glasses adorning her face. “You don't remember? Heh, considering what happened, I guess you wouldn't. Anyway, you took a really nasty shot earlier. You had a lump on your head the size of a football, but I managed to get the swelling down.”

It was then Chris reached up to her forehead and felt bandages tied around it.

“...Thank you,” she said to Melody. It wasn't often she said those words, and they felt strange coming off her tongue.

“I'm not the one you should be thanking! Alex here is the one who dragged you all the way here!”

Chris hadn't even noticed the girl timidly standing in the corner of the room. She waved and anxiously smiled in Chris' direction. Chris nodded in response.

“Y-Yeah, my bad!” the girl with dark skin and a black bob cut chimed. “I-I'm also the one that put you in the nurse's office to begin with! So...um...oopsie?”

Chris didn't respond, but a low grumble could be heard from her.

Alex then went on, stating, “I was late for class this morning and totally wasn't paying attention where I was going! I'm really sorry!”

Bowing promptly, she genuinely looked sincere with her apology. Taking this into account, it was hard for even someone like Chris to stay upset at her.

“Thanks for your help, Alex. You better get to class now,” said Melody.

Alex's face turned red and horror filled every inch of her features. “Oh my gosh! I-I totally forgot about class! I was running in the first place because I didn't want to be late, and now I've almost missed the whole lecture!”

“Don't worry. I've already explained your absence to your professor. Just hurry!”

Alex didn't need to be told twice. She ran out of the room in a flash, though both Chris and Melody could hear her wailing as she raced to class. If there was one thing Chris could already say about her time at Mali-U, it was that all the students there were peculiar.

“Thank you again.” Chris stood from her bed, nearly toppling over from dizziness.

“Hey now! Are you sure you want to be walking around so soon?” asked Melody.

“Y-Yes. I have something important I need to attend to.”

With that, Chris exited the nurse's office through the sliding doors.

Sighing, Melody said, “Well, I'm at least glad to see she has plenty of energy now.”

#

“I've wasted enough time. I've never had this much trouble on a mission before. Unbelievable.”

Chris' skull was still pounding like a drum, and she emitted a third groan as she clutched it between her fingertips. She assumed beforehand that while this undercover assignment would be both bothersome and unorthodox, it would nevertheless be an easy one. It was so far anything but
considering half the day had already passed, and she was no closer to figuring out where Doctor Heisenberg had stashed his invention. She sighed at this fact, becoming aggravated by the many crickets chirping in the trees around campus. The sun was just beginning to set; it wouldn't be long now until darkness descended upon the school.

“I think Scar said something about me staying here on campus in one of the dorms.”

That covered her bed for tonight, yet where had Doctor Heisenberg gotten off to? It was likely he had gone home for the day, meaning Chris would be forced to endure life as a college student for one more day at the very least. The mere thought was enough to make her gag.

“Wait a minute.” Reaching onto her person, Chris pulled out the Faux Silk Invisibility Scarf Scar had given her earlier. “Even if Heisenberg isn't here, I can still check out his office here on campus to see if he left whatever he’s working on there. And with this scarf, I can snoop around without worrying about being caught. Well, what do you know? That idiot Scar might actually help me out for once...”

“Whoa! Way cute scarf you've got there! Mind if I try it on?”

Chris' entire body tensed up into a fighting stance in response to whoever had spoken to her. It was afterward when she realized it was yet another woman around her age, rather than an enemy, did she relax.

“Uh...y-you don't have to let me try on the scarf if you don't want to...” said the blonde, visible startled by Chris' reaction.


“Seriously though! You just have to let me borrow that scarf! I think I have the perfect outfit to go along with it!”

Chris wasted little time in removing the scarf from the girl's prying hands. “I-I can't! I...it's...it's a precious, family heirloom! I can't lend it to you...”

The girl appeared more confused by Chris' erratic behavior than saddened. “No prob! Still, your outfit is really cute! How come I've never seen someone as fashionable as you around campus before?”

“I just transferred to Malibu University today.”

“Welcome Mali-U then! I'm Clover!” said Clover in the sort of Beverly Hills accent Chris was becoming used to at this point. “Since you're new in town, we should totally go shopping together! I could show you around Bev Hills, and we could totally get some mani-pedis together!”

“...'Mani-pedis?'”

The more Clover talked, the more Chris was certain the girl was speaking an entirely different language. The only thing the SOAP agent could discern from the conversation was that Clover wanted to go to the mall, something Chris had no interest in. Hoping to get back to her mission, she struggled to think of something to make Clover go away.

“Er...t-that sounds great, Clover...” she said in the most insincere tone. Clover didn't seem to notice however. “A-As much as I would love to...er...go shopping...I have...something I need to do right now. It’s something that really needs my full and undivided attention at the moment.”
"No prob! We can totally go another time...uh...er..."

"...My name is Chris."

"Got it! I'll see you around campus then, Chris!"

Chris nodded. "Er...sure. See you around."

Clover waved and soon disappeared. With that out of the way, Chris put her hands on her hips and sighed. She then went somewhere she was certain no one would see her ahead of pulling out her Z-Powder and pressing a button. Her black catsuit then formed around her body behind an array of light.

"I have to admit, that's actually rather impressive. Now then, time to do something I'm actually good at." She slipped her trademark ski mask over her face. Reaching onto her person, she muttered, "Where did I put it...?"

She pulled out a map of the Malibu University campus she managed to snag before going to class that morning. Looking it over, she saw that Doctor Heisenberg's office wasn't that far from her current position. In fact, it was right above her. She chuckled at the reality something was finally going her way for once and then aimed her bungee cable at a nearby window. The metal ending of the cord clanked against the glass and pulling herself toward it, she quickly scaled the wall, reaching the window. A nameplate on a desk inside told Chris that the space was indeed the office of Doctor Heisenberg. With that confirmed, she pulled out the All Purpose Fountain Pen Laser, cutting a circle large enough for her to fit through. She then kicked the now loosened glass away and leaped through the hole.

"Hmph. Good at note taking and infiltration. Handy little gadget," Chris said with a smirk, putting the pen back in her pocket. "Now then, where to start?"

Doctor Heisenberg's office was rather small, solely containing his desk, two file cabinets in one corner, and a trophy case on the opposite side. Curiosity got the better of her, so Chris walked over to the trophy case first. Heisenberg was certainly no slouch when it came to Quantum Physics. He had decades worth of awards and trophies in his name for his achievements in the field.

"Good. That means this invention of his is the real deal."

Chris next turned her attention to Heisenberg's desk. A number of the drawers were locked, albeit they were no match for Chris' trusty All Purpose Fountain Pen Laser. She spent a number of minutes combing through every inch of the desk, though she was unable to find the thing she sought after amongst the clutter.

"Old gum wrappers, receipts, and random notes. Heisenberg sure is a messy guy."

She moved on to the file cabinets, using her gadget to slice through the locks keeping them tightly off-limits. To her dismay, hundreds upon hundreds of folders and papers were contained within each drawer. With no other choice, she began sorting through the files one by one.

"Jeez. This guy is a hoarder too. Half the stuff he has in here isn't even relevant anymore."

Finally, Chris found something of interest: a red, unmarked folder. Unlike the other files, it was sealed tight with thick tape. Chris burned off the seal, and the smell of musty papers hit her nose after opening the covering. She paid this no mind, more intrigued by the first file that read 'Lightspeed Power Suit.' She shifted through the pages, her eyes lighting up more and more.
“This is it! This is the invention Heisenberg is working on!” she exclaimed in a hushed voice. “Let's see here. It says the Lightspeed Power Suit allows the wearer to move at the speed of light. Pretty self-explanatory. Hmm, it also says that it's still undergoing testing right now. This is definitely Heisenberg's handwriting on these papers, so this has gotta be legit. Still, where is he actually keeping the suit?”

She scanned the files a bit longer and found the mention of a secret laboratory. Though she was ticked off by the parchment mentioning nothing about its location, she now understood Heisenberg was a rather paranoid individual that would never keep something so important as the Lightspeed Power Suit on campus where others could accidentally stumble upon it.

“Does that mean this laboratory of his is somewhere else? Dammit! Then it could be literally anywhere in the world!”

Chris, calming herself, took some pictures of the papers with her Z-Powder for future reference. It was then she heard voices outside that were steadily growing louder with each passing second. The door to the office slowly clicked opened. Heisenberg, along with a student, walked inside. The room was totally empty, and judging from Heisenberg's expression, that hadn't been what he was expecting.

“I-Is something wrong, professor?” the student inquired.

Heisenberg shook his head. “N-No. I just thought I heard something strange coming from inside here. Sorry. I must be imagining things.”

Unbeknown to both Heisenberg and his pupil, Chris had slipped right past them and into the hallway. Then again, there was no way they could have caught wind of her presence when she was wearing the Faux Silk Invisibility Scarf. She dashed around a corner, ripped off the gadget from around her neck, and grabbed hold of her Z-Powder again.

“Scar! Hey, Scar, answer me! Tch! Where is he when I need to talk to him?!”

Scar, sipping a piping hot cup of tea, came on-screen the second she finished slighting him. “Ah, Christine. I didn't think we would talk again so soon. You certainly look well.”

“I told you to stop calling me that! Bah! That's not important right now! Listen, I've figured out what Doctor Heisenberg is working on!”

Chris explained everything she had found out about the Lightspeed Power Suit to Scar, who was more than slightly intrigued by her findings.

“Fascinating,” he replied. “And the suit? Where is it now?”

“Heisenberg's keeping it in some secret facility. I don't know where said lab is...”

“Well then, agent, I believe you still have a job to do. Tata for now.”

“W-Wait! Don't...” The screen on Chris' Z-Powder went dead. “…hang up.”

She sighed. Like always, she was just going to have to handle this herself.

“Dammit! That lab could be anywhere in the world! If only I had some clue to go on.”

There was no time for her to lament over her sorrows. Footsteps were heading toward her once more, and she figured it must have been Heisenberg coming back. Pushing a button on her Z-
Powder, she changed into some more casual apparel. However, instead of her Quantum Physics instructor, three familiar faces all laughing as they walked around the corner.

“Sam?! Alex?! Clover?!”

It was indeed the three girls she had run into during the day, or at least in Alex's case, the one who had run into her. The trio spotted Chris and stopped their ongoing conversation, seeming just as stunned to see her as she was to see them.

“Oh, hey! It's you!” said Sam.

“Yeah, it is Chris! W-Wait a sec! You know her too?” asked Alex. Sam nodded.

“No way! I ran into her today too!” added Clover.

“Well, we share a Physics 101 class together,” explained Sam.

“Er...I-I almost killed her today,” explained an embarrassed Alex.

Clover then added, “Well, I stopped to talk to her because she had a way cute scarf on. Speaking of which, are you positive I can't borrow for just a little while? Pretty please?”

“I am. And...h-hello again, you there,” said Chris, clearly uncomfortable with this chance encounter. “S-So you all are friends then?”

The three nodded enthusiastically.

“Isn’t it rather weird though that we all bumped into Chris here today?” asked Sam.

“Yeah, it is! Maybe it's like...fate or something!” exclaimed Alex.

“Puh-lease! Like I'm seriously going to believe in that horoscope crap!” said Clover. “Still, it is totally bizarre!”

Being talked about like this was making Chris even more uneasy for reasons beyond her. Her face was hot and butterflies were floating around in her stomach.

“I-I should have just used the Invisibility Scarf to run away when I had the chance…” she whispered.

“Hey! Since we're going to the mall anyway, we should totally bring Chris along!” suggested Alex.

“That's a great idea!” Sam replied. “I'm sure Chris would love The Groove!”

“Totes!” added Clover. “I said I would show her around anyway!”

“W-What's ‘The Groove?’” asked Chris. She wasn't sure she even wanted to know.

Clover was so shocked and stunned by the question, she found herself unable to speak for a moment. “Y-You don't know what The Groove is?! Seriously?!”

Chris nodded.

“It's only the greatest place on Earth! Not only does it have the best shops but also the cutest guys! Seriously, how could you not know?!”
“I...just didn't.”

“Well, good thing you ran into us then! Anyway, they're having a sale on cashmere right now, so we better move if we don't want everyone to take all the good stuff!”

“And I still have to make it up to you for almost giving you brain damage today!” Alex told Chris. “I know! I can buy you a drink at Señor Smoothie!”

“There's also a great bookstore at The Groove where we could probably find something to help us for Physics class tomorrow!” added Sam.

Chris wasn't sure what was going on anymore. She had no interest in shopping and even less of a desire in drinking a smoothie. It made no sense to her why anyone would waste their time on such fruitless endeavors.

“T-Thank you for the offers, girls, but I...”

Her new acquaintances weren't taking no for an answer it seemed. They basically shoved Chris out of the door and in the direction of the mall, much to their helpless victim's chagrin.

“D-Damn it, Scar! I'll never forgive you for making me go on this stupid mission in the first place!” she grumbled. Things were about to get a lot more interesting for the simple SOAP operative from the looks of it.

END
The name of the outdoor shopping complex Sam, Alex, and Clover had spoken so highly of really was The Groove. Chris had presumed it merely a cute, little nickname the three had come up with, but a sign hanging over the entrance verified this wasn't the case. She gazed at the letters in total silence for a few moments, while her new acquaintances rushed into the mall with a full head of steam. She followed soon afterward, honestly finding herself in awe at the many stores that filled The Groove. There were shoe outlets, clothing stores, and even a hair gel kiosk for whatever reason. She somewhat understood now why a place such as this could occupy the minds and hearts of the hundreds of people blissfully shopping in it. Nevertheless, there was nothing remotely appealing to her amongst the fashion designer clothing and overpriced jewelry.

“Aren't there better things these people could be spending their time doing?” she asked herself while staring at a mob of teenage girls fighting over the last pair of some fancy shoes.

“A-Are those the latest designer pair of Yves Mont Blanc's?!” Clover yelled in shock. She quickly rammed her way through the unruly crowd and into the center, where she began wrestling for control of the boots from an older woman. “Hand over the goods, grandma!”

“A-Are those shoes that important?” asked Chris, cringing when Clover dug her nails into the old woman's eyes.

“For Clover, yeah,” replied Alex. “If she's willing to ruin her manicure over them, you know she's serious!”

“I've seen this happen before. Trust me. Things are going to get a whole lot uglier before they get better,” groaned Sam.

Clover, successfully obtaining the Yves Mont Blanc shoes, leaped from the crowd and hissed at those foolish enough to try and ambush her for them. Grudgingly, everyone backed off. Brushing herself off and fixing her hair, Clover then walked back over to her friends, holding the shoes up high for all to see.

“Got 'em!” she proclaimed in between gasps of air.

“Yes, and they only cost you a couple of teeth and your self respect,” remarked Chris.

“A minor price to pay!” Clover responded as she eagerly slipped on the shoes. “These totally go perfectly with my outfit!”

A bead of sweat rolled down Sam's head. “If you're done playing Mall Gladiator, there's still that bookstore I want to check out.”

And so the trio, along with a less than eager Chris, continued their mall excursion, stopping and shopping at place to place, buying anything and everything that appealed to them. Chris was amazed to find that no matter how much Sam, Clover, and Alex swiped their credit cards, they never seemed to max them out. She wondered if they were perhaps rich.
Before long, the three had dozens of bags in each hand, yet their thirst for shopping wasn't sated. Chris, despite having bought nothing, was carrying even more than them. With a vein on her forehead, she was seriously debating whether or not to simply dump their purchases and storm off.

“Where should we head next?” asked a beaming Alex.

“I heard there's a sale on hats at Hats 'R Us!” said an equally elated Clover.

“Well, I do need a new hat for my Advanced Hat Study class!” said Sam.

“...Is this seriously all you girls do?”

Sam, Alex, and Clover stopped in their tracks and moved their heads back to Chris, who had blurted her last statement without really thinking. Blushing, she cleared her throat.

“W-What I mean to say is, I don't get why you three like shopping so much. What's so fun about going to a place crowded with people to buy clothing and jewelry that you'll eventually forget about in the long run? It just seems like a waste of time in my opinion.”

These questions, mind boggling to the three girls standing in front of Chris, were apparently harder to answer than she would have imagined.

“Well, I guess if I really had to think about it, it's not so much the shopping in general we enjoy...” Sam began. “... so much as it's spending time with one another!”

“I mean, hello! What's the point of buying clothes and looking fab if you have to do it alone?” added Clover.

“Are you saying...it's fun because you do it...together?” asked Chris slowly.

“Yeah!” yelled Alex. “What's better than spending time with your girlfriends?”

The three proceeded to hug before grinning at Chris, the latter more puzzled now than when she had first asked her question.

They just...want to be together then?

Such a concept was completely foreign to her. She had no friends at SOAP, and the sole person she could even remotely think of to refer to as an acquaintance was Scar. For all her life, she had worked, slept, eaten, and done most everything else completely alone. As a spy, she simply assumed that was just the way things had to be.

...I don't get it. Isn't it more efficient to do things by yourself? Don't other people just get in your way?

“What do you say we take a break, girls?” asked Sam. “We can go grab a drink at Señor Smoothie!”

“I second that notion!” Clover put her bags down and wiped her forehead clean. “As much as I love catching all these sales, my pedi is totally being ruined by all this walking around!”

“I bet you're thirsty too after nearly killing everyone to get those shoes,” said Alex.

“Is that fine with you, Chris?” said Sam.

With her feet stinging and her throat dry as well, Chris had no objections with the plan.
Alex bought Chris the drink she had promised her from Señor Smoothie, a strawberry and banana concoction that was actually quite delicious. Even so, as Chris sipped on the smoothie through a straw, she couldn't help but feel like something was wrong. It could have had to do with her guilty conscience at the moment, upset she was wasting her time goofing off at the mall when she had an all important mission for SOAP that required her full and undivided attention.

*I shouldn't be here. If Scar realized what I was up to...*

“Hey, is something wrong?”

Chris averted her staring from the floor to Sam. “...No, I'm fine.”

“Then how come you look like you missed out on a big sale at YMB?” said Clover.

“I-Is it the smoothie? Do you not like strawberry banana?!?” asked Alex, who looked like she was ready to burst into tears. “I-I can get you chocolate if you want!”

“It's not the smoothie. Like I said, It's nothing. I assure you all.”

With that, Chris went back to quietly slurping her drink. Despite her words, Sam, Clover, and Alex were certain her current behavior was a bit more than 'nothing.'

In an attempt to break the awkwardness of the situation, Sam said, “So...Chris, why don't you tell us a bit more about yourself?”

“There's really nothing to tell,” said Chris in response.

A drop of sweat fell down the back of Sam, Alex, and Clover's heads at this answer.

“Um...how about your favorite sports team?” said Alex reluctantly.

“Sports team? I'm not really into sports.”

Strike two, the others thought.

Clover then jumped in, saying, “Y-You have to have a favorite boy band at least? Teensicle? Boy Candy? Frontstreet Guys?”

“What's a...boy band?”

Strike three. The girl's attempts at getting to know Chris were making them want to learn less about her. Moving out of earshot, they huddled up.

“Okay, is it just me or is this girl really...weird?” Sam asked. “It's like she lives in a totally different universe or something!”

“Tell me about it! She didn't even bat an eyelash when I mentioned the halter tops in the mall were half off today!” replied Clover.

“Well, what are we going to do? We're the ones who invited her here!”

“I know, Alex, but...” Sam glanced over her shoulder at Chris, who was paying them no mind, and continued with, “We can't just bail on her...”
“I-I guess not,” said Clover, though she was really hoping they could.

“We should just try to make her feel more comfortable! Maybe she’s just acting so weird because she doesn’t have any friends yet here in Beverly Hills!”

Clover and Alex, frowning, nodded their heads at Sam’s plan. They weren’t exactly jumping at the chance however to interact with Chris again.

“...Okay, what are you three talking about over there?”

A chill shot down the three’s spine just then. Chris, having seemingly come out of nowhere, loomed over them ominously. They were so frightened, they lost their footing, weakly chuckling on the floor in an effort to hide their guilt.

“U-Uh...w-we were just trying to figure out what store we should hit next!” Clover lied.

“Y-Yeah! We...always have to decide...like this...” said Alex in an even less convincing fashion.

Chris raised an eyebrow. “...I see. Anyway, as much as I’ve enjoyed this little excursion, there's something I...”

Interrupting her was a loud, booming sound that was unmistakably an explosion of some sort. It was powerful, so powerful in fact, it violently shook the ground and nearly caused everyone to fall over. Nearby denizens off the mall started to run and scream for their lives from an unseen entity soon after, and Chris, scanning the area, couldn’t locate the source of the disturbance.

*What the...? That wasn't a normal explosion. It sounded like...*

“Uh...what's going on?” Alex wanted to know.

“Either there's a killer shoe sale happening somewhere or something's attacking the mall!” said Clover.

“Er...I think I’ve found what our 'something' is! Look!”

Sam pointed to a far off corner, where a giant, metallic robot was currently destroying everything in sight with red laser beams fired from its eyes. The sight of it made one of Chris’ eyelids twitch.

“D-Does this sort of thing happen often here at The Groove?” she inquired.

“S-Sorta! When you think about it, there always seems to be a baddie trying to trash our favorite hangout!” Clover explained. “Agh! D-Did it just blow up my favorite shoe store?!”

“T-That's so totally evil!” Alex chimed with her hands on her head in shock. “A-Ah! H-He just got the pet shop I always go to to get Oinky's favorite brand of mud!”

“What do you say we stop that oversized can opener and send it back to the scrap heap where it belongs?!” declared Sam.

“Yeah!” answered Alex and Clover. It was then the overzealous trio recalled Chris was standing right behind them.

“...What are you three talking about? You don't actually think you can stop that thing, do you?” inquired a confused Chris.

“Uh...n-no! O-Of course not! We were just...” Sam, her eyes shifting in panic, struggled to come
with an excuse. “Y-You just wait here, Chris, where it's safe! We're just going to go...check on something real quick!”

Sam, Alex, and Clover all nodded at this, waved, and hastily dashed off into the distance. Watching them go, Chris' intuition told her something was amiss. She disregarded Sam’s warning, following after the girls. The three hadn't gotten far, hiding out of sight behind a plant. Chris adjusted her position and watched them pull out pink, compact mirrors before their clothing suddenly transformed. Now wearing green, yellow, and red catsuits respectively, Sam, Alex, and Clover stepped into the fray, attracting the attention of the nearby, rampaging robot.

“Alright, girls, it's spy time!” Sam bellowed.

The trio then jumped into action. Chris, with her jaw practically on the floor, watched them battle the robot while her brain struggled to comprehend what she was seeing.

“...Impossible!” she stated. “...You're meaning to tell me those bumbling, absentminded, mall crazy girls are actually spies?!”

As strange and shocking as this development was, things were suddenly beginning to make sense to her. There was no doubt in Chris' mind now that Sam, Alex, and Clover were the WOOHP spies Scar warned her were at Malibu University. They had been under her nose all this time. Smirking, she couldn't help but find it humorous how easily she had been fooled.

“Still, how could girls like them be working for WOOHP? It doesn't make sense.”

She supposed it didn't matter how. She reached for her Z-Powder, pressed a button. Before long, Scar's face popped up on the top screen.

“Agent C? What's the matter? Has something gone wrong with your mission?”

Chris shook her head. “Quite the opposite actually. Remember those WOOHP agents you were telling me about? Well, I'm pretty sure I've found them.”

“...And you're sure about that?” Scar asked, rubbing his chin.

Chris moved her head back to the fight unfolding below her and witnessed Sam using some sort of gadget that froze the robot's legs solid. Alex then aimed a ring on her index finger at it, causing a laser beam to shoot out and slice the machine right down the middle. The two halves fell in opposite directions, violently sparking as they did so.

“Yes, I'm positive,” Chris answered, turning back to her Z-Powder. “Those girls are using gadgets like the ones we have at SOAP, unless you want me to believe they bought them here at the mall.”

“Wait, you're at the mall?” Scar's interest, and his eyebrow, heightened.

Chris blushed. “I-It's not what you think! I-I was just...!”

“I needn’t know the reason. Actually, the WOOHP spies revealing themselves to you like this is a blessing in disguise. Agent C, I want you to eliminate them. Their presence during your mission will simply overcomplicate things. Take care of them while you have the opportunity.”

A throb of pain abruptly shot across Chris’ chest when she heard the word ‘eliminate.’ Though she hadn't the foggiest idea why, a small part of her had actually flinched at the idea of disposing of Sam, Alex, and Clover.


...What was that?

“Agent C, is something the matter?”

“N-No, Scar. I'll...eliminate the WOOHP agents right now, then get back to my mission of finding Doctor Heisenberg’s invention!”

“...I’d expect nothing less from you. Tata.”

Chris ended the transmission before taking a long, deep breath. There was something wrong with her at the moment. She could feel it. Whatever the case, she would have to get over whatever was plaguing her because right now, she had something important to take care of. She activated the clothes changing features on her Z-Powder and slipped into her black catsuit, shrouding her face with a black ski mask. Though the outfit likely wasn’t what Clover would refer to as ‘fashionable,’ it was the only thing she ever felt comfortable in.

“Time to get to work...”

#

“So, where do you think this thing came from?”

Alex, crouching down on her knees, poked at the remains of the metallic monstrosity that had moments ago been having its way with The Groove. A piece of it shifted some, making her shriek in terror. Her face then turned scarlet when Sam and Alex glanced at her like she were crazy.

“I don't know where it came from either, Alex, but we better send some evidence to Jerry using our X-Powders so he can hopefully find out the answer,” said Sam.

“He better find out fast because I'm going to make whoever sent this thing pay for ruining the pair of red pumps I was going to buy from that store it stepped on!” Clover proclaimed, clenching her fists tightly.

Alex sighed. “So much for our peaceful shopping trip.”

“I know, but don't you think it's strange?” asked Sam. “Why would someone send a robot to attack The Groove in the first place?”

“Maybe someone's mad because they missed out on Hats Off to the Mall Day?” suggested Clover, shrugging.

“Hey girls, don’t you think whoever made this thing is a total cheapo?” Alex picked up another fragment of the robot, easily crushing it within her grasp. “I mean, what is this thing made of, paper mache?”

Sam and Clover inspected the wreckage as well, and the various wires and parts were as fragile as glass.

“Hey, you're right!” Sam exclaimed. “The wiring and circuitry are way out of whack too! I'm surprised this thing was even up and moving around!”

“So, either our bad guy is really strapped for cash, or they totally aren't very good at building robots,” said Clover.

“Seems like it. We won't know for sure though until Jerry sends the results of that analysis back.”
“I just still can't believe the mall is totally trashed!” whined Alex. “What are we supposed to do in the meantime?”

“Hmph. You're about to have something other than your precious mall to fret over.”

The WOOHP agents slowly shifted to whoever had just spoken, just as the individual in question landed a few feet away. Frowning from underneath her mask, Chris placed her hands on her hips and stared down Sam, Alex, and Clover intently. Even now, she was having a hard time accepting the fact the three were actually secret agents, especially when they insisted on parading around in such inconspicuous outfits.

“What the...?! Who are you?!” Sam demanded to know.

“For all intents and purposes, your destroyer,” answered Chris.

“So, I...um...take it she isn't on our side,” chimed Alex.

“Duh! Someone on our side would totally know that ski mask so clashes with that kind of outfit!” added Clover.

Chris chose not to respond to the remark.

“Wait! Were you the one that sent that robot to trash our mall?!” said Alex.

Chris shook her head. “My group, Spies Organized Against Peace, wouldn't bother sending a mediocre thing like that if we really wanted to 'trash' this place. Not that a place like this even has any value to us. ...Wait, why are you all staring at me like that?”

The WOOHP agents paused at her question before breaking out into spontaneous laughter.

“...What's so funny?” asked Chris, who had clearly missed the joke.

“Y-Your organization's name is SOAP?!” giggled a struggling to breathe at the moment Sam.

Clover was having just as much trouble holding back a couple more chuckles. “T-That's the silliest name for a group I've ever heard!”

“Yeah! What are you gonna do, clean us to death?!” said a snorting Alex.

The three kept on hamming it up, so hard that their chest began to hurt, and they weren't even able to stand under their own power anymore.

“T-That's enough!” Chris barked. She then angrily stomped her feet. “Would you idiots stop screwing around?! I'm only about to kill you here!”

Chris was about to ensure her enemies had nothing to giggle about in a moment. She rushed at the unsuspecting WOOHP agents with vigor, unleashing a flurry of punches and kicks. Her enemies all gasped ahead of scattering like cockroaches to dodge her assault.

“H-Hey! Take it easy!” Sam cried, ducking a roundhouse kick aimed for her head.

“W-Wow! She's good!” added Alex, who narrowly avoided a left hook.

“Hey! Watch the hair!” blared Clover.

“Tsk! To think girls like you actually have some skill!” growled Chris.
The offensive tide started to turn before Chris knew it. Now she was the one being pushed back. The strikes from the WOOHP spies were faster than she had anticipated, and numerous blows nearly knocked her block off. Three on one was something she wasn't going to win no matter how stubborn she was, so she hastily flipped backward to catch her breath and think up a new strategy.

“What's wrong? Is that all you've got?!” taunted Clover.

“Yeah! I thought you were gonna destroy us!” said Alex sarcastically.

“Looks like we've got her on the rope, girls!” said Sam.

Chris held her tongue at the comments, more concerned with how she could gain the upper hand in this fight. It was then she remembered the Faux Silk Invisibility Scarf in her possession. If used, it would allow her to attack without being seen and end this struggle in a flash.

W-Wait a minute...!

Or so she thought. The memory of Clover seeing her wearing the scarf earlier in the day remained fresh on her mind. Putting it on now would be the equivalent of her just telling Sam, Alex, and Clover she was Chris in disguise.

Plan B it is then...

Fortunately for her, there was another gadget in her disposal she could use, one her enemies had no knowledge of. Chris tossed the Knockout Gas Apple Earrings right at Sam, Alex, and Clover. A thick, red gas burst forth from them, shrouding everything in sight. The WOOHP spies could be heard screaming in panic in the midst of the gas cloud growing larger and larger. Chris, on the other hand, kept a level head, quickly scaling up to a higher level of the mall using the bungee cable attached to her utility belt.

“How about that? I never imagined that gadget would work so well” she stated.

Three more cables attached themselves to a nearby railing, and much to Chris' chagrin, Sam, Alex, and Clover soon followed behind them. They were surrounded by a pink, spherical barrier.

“H-Huh? Why didn't the gas knock you three out?!” Chris asked.

“Don't think you're the only one with gadgets, missy!” said Clover, who was holding a pink rod in her fingertips. She pressed a button on it, and the barrier faded away.

“You've gotta love the All Purpose Weather Umbrella!” said a winking Sam.

“But...isn't it bad luck to open umbrellas indoors?” said Alex. Upon receiving a pair of blank stares from her friends, she held her arms up and cried, “W-What?!!”

Chris grit her teeth and mumbled, “How can such blithering idiots work so well together?”

She realized how upset she was getting and calmed down. She would accomplish nothing without a clear head. That was something Scar had drilled into her psyche during all her rigorous training. She also reminded herself that destroying these girls was her highest priority if SOAP's goals were going to be achieved.

“Just give it up already!” Sam declared.

“Your evil spy days are over!” said Clover.
Alex added, “I think there’s a cell in the WOOHP containment facility with your name on it, missy!”

The mere idea of being captured by WOOHP made something within Christine snap. Even as Sam, Alex, and Clover headed toward her, she no longer had any thoughts of backing down, despite the fact taking them all on at the same time was tantamount to suicide. Her eyes moved to and fro, searching for some other means of attack. Soon enough, she found just the thing to settle this. She fired her bungee cable again, this time toward the Spies themselves. The three of them managed to duck it in time, although they were never Chris’ target to begin with. Her cable instead latched itself onto the arm of a giant teddy bear in front of the toy shop behind them. With one strong pull, the stuffed animal came tumbling forward.

“Hey, is it getting darker?” Alex asked as the bear’s shadow grew larger and larger.

The girls, though not wanting to, did an about-face. Their expressions changed to ones of horror as the giant teddy bear crashed down on top of them, squeaking loudly as it did. Chris braced herself from the impact and thereafter, a smile wormed its way onto her mouth. Walking over to the bear, she kicked it in the head quite stiffly, making it squeak again.

“Good riddance,” she said. With WOOHP out of her hair, her primary mission became a whole lot easier. She began to step away from the area, intent on finding Doctor Heisenberg as soon as possible to pry the location of his secret laboratory out of him.

The WOOHP spies weren’t out of the game just yet. The center of the teddy bear, their supposedly final resting place, was frozen solid. Then, Alex and Clover burst from within the frigid stuffing and connected with a pair of kicks to the back of an unsuspecting Chris’ head. She went rolling across the ground but found her way to her feet employing an acrobatic flip. However, at that instant, Sam rushed in, balled her fist tightly, and slugged Chris square in the jaw. Floored a second time, Chris was helpless to stop Sam from pulling out a blue, star star-shaped bottle and spraying at her legs.

“W-What in the...?!” Chris' eyes widened after her legs became frozen solid by the sweet-smelling mist. No amount of struggling was able to break her free. “D-Dammit! W-What did you do to me?!”

“Ice Queen Perfume. Just another one of WOOHP’s handy gadgets,” said Sam, tossing the bottle in her grasp up and down. “You're on thin ice now!”

Chris didn't want to admit it, but things certainly did look bleak for her. Clover and Alex made their way over to Sam, and the three high-fived one another for a job well done.

“Now then, how come you're trying to get rid of us?!” said Clover to Chris.

“Yeah, who sent you?!” asked Alex. “D-Did our moms send you here because they know we're not doing so great in school right now?!”

“Better yet, who are you?” added Sam.

There was no way Chris was going to open her mouth and spill any of SOAP's secrets. She would rather die.

“Not much of a talker, eh? You sure were earlier,” chimed Sam. “That's fine! As soon as the boys from WOOHP come and pick you up, they can get all the answers we need out of you!”

Again, the thought of being apprehended by WOOHP lit a fire inside Christine. She started jerking her legs even harder against the ice ensnaring them.

Opening her X-Powder, Sam began to speak into it. “Hey, Jerry? We've got someone here we need
you to get. Apparently, she's an enemy spy from some group by the name of SOAP. I'm still not sure that's even a real thing!

"...Jerry?" Speaking in barely a whisper, Chris ceased moving. Her eyelids then narrowed, and she began biting her bottom lip so fiercely, she drew blood. Hearing the name 'Jerry' had visibly upset her. No, perhaps referring to her as 'upset' was an incredible understatement. This was no more apparent than when she roared, "JERRY LEWIS?!!"

"Whoa! Psycho much?!" hollered a taken aback Clover in response to this.

"Uh oh! I think she's gonna blow, girls!" inquired Alex.

"W-Wait, do you...actually know Jerry?!!" asked Sam.

"...You clearly take me for a fool! You want to know if I know that man? There's no way I wouldn't know the name of a man as despicable as Jerry Lewis!" Chris' skin was flushing so deep a shade of crimson, Sam, Alex, and Clover mistook her for an erupting volcano. The rage she was struggling to contain sure was bubbling like lava. "There isn't a chance in hell I wouldn't, not when that man was the one to take everything from me! Now you three imbeciles think I'm just going to allow myself to become his captive?!!"

Chris, managing to tap into newfound strength, freed one of her arms before brandishing her All Purpose Fountain Laser Pen and slicing the ice trapping the rest of her flesh.

"Did we seriously just forget to take away her gadgets?!!" said Alex, palming her hand over her face.

"Ugh! What a totally boneheaded move!" added Clover. "That's usually what the villains forget to do when they capture us!"

"Ngh! It's still three on one! You're not going anywhere!" Sam proclaimed.

"Tsk! I wasn't planning on running anyway!" answered Chris. "This whole this is seriously pissing me off! I'll destroy you three here and now!"

She aimed her laser pen right at them, preparing to burn the trio off the face of the Earth in a blind fury. The sole thing that prevented her from doing so was the abrupt beeping of her Z-Powder. Grabbing it, she opened it to see a very stern-looking Scar glowering back at her.

"Fall back, Agent C," he said briskly. "I believe you have caused enough trouble for one day."

"Excuse me?! You want me to do what?!" Hearing this made the already unstable Christine even more volatile. "I don't need to retreat, Scar! I can do it! I can take out these WOOHP agents right here and now!"

"No, you're blinded by rage at the moment. I'm not allowing my best agent to be captured or worse just to settle some personal vendetta. You won't be able to exact your revenge if something happens to you, correct? Fall back for now. You'll have another opportunity in the near future to settle things. I promise you that."

Yielding here was something Chris' pride was screaming at her not to do, yet she forced herself to simmer down after taking some time to reflect on Scar's words.

"Hey, doesn’t that thing she's talking into right now look sorta like our X-Powders?" asked Sam.

"Yeah, it does! What gives?!" cried Alex.
“Sheesh! Do you just have copies of all of our gadgets?!” Clover inquired. “Talk about unoriginal!”

Slamming her Z-Powder shut, Chris pointed to the WOOHP spies and declared, “I don't know how, but it looks like you three are going to leave this mall tonight with your lives intact! Don't worry though! We'll settle this some other time! Count on it!”

“Oh no you don't, lady! You're not going anywhere!” Sam informed her. “Grab her, girls!”

Chris put a thorn in her pursuer’s efforts to capture her by lobbing a couple smoke bombs. The resulting smokescreen allowed her to make a clean getaway as she leaped down to the ground level of the mall and right through The Groove's emergency exit. Though she might have been in the clear now, she couldn't help but leer back and groan at everything that transpired this evening.

“...To think I was nearly defeated by three, bumbling idiots like those girls! It seems I underestimated them! Next time though, they’re going down for sure!”

#

Christine's trek back to Malibu University had been a successful one. No one had trailed her return trip, and she figured she had gotten away without anyone discovering her identity. All this should have been cause for celebration, but as she sat quietly on her bed inside her pitch black dorm room, all she felt was bitter disappointment. She scowled at the blank wall in front of her, noting she hadn't been this upset in a very long time. Her shaking fist collided with her pillow, sending white feathers everywhere.

“What did I do wrong?! Where did I screw up?!” She laid back in her bed and fixed her blue eyes to the ceiling this time around. “There must be some miscalculation I made that I simply can't remember...”

She tossed and turned in her bed for answers though was unable to come up with a single one. The whole thing just didn't make sense to her. Was it Sam, Alex, and Clover's superior numbers that gave them the edge? Their gadgets? Or was it something else, something Chris was unable to fathom because she didn't think like them?

I wonder. Could it have been...?

Her Z-Powder started to beep again, breaking her from her heavy thinking.

“Yeah, what is it, Scar?” she said with an air of annoyance at her boss.

Scar frowned at this. “Is that how you talk to me now, Christine? That school must be corrupting you faster than I estimated.”

“I told you not to call me that.” Chris sighed. “Just get on with whatever it is you want to say.”

“...Fine. I've analyzed the data from that nasty robot that attacked you at the mall earlier this evening, and I have the results right now.”

“You do? How? I didn't even send you any evidence.”

“Oh, I assure you SOAP has its ways.”

Chris' eyebrow rose. “O-ooo-okay. Why is it even any of our business that some secondhand robot attacked a silly mall?”
“I'm pleased you asked. You're right. If it were just some machine going crazy in a mall, it really wouldn't be any of our business, but what if I told you that robot wasn't just destroying things for the sake of destroying them, but actually looking to destroy someone?”

“...What are you trying to say?”

“I'm trying to say that that robot was trying to destroy you, Agent C.”

Chris, for a moment, wasn't sure if she was hearing Scar correctly. “...That makes no sense, Scar. Why would it be going after me?”

Scar, stroking his chin, stated, “That's a very good question, agent. I must admit, the whole 'evil robot going after you thing' is merely a theory of mine, but don't you think it's rather suspicious that the one time in your entire life that you take an interest in something 'normal' girls your age do all the time in going to the mall, it is attacked?”

“...I-I see your point, yet the robot went after those WOOHP agents, not me.”

“Another good point. However, I believe the robot simply mistook them for you. I'm sure you noticed it yourself, but that machine was...how should I say...shoddily constructed. It looked like something an elementary schooler would bring for a science fair. Well, a rather eccentric elementary schooler with a fair amount of funds, but you get my point. Anyway, I think it's safe to say the robot's programming couldn't have been all that much better, so I have no doubt it could have confused its intended target for someone else.”

“These are a lot of assumptions to go on, Scar. If everything you're saying is true, that means someone here at Malibu University knows I'm actually an undercover agent and has it in for me. There's no way it could be those WOOHP agents because my face was covered the entire time.”

“I believe you're correct. It also couldn't have been WOOHP who sent that robot if your recollection of tonight's events are correct. Besides, their technology, as much as I hate to admit it, is far too advanced. Can you think of anyone else that might know your secret?”

“No. I'm telling you, there's no one out there that could possibly know. I've been very careful. Was there a leak at SOAP or something?”

“H-How dare you suggest this organization could possibly have any leaks!” Scar shouted indignantly.

“I-It was just a question. You...don't have to get so worked up...”

“Anyway, it seems you're not only going to have to find out who wants you disposed of, but you also still have to discover the location of Heisenberg's secret laboratory. Tata for now, my dear. I'll contact you if I find anything of relevance. Remember to do the same, agent.”

Scar dropped the call, and like always, Chris felt that he was of no help to her when it really mattered.

“How could my cover have been blown? I'm positive I didn't make any errors or allow anyone to see me while I was in Heisenberg's office earlier. Even if they did spot me, how would they know it was me when I was in disguise? Something about this just isn't right.”

A knock at the door of her dorm room gave Chris a fright; she half near fell out of her bed as a result. She certainly hadn't been expecting any visitors, especially at this time of night, so she grabbed the All Purpose Fountain Pen Laser that was resting on her desk and slowly approached the door. If
there was one thing she had to give her would be assassin credit for, it was that they were persistent. It was just unfortunate that they weren't dealing with an amateur, she thought. She unlocked the door, pulled it open, and aimed the pen straight at the heart of the person waiting on the other side.

“Uh...i-is this a bad time? B-Because I can always come back...”

The person now sweating profusely in her doorway was no assassin, but Samantha, one of the WOOHP agents Chris had grappled with back at The Groove. Why she was here of all places, Chris didn't know, but perhaps this moment would be a good time to eliminate her. She was alone and vulnerable, making her easy prey. Despite this, Chris' arm lowered, her weapon along with it. For some reason, she couldn't bring herself to do the deed. In terms of an explanation, she settled on thinking she could blow her cover if someone were to pass by and see the deed. However, there was definitely something else staying her hand, even if she didn't want to admit it.

“H-Hello, Sam,” Chris said, trying to sound as natural as possible.

“Oh, hi! Hmm, that's the second time tonight someone's tried to kill me with a pen. Er...anyway...I didn't mean to drop by so late, but when I heard your dorm room was around here, I just had to come check up on you! Are you alright? Clover, Alex, and I couldn't find you after that little 'incident' back at The Groove. You don't know how relieved I am to see you here safe and sound!”

“Yes, I'm fine. No need to worry.”

Chris wanted to add, “No thanks to you!”, but held that little tidbit in.

“Er...there's one other thing. I-I just want to apologize for the way we acted back at the mall,” Sam continued, rubbing the back of her head. “We're not usually like that, I swear!”

“What are you talking about?”

“Well...it's just that...Clover, Alex, and I were sort of...talking behind your back for a little while there. We were saying all sorts of mean stuff like you were strange and that it was weird you don't like Teensicle and all that.”

“It's not that I don't like Teensicle. I just don't have any idea what that is,” Chris said honestly.

Sam snickered, though it was obvious she had tried to hold back. “Sorry! I'm not laughing at you! It's just...”

“I think I...understand what it is you're trying to say...and it's fine. You guys can talk about me all you want. I don't mind really. Stuff like that tends not to bother me.”

A bead of sweat rolled down Sam's head. “T-That wasn't the point I was trying to get across. Anyway, I got you something from the mall! Remember that really cool bookstore we stopped at before that robot got through blowing it to bits?”

Sam reached into her bag and pulled out a very, very thick book. Taking it, Chris nearly fell over from its sheer weight.

“W-What is it?” she strained to ask.

“It's *Everything You Need To Know About Physics and More!* It was on sale, and I remembered we had Physics 101 together, so I went ahead and bought it! I meant to give it to you back at the mall, but...”
“...You got this for me? I don't understand. Why did you go to the trouble?”

“Huh? Because we're friends, duh! Well, I'd like us to be anyway! Although you're sort of strange, no offense, me and the others wouldn't mind hanging out again!”

Friends? For the second time today, that word had been brought up in conversation, and for a second time, Chris had no idea how to react to it. She gazed at the text in her hand without saying a word before glancing back up at Sam. Without her realizing, a single tear had formed in one of her eyes.

“Thank you,” she then said.

“H-Huh? Are you...crying?!” asked Sam in confusion.

Chris gasped, quickly wiping her face clean, and stated, “O-Of course not! It’s probably just my allergies flaring up. This dorm room tends to get rather dusty, and I...uh...haven't had the chance to really clean it yet...”

“Ah, I see. Um...well, you can look over the book if you want! It should help you get ready for that big test we have on Thursday! Don't worry about me! I've already read it over!” Sam explained.

“Alright, I gotta go! Clover and Alex are waiting for me, but I'll see you in class tomorrow, right?”

Chris nodded and watched as Sam waved and disappeared down another corridor. Stepping back into her dorm and closing the door behind her, Chris took a seat on her bed. She wasn't sure what had just transpired, only really getting that she was left with a really heavy book in her lap. There was nothing other for her to do than open it to begin skimming through its pages. Like Sam had stated, the information inside was quite extensive, enough so that she humorously questioned if she would even have to bother attending Doctor Heisenberg’s lecture tomorrow morning.

“...I seriously don't know why she let me have this. It would have been more beneficial to her to keep it, and the knowledge, to herself. Was it some sort of trick?” she muttered. “And why did she say something silly like us becoming friends? Tsk. Those girls really are strange.”

In spite of her talk, she felt like the strange one here. Just hours ago, she had been ready to rip Sam's and the other girl's heads off, but now she was as calm as could be.

“...It doesn't matter. I'll pay those girls back soon enough...”

Flipping through another page of the physics book, she began to wonder just how long it was. With school not starting for a number of hours, she supposed she had time to find out.

END
It was the start of a new day for Christine the Spy at Malibu University. As she made her way to class that morning, she couldn't stop herself from yawning repeatedly. She rubbed at her puffy, red eyes, annoyed at the seemingly endless supply of tears coming out of them. It wasn't often she was this tired, but then again, it wasn't often she stayed up all night reading. The book Sam had given her titled *Everything You Need To Know About Physics And More!* was more engaging that Chris had imagined, and before she knew it, the sun had come up by the time she finished reading through the complete text for the second time. At the very least, if she couldn't complete her mission in stealing Doctor Heisenberg's secret project, she could certainly go into a career in quantum physics.

“Need...coffee,” she muttered, trudging through campus like a zombie. The Mali-U Café was just up ahead, so she opted to grab a cup of joe before class. “Just...one cup...”

In her exhausted state, she was unable to avoid slamming into person after person. Eventually, she made it to her destination but was horrified to see a line of people at the coffee stand.

“Good morning! How are...” Nurse Melody, toward the café’s exit when she spotted Chris, dropped the paper cup filled with straight black coffee in her hands and rushed over to her. “Goodness! A-Are you alright?! Y-You look even worse than yesterday! M-Maybe I shouldn't have let you go so soon!”

“Need...coffee,” Chris muttered in response. Her trembling hands reached out for the other cup of coffee in the nurse's hand. “Just...one cup...”

“W-Wait! T-That one isn't mine, it's...!”

Melody shook her head, supposing that it didn't matter. She instead pulled a pocket-sized flashlight out of her white coat and flicked it on, shining the light in both of Chris' eyes. Black bags encircled the bottom of them, and even with the bright illumination, Chris didn't flinch at all, more focused on the piping hot caffeine in her grasp.

“H-Have you been sleeping well?” Nurse Melody inquired.

Chris nodded. “Yes, why do you ask?”

“Well, it's just that you look about ready to pass out! Not to mention you have all the classic signs of sleep deprivation!”

“I'm fine. I just need some coffee. Just one cup...”

“Y-Yes, you've...said that already.”

Chris, barely alive at this point, slowly drank her coffee. Within seconds, her dreary features cleared up. It was as if she had gotten the full, eight hours of sleep most doctors recommended.

Melody's jaw fell wide open at this. “T-That’s impossible!”
Confused by the look she was receiving, Chris stretched her neck and lifted one of her eyebrows.

“What?” she then asked. “I told you. I just needed a cup of coffee.”

“B-But...?!”

“My body is trained to work on as little energy as possible. Therefore, one cup of coffee for me is like one hundred for you. Is that so strange?”

Chris walked away, leaving a still baffled Nurse Melody wondering if she had been merely imagining things just now.

“I...really should’ve kept her in my office a bit longer!”

Chris was about to exit the café and head to class until she caught wind of Sam, Clover, and Alex chatting at one of the tables. In haste, she tried slinking away and out of sight to no avail. Clover spotted her and began to wave in her direction.

“Hey there!” Clover yelled from across the room. “Come here!”

It would have been easy for Chris to just ignore her and walk away anyway, but something compelled her to suck in her pride. Forcing a smile, she walked over to the trio's table and took a seat at their invitation.

Why is it I can't seem to avoid these girls?

“H-Hello,” she muttered to them. “G-Good morning.”

“Good morning!” Sam replied. “You're coming to class today, right?”

“Yes. I also finished that book you gave me. Thank you again for gifting it to me.”

“No problem! So, tell me! What did you think about the part pertaining to the behavior of photons and electrons?”

“It was actually quite fascinating, mostly because…”

“W-Wait! You guys aren't talking about that big book Sam picked up from the bookstore yesterday, are you?!” said Clover, whose expression was the same as Nurse Melody's when Chris left her. “T-That thing was like a bazillion pages! And you're saying you finished it?!”

“Twice,” said Chris nonchalantly. “I wanted to make sure I understood everything.”

“M-My head hurts just thinking about something like that!” said Alex. “You guys are total bookworms!”

Checking her watch, Chris said, “I really have to be getting to class, so…”

“Yeah, she's right,” said Sam. “We wouldn't want to miss a minute of Professor Heisenberg's lecture today!”

A drop of sweat rolled down both Clover's and Alex's heads.

“Well, I guess I better head to Fashion Design Class,” said Clover, standing and stretching. “There's this totally cute boy in my class, and I think he has the hots for me! Ha, not that I blame him!”
“Somehow, I doubt it,” Alex whispered.

“What did you say?!”

“N-Nothing! Nothing at all! Er...w-would you look at the time! I have my All About Dogs course coming up! See you girls later!”

Alex almost broke the doors to the café in an attempt to leave as fast as she could.

“All About Dogs course?” said Chris slowly. “What's that?”

“Nothing, unless you want to be able to tell if your dog has fleas,” replied Clover. She stuck out her tongue in disgust at the concept.

“Alex says we simply don't understand all the 'subtle nuances' that comes with being an animal lover every time we bring up how silly the course sounds,” Sam explained.

The class sounded just as useless as Sam and Clover described it in Chris’ opinion. The three of them began to laugh in unison at this fact, and in the middle of it, Chris took heed of what she was doing. Covering her mouth in shock and confusion, she returned to her usual, serious demeanor and abruptly stood.

“Hey! What's the rush?” Clover asked in her wake.

“I'm wasting time here,” was Chris' simple reply. She headed back outside onto campus, still unsure as to why she was allowing herself to have such a grand time with the enemy. Sam, Alex, and Clover were WOOHP spies. Hitting herself in the head, she reminded herself of this while also acknowledging that she was slacking off somewhat. She was a SOAP agent first and foremost.

*Perhaps I'm trying a little too hard with this whole 'pretend to be a college student' thing...*

#

Chris' trek to Doctor Heisenberg’s lecture hall was interrupted when she went down a corridor filled with strange posters on a majority of the walls. Even weirder was the smugly smiling girl depicted on them, a girl Chris could have sworn she had seen before. The identity of the individual didn't take long for her to figure out as a loud, high-pitched laugh invaded her ears out of the blue.

“Mandy...” she said through gritted teeth.

Mandy, the girl Chris had the unfortunate pleasure of meeting yesterday, was standing on the back of her intern Trent like he were a ladder. Trent, obviously in pain, seemed to be ignoring his anguish for Mandy's benefit, though Chris had no idea why anyone would want to do such a thing of their own free will. Perhaps Mandy had some sort of mind control chip inserted in his brain. As silly as it sounded, it was the sole thing Chris could think of to explain their relationship.

“Trent! Stop moving around so much!” Mandy barked. “Do you want me to break my neck or something?!”

“N-No, Mandy,” Trent groaned, straightening up to quell her ire.

With Trent's help, Mandy was putting up flier after flier, advertising herself for some purpose Chris honestly didn't want to know about. Taking this into account, she put her head down in an attempt to rush through the hallway without being noticed. This did her no good since Mandy's keen eye caught sight of her.
“Hey, loser!” she bellowed. “Just where do you think you're going?!”

The list of inexplicable things Chris had done at Mali-U increased by one when she stopped and turned back around. Ignoring a person like Mandy was easier in prospect than execution, it seemed.

“Hello...Mandy,” said Chris sheepishly.

“You've got a lot of nerve showing your face to me after what happened yesterday!” Mandy jumped off Trent's back, causing him to grunt, and walked over to Chris while smiling. “Especially in an outfit like that! Is there a 'buy one, get two ugly ones free' sale going on at the mall or something?!”

There it was again. Chris cringed at the distinct tone of Mandy's laughter. It was by far the worst thing she had ever heard in her life, and she was certain that no matter how many times she would have to withstand it, she would never get used to it.

“I'm running for the Miss Mali-U competition as you can so clearly see!” Mandy then stated, holding her arms out toward the photos of herself everywhere. “Only the most beautiful and popular girl on campus has a shot of winning, so naturally, the judges just have to pick me!”

“I don't care,” Chris replied candidly.

Mandy, either not hearing her or just not caring, went on with, “I don't even know why the other girls on campus are even bothering to sign up! It's not like any of them can even remotely hold a candle to yours truly! Right, Trent?”

“...”

“RIGHT, TRENT?!”

“Y-Yes, Mandy!” said Trent in surprise at his presence being acknowledged.

Chris hadn't the foggiest idea why anyone would be interested in entering the sort of contest where the participants did nothing more than flaunt their beauty. It was the type of thing made for idiots and by idiots. Thinking on it some more, it made perfect sense to her why a person like Mandy took such interest in it now.

“Good luck then,” said Chris, who walked right past Mandy without another word.

“H-Hey! Get back here!” Mandy yelled. “Y-You can't just ignore me! And what do you mean by 'good luck?!' I don't need luck! You're just saying that because you're jealous!”

Mandy face resembled a beet at the moment, and Chris didn't understand why she was getting so upset over a simple, good gesture.

Mandy continued her mad rant. “Y-You wouldn't last ten seconds against me in the Miss Mali-U contest! In fact, you wouldn't even last five seconds against the likes of me, so...so just keep walking, loser!”

That last remark was enough to make Chris cease her voyage to class. In fact, it was enough to do a little more than that. Everyone present gasped when she slowly rotated her head back in Mandy's direction, giving the latter a clear glimpse of her bloodshot eyes. For a moment, both Mandy and Trent thought her glare alone would kill them, their skin turning a sickly, pale color.

“...Where do I sign up for this Miss Mali-U competition?” Chris asked in a calm manner that didn't remotely match her body language.
Mandy pointed to a nearby table using a trembling finger, and Chris walked over to it. The girl sitting at the table gulped before handing over a signup sheet. Chris filled it out to the best of her ability and stuffed it into the ballot box. With the hallway utterly quiet, she grabbed her backpack off the ground and headed for class once more. Before departing though, she looked back at Mandy one last time.

“Not only am I going to win that silly contest, I'm going to show you that you aren't as great as you think you are, Mandy. Prepared to be crushed under the weight of your own hubris.”

Those words lingered in everyone's minds, even after Chris had gone.

“I-I'm not scared of her!” said a still shaking Mandy. Sweat drenched her forehead and falling to her knees, she added, “E-Even if she enters the contest, she doesn't stand a chance against me! R-R-Right, Trent?!”

Trent, rather than responding, simply gave a curt nod.

Finally, Chris made it to Physics 101. She took her seat, certain for some time before arriving that she would never see the lecture of hall of Doctor Heisenberg again. Getting to class each and every day shouldn't have been as hard as the classes themselves, she thought.

“Huh? How did I make it here before you?” asked Sam, who was seated adjacent to Chris again. “D-Didn't you leave before me?”

“I got a bit...tied up,” Chris replied, sighing. “...Do you know anything about the Miss Mali-U competition?”

Sam nodded. “It's something the school started this year. It's this silly contest where girls all over campus are going to flaunt their beauty and talents to a bunch of judges. It's rather stupid, isn't it?”

“...I'm entering it.”

Sam's face froze into a look of horror. “U-Uh...d-did I say the competition was stupid?! Er...w-what I meant to say is that that it could really be a great opportunity for someone like you! Y-Yeah...!”

Chris groaned. “You don't have to pretend to like it. I thought the whole concept was asinine too, but then I ran into Mandy. Before I knew it, I had signed up for the stupid thing.”

“Oh great. You're already acquainted with Mandy then? At least you've only had to deal with her for a little while. Clover, Alex, and I have had to deal with her for most of our lives...”

“You have my condolences.”

At the front of the class, Heisenberg was writing a rather complex formula on the board. A number of students began chatting about it, speculating if it was something they would have to solve as apart of the lesson today.

“Welcome to another stimulating day in Physics 101!” Heisenberg said to the entire class just then. “I hope you're all ready to dive into the wonderful world of quantum mechanics...again!” He then paused and stared down at a clipboard in his grasp before leering back up. His gaze found its way over to Chris' area, though she could tell that he was staring at her in particular. “Christine, is it? Would you mind standing up for me?”

Chris, though perplexed, did as he asked.
“Could you please describe for me the uncertainty principle of quantum mechanics?”

The inquisition itself was harmless, yet something about it made Chris stiffen up. Her peers descended into whispers again, while Sam began waving her hand around briskly in an effort to answer the question herself.

“Put your hand down, Samantha,” Heisenberg said. “I want Christine to answer this one.”

Although disappointed, Sam complied with the request.

Coolly, Chris stated, “The uncertainty theory states that the more closely one determines one measurement as being accurate, the less accurate another measurement pertaining to the same particle must become.”

“...That is correct,” Heisenberg informed her. “Very good, Christine. I see someone has been doing their homework!”

Chris took her seat again. Nearby students glanced at her, amazed by her extensive knowledge.

“Nice job!” said Sam, flashing a thumbs up.

Chris shrugged. “I only knew that because of that book you gave me. It's no big deal.”

Unlike everyone else, Chris was far more interested in Heisenberg at the moment.

...What the hell was that about? Why'd he single me out when there's hundreds of other kids in this classroom right now?

#

The class period ended with the sound of the bell, and everyone inside the lecture hall quickly piled outside. Chris headed for the exit as well, hoping for a chance to get Heisenberg alone again and find out more about his invention. However, she was stopped by Sam, who appeared a tad bit exhausted.

“That in class assignment was rough, huh?” she stated. “I didn't think we'd learn about the photoelectric effect so soon!”

“I guess, but at least we'll be more prepared for that test on Thursday now.”

A lone bead of sweat rolled down the back of Chris' head at her own comment. She had gotten so into the lecture that for a moment, she had forgotten she wasn't actually a student at Mali-U.

“Hey, we should totally head to Mali-U Café right now! After a lecture like that, I say we get some smoothies and just relax for the rest of the afternoon...”

As nice as that sounded, Chris knew she didn't have time for it. Besides, it was becoming apparent that Sam and the others were beginning to get far too friendly with her. No matter what they thought of her, Chris was their enemy and vice versa. She would be destroying them soon enough, so the idea of sharing a smoothie with Sam was quite laughable.

Or at least it should have been. In the back of Chris' mind, she had half a mind to accept the offer.

“Excuse me, Christine?” Doctor Heisenberg walked up to Chris and Sam, saving Chris the trouble of having to turn Sam down in the process. “I have something I need to discuss with you in private. Do you have some free time right now?”
“Oops! Well, I guess I'll have to take a rain check on our little trip to the Mali-U Café,” said Sam with the slightest hint of disappointment in her voice. “By the way, Professor Heisenberg, that was a great lecture today! I'll see you later, Chris!”

Sam waved to Chris and then disappeared out the door, leaving the latter and Heisenberg all alone. While the situation was perfect, it was also quite fishy in her opinion.

“...What's this all about?” she asked him.

“Oh, I just wanted to follow up on the discussion we never got an opportunity to get to yesterday. Then again, from what I've seen from you in class, you may not need my tutoring after all!” said a smiling Heisenberg.

“O-Oh, I see! Thank you then, Professor, for taking time out of your day to help me.”

Chris' suspicions faded away, and she relaxed as a confident grin appeared on her face.

Perfect. How fortunate that Heisenberg is going to reveal his hand to me, rather than me having to force him to do so.

“Oh, it's no problem at all!” said Heisenberg in response to Chris' earlier remark. “I'm happy to take time out for my students, especially when they're so eager to learn about the wonderful world of quantum mechanics! Most see it as a rather complicated subject, but it's actually quite simple once you break it down.”

As she listened to him ramble on about nothing in particular, Chris couldn't help but note how they weren't heading for his office this time around but his desk.

“Are we going to do the tutoring in your classroom?”

Heisenberg nodded. “Yes, but there's something I want to show you first.”

The two arrived in front of his desk, where Heisenberg twisted his nameplate ever so slightly. Suddenly, the ground underneath the two proceeded to shake, knocking Chris off her feet. A circular portion then began to descend, slowly at first, but speeding up with time.

“W-What the hell is going on?!” Chris demanded to know.

With a malicious grin, Heisenberg replied, “I told you, didn't I? I have something I want to show you.”

The elevator reached its destination soon enough: an expansive area filled with an abundance of strange machinery Chris didn't recognize. All around were people in white lab coats working diligently, each one of them stopping momentarily to greet Heisenberg as he stepped off the platform.

“Follow me,” he told Chris.

She hesitantly did so, asking, “...What is this place?”

“My secret laboratory. Do you like it? I've hidden it underneath the campus of Malibu University! Even the Headmaster and Dean of Students have no idea this place exists! Bah, like those jabbering idiots could do something about it even if they did know! It is where my colleagues and I do research pertaining to the advancement of quantum physics. That isn't the only thing we do here, however.”

While continuing to quietly trail behind Dr. Heisenberg, Chris got a good look at the machinery
surrounding her on every side. Despite Heisenberg having said his lab was used for quantum physics research, none of the machines here seemed suited for it. In fact, the place took on the appearance of a factory more than anything, but a factory for what?

“I don't get it,” she said. “Why keep the lab a secret? If you're just working on physics research, why not have it out in the open?”

“Hmph, you certainly are quite bright, Christine,” responded Heisenberg. He then faced her and inquired, “Tell me, what do you know about the speed of light?”

Stopping suddenly, Christine's eyes widened. She knew exactly why Dr. Heisenberg had brought her to this place now. It was too late for her to act however. A cell with metallic bars abruptly appeared from the ground and formed around her, trapping her. The second she touched one of the bars to break herself free, over a thousand bolts of electricity coursed through her body.

“Hahaha! Careful now! The bars are quite 'shocking' to the touch!” said Heisenberg.

Chris weakly replied, “Y-You don't say?”

“Still acting cheeky, are we?” Heisenberg's smile vanished, replaced by pure, unadulterated rage. “Well, I'm the one in control now! Did you really think I would be foolish enough not to know a SOAP operative was running around campus?!”

“...I see. So it was you that knew who I really was. Still, that doesn't explain how you could have found out. Who told you?”

“Hmph! That doesn't matter now, does it?! I have you as my prisoner, meaning SOAP will never gets its hands on my Lightspeed Power Suit! I know it was you prying around in my office yesterday! I don't know how you managed to slip past me, but I'll make you pay the price for snooping around through other people's files!”

Chris wasn't intimidated in the least by Heisenberg's 'threats.' “This cell is only going to delay me for a little longer, old man. If you wish to save yourself from a world of pain, I highly suggest you have over your Lightspeed Power Suit right now.”

“Ha! You have a lot of nerve demanding things from me while trapped inside that cell! It's just a shame my precious robot didn't finish you off yesterday.”

“Tch. That's was you too then?”

“That's right! Quantum mechanics might be what I'm known best for, but it is robotics that sways my heart in reality! For years, I've created androids and other machines in the hopes of being accepted by the scientific community for something other than my work in quantum physics! However, all my wonderful creations were turned away by my idiotic peers! Everyone told me that while my efforts were 'admirable', I should just stick to what I was good at! Those fools! They wouldn't know genius if it hit them right between the eyes!”

“If that hunk of junk you sent after me yesterday at The Groove was any indication, I'm thinking those 'fools' were onto something. That robot wouldn't have been able to hurt a fly, let alone kill me.”

Heisenberg snarled. “Y-You're no better than those idiots than shunned me! Well, no more! I'm finally going to get revenge on the world for attempting to stifle my genius!”

“Before you go on explaining your master plan,” said Chris, holding her hand up. “I just want you to
know that I don't care what it is you've got cooked up. I have no intention of stopping you. All I want is the Lightspeed Power Suit.”

“Hmph! You're rather overconfident, aren't you? Like I said before, I'm the one in control now! The Lightspeed Power Suit is my invention, and I'm going to use it to further my goals! Now then, if you'll excuse me, I have a world domination plot that needs my undivided attention! You can sit there in rot in that cell in the meanwhile. I'll decide what to do with you later.”

Heisenberg let out a few more mad cackles before vanishing.

Chris simply rolled her eyes at this. “Better fill Scar in on all this.”

She turned on her Z-Powder and tried contacting her leader, yet she got nothing but static.

“Great, the signal must be jammed. Oh well. Plan B it is.”

Heisenberg might have been a great quantum physicist, but he was an idiot when it came to common sense in Chris' opinion. He had failed to take any of her gadgets, meaning she still had possession of her All Purpose Fountain Pen Laser. She easily cut a hole big enough for her to fit through in the bars, sliding out of it and landing on the floor. She then used her Z-Powder to slip into her catsuit.

“Alright. Time to see where that loon Heisenberg got off to.”

The security in Heisenberg's facility was rather lax, so much so that Chris was able to simply stroll through as if she owned the place. The many scientist that Heisenberg mentioned were his colleagues were far too engrossed in their research to give a care about her.

“Okay...? Something isn't right here. This is way too easy.”

Her words proved to be prophetic when she reached a wide open area. From the rafters came a dozen or so metallic robots, all exact replicas of the one that had attacked The Groove yesterday, though they were much smaller, only slightly taller than Chris. They were just as poorly constructed, with one even sparking from the head.

“...Heisenberg really should just stick to quantum physics.”

The robots charged at her, though she easily dispatched them with some fancy moves, slicing the last one in half with her laser pen. It was hard for her to believe that they actually looked better than they fought.

“Wouldn't it have been more efficient for the old man to just hire some incompetent henchman? It probably would have saved him some money too,” she stated. She then kicked the head of one of the robots to the side. “Now then, where did Heisenberg go? It would be a pain if he's already left the facility because I don't have any way of tracking him.”

An adjacent hallway was suddenly filled with the sounds of heels clacking against the metal flooring, and without delay, Chris hid herself. She then moved her head just enough to peek around the corner. With a low groan, she was dismayed to see Sam, Alex, and Clover. It seemed that no matter where she was and what she was doing, she couldn't rid herself of the trio.

“What are they doing here?” she muttered.

“Professor Heisenberg can’t be too far now, girls!” said Sam, pointing off into the distance. “We
have to stop whatever he's planning before it's too late! I just can't believe my awesome physics teacher turned out to be a bad guy!"

“This seems to happen to us a lot with the people we know,” chimed Alex.

“Jer's analysis of that robot from yesterday definitely says Heisenberg has something to do with this,” said Clover. “No point complaining about it now!”

“Yeah, I guess you're right. Alright, girls, it's spy time!” Sam proclaimed.

The three dashed down another corridor of the complex, just as Chris came out of her cover.

“Tch! So, WOOHP is after Heisenberg too then? No way I'm letting them get to him first! That Lightspeed Power Suit is mine!”

She hadn’t the slightest idea where Sam, Alex, and Clover were headed, yet she was certain she could trail them without being seen. Above her was a drainage pipe, so she latched her bungee cable onto it and climbed inside. It was dark and damp, although it was nothing she wasn't accustomed to as a spy. She dragged herself through the narrow passage for a number of minutes until she heard voices coming from underneath her. An opening allowed her to take a gander at what was unfolding. To her surprise, Heisenberg and the WOOHP agents were now face to face. Her first instinct was to jump down and join them, but she stopped herself, feeling it was better to wait and see what happened first.

“W-Why are so many others interfering with my plan?!” Heisenberg proclaimed.

“When it comes to stopping bad guys like you, it's kinda our job,” Sam told him. “If you think we're just going to allow you to unleash your army of robots on the entire world, you've got another thing coming!”

Chris frowned at what she was hearing. “That's the evil plan he's been going on about? He really is an amateur when it comes to this 'evil villain' stuff.”

“We'll just see about that!” bellowed Heisenberg. He snapped his fingers, causing a mob of robots to fall at his sides.

“Whoa! He was crazy prepared for us!” cried Alex.

“We'll just have to send these tin cans back to the recycling bin where they belong!” Clover hollered.

The trio engaged the androids, and with them distracted, Chris knew it was time for her to act. She jumped into the fray herself, bursting from the pipe, landing on the ground, and making Heisenberg jump at her presence.

“You again...?!” he yelled. “H-How did you escape my electric cage?!”

“Well, like everything else you make, Doc, that one was a dub,” Chris answered. “I don't want to sound like a broken record, but hand over your Lightspeed Power Suit.”

“Never! Your persistence in trying to steal it will be your downfall, spy!”

“A-Ah! Look girls, it's that evil spy again!” said Alex as she fought off robot after robot.

Clover, wrestling a machine to the ground, added, “Wasn't she from some group called SUDS or something?”
“That's **SOAP**, you idiot!” Chris snapped. “Spies Organized Against Peace! Anyway, I didn't think we would all meet again so soon, WOOHP spies. I'll let you ladies handle those nasty robots. If you don't mind, I'll just take Heisenberg for myself!”

“S-She must be after Heisenberg's invention!” Sam stated. “W-We have to stop her!”

That was easier said than done. More of Heisenberg's robots swarmed onto the scene and quickly began to overwhelm the WOOHP agents, much to Chris' amusement. That left her all alone with Heisenberg.

“Like I said before, I'm not here to stop your 'evil' plan, old man,” she informed him. “You can try to take over the world if you really want to. Then again, your robots wouldn't even be able to take over a middle school. I only want that Lightspeed Power Suit of yours.”

“Hahaha! If you want it so bad, come and get it! That is, if you even can!”

Heisenberg ripped off his clothing, revealing that he in fact was wearing the red and white power suit this whole time. Chris had no qualms in having to rough him up if that's what it took to get his invention, she charging at him to do so. However, she got nothing but the air when she swung. Much to her shock and confusion, Heisenberg was gone.

“Where did he...?!”

“Behind you, my dear!”

She turned her head to see that Heisenberg was indeed behind her. She tried jumping on him again, but like before, her arms grabbed nothing but the space in front of her. A kick then found its way into the back of her head, knocking her over. Heisenberg appeared once more, laughing at her failure thus far to capture him.

“Perhaps you didn't study up enough after all!” he told her. “Have you forgotten already? This suit allows me to move at the speed of light! Even if there were a hundred of you, you would never be able to catch me!”

Rubbing the back of her skull, Chris saw that the old professor had a point. Unfortunately, she didn't have much time to strategize. Heisenberg escaped her sights again before pounding her with a barrage of unseen punches. The most she could do to defend herself was hold her arms up. Another blow sent her crashing into the ground, and with a groan, she struggled to stand.

“Is that all you've got?!?” cried Heisenberg, who was now running circles around her in a mocking fashion. “Not much coming for a spy such as yourself!”

Ignoring the harsh words flung her way, Chris pulled out some smoke bombs and tossed them downward.

“W-What's going on?!” Heisenberg asked in a panic. He was unable to see anything through the thick miasma hovering around him. A thick bungee cable found itself around his waist just then, and with a strong tug, he was jerked forward and toward a lying in wait Chris.

“You're right about one thing, Doc;” she told him as she tied him up. “Even if there were a hundred of me, I wouldn't be able to catch you, but if you can't see, then it's a whole different story.”

“Hmph. You're more cunning that I thought, spy. However, you underestimate the unpredictability of quantum mechanics!”
Chris hadn't won the battle just yet. Heisenberg, employing some high speed moves, broke himself free of his bindings and got a good distance away from his enemy. He then snapped his fingers once more. Following this was an entire battalion of robots falling from the sky, more than enough to overpower Chris in a flash.

*Poorly made or not, I could be in trouble here.*

She stood her ground, unsure of what to do.

The mass of machines that had piled on top the WOOHP agents sometime ago were all frozen into a block of ice out of the blue and then shattered into pieces. Sam, Alex, and Clover then jumped out from the wreckage no worse for the wear.

“That...was a little too close,” Sam admitted. “Thank goodness Jerry gave us the Icy Fresh Liquid Nitrogen Breath Spray this time around.”

Clover sprayed some of the mentioned stuff in her mouth, stating, “Effective in stopping baddies and bad breath!”

“Uh...guys? I think that SOAP spy is about to be torn to shreds by those nasty robots,” said Alex just then.

“Really?! Aw, we should have brought some popcorn along so we could watch!” said Clover.

Sam frowned. “Even if we are enemies, we can't just let Heisenberg's robots do whatever they want! Come on, girls, we've got to help her!”

Alex and Clover looked less than enthusiastic about the prospect, but eventually, they nodded and agreed. The trio sprung into action, just as the army of robots charged for the otherwise helpless Chris.

“Use the Cat Fight Gloves!” Sam told Alex and Clover. The three slipped on pink, rubber gloves, inducing laughter out of Heisenberg.

“And just what are those silly things supposed to do?” he inquired. He soon found out when three, sharp claws retracted from the gloves. The WOOHP agents then proceeded to slice and dice Heisenberg's creations with relative ease. While Chris watched them do so, she couldn't get a grasp of what was going on.

“Are they actually...helping me?”

Before long, a pile of smoldering scraps of metal was all the remained around Sam, Alex, and Clover, each of them flashing smiles at this fact.

“No! NO! How can this be?!?” Heisenberg fell to his knees and clutched the sides of his head. “Why do so many people deny me of my dream?!”

“Sorry, Professor! Looks like you're going to have to find another dream to chase!” said Sam.

“Yeah! I'm sure you could probably find something else you're good at, like maybe a career as a shoe designer or just someone that cruises the mall on weekends!” Clover added.

Heisenberg growled in anger, yet without warning, it was replaced with spontaneous cackling.

“Oh, I don't like the sound of that!” said Alex. “Every time a bad guy starts laughing like that, it's so
never a good thing!"

“You girls just don’t understand, do you?!” Heisenberg’s expression twisted into one of pure
madness. “Did you think you had destroyed every robot I had at my disposal?!! The rest of my
wonderful machines are already on standby at various places around the globe! With one push of a
button, I can activate them to have them wreak complete and utter havoc!”

He pulled out a small remote with a single, red button in the center, intending to show everyone
present exactly what he meant. Sam attempted to jump at him and stop him, but he merely got out of
the way with the aid of his Lightspeed Power Suit.

“No one can stop me now!” he exclaiming, slamming his finger down on the button.

There were a few moments of awkward silence.

“D-Did he do it?” asked Alex, who stopped bracing herself.

“I dunno,” Clover replied. “I figured something cooler would happen...”

The two weren't the only ones confused by the inactivity. Heisenberg began mashing down on his
remote because the signal for his mechanical army to strike wasn't being sent out.

“Why?! Why won't my robots move?!” he cried.

“Probably because you forgot to put batteries in your little remote there,” said Chris, who was now
standing behind the professor.

Heisenberg checked the back of his device and saw that she was spot on in her assessment. “H-How
could I have overlooked something so simple?!”

“You should take it as a sign, Doc. You're a real hack when it comes to robotics.”

Chris spun Heisenberg around before nailing him in the jaw with a right hook. Now seeing stars, the
professor groaned on the floor and muttered something about his 'dream being dead.'

“What an idiot,” Chris stated, shaking her head. She reached down toward her instructor and ripped
the Lightspeed Power Suit right off his body, leaving him stripped down to his boxer shorts. Sam,
Alex, and Clover hastily shielded their eyes from this.

“Ew! Groddy!” Clover squealed. “The last thing I wanted to see today was some hairy, old man in
his underwear!”

“We can’t let you leave here with that suit!” said Sam, trying to peek at Chris between her fingertips
and talk to her at the same time. “Hand it over!”

“As much as I'd like to...” Chris began. “I'm afraid I can't do that. My boss wouldn't let me hear the
end of it if I returned without my mission objective after all this time.”

“What do you think our boss is gonna do if we don't come back with it?!” said Alex.

“Psh! Some gratitude! We just totally saved your butt back there, so the least you could do is let us
have that suit thingy!” said Clover.

“Hey, I never asked for your help. If you three were really smart, you would have let those robots
finish me off and reap the rewards for yourself. Nevertheless, I guess I should be thanking you girls
for your assistance today! I wouldn't have made it out of here in one piece without you!”

Chris aimed her cable toward a nearby railing, waving as she scaled up to it.

“We'll finish what we started yesterday soon enough!” she told the awestricken WOOHP operatives. “Try not to die before then!”

“Oh no you don't! You're not getting away this time!” Sam cried. The WOOHP agents attached their own bungee cables to the same railing and headed right for Chris. Smirking, Chris grabbed her All Purpose Fountain Pen Laser and burned off their wires, causing the girls to scream before slamming into the ground with a thud.

“I learned my lesson from yesterday,” she then informed them. “You girls just 'hang out' down there. If you'll excuse me, I have to get this suit back to base.”

With that, Chris made her exit. A bitter Sam, Alex, and Clover resigned themselves to the reality they weren’t stopping her.

“Ugh. I think my spleen is broken,” said Alex, who slowly sat up and held her side.

Clover did the same thing, but let out a shrill scream as well.

“W-What's wrong?!” Sam asked in concern. “D-Did you break something?! Don’t worry, Clover! We’ll get you back to WOOHP and have Jerry fix you up in a jiffy!”

“Ugh! I totally broke a nail when we fell just then!” Clover said. Tears dripped down the sides of her face, and she added, “And I just got a new manicure yesterday!”

Both Sam and Alex had to hold back the urge to smack their friend upside the head with all of their might.

Running was the lone thing occupying Chris' thoughts. She had no clue where she was going or even what direction she was headed in. Her legs were on autopilot on, and despite her lungs crying for fresh air, she didn't stop. If it weren't for her tripping over a branch and falling onto her face into some dirt, she might not have ever stopped. Reality hit her, and she searched around at the forest she had somehow traversed to. She wasn't even sure there were forests near Malibu. Checking behind her, she saw nothing more than her own footprints in the Earth.

“I-I think I got away,” she said, wheezing. Her entire body was stiff, so she sat down against a tree and reached for her Z-Powder. “S-Scar...are you there?”

“I am indeed,” Scar replied. “You hadn't reported back to me in quite some time. I was beginning to get worried.”

“I-I know. T-The signal got jammed, and I...”

“By the way, I found out you entered the Miss Mali-U Contest at your school! Good for you!” Scar clapped his hands. “I never took you as the type to be so adventurous! This will be a good experience for someone such as yourself! I know how antisocial you are and...”

“W-Would you shut up for a sec! I'm trying to tell you I've got...!”

Scar still wasn't listening. “Since you're entering the contest and all, we'll have to pick you out a cute,
little dress to wear! Oh, I can see it now! It can have flowers and frills and maybe some glitter and..."

Tired of having to shout over him, Chris simply aimed her Z-Powder at the Lightspeed Power Suit. There was a bright flash prior to the suit being transferred over to Scar's end. It landed right on top of his cranium, making him to go berserk for a couple moments before he eventually pulled the rubber item off him.

“W-What the...?! I-Is this the Lightspeed Power Suit?!” he asked in astonishment. “H-Hey, are you...laughing?”

Chris quickly blocked her features with her free hand. “N-No...! And yes, that's the suit. I managed to get it off Heisenberg in the end.”

“You're sure it's the real thing?”

“Yeah. I've seen it in action. Trust me, it works.”

Scar nodded. “You've done a good job, Christine.”

“...I thought I told you not to call me that,” said Chris. A comically large vein was pulsating on her forehead.

“Oh, of course. My apologies. Any who, did those pesky agents from WOOHP show up again?”

“They did.”

“And did you eliminate them?”

Chris paused for a moment. “N-No. There wasn't an opportunity for me to do so.”

Scar was obviously disappointed to learn this, yet he stated, “...It's fine. As I said before, there will be plenty of opportunities for you to get rid of them in the near future. What's most important here is that you completed your mission successfully. SOAP owes you a great debt, Agent C.”

Hearing those words meant a lot to Chris, more so than she thought they would in the beginning of this little fiasco that was her assignment.

“Send someone to pick me up and take me back to base, would you?” she asked wearily. “I have no idea where I am right now and I'll be damned if a bear comes by and eats me or something.”

Scar held up his hand. “Not so fast, Agent C. Your undercover mission isn't over just yet.”

“WHAT?!?” Chris' voice echoed throughout the forest, scaring off a number of nearby wildlife. “Y-You can't be serious?! You must know how awful college life really is, right?! I would rather you lock me up in the SOAP dungeons than send me back to that hellhole known as Malibu University again!”

“R-Relax there,” Scar told Chris, watching as steam shot out of her nostrils. “I have been doing some thinking as of late, and I believe that it would be in SOAP's benefit if you remained there at Malibu University for a little while longer.”

“...I don't follow.”

“The WOOHP agents are still there, correct? Perhaps there's a way we can use their presence to our advantage. I believe that if we play our cards right, we might not only be able to take out the spies who have become a massive thorn in your side, but also the entire WOOHP organization as well.”
Chris saw some logic in her boss’ words in spite of feelings of ire lingering. If it would help her crush WOOHP once and for all, she was willing to withstand anything, including being a college student, for a little while longer.

“I-I suppose you have a point,” she finally told Scar. “Fine. I will do as you command.”

“Good. That's what I like to hear. Besides, you should try to enjoy your time as a college student! Most girls your age would kill for the opportunity! Of course, now that you'll be staying at Mali-U for a tad bit longer, I suppose we can go back to discussing what you'll be wearing for the Miss Mali-U contest! If you’d like, we can pick out some pretty makeup and shoes and...!”

“No.”

Having had just about enough of that discussion, Chris shut her Z-Powder tightly. As big a pain as Heisenberg might have been, she debated whether or not she would have rather had to deal with him on a regular basis than Scar.

“I swear, he’s really nothing more than a big idiot. This must be how kids my age feel when they say they’re embarrassed by their parents.”

END
“Mhmm! Yes, just a little more eyeshadow there and...!”

Sitting in front of a mirror and diligently applying more makeup to her face was an incredibly attractive, young woman. With a dab here and a dab there, she let out a gasp awash with excitement at how well the eyeliner went with her almost flawless, dark skin. She had presumed it was impossible to make herself more beautiful, though she was pleasantly surprised to find herself wrong.

“Alright! There's no way I can lose the Miss Mali-U competition now! I'll even be able to beat Mandy!” she stated. Her voice brimmed with confidence, and as she blew a few kisses at her own reflection, she added, “Now then, which shade of lipstick should I use? I was thinking coral blue, but...”

A sudden noise inside of her dorm room caused the girl to leap in fright. Her head immediately shot over to her door, yet there was no one there. She had locked it the second she returned from a night of partying, so it shouldn't have been possible for anyone to enter anyway. Why was it then that she felt as if a pair of eyes were glowering at the back of her head?

“H-Hello?” she asked timidly. “I-Is someone there?”

Her supposedly locked door creaked open just then. Panic filled her features while it did so, and in her haste to get up and flee, she swept her arm across everything on the counter she had been sitting in front of. Various makeup products and other knick knacks crashed against the carpeting. However, the sounds of them shattering were overshadowed by the girl now screaming for her life. A bright, pink flash enveloped her afterward and could be seen from the dorm's nearby window for miles ahead.

#

Morning came upon Malibu University faster than Chris liked. It had solely been her third day of college, yet she had grown weary of the experience already. Therefore, dragging herself to her Physics 101 class was more of a challenge than it should have been.

“Gah! Out of my way, you imbecile!” she shouted at a boy who for some reason was catching a football thrown at him by another person down the hallway. Chris could tell by their apparel that they were members of the Mali-U football team. “W-What are you doing?!”

“O-Oh, sorry!” the youth replied, grinning in a goofy manner.

Chris rolled her eyes and strolled past him. For a moment there, she seriously debated on knocking him out with a swift roundhouse kick. That would probably draw too much attention to herself though, something she wasn't supposed to do considering she was a undercover agent for SOAP, Spies Organized Against Peace.

“Like I'd let some stupid jock blow my cover.”
Of course, the reality she still had a false identity to blow in the first place was more than a little aggravating to her. Doctor Heisenberg’s invention was already in SOAP's hands, and the good doctor himself had been apprehended and imprisoned by WOOHP. If it weren't for Scar, her boss, being so sure there remained some value in her staying undercover, she would be kicking back in her old quarters at SOAP headquarters this very instant. Instead, she was heading to a class that no longer had an instructor.

“...Well, I suppose that big test Heisenberg had scheduled for today won't happen at least...”

She actually laughed at her own joke. Nearby students glanced at her in confusion. Despite this, she continued to giggle merrily. It wasn't often she was able to find levity in anything. Being a spy for SOAP was often a humorless profession. It was because of this that for the moment, she didn't care how stupid she must have appeared.

“Hmm? What's this?”

Walking down another hallway, Chris was greeted by a plethora of posters and signs that all mentioned something about the upcoming Miss Mali-U competition. Smacking her lips, the contest was something she had been trying to get out of her head since yesterday.

“...Why in the hell did I join this stupid thing on such short notice?” she wearily asked herself. She blamed her misfortune on Mandy, the resident mean girl on campus. Chris’ spontaneous decision had been a result of Mandy's ability to irritate even the hardiest of individuals.

“On the other hand, crushing her is one reason I'm glad I decided to sign up...”

Her attention shifted to the crowd gathering around something up ahead. Her curiosity got the better of her, and she trailed behind everyone to find out what all the commotion was about. Immediately, she gasped upon seeing Sam, Alex, and Clover all standing on their tiptoes in order to see over the tall jocks in front of them.

_W-Why is it that I can't seem to avoid these three for even five seconds?_

“Chris!” said Sam after sighting her. “Good morning!”

“Morning!” said Clover.

“Hey there!” added Alex. “How's it going?”

“G-Good morning,” said Chris quietly, becoming apprehensive for some reason. “W-What's going on over here?”

She discovered what for herself after a portion of the masses parted enough for her to get a glimpse of what had those present gossiping. Standing on top of a small stage was Mandy, who was wearing a very elaborate dress that certainly wasn't something one would wear just to go to school.

“That's right! Take as many pictures of me as you can, everyone! I have to make sure as many people as possible see how great I look right now!” Mandy bellowed before laughing her usual laugh, one that was just as grating as always to Chris. “Don't I just look _fabulous_?”

“...What the hell does she think she's doing?” Chris snarled under her breath.

“Can you believe Mandy right now? I think she's showing off the dress she's going to wear for the Miss Mali-U competition,” Sam explained. “So much for the element of surprise.”
“Yeah, if I have to watch anymore of this, I'm pretty sure I'm going to hurl up that nonfat latte I had earlier this morning,” said Clover, who legitimately looked sickened.

Mandy cackled again and then screamed, “TRENT! What are you doing?! I need some more spotlight over here!”

That was the last thing Trent wanted to hear. Having no choice but to heed Mandy's order, he wheeled out another large lamp and made sure to get her good side, struggling as he did so. This prompted Chris to shake her head.

“Someone really needs to get Mandy off her high horse,” she stated.

“Hey, that's why we have you!” said Alex. “You gotta beat Mandy for all of us!”

“That's right!” Clover's eyes were gleaming for some reason while she spoke. “And you're not gonna do it alone either! With the two of us in the competition, we'll crush Mandy once and for all! We totally have to take pictures of her crying afterward and spread them all over the Internet!”

“I think that last part might be...taking things a bit too far,” said Sam alongside a few half-hearted chuckles.

“Hmm? Wait, you're entering too, Clover?” asked Chris.

“That's right! It would be a crime if someone as beautiful as me didn't!”

This response was one of the reasons Chris was questioning her place in the contest.

“Oh, look, the 'Three Stooges' are here!” Mandy, having spotted Sam, Clover, and Alex, snickered ahead of catching a glimpse of Chris standing next to them. “Oh, wow! Looks like you girls have added a fourth member to your little gang! I should have known someone like her would be hanging out with the likes of you three!”

Chris rolled her eyes at the remark without indulging it with a response.

Mandy wasn’t done apparently. “So, how do I look? Good, right? Hahaha! You and Clover might as well just drop out of the pageant right now!”

“Whatever, Mandy! You look about as good as a used handbag right now!” growled Clover. “The only kind of competition you could ever hope to win is a costume contest when you're wearing a mask like that!”

Mandy rose an eyebrow at this. “‘M-Mask?!’ I'm not wearing a mask!”

“Really now? That's your real face then? I thought you were auditioning for the part of a monster in some horror movie!”

The hallway erupted into a frenzy of laughter at Clover's remarks, something that made Mandy's heavily dressed up features redden. Even Chris got a good chuckle out of it. Witnessing Mandy being humiliated was even more satisfying than she had imagined.

“Y-You're just jealous, Clover!” stated Mandy. She managed to calm down somewhat. “It must really suck to be you, considering you always dress like one of those Valley Girls! Hmph! Come on, Trent! WE'RE LEAVING!”

Trent obediently followed after Mandy and cringed when she abruptly tripped on her long dress,
slamming face first into the floor. Another torrent of laughter swept through the corridor.

“T-That’s not funny!” Mandy screamed. She held her now bloodied nose and glared in Trent’s direction. “What are you doing, you nincompoop?! Help me up already!”

“Yes...Mandy...” Unenthusiastically, Trent came to her aid.

“That Trent guy...does he have brain damage or something?”

“Hmm? Why do you ask that, Chris?” said Sam.

“Because that’s the only reason I could see him hanging out with Mandy on purpose.”

“Pretty harsh...but pretty true,” Alex had to admit.

The WOOHP spies yucked it up at Chris’ remark, yet whilst they did, Chris began to fidget around. There was something she had been meaning to ask them, but now that she had the opportunity, she found herself unable to. Blood rushed to her cheeks, and though she tried to hide this, Sam, Alex, and Clover soon realized something was up.

“What's the matter? Are you alright?” asked Sam.

“D-Do you have a tummy ache or something?” inquired Alex.

“Ugh! Don’t tell me you tried out the ‘Mystery Meatloaf’ they’re serving on campus today?!” said Clover. “You’re so gonna be puking for days!”

Chris muttered something the girls weren't able to discern.

“You're going to have to speak up!” said Clover.

Chris again spoke, this time in a louder voice. Nevertheless, she still wasn't understood.

“You're almost there!” said Alex.

Taking a huge breath, Chris screamed, “I-I NEED HELP WITH THE MISS MALI-U COMPETITION!!!”

Numerous, befuddled glances shot over in her direction, whereas Sam, Clover, and Alex were left stunned by her unexpected declaration.

“Oh...I don't know anything about fashion and makeup and all that other crap, alright?!” Chris stated in a much quieter, yet just as flustered, tone. “I-If I'm going to beat Mandy, I'm going to need all the help I can get! So, I’ve decided to...ask you three for assistance.”

Requesting assistance from her mortal enemies half near made Chris want to puke. Desperate times though called for desperate measures, and as much as she hated to admit it, the three WHOOP agents were probably the best people to turn to in a situation like this.

“Ah! That's what was bothering you?” asked Sam with a smile. “You had me worried there for a sec!”

“Wow! You’re really taking this seriously, aren’t you?” said Alex.

Clover nodded. “Of course she is! This is kinda a big deal! Don’t worry about it though, Chris! We’ll help you out for sure!”
“H-Huh? Why would you want to help me, Clover? We’ll be competition in the contest against each other, right? Wouldn't it be more beneficial for you to just worry about yourself?”

“Huh? No way! Even if we are going up against one another, I’d totally rather see Mandy crushed than turn my back on a friend!”

“...I-I still don't understand.”

No one heard Chris' last remark, and she guessed it was better they didn't.

Chris, not wanting to be late for class, skirted off toward her lecture hall. She then stopped in her tracks, thinking how silly it was she constantly complained about being a college student while she was trying her best to be a model one.

“Jeez, where did the time go? Guess we all better get to class,” suggested Sam. “You guys can discuss the Miss Mali-U contest some more later on. How about we all meet up at Mali-U cafe after our classes are done?”

“Sounds like a great idea! I'll buy the drinks!” said Clover.

“And I'll make them...” Alex sighed. “How come I'm the only one that has to work at the cafe today?!”

Chris chose not to join in on the other's laughter, nor did she move when Sam, Alex, and Clover headed off toward their respective classes. Rather, she tightly clutched the Physics book in her grasp, threatening to break it in half.

“...What in the world am I doing?” she scathingly mumbled. She continued to sulk, letting student after student pass her by on their way to class. "Why am I still hanging out with those girls? Why did I just agree to go to some cafe with them after school? I don't get it. I seriously don't get it. What's going on with me? Not only am I fraternizing with the enemy, but they've somehow convinced me to become excited about some silly beauty pageant. Perhaps this wretched school is poisoning my mind faster than I anticipated.”

“What's the matter, Chris? If you don't hurry, we're going to be late.”

Sam stopped to check on her friend, and Chris shook her head at the possibility of there being something wrong with her.

“I hear you. Let's go.”

#

Christine and Samantha found their seats amongst their muttering classmates. Per Chris' prediction, the head of the classroom was vacant, and the usual equations and quantum subjects that often permeated the blackboard were absent. There was no longer an instructor for this course with Heisenberg behind bars. Still, the fact that it hadn't been canceled made Chris wonder what the school had in store for this lecture hall full of vexed pupils.

“Hey, I heard old man Heisenberg got arrested!” exclaimed a boy near Chris.

“Cool! I guess that means we won't have to do any work today!” his friend replied. Chris found the discussion strange because she wasn't sure why someone would attend college in the first place if they had no intention of doing any work.
“This is awful,” said Sam out of the blue. Chris could have sworn her friend was on the verge of tears. “I was really hoping to learn more about physics, but how are we supposed to do that without a teacher? We were just getting to the good stuff too! If only Heisenberg weren’t such a crook!”

Her demeanor was wholly different from the the two students Chris had just listened in on. Patting her on the back, Chris held back a smirk at this fact.

“I’m...sure it’ll all work out in the end."

Sam sniffled. “Yeah, I guess you’re right.”

The chatter and commotion died down when an individual entered the classroom from below and began scribbling something with chalk on the board.

“Good morning, class!” said the woman below who was wearing thick glasses. “My name is Melody Jenkins, and starting today, I’m going to be your new Physics 101 teacher!”

Chris’ jaw hit the floor upon hearing this. Melody Jenkins, the school nurse, had been her last guess for a replacement professor, and even though the woman was clearly standing in front of Heisenberg’s former desk, she still couldn’t believe what she was seeing.

“Tsk. What could this woman possibly know about quantum mechanics?”

“Okie dokie! I know you kids are probably shaken up after what happened to your last teacher, so how about we just get right to it today?” said Melody. “Today, we're going to be learning all about matrix mechanics! Get out your textbooks and get ready, because this one's a doozy!”

Chris stood corrected.

Sam, eagerly pulling out her book, stated, “It’s about time we started learning about this stuff! I thought we'd never get to it!”

Chris wasn't able to join in on Sam's fun because her Z-Powder began to vibrate in her pocket all of a sudden. Standing, she knew she wouldn't be able to answer it with so many prying eyes about.

“Hey, where are you going? The lecture just started!” said Sam.

“I'll be right back. I...just have to go to the bathroom.”

The sole place Chris could find to hide in was an open locker in the hallway. Dashing into it, she slammed it shut behind her and noted that it was a tight squeeze. At the very least, no one would be able to listen in on her conversation as she opened her Z-Powder to greet the smiling face of Scar staring back at her.

“Ah, Christine! How are you?” he began. “Say, why is it so dark where you are now? That isn't good for your complexion, you know! You have to make sure to get plenty of sun, especially since you're entering the Miss Mali-U competition! You have to have flawless skin if you want a chance at...”

“Alright, enough already!” Chris replied, cutting her leader off. “And I thought I told you to stop referring to me by my first name.”

“Ah, yes. Of course. Anyway, I apologize for removing you from your stimulating lecture, but there
is an assignment I need you to undertake post haste. I think you'll find it quite...ironic that it has something to do with the upcoming Miss Mali-U contest.”

“I don't see why SOAP would care about some dumb pageant.”

“You mean the ‘dumb pageant’ you entered the other day?”

Chris' face reddened. “S-Shut it, you! Just get to the point!”

“Gladly. The reason the competition is of interest to us is because the woman heading it, a Miss Kyla Sacks, is in the possession of something...”

“...that you want me to steal, right?”

Scar nodded. “You know me well, Agent C.”

“Alright. That explains that, but not why this Kyla Sacks would have something you place so much value in. Who is this woman? I thought she was just heading the competition.”

“According to our records, Kyla Sacks was a supermodel that disappeared suddenly a month or two ago. For whatever reason, she's now reappeared and is the individual who created and is running the Miss Mali-U contest. That's all we have on her at the moment. Anyway, I know it's moot to say so now, but I want you to enter the pageant, get as close to Kyla as possible, and find out what invention she currently has. Afterward, retrieve it.”

“Understood. It shouldn't be too much of a problem. After all, she's just some silly supermodel.”

I'm still taking down Mandy! I'll just consider it a little bonus to this mission.

“You're thinking of something sinister, aren't you, Agent?” asked Scar.


“...I see. Now then, you're going to need some new gadgets for this latest mission. I've already had them sent to your dorm, but I'll explain what they do from here. Let's see now...where did I put those things?”

Chris, sighing, sat patiently as Scar searched his desk clean prior to stumbling across a black bag teeming with the aforementioned gadgets.

“You wouldn't have to do all that if you actually cleaned your desk once in awhile. I found a decade old cup of pudding in there one time,” chimed Chris.

“...Y-Yes, I believe you're right. Anyway...” Reaching into the bag, Scar pulled out what resembled a harmless tube of unmarked toothpaste. “Don't give me that look, Agent C. Though this may appear to be nothing more than ordinary toothpaste, this is actually a gadget called the Cinnamon C4 Toothpaste. While you can use it to ensure good dental hygiene, what it really is a very potent explosive that works wonders on anything you stick it against.”

“...I don't even like cinnamon-flavored stuff. Why does it have to look like something as asinine as toothpaste anyway?”

“Did you forget already? All your gadgets are going to have to appear as common, everyday items because we don't want your cover to be blown in the off chance someone stumbles upon them.”

“That I get. What I don't get is why you would make a gadget look like toothpaste.” “...Moving on
then.” Next, Scar whipped out a shimmering, pearl necklace. “This item here, and I don't want to hear any lip out you about it right now, is the Fall For Me Necklace. Upon detaching the beads, they grow and will trip up any unsuspecting foe.”

“Well, at least this one isn't as silly. It could certainly come in handy.”

Scar frowned. “...And for your final gadget, we have the Jetline Boots. These shoes are rocket powered and will allow you to whisk around at your leisure. Careful you don't crash into anything while using them though. I'm certain an agent of your caliber will have no problems operating them, but I must inform you that a number of SOAP operatives have gotten into some rather nasty accidents in the past.”

“Now that's a gadget I can use. Thanks again, Scar, and I'll be careful.”

“Not a problem, agent. Now then, you had better get back to class. I wouldn't want you to miss seeing your new instructor in action. Good luck in the competition as well! I will be rooting for you!”

Chris hung up and closed her Z-Powder, relieved to hear that Scar actually had something for her to do at Malibu University. She had been beginning to think her staying there was a cruel joke on his part.

“I guess I'll have to keep an eye on this Kyla Sacks. I wonder, where can I find her? She shouldn't be too hard to locate, considering she's heading the Miss Mali-U competition...”

“H-Hey! What are you doing insidemy locker!”

Light entered the confines of the locker just then, and a glowering Mandy leered down at an unsuspecting Chris. Quickly, Chris jumped out of the tight space, partly because she recalled how silly she looked inside of it, but mostly because she couldn't stomach the thought of occupying the same space as Mandy's possessions any longer.

“Er...I was just...”

“Aha! I know what you were trying to do! You were prying through my locker to learn all my secrets for the Miss Mali-U competition!” Mandy proclaimed. “Ha! Like I would be stupid enough to leave anything like that here! I always leave all of my secrets with Trent!”

Mandy quickly covered her mouth upon realizing what she had revealed, though Chris couldn't have cared less about what it was she was planning for the pageant.

“I-I just got lost is all. Sorry,” she told Mandy before dashing away.

“H-Hey! Wait a second! Get back here, you loser! Y-You better not have stolen anything out of my locker! I will so have campus security after you if you did!”

Mandy let out a sharp exhale and furrowed her eyebrows before stomping off.

#

The end of the school day had arrived. As agreed upon earlier, Chris made her way over to the Mali-U Cafe to join Sam, Alex, and Clover for a drink and a bit of strategic planning.

“We have to prepare for battle!” Clover exclaimed, slamming her hand down on the table she and her friends were sitting around. “This isn’t the time for us to just sit around drinking coffee! Everyone, focus!”
“...What in the world are you talking about?” asked Chris. “And you’ve got a lot of nerve saying something like that when you’ve already had about three or four cups of coffee.”

“You know what I’m talking about! I’m talking about the Miss Mali-U competition!”

A bead of sweat rolled down the other’s heads.

“I figured that was the case,” Sam stated. “Still, is it really that serious?”

“Of course it’s that serious! This is probably the most important undertaking of our young lives! Think of the publicity we could build by totally winning this thing! Think of all the cute guys that will want to go out with us after this is all said and done!”

“You keep saying ‘we’, but you do realize only one person can with the contest, right?” said Chris plainly.

“Would you just let me finish what I have to say?!” Clover screamed. Everyone did. They also gathered it was a good idea to not let their friend drink so much caffeine in the future. “Now then, if we’re totally going to crush Mandy and every other girl going after Miss Mali-U, we’re going to need to make sure we have the best outfits, the best makeup, and the most talent! Of course, all three of those things already apply to me, so there's nothing I really need to do!”

As Sam and Alex shook their heads in disgust, Chris couldn't help but note how much Clover was sounding like Mandy. It appeared those two had more in common than either one of them would want to admit out loud.

“Well, at least you have the right attitude about this whole thing,” said Chris. “I really don't know how one could get so worked up over something like this, but I suppose I'm in agreement with you, Clover. Let's crush the competition!”

“W-Whoa,” said Alex slowly. “I kinda figured you weren't into this kinda stuff, Chris.”

“I'm not really. I'm only doing it because I need to steal...” Chris hastily bit her tongue and tried thinking up something to say to divert the suspicious glances coming her way. “Er...what I meant to say was that I'm only entering the pageant because someone is counting on me to...um...win.”

That was too close...

“Ah, I see,” replied Sam, although her wary expression did not fade away.

“Okay! We gotta read all these over!” Clover slammed a gigantic pile of magazines onto the table, actually causing the structure to shake a little. “I gathered up every fashion catalog I own, so we should be able to find the perfect outfits to wear for the contest in them!”

“Y-You can't be serious, Clover! There has to be hundreds of these!” stated Sam.

“It would take us all day to read them...” said Chris. “And all night. As much as I enjoy reading, this...might be a bit much.”

“I wouldn't have bothered calling off work if I knew we were going to be doing something like this!” exclaimed Alex. “H-How many subscriptions do you own?!”

“Eh, I lost count a while ago,” Clover replied nonchalantly. “Come on now, girls! Quit complaining! If reading all these magazines is what it's going to take to beat Mandy and win that competition, then I think it's worth the pain, suffering, and paper cuts!”
All of that might have been fine for Clover, yet Sam and Alex debated if they should have been reminding her that neither of them were in the contest to begin with.

“What's going on over there?” said Chris.

Everyone peered to where she was pointing to see a large crowd gathering at a specific table. For a moment, Chris assumed it must have been Mandy showing off her outfit again, but she could tell that wasn't the case because she couldn't hear the girl hollering for Trent or complaining about something idiotic.

“I don't like the look of that. Maybe we should see what's going on,” said Sam. Clover and Alex agreed and the two, along with Sam, arose from their seats. Chris followed behind soon afterward, thinking that the trio were better off keeping their noses out of other people’s business. Blushing, she supposed she wasn’t one to talk, considering she too was being meddlesome.

The four arrived on the scene, and they instantly cringed at the girl sobbing at a table. Her overall appearance had something to do with it, with her possessing unkempt hair, thick braces, and a pair of circular glasses adorned above her nose. Dramatically, the girl kept on sobbing, perhaps hoping to draw as many people to her as possible.

“Don't look at me!” she stated between melancholy pants. “I'm hideous! I'm a freak!”

The girl then charged through everyone and toward the café’s exit in the same, melodramatic manner.

“W-What just happened?” asked a blinking Sam.

“And if that girl was just going to leave to begin with, why in the world did she bother showing up here so everyone could see her?” added Chris.

“T-That was Cassidy Jenkins!” Clover cried.

“Oh no! Not Cassidy Jenkins!” replied Alex. “...Wait, who's Cassidy Jenkins?”

“She's only one of the most popular girls on campus! She's won a ton of beauty contests around the state of California, and she was the favorite to win the Miss Mali-U pageant this year!”

“You could have fooled me! What happened to her?!?” inquired Sam.

“I don't know! She looks like a total geek now!”

“Hey, she might not win Miss Mali-U now, but she's a shoo-in if the school ever throws a spelling bee!” joked Alex.

“I doubt that's a new fashion fad she's into,” remarked Chris.

“Hey, that's less competition for us, right, Chris?” said Clover without a shred of remorse in her voice. She received a volley of glares from her friends as a result. “W-What?! It's true!”

Shifting away from the conversation, Chris spotted something glinting under a chair. When she reached down to pick it up, she saw that it was some kind of hair clip, one shaped like a butterfly.

Wait a minute. This was in the hair of that Cassidy. I'm sure of it. She must have dropped it when she ran out of here...

“What's that you have there, Chris?” Sam bent down to Chris and glanced at the hair clip in her possession. “You really are getting into the pageant spirit! Now you're trying on hair accessories?”
Chris answered, “No. I was just picking this up off the ground is all.”

“Talk about tacky!” Clover snatched it out of Chris’ hand and held it up, gagging at the sight of it. “These sort of things went out of style years ago! Just throw it away! We have more important things to worry about at the moment, like totally not being late for the tanning salon appointment I set for us, Chris!”

“C-Come again?”

“You heard me! Our skin has to be flawless if we're going to win that competition!”

Chris groaned, more at the fact Clover's words just now were the exact same ones Scar had given her earlier.

*I don't care what Clover says. I'm going to hold onto this barrette and see if SOAP can analyze it for any clues. Meanwhile, I guess I'm...getting a tan.*

#

The local tanning salon near Malibu University was quite an interesting place in Chris’ opinion. She had never been to a locale like it in her life, and she found herself more marveled than dismayed at the hoards of attractive people that flocked here just to put their skin under a lamp and cause irreparable damage to it.

*Why am I here again? The things I do for SOAP...*

“Don't look so down!” said Clover enthusiastically, jabbing Chris in the shoulder as she spoke. “We're gonna look great after we come out of here, and then we're totally gonna pound Mandy's pasty face into the ground!”

“T-That's good and all, but...I seriously think you're forgetting something, Clover.”

“Hmm? What's that?”

“Like I said earlier, only one of us can win the pageant. I know you just want to embarrass Mandy, but wouldn't you also like to win too?”

“Well, yeah, of course I wanna win!” Clover replied. “But that doesn't mean we can't socialize anymore! I mean, it's not like we aren't going to be friends after this, right?”

“I-I...suppose you're right...”

Despite her response, Chris wasn't sure at all what the correct answer was.

...*Where does she get off calling us friends? I'm just using her so I can complete my mission. That's right.*

Chris and Clover went into different rooms, where Chris was greeted by a buzzing tanning bed upon. Walking up to it, she peered at it curiously, unsure of how to actually use it. She guessed she really didn't have to get in if no one was looking, though she changed her mind when imagining Mandy's cackling face holding up the first place trophy for the Miss Mali-U competition.

“...Like hell I'd let that happen,” she muttered as she prepared to cast aside her doubts and get in the machine. However, her Z-Powder beeped in her pocket, so she pulled it out, opened it, and stated, “What is it now, Scar?”
“...Is a simple 'hello' so hard to say, Christine?” said Scar on the other end of the line.

“...Stop calling me that.”

“Of course. Of course. By the way, what are you doing at a tanning booth?”

Chris stammered ahead of replying, “I-It's not what you think! I-I was dragged here against my will! I-I am not slacking off on my assignment, I promise!”

“No need to explain, Agent C. I can clearly see that it's quite the opposite! You've gone to get a tan in preparation for the Miss Mali-U pageant, right? It really warms my heart to see you so dedicated to your mission!”

“...Alright. Sure. Why not?” Chris didn't bother trying to argue with him. “So, what is it this time? Did you finish analyzing that hair clip I sent you?”

“Yes, I did. It turns out it isn't as innocent as it looks. It's rather peculiar because it doesn't appear to be man made.”

“What are you trying to say?”

“That hair clip contain traces of a certain DNA. Hmm, how should I put this?” Scar stroked his chin in deep thought. “It has...Nerd DNA.”

“...'Nerd DNA'? What the hell is that supposed to mean?”

“You know? Nerd? Geek? The kind of people all the football players and popular girls like to pick on at school?”

“Oh, I see...” A light bulb went off in Chris' head suddenly. “W-Wait a minute! That Cassidy Jenkins girl! She was the one who was wearing that hair clip, and she looked exactly like a geek! So, there is something strange about her new appearance!”

“Are you saying she didn't look like a nerd before?”

“No. She was supposed to be one of the frontrunners to win Miss Mali-U.”

“I see. Well then, agent, something tells me this Cassidy girl and your mission have a lot to do with one another. I would keep my guard up if I were you. Something about this whole mess smells fishy to me.”

“I thought you hated fish.”

“...I’ll contact you if I learn anything more. Tata for now.”

Scar couldn’t wait to end the call after Chris’ corny joke. She chuckled, having no recollection of him being so sensitive.

“What does what happened to Cassidy Jenkins and the Miss Mali-U competition have to do with one another? I’m seriously struggling to come up with a connection. Maybe…”

Without warning, a very loud scream emitted from the opposite room. Straightaway, Chris acknowledged it as Clover's, and she feared Scar's warning was already coming into effect. She rushed across the hall and slammed open the door under the impression her friend was currently under attack.
“Clover, are you...?!”

However, Clover was just fine. In fact, there was no one else in the room other than her. It took a few seconds for Chris to even understand why the girl had shouted in the first place.

“What happened to...your...face?” she said slowly. “I know you said we would look...'different' after we tanned, but I wasn't quite expecting...that.”

Clover squealed at these words and tried blocking her features from sight. They remained visible though, allowing Chris to see the acne littering the blonde’s face. A large retainer was attached to her mouth, muffling her speech a bit, and her once styled hair was now a puffy mess of bangs.

“D-Do I really look that bad?” Clover asked. Hesitantly, Chris handed her a mirror. She soon regretted this action when Clover let loose a high-pitched scream of revulsion that actually put a crack in the reflective surface. “W-What the heck?! I-I look like something that crawled out of the Mali-U science lab!”

“Um...it's really not that bad,” Chris lied.

Clover wasn't listening. “Oh my God! Oh my God! This is it! My life is over! I'm totally going to need about fifty trips to the salon just to get my hair to resemble something halfway decent!”

The weight under her legs gave way, and she collapsed to the ground, totally discontented. Although this turn of event was an advantage to Chris and her efforts to win Miss Mali-U, she for sure didn't feel elated to see her friend in such a state.

“Er...i-it's going to be okay, Clover. Seriously, you'll be fine. Tell me though, how did this happen?”

“That's a...good question. I don't really remember! All I can remember is that I was totally minding my own business and about to hop into the tanning booth to catch some rays when there was this bright, pink flash all of a sudden! The next thing I know, I'm looking like the Bride of Frankenerd!”

“...Something tells me whatever happened to you also happened to Cassidy Jenkins. I'd also surmise that someone's trying to take everyone out of the Miss Mali-U contest by turning them into nerds. Er...somehow.”

“All I know is that this better not be permanent! I so can't be seen in public like this! I can't be seen again ever!” yelled Clover. She then gasped, adding, “W-Wait! I-I can't enter the competition looking like this! Chris, you're going to have to enter and win it for the both of us!”

“I-I don't really like the sound of that...”

“Trust me! You'll be fine!” Clover smiled at Chris, nearly blinding her with the light reflecting off her braces in the process. “Now that me and Cassidy Jenkins are out, you're our only hope of stopping Mandy from winning it all!”

Chris remained apprehensive about the whole thing, yet she felt the matter was out of her hands. The last thing she wished to deal with was a victorious Mandy gloating all around campus for a few months.

“O-Okay, I got it! I won't let you down, Clover!” she said with enthusiasm, so much so that she surprised even herself. “B-But you're going to have to help me out, alright? Like I said before, I'm clueless when it comes to things like fashion and the latest trends.”

“You got it!” replied Clover. She then sighed and slipped a paper bag over her face. Curiously, it
already had two eye holes cut out in it for her to see. “Let's get out of here. I need to hit up The Groove and buy a ton of facial cream right now. I look like a giant pizza...”

#

The days leading up to the Miss Mali-U contest passed by with Clover, along with a reluctant Sam and Alex, trying her best to prepare Chris for the competition. The task seemed simple at first, but as Clover soon discovered, Chris' ignorance to the world of fashion was far worse than she could have ever imagined. From scratch, Clover and the gang had to instruct Chris on how to stand like a proper lady, how to walk across a stage in high heels, and even how to tell which earrings went with what dress. Despite their diligent efforts, the information was having a hard time sticking in Chris' brain because of her relative inexperience in being a normal girl. Clover had assured her that she would be fine in time for the pageant, though her enthusiasm seemed to lessen with each day.

Finally, the day of the contest arrived. It was a day Chris had been dreading, but one she knew she couldn't avoid. As she headed in the direction of Malibu University's auditorium, she tripped in the red pumps she had been running in and landed face first into the pavement. Things were already going rather sour for her, it seemed.

“D-Dammit! How can anyone get around in a outfit like this?!” she exclaimed as she rubbed her aching skull. The glittering, crimson dress she was wearing might have looked nice, yet it was a pain for her to move in. “I-I look so silly...”

“I think you look great, although I don't think it's time for you to be 'falling on the job' just yet.”

A hand extended its way toward Chris, and she grabbed it before being pulled to her feet. She was then greeted by the smiling face of Sam. Behind her were Alex and Clover, the latter still wearing a paper bag to conceal her visage. Though somewhat annoyed by their arrival, another part of Chris was greatly relieved to see them. Their presence settled the butterflies fluttering around in her stomach.

“Yeah, we can't have you quitting on us just yet!” said Alex. “The competition is about to start any minute!”

“...I understand the circumstances, Alex. It's just that it's rather awkward to get around in this silly dress. Clover, are you sure I have to wear it? And I really don't like this red lipstick you put on me. It feels weird. And these crimson earrings hurt too. I-I can't believe you made me get my ears pierced just for this asinine contest.”

“W-What are you complaining about?!” Clover snapped, causing Chris to jump in fright. “At least you don't look like a total nerd right now! A-Anyway, you look great, seriously! You're going to do fine! Just...er...try not to walk so fast! We don't have any more bandages, so if you mess up your nose again falling, you're on your own!”

Chris moaned at this. “That makes me feel a heck of a lot better...”

“Are you going to take that ridiculous bag off before we head in, Clover?!” Sam asked with her arms crossed. “It's gonna be weird sitting next to you when you look like that.”

“No way! I look way more ridiculous with it off! It's not going anywhere until I'm normal again, so you're just going to have to deal, Sammy!”

The prospect was the last thing Sam desired, and she frowned as such.
“Wow, you picked out a really good dress, Clover!” said Alex while she inspected Chris from head to toe.

“Teehee! But it's not nearly as good as my dress!”

No one wanted to, but they eventually turned around to see Mandy in a puffy, purple, and flowery dress. Her hair was did up in an elaborate manner, so much so that Chris wondered how she was able to keep her head up from the weight of it. As much as Chris detested thinking anything nice about Mandy, the latter did look great at the moment, meaning she really was going to be an obstacle in the contest.

“Trent, don't ruin this dress, you hear me?!” Mandy snapped to her intern. He was holding up the train of her clothing so she could walk properly. “This dress costs more than your entire salary for the year!”

“B-But, you don't pay me, Mandy. I'm an intern.”

“Exactly, so don't mess it up!”

Trent sighed.

Mandy caught a glimpse of Clover and said, “Oh, hi, Clover! You know, for the first time in your life, you actually look good! Hahahaha!”

“Tch! Leave us alone for once, Mandy!” Clover yelled back. “You should be getting ready to get your butt handed to you by Chris here, rather than wasting time talking to us!”

“Hmm? You think she's going to beat me? That's really funny!”

“The only thing funny around here is the fact that you look more like a giant lilac than a beauty contestant!”

Everyone, save Mandy, got a good laugh out of Clover's jib. After hitting Trent for having the audacity to find humor in the remark too, Mandy glared at Clover irately.

“W-Why you...! J-Just know that I'm so gonna beat your little friend over there, no questions about it! After all, I am the prettiest girl on campus and besides, it's not like there's any real competition for me to face today after what's happened to most of the contestants! Later, losers!”

With that, Mandy and Trent disappeared inside the auditorium.

“What did she mean when she said something about the other contestants?” asked Chris.

Alex answered, “She's talking about the fact that whatever happened to Clover has happened to a lot of the girls that were going to enter the pageant today. Over half the contestants have had to drop out already! Y-You don't think Mandy has something to do it with, do you?”

“I'd bet half the designer blouses in my collection that evil witch does!” said Clover, fuming underneath her bag. “It's too cruel that out of everyone that got nerdified, Mandy was spared!”

“It is far too convenient to be a coincidence,” stated Sam, stroking her chin. “Then again, I doubt Mandy is behind all this. I mean, she'd do it if she could, but she isn't smart enough to come up with a plan like this. Still, it sure does seem like one of the competitors has something to do with this.”

“Argh! Just give me five minutes with whoever did this! I'll totally make them regret ever being
born!” Clover declared. It was hard for the others to understand her thanks to her massive retainer. “Ugh! This thing is seriously driving me crazy! Not to mention the fact it's ruining my flawless teeth!”

“Uh...Clover? I think the point of a retainer is to keep all your teeth aligned,” said Alex.

“Whatever! The sooner it's gone, the better!”

“I certainly agree with you on that,” muttered Chris.

The PA system switched on, and a person speaking over it informed everyone that the Miss Mali-U competition would be starting in approximately five minutes.

“All right, that's our cue!” said Clover as she began literally shoving Chris in the direction of the auditorium. “Time to break a leg!”

“How would breaking a leg help me win?!” asked Chris with a horrified expression. “I can barely walk in this stupid dress as it is!”

“I-it's just an expression! It means good luck! Seriously, have you been living in a cave for most of your life or something?!”

SOAP headquarters was certainly starting to feel like a cave in Chris' opinion.

Pushed through a pair of velvet curtains, Chris stumbled her way into what she figured was the dressing room. There were a number of girls powdering their faces, making sure their outfits were okay, and styling their hair even now, all appearing stressed and simply ready to get the entire competition over with. Chris could without a doubt relate.

“Sit down over here!” Clover barked, seating Chris in front of a mirror. “I need to make sure your makeup doesn't run while you're on stage! That would be the worst possible thing!”

“I-I'm pretty sure my makeup is fine, Clover!” Chris pleaded. She fidgeted around in her chair when Clover grabbed her shoulder and began roughly applying more eyeliner. “S-Seriously! You're acting like one of those crazy moms at a little girl's beauty pageant! Wait, why do I even know what that is?!”

Clover, not hearing her, muttered, “Hmm...you might need another hair band or two...”

Chris did her signature sigh at this and tried to bear the pain of a brush being roughly grazed against her hair. Her tear-stained eyes moved over to another corner of the room, where Trent was running around trying to make sure Mandy was in proper order.

“Trent, make sure there aren't any holes in my dress! And I think you need to add another coat of nail polish to my fingernails! And don't you dare forget my French imported perfume! How can you feel good if you don't even smell good, right? Hahahaha!”

“Y-Yes...Mandy,” Trent replied, out of breath. “I've got the perfume right here!”

The curtain at the entrance of the room was drawn open, and those present ceased moving when someone stepped in. A dark-skinned woman with black, lengthy, and curly hair smiled at everyone, and her mere presence sent those there with Chris into a hushed awe for some reason.
“Hello, my lovelies! It is a pleasure to meet you all!” the woman shouted joyfully. “My, aren't you all looking just wonderful! You may know me already, but for those of you that don't, my name is Kyla Sacks!”

Chris watched the woman carefully, pleased to see that she had bumped into the infamous Kyla Sacks. Nonetheless, nothing about the woman stood out to her other than her beauty, and she wasn't sure how someone like her could have an invention SOAP took interest in.

“I just wanted to come back here and personally welcome you all to the first ever Miss Mali-U beauty competition! While I want to thank all of you for entering, know that only the best, brightest, and most beautiful girl here will win! Even so, I don't want to make you all nervous, so I'll just say this: just go out there and have fun! I know there's not a lot of you left due to some...unfortunate circumstances, but as the saying goes, the show must go on! Shine brightly, my lovelies! I will be watching you with bated breath out there!”

“This lady sure likes to talk,” Chris said under her breath. Kyla flashed a pose ahead of winking, grinning some more, and then finally taking her leave. The woman, while silly, really did seem completely harmless. “Maybe the boys back at SOAP headquarters screwed up on their intel this time around.”

A powdering brush that might as well have been made of needles was swept against Chris' face just then. Coughing, she yelled, “I-I seriously think that's enough makeup, Clover! Are you trying to make me look like a clown or something?!”

“It's never enough makeup!” Clover responded. “Now, where did I put that perfume?!”

Chris sighed her oh so familiar sigh again.

#

Soon enough, the introductory phase of the competition got underway. All the contestants gathered on stage. The crowd, some of which were still trying to find their seats was larger than Chris had anticipated. Gulping some, she simply hoped she didn't end up getting stage fright. Squinting, she could make out Sam, Alex, and Clover waving at her from a row near the back. She returned the kind gesture, although she did so sheepishly.

Those idiots. They never cease to amaze me.

Her attention shifted to the trio of judges sitting at a table close by. Kyla was one of them, though that wasn't much of a shock to Chris. The woman sitting next to her, on the other hand, was since it was Nurse Melody Jenkins of all people.

J-Just how much free time does that woman have on her hands?!

The last judge was an unfamiliar face, yet at the same time it wasn't because the woman had an uncanny likeness to Mandy.

“Hi, Mom!”

From the stage, Mandy waved enthusiastically at the woman, who smiled and waved back.

“Y-You can't be serious! Her mother is one of the judges?!” Chris said in a much louder voice than she had meant to say her comment in. A few of the other contestants glanced at her momentarily. “Ugh! I guess we won't have a completely impartial panel here...”
This newest revelation wasn't enough to deter Chris. She was going to win this contest no matter what it took.

*I've still got a mission to complete too. I wonder if any other SOAP operatives have to deal with as much crap as I do.*

The main portion of the pageant got started, and as soon as it did, Chris quickly recalled the reasons she disliked these types of events. The first contest was a swimsuit one, where the contestants had to pose on stage for a short time in swimwear. When it came to Chris' turn, she appeared in a black one piece. Her outfit and posture were fine, but the fact she was unintentionally scowling the entire time was not. She intimidated both the crowd and the judges. Mandy came out next in a purple two piece, wasting little time in soaking up the limelight by performing a variety of poses and expressions. Her act pleased the crowd and more importantly, the judges, who all gave her rather high scores. Her mother in particular rated her the highest. Chris smacked her lips at this.

“You’d think she’d at least try to act like she was being fair to all parties…”

“This contest is totally rigged!” said a voice suddenly from the crowd that sounded an awful lot like Clover's. “I’d give that phony girl in the two piece a negative one out of ten if I could!”

Growling at this, Mandy stormed off the stage in anger.

The next part of the pageant was the talent competition. The acts performed included one girl juggling some bowling pins, another eating fire, and even a girl showing everyone that she could hold her breath for two consecutive minutes without passing out. Nevertheless, she had to be carried off stage because she had gotten a bit dizzy.

The following act was Chris'. For a couple of moments, she did nothing but stand quietly, inducing a low murmur from the crowd. Then, she whipped out four plates and tossed them into the air before pulling out a handgun and expertly shooting them all to pieces.

“...Thank you,” she said in a deadpan manner while bits of fine china rained down around her. She then walked away without another word, leaving the crown in a stunned silence.

“Well, that sure was...'interesting',” said Nurse Melody, who could think of nothing else to describe the act.

Mandy appeared on stage afterward dressed in a magician's outfit. Straining, she wheeled out a box that had her intern Trent inside of it. It was clear that she was going to try to saw him in half, but for whatever reason, the trick wasn't going as planned. Even as she diligently tried to saw him in half, he remained one whole of an individual.

“W-What the...?! TRENT! What did you do wrong?! Why isn't it working?!”

“...Y-You've never even done this trick before, Mandy,” groaned Trent. “I-I told you you should have practiced before coming out here!”

“Argh! You are totally ruining everything, Trent!”

“The only magic trick you should be doing is a disappearing act!” said a voice from the audience that again sounded like Clover's. The crowd erupted into full on laughter, whereas a red-faced Mandy kicked the box holding Trent off stage. A loud crash was heard afterward as and she then marched out of sight. Despite all this, the performance somehow still managed to garner a ten out of Mandy's
“Are you kidding me?!” said Chris, watching from the back. “I bet Mandy could literally just stand there on stage and breathe, and her mother would still give her a perfect score!”

Following a frenzied series of events, including a pie eating contest, a bull riding contest, and a water balloon fight, the final part of the competition got underway. Chris, still soaking wet from having so many water balloons thrown at her, was just thankful that the only thing everyone had left to do was to go back on stage with Kyla Sacks and answer a couple of mundane questions.

“So, Mandy, could you please introduce yourself to the crowd and tell us a little about your aspirations for the future?” said Kyla.

Mandy, snatching the microphone away from her, stated, “I don’t need to introduce myself because anyone who's anyone already knows who I am! As for my plans for the future, like, I'm going to be the world's most popular celebrity! Everyone's going to want to emulate me, like they should of course!”

Those in the crowd covered their ears when Mandy’s shrill cackling sent a torrent of feedback into the mic.

“Get off the stage!” said the same person that had twice already shared their opinion.

“C-Clover, would you be quiet!” said another individual that sounded like Sam. “You're embarrassing us!”

Mandy grit her teeth and said, “I know it's you back there that's been saying all those nasty things, Clover! Well, too bad for you because it doesn't matter what you try to do to sabotage me! You aren't ruining my big moment, you loser!” She then parted her hair and smiled before turning back to Kyla. “The biggest stars always have their fair share of haters!”

“Er...thank you, Mandy, for those 'interesting' comments,” said Kyla as Mandy went backstage. “Okay, everyone! It's now time to interview our final contestant!”

Chris got her cue and walked over to Kyla. A majority of the audience was worried she was going to start shooting things again.

“Alright, Christine, please tell everyone in the crowd about yourself!”

“...Fine. I am your normal, everyday college girl that likes shopping, talking on the phone with boys, and..shopping.”

The deadpan manner in which she delivered her speech was jarring enough that the audience once again descended into awkward muttering. That hadn't been the result Chris intended.

“Alright, Christine, please tell everyone in the crowd about yourself!”

“...Fine. I am your normal, everyday college girl that likes shopping, talking on the phone with boys, and..shopping.”

The deadpan manner in which she delivered her speech was jarring enough that the audience once again descended into awkward muttering. That hadn't been the result Chris intended.

C-Crap! This isn't good. Clover told me that crowd would love it if I said dumb stuff like that, so how come it isn't working?!

“...Alrighty then!” said Kyla, chuckling nervously. “W-Well, what are you aspirations for the future?”

“I wish to ensure that peace is cleansed from this world. There are far too many goodie-goodies in it, and quite honestly, it pisses me off. Oh, I'll probably be a veterinarian if that whole thing doesn’t work out.”
There was no mumbling this time around, but complete and utter silence.

“...T-Thank you, Christine! Y-You can go over with the other girls now,” muttered a thoroughly weirded out Kyla. Chris did as told, while the host of the Miss Mali-U pageant felt it was time to wrap things up before they got any stranger. “Well, this whole event has certainly been...something, ladies and gentlemen! Before we crown the winner, I just want to...”

“Thank you! Thank you! I couldn't have done it without you all!” said Mandy out of the blue. She stepped forward and took a number of bows to the confusion of everyone. “Aw, who am I kidding? Of course I could have! You don't need any help when you're perfect like me!”

“...I haven't announced a winner yet, Mandy.”

“So? I was just trying to save you the trouble of having to read out some silly card! Everyone knows that I'm going to win this thing regardless, so we should just totally get it over with already!”

“...You know, it's words like those that are exactly the reason I despise stuck up beauty queens like yourself!”

The crowd gasped at the comment, but more specifically, the nastiness in Kyla's voice as she said it. Even Chris found it bizarre because in her opinion, it was the first time Kyla come off as truly sincere.

“H-Hey! What's that supposed to mean?!” bellowed Mandy.

“You heard me! Girls like you and everyone else that joined this competition are just arrogant, over privileged brats that only care about themselves! You all don't even deserve to win! Therefore, there is no winner! All of you lose!”

No one was really sure what was going on anymore. Whispering filled the seating section, though it was soon replaced with screams of terror when Kyla pulled out a long, metallic gun. Her countenance transformed into one of pure madness when she aimed the weapon toward Mandy.

“I think it's about time you learned a bit of humility, little girl!” she declared. Mandy shouted at the top of her lungs as a pink ray shot out of the Kyla’s gun and hit her straight in the chest. She toppled to the floor afterward, remaining motionless for some time.

“M-Mandy!” cried her mother alongside the numerous gasps from the audience.

“O-Ow! That really hurt! What's the big idea, lady?!” Mandy managed to sit herself up after a bit. Despite her claim, she wasn't in that much anguish, though she did note something was off. “Huh? How come...my voice sounds so funny?”

Her mother ran on stage to check on her with a mirror in hand. Holding it up so Mandy could see her own reflection, the glass immediately split down the middle thanks to her daughter's screeching tone.

“W-What happened to me?! I-I look hideous! I-I almost look as bad as Clover!”

The multitude of freckles on her face wasn't doing her complexion any favor, yet worse perhaps was the braces now adorned to her teeth and the pair of square-shaped glasses resting in front of her eyes.

“I-I've turned into a nerd!” she hollered, wanting to faint from shock. “H-How could this happen?! I-I can't be seen like this! Someone, do something!”

“D-Don't worry, hun! We'll go see my plastic surgeon and fix all of this!” her mother assured her.
The two rushed off the stage and out of sight. Meanwhile, Trent hastily followed after them, screaming for Mandy to wait for him.

Kyla wasn't satisfied with just nerdifying Mandy, so she turned her weapon on the rest of the helpless pageant contestants. With a zap here and a zap there, more and more shrieking and flailing girls were changed into geeks, much to Kyla's satisfaction.

“Hahahaha! Yes, this what all you deserve!” she howled. She had been ready to turn another contestant into a nerd when suddenly, Sam, Alex, and Clover landed on stage in front of her. Dressed in their WOOPH catsuits, they formed an imposing wall that Kyla was irritated to discover she couldn't get past.

“Stop right there, lady!” said Sam.

“Yeah! Drop the gun before someone else gets stuck with braces!” added Alex.

Kyla found their demands amusing. “I'll do no such thing! If you girls are really going to stand in my way, I'll have no choice but to ruin those pretty faces of yours as well with my trusty Nerdifier!”

“'N-Nerdifier?!' A-Are you saying that thing you have in your hands is what totally ruined my complexion?!” asked Clover from underneath her brown bag.

“Haha! That's right, my lovely!”

“T-That’s so evil! That’s it, lady! You’re going down!”

“Uh...Clover? You might wanna chill a little,” said Alex apprehensively. “You're totally gonna make your acne worse stressing yourself out like that!”

“Why are you doing this?!” Sam asked Kyla. “What could you possibly have to gain by turning all these innocent girls into geeks?!”

“Why, you ask? Well, it's really quite simple! You see, for as long as I could remember, I wanted to be a supermodel! I would see all the beautiful women walking down the catwalk and doing photo shoots, and I was positive I could be just like them! However, everyone kept telling me I didn't have what it takes to survive in a model's world! I used to be a nerd too, you know! For years, I was forced to work my tail off in order to cast aside that image and show everyone that I could do it, that I could become a successful model in spite of their hurtful talk! For awhile, I was a world famous model! Finally, all the blood, sweat, and tears I shed for my profession had paid off! Eventually though, people stopped caring! They stopped caring about my dream! I was cast aside, forgotten by the modeling world! I figured that if I couldn't be pretty, no one could be! That's why I started this contest! That's why I invited so many of Beverly Hills' finest to it! Revenge! All these dumb girls will understand how I felt when I was rejected! They'll never be admired for their beauty again! Hahahaha!”

“...That is by far the dumbest thing I have ever heard.” Everyone moved their heads to see Chris, who was leaning against a wall casually with her arms crossed. Opening her eyes, she glared at Kyla and added, “Instead of hatching this idiotic 'revenge plot' of yours, you would have been better served getting over your situation and finding a different career choice. Right now, you just sound like a spoiled brat that's upset she didn't get her way.”

A vein on Kyla's forehead throbbed at what she was hearing. “W-Why you! You're just like everyone that shunned me, rejected me! I'll make you pay for those words, little girl!”
Kyla fired at Chris, but the latter managed to roll aside just in time.

“Man, even jumping around in this stupid dress is hard!” she voiced.

“Chris?! What are you still doing here?!” asked Sam in surprise.

“You better get out of here while you still have your looks!” said Clover.

“We’ll take care of this looney lady!” added Alex.

Nodding, Chris leaped off the stage and rushed toward the back of the auditorium prior to taking shelter behind a row of seats. She then sighed contentedly, simply glad to be off her feet. The shoes she was wearing were seriously beginning to drive her nuts.

“So, the Nerdifier was the invention Kyla had,” she muttered as she used her Z-Powder to change into her black catsuit. Slipping on her ski mask, she said, “...SOAP probably doesn't have any use for such a thing, but I suppose my own opinion doesn't matter. Scar told me to bring back whatever it was that crazy Kyla Sacks lady had, so I better do as he asked. I'm just glad to be out of that stupid dress...”

After determining the timing was right, Chris jumped out of her hiding place and returned to the stage with a full head of steam.

“H-Huh? Hey, it's that mean SUDS spy again!” proclaimed a pointing Alex.

“For the last time, it's SOAP, you blithering idiot!” Chris snapped.

“Of all the rotten timing! What's she doing here?!” cried Sam.

“I dunno, but I doubt she came just to watch the pageant!” added Clover.

“Whatever the case, we're going to have to stop her and Kyla Sacks over here!”

“Ha! It doesn't matter how many of you there are!” Kyla said confidently. “You won't stop me! You can't stop me! My dreams won't be crushed so easily! In the end, I will exact my revenge against the world!”

“...Would you put a sock in it already, lady?” said Chris. “If you planned your evil schemes as well as you ran your mouth, you might have actually gotten somewhere already.”

“How dare you! I don't know who you are, but you're going to pay for that!”

Kyla fired off another round from the Nerdifier, setting her weapon on the highest setting before doing so. Because of this, the blast was much bigger than before. Chris managed to shift her body and dodge it by the skin of her teeth. As the pink ray illuminated her clothing, she reached for the pearl necklace wrapped around her neck, tossing it near her enemies. The beads of the Fall For Me Necklace grew twice their normal size the moment they made contact with the ground, and everyone unfortunate enough to be standing nearby were swept right off their feet by them. Chris took advantage of this and jumped down right in front of Kyla, who was busy sitting up and rubbing her pounding head.

“O-Ow! What in the world just happened?!”

“...I wouldn't worry about that. In fact, if I were you, I would be more worried about myself at the moment.”
Kyla slowly leered up, gulping at the sight of Chris looming above her. “W-Who are you?! What do you want from me?!”

“Simple. Give me the Nerdifier and you don't get hurt. Seems fair, right?”

“Tsk! The Nerdifier is my life's work! There's no way I would ever hand it over to you!”

“...Wrong choice, lady. Now, we do this the hard way.”

Cracking her knuckles, Chris shot a devilish grin at Kyla, one that made the former model scream in absolute terror. Fortunately for Kyla, Chris never got the chance to strike since her legs were abruptly glued to the floor via some kind of adhesive.

“W-What the...?! W-What is this stuff?!”

“It's 24 Hour Extra Power All Day Adhesive Hair Pomade,” said Sam. She walked up to Chris while tossing a bottle of hair spray up and down. “Like the name suggests, you aren't going anywhere for awhile, SOAP spy!”

“What a...stupid name for a gadget.”

The name might have been ridiculous, but the gadget certainly was certainly effective. No matter how much she struggled, she couldn't break herself free. That was the least of her troubles however. She quickly found herself surrounded by the three WOOHP agents that were always a thorn in her side.

“Looks like you've sure landed yourself in a 'sticky situation!'” taunted Alex.

“Luckily for you though, we don't have time to mess around with you today!” said Clover. “We've got a psycho ex-model to take down!”

“That's right, so do us a favor and sit tight, okay?” Sam added. “We'll be sure to drag you back to WOOHP headquarters as soon as all this is over!”

It wasn't as if Chris had much of a choice but to remain where she was. Considering her legs were the equivalent of concrete at the moment, she was not only powerless to fight back, but incapable of stopping the three spies from going after Kyla again. Grinding the rows of her teeth, anger began to replace her usual collected demeanor.

“T-They’ve got a lot of nerve just ignoring me like this!”

Kyla was ready to brawl some more, aiming her Nerdifier at the WOOHP spies and pulling back on the trigger. Sam, Alex, and Clover managed to jump up and avoid her attack before they dove downward, each one of them landing a heeled boot straight into Kyla's chest. This sent her flying backward and into some stage props with force. It was also enough to cause her to see stars and then slip into unconsciousness.

“Well, that was easy enough!” Alex, leaning down near Kyla, waved her hand back and forth in front of the woman's face to confirm that she was indeed out for the count. “She sure was one messed up lady though!”

“You can say that again. It's too bad she had to ruin her career by turning into such a nasty person! Can you believe she was seriously trying to turn every pretty girl out there in a geek with that Nerdifier of hers?” said Sam.
“Hello?! Who cares about all that?! I think there's something important you two have totally forgotten about!” Clover removed the bag from her head and in response, both Sam and Alex cringed.

“I-It's not that I'd forgotten. I was just trying to block out the memory,” said Alex.

Sam added, “Um...I'm sure there's some way to reverse what's happened to you. Hang on a sec.”

The Nerdifier was thankfully nearby. Sam cautiously approached it, taking it out of Kyla's grasp once she determined it wasn't going to randomly fire on her. She then inspected the device carefully and turned a dial near the top ahead of shooting the weapon at an unsuspecting Clover. There was a bright, pink flash for a instance, and when it faded away, Clover pulled out her X-Powder to check her own reflection.

Squealing in delight, she patted her now normal hair and exclaimed, “Alright, I'm totally back to my non geeky self! Thanks, Sammy! For a second there, I was getting the strangest urge to solve a couple of trigonometry problems!”

An explosion went off from behind the trio just then, and for strangely, the scent of cinnamon was mixed in with the cloud of smoke that swept past them. While they coughed and fanned the vapor away, Sam was hit with a surprise attack, knocking the Nerdifier out of her hands in the process. Quick to react, both Clover and Alex tried vaulting in the air after it. However, someone else flew past them and snatched it up just as they would have laid a finger on it.

“I'll be taking that, thank you,” declared a beaming Chris. She was hovering above the dumbfounded spies with the help of the Jetline Boots Scar had given her. “You know, you three aren't very bright. You really should have finished me off when you had the chance. I figured you would have learned that lesson from our last encounter, but I guess I was wrong.”

“Whoa! Those are some really cool shoes she has on!” said Alex, who's eyes were glittering in amazement.

“You can say that again!” replied Clover. “I wonder if there's a pair of those in my size!”

“W-Would you get serious, girls?!” Sam hollered. “In case you haven't realized, she's still the enemy, and she's about to get away with the Nerdifier! We have to stop her!”

“I'm afraid I can't allow you to slow me down this time, WOOHP spies! The Nerdifier is coming with me, but as a consolation prize, you can have Miss Kyla Sacks over there. I'm sure she would enjoy your company.”

Chris retrieved a detonator from her person. Pressing down on it caused the explosives she had carefully set up around the stage long before the start of the Miss Mali-U competition to all go off at once. Sam, Alex, and Clover were thrust from the vicinity by the resulting shock wave, enabling Chris to use the chaos to make her escape. She flew upward with her Jetline Boots, slamming right through the ceiling of the Mali-U auditorium. In due time, she was outside and home free. Her gaze moved from the Nerdifier in hand to the now empty tube of Cinnamon C4 Toothpaste in the other.

“Well, what do you know? This stupid thing came in handy after all. I'm going to have to ask for some more for my later missions. Now then, all I have to do is get this stupid Nerdifier back to Scar and head back to my dorm room before those WOOHP agents figure out 'Christine' is missing again.”
Back inside the auditorium, the fires spawned by Chris' explosives were beginning to die down. A pile of rubble shook violently before an arm shot up from it. A battered and bloody Sam then burst climbed her way to the surface. A number of raspy coughs escaped her, they being a result of the thick, black smoke billowing everywhere. Her reddened eyes then adjusted themselves to Alex climbing her way out of some singed wood.

“Agh! I-I think I swallowed a nail!” Alex stated, spitting out a glob of blood. “I knew the Miss Mali-U competition was going to get ugly, but I never imagined it would be *this* bad!”

Clover soon made her presence known by pushing a row of seating off herself. “Yeah, let's never do that again ever! I don't even wanna know how many nails I've broken...”

“I-Is everyone okay?” asked Sam, who was clearly still out of it.

“More or less,” Clover replied. “But my outfit is totally ruined!”

“I-I don't think that's what you should be worried about right now, Clover! In case you've forgotten, that SOAP agent totally got away with the Nerdifier!”

“O-Oh yeah...”

“I-It's not all bad, right? I mean, what's the worst that mean, old spy could do with it?” stated Alex.

Sam frowned. “I...suppose you've got a point, Alex.”

The three yelped when another portion of debris nearby stirred. Kyla Sacks crawled out of it and toward the exit, noting that she couldn't let things end here.

“I-I can still do it! My plan can still work!” she muttered to herself. “I-I just have to start smaller is all! M-Maybe I could ruin one of those pageants where the mother's force their daughters to enter!”

She stopped moving when she took heed of a shadow hovering above her. She leered up to see an elderly man dressed in a black suit gawking back at her.

“I'm afraid you won't be ruining anymore pageants anytime soon, Kyla Sacks. That's because you're going to be locked away in the WOOHP containment facility for a very long time.”

The man snapped his fingers, prompting two similarly dressed men wearing sunglasses to lift a befuddled Kyla up off the ground.

“H-Huh?! W-Wait! You can't do this to me!” she shouted, flailing her arms about as she did so. “I-I'm Kyla Sacks! I'm a famous model, you know! Seriously, I won't look good in prison stripes!”

Her pleading did nothing to change her fate, and she was dragged out of the auditorium through the opening where the double doors used to be before being blown to smithereens.

“Excellent work, spies!” said Jerry Lewis, leader of the World Organization Of Human Protection. “You've managed to save the world from Kyla Sacks’ nefarious scheme.”

Jerry then glimpsed around, casually stepping back at the sight of a well-sized chunk of the ceiling crashing into the space beside him.

“...Although, you girls really didn't have to make a mess of the place in the process. Oh boy. The cost of repairs is going to have to come out of WOOHP’s wallet.”
“It wasn’t us that caused all this nasty chaos, Jer!” said Clover defensively.

“Yeah! I-It was that SOAP lady!” Alex stated, twiddling her fingers. “You know we haven’t blown up anything in long time!”

“Alex is right, Jer. That SOAP spy really did show up! Worse of all, she managed to make off with the Nerdifier you were telling us about,” explained Sam.

“Oh dear,” replied Jerry.

“B-But it wasn’t our fault!” Alex insisted. “Er...w-well, I guess we did kinda screw up, but it was because that lady was packing some serious gadgets!”

Clover added, “Come on, Jer! Can’t you give us some better gadgets next time around so we don’t totally get our butts kicked again?!”

“Actually, spies, I have been thinking over your little dilemma, and I believe I have come up with an idea that will take care of your little ‘SOAP problem’ once and for all.”

Sam, Alex, and Clover raised an eyebrow at what their boss was telling them.
“...It's been a whole week...”

Chris solemnly shuffled her way around the Malibu University campus, sighing as she peered at the blank screen of her Z-Powder. It had been exactly seven days, thirty two minutes, and fifty one seconds since her last contact with her leader, Scar, and she would have been lying if she said she wasn't a bit uneasy. Getting in touch with him was no good either because the line was seemingly jammed. Therefore, she was trapped at Mali-U, stuck in some kind of limbo while she awaited her next orders.

“This...isn't good,” she mumbled under her breath as she sat herself down on a vacant bench. She put her head in her hands and sighed a second time. “I wonder if something happened back at SOAP HQ.”

Worrying wasn't going to do her any good, she thought. Clutching the Physics book in her hands, she felt she might as well pass the time by studying for her upcoming test if Scar had nothing for her to do. Still, she wasn't positive she could take another day of college life. Spending so much time amongst obnoxious youths her age was beginning to wear on her nerves. How anyone could do this on a daily basis was beyond her, but perhaps she only had such a mindset because she was so used to be a spy and dealing with so much tension. If anything, that made her the strange one.

“Okay, where did I leave off again?”

Her index finger danced against the pages of her book in an attempt to find the passage she had last read, yet it jumped when sudden yelling in the background scared her out of her seat. Chris quickly found the source of the disturbance when she sighted Mandy bellowing at her intern Trent about something or another while they sat in her personal cart.

“Ugh! It's so hot today, Trent! Can't you do something to cool me off?!” she whined. Trent wasn't sure what else he could do. There were already a multitude of different-sized fans blowing cool, refreshing air on her and not him. Shrugging, he pulled a pocket fan off his person and held it by Mandy, who let out an exhale of glee.

“That'll have to do for now!” she told him. “Now then, drive me to the library! I've got a big biology paper coming up, and I need to see if I can get one of the losers there to write it for me! Ha, they'll probably do it if I say I'll let them touch me once!”

The two drove away, and watching them, Chris was relieved Mandy wouldn’t be bothering her for once.

“It really is hot though,” she said, wiping some sweat from her neck and forehead using a towel. There wasn’t a single cloud in the sky to block out the sun, much to her chagrin. “Maybe I should find some shade soon...”

“Hey, the only thing hot around here is you, baby!”
Chris was so focused on the weather than she hadn't even noticed someone standing in front of her until a couple seconds after the fact. It was a handsome boy bearing all his white teeth in a goofy grin. His presence was more baffling to Chris than it should have been.

“Can I...help you?” she asked cautiously.

“You sure can, gorgeous!” the boy replied. He took the liberty of having a seat next to her. He would have put his arm around her too, though the death glare she was giving him made him back off just enough. “Er...so, I haven’t seen you around campus much, sweetheart!”

“I don't see how not. I've been here at Mali-U for over a week now.”

“I see, I see! Heh heh. So, whadya say we hit a movie right now, just the two of us?”

“I'm not really into cinema or the like. Besides, I'm not sure why you need me to accompany you. I'm sure they sell tickets for one. The theater on campus isn't even that far from here, so if you’re lost, use a directory.”

The boy scratched his head, having never before been spurned in such a fashion.

“H-Hey, I'm the Quarterback of the Mali-U football team! Here you are turning me down when there are plenty of girls that would kill for the chance to go out with me!” he said smugly, even pointing to himself while he spoke.

“Then go ask one of them,” Chris replied nonchalantly. “Seriously, quit bothering me.”

The boy, his jaw glued to the floor at this point, could think of no counter to this.

“H-Hey, l-look out!”

Someone, the same someone that had just shouted in fact, abruptly crashed into the boy disturbing Chris with the force of a bowling ball. Chris cringed at the sight of this.

“...Do I even want to know what’s going on?”

“O-Oopsie...” Alex, sitting on top of Mali-U’s star Quarterback, shook her head before glancing down at the carnage she caused. “...That's gonna to leave a bruise for sure!”

“Do you always just slam head first into people to start your day?” asked Chris.

“N-No! N-Not everyday...” Alex replied, discomposed. “I-I was just in a hurry is all!”

“It's seems you're always in a hurry. Anyway, why are you wearing that strange getup?”

Chris was referring to the blue tank top and shorts Alex was in. Alex glimpsed at it, puzzled someone would even have to ask such a thing.

“Huh? This is the Mali-U Track team uniform. You've never seen it before?”

Chris shook her head. “I don't even know what a 'Track team' is.”

Alex gasped. “Y-You can't be serious! You have to come with me like right now!”

“H-Huh? Come with you where?”

Rather than responding, Alex grab Chris’ hand and drag her in a specific direction, all the while
telling her the thing she wanted to show her was something that needed to be seen with one’s own eyes. There was nothing Chris had going on anyway, so she didn't bother to resist.

At least I don’t have to deal with that stupid jock anymore this way.

The placed Alex dragged Chris to was a gigantic, open space that the latter couldn't make sense of. The center of it was red concrete in the shape of an oval, and numerous, white lines circled it. Rows of seating were nearby, and she could see a number of girls that were seated there watching people run around the field. Everyone sprinting, stretching, and warming up were dressed similar to Alex, making Chris come to the conclusion that this was the Mali-U Track team her friend had spoken of. This was the first time she had ever seen a track field; the more she stared at it, the more curious about it she became.

“What are those people running around the track for?” she asked. “I presumed they were looking for something at first, but that doesn’t appear to be the case.”

“They're practicing for our upcoming meet with Valley Technical Institute!” Alex replied. “They're our bitter rivals! They always kick Mali-U’s butt every time we compete!”

“I see. So basically, you and the other team race each other around that oval track up ahead, and you win by determining who’s the faster runner? Interesting. It seems so simple, yet I imagine you must compete against one another fiercely.”

“...I-I'm starting to think Clover was right about you living in a cave until now.”

Chris ignored Alex's remark. “And you're apart of this team?”

“That's right! Hey, you should totally join! We could use another runner before the competition, and besides, you haven't joined any of the other clubs at the school, right?”

“No, I haven't. It’s for good reason too. While I appreciate the offer, I think I'm going to have to decline. I simply don't have the time.”

“Aw! That's stinks! I think you'd totally be a really good sprinter!”

“I think she'd be a pretty good runner too, Alex!”

The two turned around, and Chris' heart skipped a beat at the sight of a boy with waist-length, brown hair smiling at her. He was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen and blood rushed to her face because of this, making it mirror a beet.

W-What the heck is going on?! M-My heart won't stop beating!

“Hey, Dyson!” Alex said to the boy. “Chris, this is Dyson Glee! He's the Captain of the Track team!”

“Chris, huh? Pleasure to meet you!” Dyson replied, extending his hand. “I see Alex was trying to get you the join the team. Well, I one for think it's a great idea! You certainly have the legs for Track!”

The comment made Chris blush even harder. “T-Thank you.”

“Is there anyway we could change your mind?”

“Well...I suppose I could...give it a shot...”
The words rolled off of Chris’ tongue, yet she wasn't sure it was actually her that was talking. It was like she had only said what she figured Dyson wanted to hear.

“S-Seriously? T-That’s great! Now then...what should we have you do?” Dyson scratched the stubble on his chin in deep thought. Eventually, he snapped his fingers and said, “I got it! Why don't you race Alex and I, you know, just to see how you fare?”

“Are you sure about that?” said Alex. “There's no way anyone could ever beat you, Dyson! You're one of the best runners in the state after all!”

Dyson laughed and rubbed the back of his head in embarrassment. “I'm alright at best. Besides, we're not gonna race to see who wins. Like I said, I just want to see how fast Chris is, though I'm sure she'll do fine. Is that okay with you, Chris?”

Unable to keep eye contact with Dyson any longer, Chris merely nodded at the proposition.

With the entire track team spectating, Chris lined up next to Alex and Dyson on the track in the way they had instructed her. The spare track uniform she had borrowed from Alex was a bit itchy, though it was very light. She felt she would have no problems moving in it.

“Yes. This is...rather nice. I was wondering why everyone was wearing such ridiculous attire, but it makes sense now. Heavier clothes would slow one down.”

She may have known next to nothing about track, but running was an entirely different story. Being a spy for SOAP had its advantages, and the intense conditioning she had to undertake to keep her job made her confident she could handle something as simple as running around a college track field.

“Are you three ready?” said another member of the track team who was holding a flag. Chris, Alex, and Dyson all nodded. The boy lowered the flag, signaling for them to being. Almost immediately, Chris lunged from her starting position and took a sizable lead over her competition. Her form was near perfect, and everyone looking on could hardly believe what they were witnessing. Somehow, she was beating Dyson Glee, their team captain. Though he had stated winning wasn't the goal, it was the sole thing Chris could think about as she ran. The feeling she got as the wind swept past her long, silver hair was indescribable. For the first time in a long time, she noted she was actually having fun. She was doing something so simple, yet the exhilaration she got from it was second to none. The cheering crowd was muted when she ran; the sole thing she could hear was her heavy breathing and the sound of her heart thumping inside of her chest.

What’s...going on? I’m just running, right? What's this...sensation then?

The finish line was steadily growing closer and closer. A couple more strides meant she would be the victor. That was what she presumed, yet the sight of Dyson beaming at her with his eyes as he suddenly caught up to her shattered this perception. Where he had come from, she had no clue, but he didn't merely pass her by. He opened up a gap that Chris wasn't sure she could close. Alex soon zoomed by as well and before Chris knew it, she was in third. The strength in her legs faded at the sight of this, only partially because of exhaustion. Even so, she wasn't willing to give up. She pushed herself to the limit, managing to catch up to the two just as the three of them crossed the finish line. The winner was too close to call. Everyone muttering around them couldn't tell who broke through the tape first.

“I think I'm going to die...” Chris said in between sharp inhales. Sweat covered every inch of her person. She couldn't remember being so tired in her entire life. “...Y-You’re telling me Dyson and
the other members of the Track team do this everyday?! Impossible!"

The consensus from everyone watching on was that Dyson had won, with Alex coming in second, and Chris rounding third. A member of the team let Chris know this, and she stared at them in shock and confusion.

“Third? How is that possible?” said asked herself. “I lost to some...college students?”

Remaining in disbelief, she watched while Dyson was congratulated by his fellow athletes and noted he didn't look the least bit winded. She could only imagine the kind of conditioning he undertook to stay in such perfect shape.

This doesn't make sense! He can’t just be a normal college student!

“Nice race, Chris! You're one heck of a runner!”

Dyson walked over to Chris and extended a towel her way. Taking it, she wiped herself clean, also using it to hide how red her features were. Being around Dyson made her uncomfortable, but not uncomfortable enough that she wanted him to go away. In fact, she wanted him closer if possible. It was a strange feeling, one she had never felt before, and one she couldn't explain in the slightest.

“T-Thank you...” she said in response to his compliment.

“Seriously, you're fantastic! Everyone here thinks I wasn't trying, but I was really giving it my all, and you still nearly beat me! If you're still interested in joining the Track team, we'd be more than honored to have you! In fact, I'd say we need you!”

“O-Okay...”

“Great! With you on the team, there's no way we can lose to Valley Tech now!”

Dyson's excitement was washed away just then when a phone in his pocket started to ring. The name on the caller ID did little to make him feel better either.

“Er...w-would you excuse me? I gotta take this...”

He stepped away, and the second he did, Chris let out a sigh of relief. She was sure her heart would have burst forth from her chest if he had stayed a second longer.

“I don't get it. W-Why is my heart beating so fast?”

“Well, you did just run around the entire track at full speed a minute or two ago,” replied Alex, who was drinking from a water bottle. “It's not surprising.”

“No, t-that isn't it...”

But what it was, Chris had no clue.

...Am I sick or something?

#

“Y-You have a crush on a boy?!”

Everyone inside the Mali-U Café was startled by Clover's declaration as she sat on the edge of her seat. The news she had seconds ago learned of was far too juicy for her not to shout in her opinion.
“...I have no clue what you're talking about,” Chris answered. “I don't know what Alex is telling you, but it's not true. I don't have a crush or whatever on anyone.”

“You don't have to play dumb with me! It's written all over your face!”

Chris smacked her lips. “You just don't quit, do you?”

“So you're saying you don't like Dyson Glee then?” asked Sam, turning the pages of the book she was reading.

“Sure, I like Dyson. He seems like a decent guy and all.”

“No, that's not what she meant! She's asking if you like him!” stated Alex.

The remark just made Chris even more perplexed. “...Would you three just speak English already?”

Sam, Alex, and Clover shot Chris a look that told her how loony they thought she was at the moment.

“Have you...seriously never fallen in love before?!” Clover inquired.

Growing both flustered and upset, Chris replied, “O-Of course not! I don't have time to entertain matters of the heart! There's no way I'm in love with Dyson Glee!”

The entire idea was laughable to her, completely laughable. She was a spy, a secret agent. With having to juggle missions and college life, she certainly hadn't the time for a boyfriend, even if she wanted one. She certainly didn't though, she told herself. Nodding at her own thoughts, she wished her friends would just drop the whole, ridiculous matter.

“Jeez, it's not like you're a robot or something!” said Alex. “I don't care what you say! I totally saw the way you were staring at Dyson back on the track field! So, when are you gonna make your move on him?!"

“...I give up,” Chris muttered as she took a sip of her coffee.

“Well, whatever the case, you've got good taste!” Clover informed her. “That Dyson Glee is a total hottie!”

“Not just that, but he's one of the best athletes in the country!” Sam added. She held up a sporting magazine, and on the front cover was a grinning Dyson. “He's won a ton of competitions all over California! You sure know how to aim high, Chris!”

Chris began to wonder if she were speaking a totally different language. No matter how many times she denied having feelings for Dyson, Sam, Alex, and Clover seemed to be pretending they couldn’t hear her.

“Dyson really seemed to like you too, Chris,” said Alex with a frown. “I've totally been trying to get his attention for awhile now. How come he already likes you better after one day?! That’s so not fair!”

“You three are absolutely insane.” Chris rose from the table, ready to leave in protest at being teased so much. “I don't care about Dyson Glee or any boy for that matter! Now then, I don't want to hear anymore about this, alright?!”

“Alright, alright! Fine, we get it!” Clover replied. “By the way, you're blushing.”
Chris quickly covered her face with a book upon seeing Clover was spot on.

Sam laughed. “I don't know why you're getting so bent out of shape over this whole thing! There's nothing wrong with having a crush on someone!”

“Yeah there is. It's...weird,” replied Chris sheepishly. “Is this what other people mean when they say they could 'die of embarrassment?’”

Clover, patting her on the back, stated, “Well, at least this proves you're not some sort of alien! If you need any tips on how to flirt with guys, just come to me! You could say that I'm something of an expert on the subject!”

“Yeah, sure...thanks. I'll keep that in mind...”

Chris was thankful when her Z-Powder began to beep in her pocket. It gave her an ideal excuse to get away from the WOOHP agents that were driving her insane. She lied and told the three that it was her father calling her before she found a safe place to answer Scar's call.

“Ah, there you are, Christine,” the leader of SOAP said. “It's been quite some time.”

“You don't say! Where the hell have you been anyway?! I've been trying to get in contact with you for over a week now! Oh, and don't call me by my first name! I'm getting real tired of having to repeat myself!”

“Oh, my apologizes. Also, I apologize for our lack of communication for the past couple of days. Things here at SOAP HQ have just been a tad bit...hectic. I won't go into the details, but just know that everything's right as rain now.”

“I guess that's...good to hear.”

Scar was being quite cryptic about his strange absence, enough so to heighten Chris' suspicions.

...He's hiding something. That's weird. He usually doesn't do that with me.

“It looks like you've been doing well though, Agent C,” Scar continued. “My, aren't you radiating with enthusiasm? Is it perhaps because of a boy you fancy?”

Chris didn't think it was possible for her cheeks to get any redder, but they did. “W-What are you talking about?! There is no boy! Y-You must be seeing things!”

“Is that so? I guess I was mistaken. Now then, the reason I called you was because I have a new mission for you.”

“It's about time. What do you need me to steal this time?”

Scar raised one of his eyebrows. “What makes you think I want you to steal something?”

“I mean, I can’t say for certain, but I can't think of any other reason you'd have me stay at this school. Besides, being a thief is beginning to become my forte...”

“...Fair point, and an accurate one. I indeed need you to find a certain invention, retrieve it, and send it in to HQ. Unfortunately, I don't know much about the item other than it's presently at Malibu University.”

“Is that seriously all the intel you can give me?”
“Sadly, yes. It'll be up to you to not only figure out who is in possession of the invention, but to locate its whereabouts. I'm certain this assignment won't be as difficult as it sounds, especially for someone of your caliber.”

“Easy for you to say. You're not the one that's going to have to bust their butt finding it.”

“Did you say something?”

Chris shook her head. “Nope. Can you at least give me some gadgets to help me out on this wild goose hunt?”

“I certainly can. Let's see here...” Scar reached his hand into a black bag, having had it ready at the start this time around, and pulled out a hair clip in the shape of a red ladybug. “Here we have the Ladybug Spy Clip. It has a small tracking device inside of it that links up with your Z-Powder. All you have to do is attach it to whoever or whatever you want. You'll be able to track it without fail. The range on it is quite good as well, so no need to worry about your target going somewhere you can't pick up the signal. Also, I think it'll look really nice on you, Agent C. Especially in front that special someone.”

Scar chuckled, though he piped down when Chris didn't join in. He could tell she wasn’t in the mood for his corny jokes. Clearing his throat, he decided to simply introduce the next item.

“This here...” he began, holding up a seemingly harmless container of white mints. “...is the Icy Fresh Breath Freeze Bomb.”

“Oh, it's actually a gadget? I thought it was another one of your lame jokes.”

“Well, while it probably is a good idea to have your breath smelling nice for the boys, I swear to you that these mints will actually come in handy during your mission. By chewing one, you can expel an icy breath that freezes anything in your vicinity. Then again, I wonder if you need such a thing. Your current temperament could probably freeze everything over just fine...”

“...What was that last thing you said, Scar?”

“Hmm? Oh, it was nothing, I assure you. Alright, I have one last item to show you. It's the Guardian Bracelet.” Scar placed a pink bracelet with a heart shaped jewel in the center onto his arm and held it up so Chris could get a good look at it. “Basically, it creates an impenetrable barrier around you upon the press of a button. Nothing should be able to get past it, but unfortunately, it's still in the testing stages at this point. It should work just fine, but I would be careful while using it if I were you.”

“Great. If my enemies don't kill me, that thing probably will. Oh well. Thanks anyway. Just do me a favor next time and try not to call me after a whole freaking week has passed, alright?”

“Of course. However, I can't keep any promises. You know how us boys are.”

Another torrent of laughter escaped Scar, making Chris hastily slam her Z-Powder shut so she wouldn't have to hear his stupidity.

“I'm not sure why I was so upset I didn't hear from him for so long anymore,” she grumbled. “Why couldn't he give me a gadget that would actually help find the thing I'm supposed to be looking for? I swear, I think he likes pissing me off on purpose.”

She shrugged. Like she stated previously, complaining wasn't going to help her situation any. Her time was better spent searching for some type of clue. At least Scar sounded certain the invention was here at Mali-U, which made her search a heck of a lot easier. Still, the campus was vast enough
that she gathered it would take her a couple of days to comb it entirely.

“...Who’s there?!”

The sound of someone dragging their feet across the adjacent hallway alarmed Chris and caused her to raise her guard. However, she saw that it was just a fellow student approaching, a girl she recognized as being a member of the Mali-U Track team. For some reason, she looked positively exhausted. Chris questioned if it was simply because of the intense training the Track team had just gone through, yet her gut was telling her otherwise. The bags under the girl's eyes and the way she hunched herself over were almost unnatural.

“H-Hey there,” the girl said weakly. “Say, you're that...new girl on our team, right?”

“Y-Yes, I am. Say, are you alright? You don't look so good.”

“Y-Yeah, I...think so. I'm just...really, really tired all of a sudden. My head's a little foggy too. Can't...really remember what happened. Well, I think I'm gonna go lie down in my dorm and head to sleep. See you tomorrow at track practice?”

Chris nodded and the girl went on her way.

“...What was that all about?”

#

It was the dawn of a new day, and Chris arrived for Track practice rather early. Of course, it wasn't by choice; the team was obligated to meet early in the morning to train before classes started. This was something Chris had no tolerance for. She wasn't remotely a morning person, and she couldn't help but yawn every couple of seconds as such.

“This is the pits,” she mumbled, rubbing her bloodshot eyes. “Why did I agree to join this stupid team again?”

She began stretching her limbs, hoping some exercise would help wake her up. While she did so, she took a look around and discovered there weren't nearly as many members of the Track team present today. Dyson was also absent, and a small part of Chris found it pointless to show up if he of all people wasn't going to be there.

“...I didn't a guy like him would skip out on practice”

“Hey! Are you looking for me, Chris?”

Swinging around, her heart instantly started to beat like a drum at her spotting Dyson Glee. He let her have his usual smile, and she quietly wished he would stop accidentally being so darn appealing.

“D-Dyson?! H-H-Hello! I-I was just...er...”

Talking in complete sentences appeared to be a problem for her whenever Dyson was around. Rather than make a fool of herself any further, Chris broken eye contact with him and sealed her lips.

“Thanks for showing up so early! I know it must have been a pain to get up when the Sun is barely even out, right?” said Dyson apologetically.

“N-No! It's was...no problem at all,” Chris fibbed.

“That's good! We can't have you tired when we've got to give it our all training this morning! We've
still got that big competition against Valley Tech coming up!”

“I-I remember. Say, Dyson, how come so many members of the team are missing this morning?”

“Er...I-I think they're all sick or something. Yeah, there's this bug going around campus and unfortunately, a lot of our guys have been hit with it! That's why the rest of us that aren't sick in bed have gotta train twice as hard and pick up the slack! Understand?”

Chris nodded her head like an overexcited dog and braced herself for what was to come.

*I know this doesn't have anything to do with my mission, but I...really don't want to let Dyson down for some reason.*

Dyson, Chris and the rest of the Mali-U Track team spent the morning training themselves to the limit. Chris was once again marveled by her comrades conditioning. It seemed everyone was giving it their all, not desiring to suffer another agonizing loss to Valley Tech. She couldn’t see it happening, not with Dyson pushing them so hard. There were those there that wanted to give up, yet couldn’t when seeing him in action. He really was a sight to behold, a natural born leader in Chris’ opinion. He had to have been to inspire someone like her to wake up so early just to sweat to death.

When everything was said and done, everyone, Chris included, was on the verge of throwing up from tiredness. It had been worth it though to most of them; they felt like they could tackle anything now.

“Alright, I think we've done enough for today!” Dyson shouted at his fellow runners. “Why don't you all hit the showers? You all did great!”

“A-Are you serious, Dyson?! We can keep going!” said a member of the team.

Another added, “Yeah! We'll lose to Valley Tech again this year if we don't keep it up!”

“While I applaud your enthusiasm, guys, you really should save some of that energy for the competition on Saturday! We don't want to be completely gassed before it even starts, right?” said Dyson. “Besides, rest and relaxation is another part of our job! We owe it to our bodies to get as much rest as possible since we’ve pushed them so hard!”

Though still wanting to protest, most everyone present agreed with their leader's line of thinking and opted to take a breather for the time being as instructed. Those present dispersed, leaving just Dyson, Chris, and Alex. This fact was one a smirking Alex didn't let slip past her.

“Er...t-there's totally something I forgot I need to do!” she declared. She then inched closer to Chris and in a whisper, she told her, “I'm going to leave you alone here with Dyson, so don't mess up this opportunity!”

“H-Huh? W-What do you mean?!”

Alex dashed off giggling prior to Chris getting a straight answer out of her. Per her plan, this action forced Chris to stand in the same vicinity as Dyson without anyone to hide behind. Her mind immediately became a blank canvas, and turning to the boy who made it do so, she noted that she couldn’t even think of anything to talk about to break the awkward silence between them. Fortunately, she didn't have to because Dyson spoke up first.

“I hope I don't sound like a broken record, but you were really great out there today! You really are a
natural when it comes to running, Chris! It's just a shame I couldn't scout you for our team sooner!"

"T-Thank you..."

"Ha, there isn't much left I think I can show you! You should do fine come Saturday!"

Chris nodded at his words, but she was more concerned that she wasn’t taking advantage of this once in a lifetime opportunity. Here she had Dyson all alone with no one to bother them. Only an idiot would pass up a chance like this, she thought.

"S-Say...Dyson?"

"Yeah?"

"Er...um...I-I..."

She just couldn't do it. The words wanted to spring forth from her lips yet couldn't. She sighed at this and stood by as things became quiet between she and Dyson again. Dyson, rubbing his nose, appeared worked up about something too.

"Say, Chris? I...hope this doesn’t sound too forward, but...are you...doing anything tonight?"


Dyson laughed. “Er...I'm really not good at this sort of thing, so I'll just come out and say it! You see, there's this sports movie playing tonight at the theater, and I was wondering if you'd want to go see it with me!"

Chris paused ahead of replying, “…You mean...like on a date?”

“Um...y-yeah! A date! That's what I'm trying to say! So, do you wanna go?"

This was most definitely a first for Chris. Never did she imagine someone would be asking her out on a date. With that in mind, she had no idea what her answer should be. Common sense dictated she say yes considering Dyson truthfully wasn't an awful choice to go out with. Nevertheless, she wasn't sure she had the time. She was supposed to be on a mission for SOAP, and she was certain Scar wouldn't approve of her using 'company time' on personal affairs.

“A-Alright,” was the answer she eventually gave Dyson anyway. “I-I don't see the harm in it.”

“Great!” Dyson shouted. “I'll pick you up at your dorm around 7 PM then, alright?”

An overjoyed Dyson sprinted off to prepare for their engagement, but he stopped, turned around, and waved one last time at Chris ahead of finally departing. This left Chris all on her lonesome. She stood silently in the spot she was in, letting a gust of wind blow a towel out of her grasp.

“...What in the hell did I just agree to?”

#

There was a lot for Chris to mull over as she sat on her bed inside her dorm. Was it merely a dream when Dyson had asked her to go out with him? She hoped not, lest the butterflies in her stomach be there for nothing. Getting ready for their rendezvous was one of the most stressful things she had ever done, and she panicked over what else she had left to do. She had already changed into a red dress, put on some red earrings, and done her best to apply some makeup to make herself look more appealing, but all this didn't feel enough.
“I wonder if Scar will get mad if I use the Ladybug Spy Clip like this,” she muttered, fixing the object in question onto her hair. “Tch. He's the one always going on about how these gadgets would look nice on me as accessories. Screw it.”

Peering at a nearby clock, she saw that it was only 6:30 PM. Dyson wouldn't be there for another half an hour, a short window of time she could use to come up with a plan of action. The worse thing she could do in theory was to make a fool of herself in front of her crush, so she decided to go over every possible scenario where something could go wrong so she would have a countermeasure for it.

“Heh. I never imagined thinking like a spy would come in handy for something like a date.”

Loud banging at her door made Chris rise to answer it. She assumed Dyson must have arrived early, though she was disappointed to see that it was just Sam, Alex, and Clover standing in her doorway. With a sigh, she let the three in and checked both sides of the hallway outside prior to shutting the door behind them.

“What do you guys want?” she asked in exasperation.

“Don't give us that look! We stopped by because we heard you had a hot date tonight!” Clover explained with a wink. “Knowing you, we figured we'd better drop by and give you a few pointers!”

“...What's that 'knowing you' part supposed to mean?”

“Er...n-nothing! Nothing at all!” answered Sam. “A-Anyway, it looks like you might not need our help after all, Chris. You look great!”

“Thanks, I guess. I was hoping I didn't look like a clown with all this makeup on.”

“Well, you did go a bit overboard on the eyeshadow,” Clover admitted.

Chris glared at her. “...If this is all you three wanted, you can go now. I still have some things to do before I have to go, so...”

“W-Wait!” shouted Alex suddenly. “Y-You so can't let Dyson come into your dorm!”

“Weird, I didn't want to be rude or anything, so I kept my mouth shut,” Clover explained. “I mean, it's bad enough your dorm's smaller than my shoe closet, but it's totally nasty in here!”

“Yeah! Dyson's gonna freak if he sees this!” added Alex.

“Like you two have any right to criticize someone else's mess!” Sam barked. “You should see what state they leave the penthouse in everyday!”

Neither Clover or Alex could really argue with that.

“You girls really think Dyson is going to care about how my room looks?” asked Chris with the slightest hint of fear in her voice.
“Totes!” responded Clover. “He's going to think you're a total slob!”

Now Chris was unnerved. She frantically looked all around her dorm and figured there was no way she was going to get it straightened up in time, not by herself anyway.

“Y-You guys have to help me clean this place up before Dyson gets here!” she screamed. “NOW!”

“Jeez, bossy much?” replied Clover.

“I guess we've got no choice,” said Sam. “Come on, girls! It's cleaning time!”

“A-Are you serious?! I don't even like cleaning my own room!” chimed Alex.

The four girls got to work and soon discovered that clearing everything out of the dorm in half an hour was a taller order than they anticipated. Sam already had a pile of clothes in her hands, yet dozens more remained on the ground. It was as if another took the place of one she picked up.

“H-Have you ever heard of a dresser, Chris?!” she cried. “W-Why do you have so many clothes anyway?! I mean, it's not as bad as Clover's closet, but...”

“That's a good question.”

Chris knew the answer to it however. Scar had sent her hundreds of outfits awhile back. He told her she needed a proper wardrobe if she was going to blend in at Mali-U. That was fine and all, but he had neglected to give her anything to put the stuff in, and Chris decided her carpeting was as good a place as any. It never really mattered until now.

“Hey, it's my trigonometry book,” she stated, finding it underneath a mountain of skirts. “I thought I had lost it in class or something. Oh, and there's my history book over there. Huh, and this is a chair. I didn't even know I had this chair.”

“Okay, this is just gross!” Alex was holding up a pair of black socks that smelled truly revolting. “I take it you haven't done your laundry in a bit, Chris...”

“It's hard to figure out what's clean and what's dirty in a mess like this is all.”

“And what's with all these chip bags?” asked Sam. There were already hundreds of them before she realized that there were more bags inside of the bags, with more bags inside those. “I-Is this all you eat?”

Chris shrugged. “What's the big deal? They taste just fine to me. They're cheap too.”

“T-That's not the point I was trying to get across...”

The other girls leaped in fright when Clover screamed at the top of her lungs without warning. She then hopped onto a chair and hysterically pointed to a corner of the room.

“T-There's a mouse over there!”

The others soon realized what she was referring to. A tiny, gray mouse had just finished eating the remains of what was left inside another chip bag of Chris'. It peered curiously at the girl aiming her finger at it, causing Clover's face to grow pale. Sam and Alex joined her on the chair, the three of the trembling in fright. Chris could hardly believe three agents of WOOHP were afraid of a little mouse. Walking over to it, she placed the creature in her hands and held it out.

“Relax. This thing can't hurt you,” she stated. “Look.”
“T-That's what I'm trying not to do!” said Clover.

“A-Are you crazy or something, Chris?!” yelled Alex. “I-I can't believe you're even touching it right now! I mean, I love animals, but even I have my limits!”

“Y-Yeah, w-we get the point, Chris, now just get rid of it!” added Sam.

Chris shook her head, walked over to an open window, and let the confused mouse out into the open world. Her focus then returned to the state of her room, which was better than it had been previously yet remained nothing to be proud of. To make matters worse, someone began knocking at the door once more, and with her heart sinking, she just knew it was Dyson.

“C-Crap! W-What do I do?!” she asked her friends.

“Y-You better just go, but don't let him see inside of here!” Sam instructed. “We'll get this place straightened out for you in the meantime!”

Alex nodded. “Have fun on your date!”

“You'll totally do fine!” Clover assured her. “Just...try not to talk much. You don't really have a way with words, and like...you'll probably say something stupid.”

“...As much as I want to punch you saying that, you're probably right.”

Chris thanked the three for their help and stumbled her way outside. Dyson was indeed waiting for her there, so she made sure to slam the door shut before he could get a peek inside. This action made him raise an eyebrow, though he didn't press the issue.

“H-Hello!” Chris said to him.

“Hi there! You all ready to go?” replied Dyson, smiling warmly. “The movie starts in about fifteen minutes, so I guess we'd better hurry if we're going to get some good seats!”

“R-Right...”

“Say, are you alright? You look...funny right now.”

“Funny? I have no clue what you mean.”

“It just seems like something’s bothering you, and I could have sworn I heard voices inside your dorm. Don't you live alone in there?”

“I-I do, yes. You must have been hearing things.”

A scream that without a doubt belonged to Clover resounded from within her dorm. It specifically shouted something about seeing another rodent. Chris palmed her hand across her face at this.

“It's just...the television,” she lied.

Dyson nodded. “Oh, I see! Well, anyway, you look really good, Chris!”

Chris blushed at this. “Thank you. Y-You don't...look too bad yourself.”

No one said anything for a couple of moments, the silence being broken by the two of them laughing at nothing in particular. Chris was relieved to see that Dyson was just as nervous about this whole date thing as she was. It made having to be with him a whole lot easier.
“Well, I guess we better get going,” he told her. Nodding, she was ready to get on with it already. As she and Dyson departed, she glanced back at her dorm and wondered if leaving Sam, Alex, and Clover alone in her place was really such a good idea.

_I just hope I didn't leave any clues about my real identity lying around with the rest of that junk..._

#

Side by side, Chris and Dyson trekked around the outside of the Mali-U campus while the sun was setting high in the sky. Neither of the two spoke much, and Chris felt it was better that way, lest she put her foot in her mouth and say something stupid per Clover's warning. Just spending time with Dyson was good enough for her, although they would eventually have to start speaking to one another, especially if they ended up going on another date after this one.

_Another...date?_

The idea made Chris totally flustered, and she giggled at how silly she sounded in her opinion.

“What's so funny?” Dyson asked.

“N-Nothing. Nothing at all. Sorry.”

“Ha. It's cool. You're really weird, Chris. I...uh...mean that in a good way though! You're not like any other girl I've met before.”

Chris was still unsure if she should have taken that as an insult or a compliment.

“Er...sorry we have to walk to the theater. My parents took my car away...”

Chris shook her head. “It's fine. I mean, the theater isn't even that far from here. I took you as the sort of person who just ran everywhere, Dyson.”

“Haha. A lot of people think that too, but even I know my limits.”

“Why did you parents take away your car?”

“Well...” The mere mention of his parents made a frown form on Dyson's lips. “My folks are serious about my running career. _Really_ serious. They have high hopes for me, and while I can appreciate that, they tend to go overboard when I don't live up to those expectations. You see, I recently came in second in a big competition. The best runners in the state were going head to head, but I screwed up, in front of my parents no less. That's why they took my car away, but I guess I'm lucky that's all they did.”

“I admit second isn't the optimal position, but it's not that bad, right?”

Dyson chuckled again. “You don't know my parents then. Unless I'm basically the best runner in the world, they'll never be satisfied with my accomplishments...”

The bitterness in his voice as he spoke was unsettling to Chris. It was as if Dyson truly reviled his parents, yet didn't want to admit it, to himself or anyone for that matter.

“Are your parents like that with you, Chris?”

Hesitating, Chris wasn't sure if she should answer the inquisition or not.

“...I wouldn't know. They've been dead for most of my life,” she finally replied.
“O-Oh! I-I'm sorry. I-I wouldn't have even asked if I had known...”

Chris shrugged. “Don't bother apologizing. There's no way you could have known.”

As anticipated, things grew sour between the two thanks the topic at hand, and Chris pondered why she had even revealed that shred of information.

“Huh. I think I might have led us in the wrong direction!” Dyson said abruptly. Chris put her head up, noticing they were at the track she and the rest of the Mali-U Track team spent countless hours practicing at. It was empty now and dark without the light of the Sun to illuminate it.

“M-My bad. I guess I was just enjoying our conversation so much, I wasn't paying attention to where we were going.”

“It's fine,” Chris replied. “This place really does look strange with no one here.”

Dyson took a couple steps forward toward the track, bending down to it and placing his fingers on the cold concrete. He then closed his eyes and let a calm gust of wind sweep past him. Something about the scene made Chris aware of the reality that Dyson always looked calmest when he was running on the track. It was where he belonged, where he was truly free. His parents kept him stuck in a cage, yet those bindings were powerless here. When Dyson was like this, Chris understood why she was so enamored by him.

“Say, Chris, do you like to run?”

“...What? What do you mean?”

The simple question shouldn't have taken her by surprise so much. Why it did might have been because of the way Dyson had asked it. His voice sounded different, intimidating even. On the other hand, it strikingly sounded natural, like he had been straining himself to sound the cheerful, friendly person Chris had grown accustomed to.

“I'm just asking if you like to run. I'm certain that with your skills, you'd be able to win gold medals in the Olympics one day. You know, a lot of people would kill for natural talent like that. Hell, I wouldn't mind adding your abilities to my own arsenal. Can you imagine that? I'd be next to unstoppable then.”

“...What is it that you're trying to say?”

Chris lost her footing when the ground beneath her began to tremble all of a sudden. She soon learned this was the least of her woes. Something burst up from the concrete, something she never would have believed unless she had seen it with her own, two eyes. It was some sort of giant robot with a multitude of mechanical limbs that resembled tentacles on an octopus. There was a single, gleaming eye on what she presumed was its head, and below that was a pod with a tinted window on the door. Because she was taking in the fact this thing even existed, she wasn't able to act in time before it snatched her up with one of its many arms.

“W-What the hell?! W-What is this thing?!”

“My apologizes, Chris.” Dyson, giving a sneering smile, stared up at his squirming date. Interestingly, the robot wasn't so keen on attacking him as well. Chris had an idea why. “You see, I sort of...tricked you into coming here tonight. You see, I needed to capture you in order to steal your abilities. I had a hard time coming to this decision though. You see...I really do like you, but I refuse to take anymore crap from my parents or anyone else about my running!”
"I still don't get what you're talking about!"

"Fine then. Let me show you."

He snapped his fingers, and the machine responded by tossing Chris inside of the pod on its body and locking her in. She sprang to her feet, pounding her fists on the glass, yet was unable to break free.

"Let me out of here, you creep!" she ordered.

"I'm afraid I can't do that, Chris. Like I said, if I had your abilities, I would be unstoppable. Well, this machine I've created lets me steal the abilities of anyone I want! Once I saw you run yesterday, I knew I couldn't let you slip through my fingertips! I've already stolen the talents of other Track team members, but you by far are the best of them! There are a few nasty side effects from this, but you'll live."

"So all the people you said had gotten sick, you actually got your slimy hands on them instead?! Tsk! You really are a piece of crap!"

"Hmph. I don't blame you for being upset. I suppose I would be too if the situation were reversed. Anyway, just sit tight. This'll be over before you know it."

Dyson punched something in on a panel on the robot before standing directly underneath it. A light then came down, enveloping him, just as something inside the pod commenced as well. Electricity ran through it and whatever was happening, Chris was powerless to stop it.

...I can't believe this. That idiot completely tricked me!

She was upset, so upset that she could hardly think straight. This had been her first experience with a boy, and it had ended in the worst way imaginable. Her feelings were an emotional wreck, with her wanting to cry, scream, and laugh simultaneously. As silly as it sounded, she was far more upset over her heart being broken into a million pieces than being some pawn in Dyson's sick plan.

"I-I'm going to kill him the second I get out of this pod!" she declared. Any plans for vengeance were likely cut short when she abruptly felt all of her energy zapped away. Collapsing, she held her spinning head. "I-I don't feel so good..."

"Haha! Yes! I can feeling your abilities flowing into me!" said Dyson in excitement.

The door to the pod swung open when the machine finished its work. Chris, lacking even the strength to crawl, simply dropped out of it and onto the dirt.

"I feel amazing!" exclaimed Dyson. Stretching, he felt as if he had stepped into someone else's skin, someone far more powerful than himself. "Yes! I can win the competition on Saturday with no problems like this! It's just a shame we couldn't tackle it together, Chris. I would have really liked running with you."

"You're...so full of...crap..." she mumbled. Speaking was a real challenge, considering her jaw felt like it weighed a couple tons in her weakened state. "I-I don't know...what you've done to me, but...undo it before I...break your teeth in!"

"If there's anyone full of crap right now, Chris, it's you. Do you really think you could actually lay a finger on me the way you are now? Besides, you shouldn't be so upset! Your talents are going to further a much greater cause!"
Chris swiped her hand at Dyson, who had bent down to her, but he dodged and found humor in her futile effort. Waving, he walked away, and even though Chris tried to squirm after him, she sensed her consciousness slipping. She knew she couldn't just let him get away though. Using the last of her strength, she reached up to her hair and retrieved the Ladybug Spy Clip, tossing it onto Dyson's leg without him noticing.

“G-Gotcha...”

That was her limit. She passed out right there in the middle of the track, unsure of if she would ever awaken again.

#

“Chris! Chris! Come on, wake up! Snap out of it already!”

Being stirred away from slumber was something Chris always hated. Because of this, she grunted angrily at the person shaking her arm while she sat up. It was then the reality of the situation hit her, with her first instinct being to search around like a madwoman for Dyson Glee. He was gone though, long gone with her stolen abilities. Everything that had transpired remained fresh on her mind, yet how much time had passed since then?

Calming, she got a glimpse of whoever brought her back from her unwanted resting. It was Sam, with a close-at-hand and concerned-looking Alex and Clover. Chris sat up in Sam's arms, almost wanting to pass out again from the strain of the simple gesture. Dyson hadn't been kidding about his machine having 'side effects' on its victims.

“Chris! You're alright!” said a greatly relieved Alex. “We were all thinking the worst there for a moment!”

“Yeah, what happened?!” asked Clover. “Something really awful, I guess, because there's no way any girl would be caught dead lying on the dirty ground in a dress like that!”

“I-I have...no clue what you girls are...referring to. I-I'm fine,” Chris informed them. Even fabricating the truth made her entire body throb with pain. “I-I need to go. I-I have to find...!”

“Whoa! You can't go anywhere! Not in your condition!” Sam replied. “Seriously though, what happened to you?! You were just lying in the middle of the track when we found you! What happened with Dyson?”

“And what happened to this place?!” said Clover. “Someone totally trashed it!”

The track laid in ruins, a side effect of Dyson's robot stomping around the place. Still, the giant footprints strewn about didn't tell the whole story.

“I don't...feel like explaining.” Against her better judgment, Chris wobbled her way to a standing position. She didn't care how bad she felt. All she was focused on was tracking down Dyson and making him pay. “Dyson...gotta...find him...”

“Dyson? Look, I don't know what happened, but you really shouldn't be moving around right now! We'll find Dyson for you, all right?” said Sam.

“Yeah! I think the Nurse's Office is still open, so you should head straight there!” added Alex.

Chris contemplated for a moment, deciding that the three girls in front of her wouldn't be satisfied unless she agreed to their terms. It was then she noticed she had overlooked something peculiar about
her friend's sudden arrival here tonight.

“Wait, how did you three know I was in trouble?”

On cue, Sam, Alex, and Clover began whistling suspiciously. They really didn't want to answer that one, but the way Chris was scowling at them softened their resolve.

“Alright, fine! W-We came to spy on you!” said Clover.

“We wanted to see how your date was going!” explained Alex.

“Judging from your current state though, I guess not well,” added Sam. “Well, anyway, you really should go see the nurse! If Dyson was the one who did this to you, then we'll find him for sure!”

Alex hollered, “That jerk! I’ll sock him in the face good for you, Chris!”

Chris had neither the will nor the stamina to argue. Instead, she observed the WOOHP agents go on their merry way.

“T-They didn’t even bother asking if I had seen which direction Dyson had gotten off to. Tsk. Those...girls really are imbeciles. Better...contact Scar.” She retrieved her Z-Powder to get her boss on the line. Thankfully, Scar answered in a reasonable amount of time. “S-Scar...I-I think I've figured out what that invention you wanted me to steal is. I'm...going to go after it right now.”

“Y-You've found the invention already?! B-But it's only been a day! I was certain it would take you much longer. W-Wait a moment, Agent C! Are you alright? You don't look so good!”

“I'm fine. I'm going now.”

She didn't have time to waste explaining her situation to Scar, so she dropped the call. Changing into her spy catsuit, she activated the tracking features of the Ladybug Spy Clip and was pleased to see that Dyson was close by. In fact, he was a little too close. Unless her radar was malfunctioning, it was currently stating her target was literally feet away. She inspected her surroundings carefully, though found no one other than herself. Her blue eyes then shot their way toward the ground.

“...I see now. He's gotta be underneath me. Don't tell me he has a secret underground lair beneath this school? Just how many of those could this place have?”

A nearby manhole gave Chris the entrance she needed. She leaped down into the musty and smelly sewers, replacing the lid on the opening above her. This wasn't going to be her first venture down dimly lit corridors considering her profession as a spy, although this time would certainly be the stinkiest. While she headed down the path her radar was directing her, she had no choice but to use the wall as a support so not to fall over. Her legs were the equivalent of gelatin presently.

“I'm...beginning to feel a bit lightheaded...”

Her Z-Powder was beeping every second now; Dyson was just up ahead. She willed her way around another corner and found herself dismayed by what awaited her. Indeed, there was nothing of interest save for something glimmering red in the rushing water. Chris reached down and picked it up to see that it was the Ladybug Spy Clip.

“Dammit! He must have figured out what it was and tossed it!”

Fortunately, Dyson hadn't otherwise done a good job of covering his tracks. Chris looked forward and regarded the sides of the hallways were littered with the tracks of Dyson's machine, which had
clearly followed its master down here.

“A trail of breadcrumbs...”

She was happy to see that at least one thing this evening was going her way. The markings led her right into a open area, one she ascertained was manmade. Inside was the robot that had assaulted her earlier, and standing near it was none other than Dyson Glee. The very sight of him made Chris fly into a blind rage. Perhaps sensing her emotions, Dyson turned himself to her.

“W-What the...?! Who are you?! How did you manage to find this place?!”

“Dyson Glee! I've been looking for you, you little rat! There's nowhere left for you to run!”

“Hmph. Have we met? I've never seen you before, so what business could you possibly have with me?”

Chris removed her ski mask to allow Dyson a glimpse at his destroyer. Revealing her identity had dire consequences, and it was something Scar warned her never to do, yet she considered this instance an exception to the rules.

“Chris? Is that really you, Chris? Well, isn't this a surprise? You sure are persistent. Is that supposed to be some kind of Halloween costume or something?” Dyson inquired.

“Funny. There isn't going to be anything funny about me breaking your face in half though.”

“You really think you're a challenge to me in your condition? You can’t even hope to catch me! After all, I am the world's greatest runner now!”

Dyson laughed at his own remark, while Chris slipped her mask back, predicting things were about to get rough. Honestly, she wouldn’t have them any other way.

“I've come here for two things, Dyson Glee. First off, I'm going to need you to fix whatever it is you've done to me. Secondly, I'm going to need that robot of yours. It's coming with me, whether you like it or not!”

Dyson certainly found nothing hilarious in her demands. “As if! Do you know how hard it was to even build this thing, let alone get it to work properly?!”

“How should I know? I figured you must have stolen it like your so called running prowess.”

“You're going to pay for that remark!”

Dyson readied to go on the attack, but Chris beat him to the punch by jumping into the air and aiming a kick straight for his face. He managed to dodge this quite easily though, and Chris crashed onto the floor in a crumpled heap. Even her fighting abilities had been diminished it seemed.

“Come on, I thought you were going to 'break my face in half!'” mocked Dyson. “Maybe you can't hit me because you have some lingering feelings for me?!”

“Tch! As if!” Chris replied. “I admit, I was an idiot to fall for you, but you're an even bigger idiot for pissing me off! Never mess with a woman with a broken heart!”

Though her body was weak, Chris willed it onward. She couldn't let Dyson get away with hurting her so much, not while he stood their like it wasn't an issue. She scratched and clawed at him, hoping to get even a single fingertip on his person. However, her legs gave up halfway through, causing her
to topple over a second time.

“You know, Chris, you're all talk. I liked you better when you were quieter.”

Dyson used the opening to slam his foot into her stomach. Letting out a howl of anguish, Chris rolled over, snarling like a rabid dog.

“I'll...get you!” she stated in between violent coughs.

“I don't think so, Chris. I'm finishing you, here and now.”

Interrupting Dyson from fulfilling his claim was the sudden arrival of Sam, Alex, and Clover. The three of them unintentionally shielded Chris with their bodies as they confronted the perplexed runner.

“Alex? And I've seen you two before. You're her friends.”

“That's right, Dyson! As much as I hate to say it, we're here to stop whatever evil plans you've come up with!” said Alex, pointing.

“Yeah! We didn't go through that groddy sewer for nothing!” added Clover.

“We know you've been stealing the talents of all the athletes on the Mali-U track team!” declared Sam. “And that's why we're here to stop you!”

“Tch! It's one interferer after the other! Like I told your friend sulking on the floor behind you, you're not taking my invention! Anyone who messes with me is going to suffer the consequences!”

“They're not...my friends, you imbecile,” said Chris, straining to her feet. “And you WOOHP idiots need to stay out of this! Me and this guy have some personal business we need to attend to!”

“You don't...look so good,” Alex admitted. “Are you alright?”

“I'm...fine,” Chris replied. The fact that she could hardly catch her breath did nothing to instill confidence in the others that her claim was the truth. “W-Why are you worried about me anyway?! I'm the enemy! If anything, you should be taking advantage of this situation by finishing me off!”

“Sorry, girlfriend, but that's just not our style!” Clover stated.

“Yeah. We may be enemies, but we'd never stoop as low as to attack you while you're clearly hurt!” added Sam. “With that in mind, we don't really want to hurt you, so I suggest you get out of here while you can!”

“Hmph, fat chance. That robot back there is coming with me first!” said Chris.

“If you want it so badly, you're going to have to go through us!”

Although Chris was practically itching to take on all challengers, she was also smart enough to realize she had no hope of taking on Sam, Alex, and Clover in her condition and coming out on top. Taking this into account, she merely sat down and crossed her arms, suggesting to the WOOHP spies they could do whatever they pleased.

“Huh? She's just...giving up?” asked Alex.

“I don't like the smell of this,” said Clover. “Though I'm thinking that just the smell of this totally nasty sewer!”
“Believe what you want, ladies. Like I said, you're better off getting rid of me if you don't trust me,” said Chris in a calm and collected manner. “The room is spinning for me right now, so I don’t feel like exerting the effort to convince you if I’m telling the truth or not.”

“...Let's just leave her be for now, girls,” suggested Sam. “Though don't think we're done with you, SOAP spy! We still have to drag you back to WOOHP headquarters!”

Chris shrugged her shoulders.

“I don't mean to interrupt your conversation, girls, but I seriously have things I need to be doing right now! If you're not going to get outta here, you leave me no choice but to destroy you!”

At the snap of his fingers, Dyson's precious robot came to life. It marched its way toward the WOOHP agents, tossing a number of its tentacles at them. The three were able to dodge them in time, whereas Chris used the distraction to regain her bearings. Her earlier words of not being a threat to her enemies had been nothing but lies designed to buy her some time.

“Well, If I can't fight with my fists, I'm just going to have to use another weapon…”

She found just the thing, pulling out the container holding the Icy Fresh Breath Freeze Bombs. She solely hoped they weren't as innocent as they appeared. At the very least, they tasted good as she popped a couple into her mouth. However, the longer she chewed, the more frigid her tongue and teeth became. Unable to stand it any longer, she exhaled as hard as she could. This was most likely the gadget's intended effect since her breath froze everything in front of her solid. This included the WOOHP spies, Dyson, and his killer robot.

“Whoa...” Chris muttered. “I'll never doubt Scar again.”

“Um...I-I can't move,” said Alex, who was stuck in a funny pose.

“N-Neither can I! Ugh! This totally going to ruin my complexion!” growled Clover.

“W-Would you two get serious! W-We have to find a way to thaw ourselves out!” Sam told them.

“And while you're at it, unfreeze me as well!” added Dyson.

“Sorry, but you four aren't going anywhere for a bit, so just 'chill out' in the meantime.” Chris, walking up to everyone, grinned at their current predicament. “Just when I think you three can't get anymore gullible...”

Destroying her prey would be a simple matter, but Chris had something else she needed to attend to first. She made her way over to Dyson's robot, quickly finding the control panel. Her fingers danced against numerous buttons and switches until she managed to activate the talent draining feature of the machine, making sure to start it up in reverse. She then stood under a light that began shimmering from the robot's bottom.

“W-What are you doing?! Get away from my creation!” Dyson roared.

“Sure, but after I take back what's mine. If you don't want me messing with your precious robot, come over here and try to stop me.”

Sighting Dyson try in vain to move his frozen limbs cheered Chris up somewhat. Having her strength fly out of his body and return to hers was also great.

“That's better,” said a stretching Chris. She then glowered in Dyson’s vicinity, making him sweat.
“Now I can kick your teeth in properly this time around.”

Dyson, shuttering, garnered there wasn't much he could to to stop what was coming.

Meanwhile, Sam was gradually able to move her arm enough to reach something on her person.

“Almost...! Just have to...grab the Wind Tunnel 9000 Turbo Blast Hair Dryer...!”

Her fingers slipped off the gadget a couple of times, yet she was able to get a firm grip on the pink hairdryer eventually. Using it, she blasted her way to freedom thanks to the high intensity heat it spewed before freeing Alex and Clover as well.

“Phew! Thanks, Sammy!” said Alex. “I was so getting frostbite there for a sec!”

Clover added, “Ugh! I hate when people totally give me the ‘cold shoulder’ like that!”

“Hmph. So you three are up and about again,” said Chris. “Whatever. I should have no problems taking you down now that I'm at one hundred percent again.”

“N-Not so fast!” mumbled Dyson. His tongue was frozen outside of his mouth, so his speech difficult to understand. “H-Have you girls forgotten about me?!?”

Through sheer will, he managed press his tongue down on a black remote in his hand. This in turn made his robot come back to life, it easily breaking free from its icy binding. Chris, Sam, Alex, and Clover all screamed in terror when it aimed one of its tentacles for them, though they all managed to get out of the way somehow. More of its limbs caught the WOOHP agents off guard though, and they were ensnared within its grasp. Chris was spared such a fate only because she managed to use the Guardian Bracelet Scar had given her. The purple barrier successfully blocked the tentacle strike, sending Dyson's robot reeling back. However, this did nothing to save the WOOHP spies from their precarious situation.

“Agh! I can't break free!” Sam howled. “H-How about you, Clover?!”

“This tentacle is totally ruining my hair!” yelled Clover.

“Forget your hair! We're totally gonna to be killed if we don't so something quick!” cried Alex.

Chris could hardly believe it. What she was being made witness to was a moment she should have been drinking in. Her mortal enemies, three agents of the World Organization of Human Protection, were about to meet their demise, and she wasn't going to have to lift a finger. Indeed, it should have been the greatest turn of events.

“They’ll...finally be out of my hair.”

Yet, doubt clouded her mind. Could she really allow this to happen? Even if they were her sworn enemies, could she really allow the three she called 'friends' to perish like trapped animals?

“...I really am an idiot!”

With no hesitation, Chris jumped onto Dyson's robot and sliced Sam, Alex, and Clover free. Tentacles hit the ground everywhere, while the machine itself toppled over, sparking as it did. Dyson's eyeballs half near popped out of their sockets at this turn of events. His mighty creation shouldn't have been defeated so easily, not by a mere girl clad in black anyway.

“N-No! No! W-What have you done?!” he exclaimed, ripping out strands of his hair in frustration.
“H-How am I supposed to steal the talents of the world's best runner's now?!”

“I know this may sound strange to you, but how about you actually exert some effort and just train like every other athlete in the world?!” Chris snapped.

“N-No way! You saved us?!” said Sam to Chris. “B-But...why?!”

“...What do you want me to say?” Chris replied in a low tone.

“Hello?! Maybe you can tell us why you go from trying to rub us out one moment to saving our skins the next!” cried Clover.

“...Like I said. I'm not sure what you want me to say.”

“Seriously though, we owe you our lives!” said Alex.

Chris felt a shred of embarrassment from Alex's praise when she thought it should have been disappointment. She had thrown away a good chance to rid herself of some pesky vermin once and for all. If Scar were here to see her antics, he would have had her imprisoned in the SOAP dungeons on the spot. Nevertheless, could barely say she regretted her heroics. In fact, a great deal of relief accumulated inside her, relief to see that her friends were alright.

“...If you want an answer so badly, consider me saving you repayment for you three protecting me back when we went up against Doctor Heisenberg. Anyway, I'm not going to allow you all to die, not unless I'm the one doing the deed anyway!”

With that taken care of, Chris sheathed the long dagger she had employed to cut the WOOHP spies free. Sam in particular took an interest in this; this was the first time she had ever seen Chris with the weapon.

“You think I'm just going to let you get away with this, Chris?!” Dyson was over the deep end now. One of his eyelids was twitching as fast as his heart was pounding, and he was ready to rip each and everyone present to shreds. “You and your pals here are gonna pay!”

“Well, you know what they say, Dyson. Cheaters never prosper,” replied Chris. “You're the only one that's going down though. Just try me.”

That was a challenge Dyson had no qualms taking. He charged at Chris in a blind rage and swung for the fences. However, rather than connecting, the punch was caught effortlessly by his target.

“Didn't your parents ever teach you that it's not okay to hit girls?” said Chris. “Too bad it doesn't really apply the other way around.”

She nearly broke his jaw with a fierce headbutt, following it up with a roundhouse kick that knocked her poor opponent into a wall. The two blows in succession were more than enough stun him, and hit the floor in a crumpled mess. Chris wasn't done exacting her revenge just yet. Snatching him up by his shirt, she pulled her fist back and readied the finishing blow. At the same time, something fell off of his neck.

“Hmm? What do we have here?”

Letting him go, Chris bent down and scooped up a circular object that was no bigger than a ring. She realized it was some sort of microchip on closer inspection.

“Huh? Why did this...come off of him?”
“Agh, my head!” Dyson, sitting up, looked around and was clearly disorientated. “H-Huh?! W-Where the heck am I?! Whoa! W-What is that robot over there?! A-And who are you girls?! Why are you all wearing spandex? Is there some sort of costume party going on or something? Ugh! W-Why does my head hurt so much?!”

“Tch! Don't play dumb with me, Dyson Glee!” Chris screeched at him.

“I-I'm not! I seriously have no idea what's going on!”

Impossible, Chris thought. Unless her assault on him had given him amnesia, she couldn't fathom how he had forgotten everything that had occurred. It would have been easy for her to think he was lying, yet his genuine expression of confusion suggested differently.

“Get away from our son, you evil girl!”

“That's right! Don't you dare lay another finger on him!”

Just when Chris was certain things couldn't get any stranger, she spun around toward the two people chewing her out to see a middle-aged man and woman glaring at her in the distance.

“W-Where the hell did you two come from?” she asked.

“Mom?! Dad?!” cried Dyson. “W-What are you two doing here?! What's going on?!”

Dyson's mother smiled at him lovingly. “We just had to make sure our precious son was alright.”

“Yes. Unfortunately, son, we still have to clean up after your mistakes,” his father stated, sighing. “Even with the behavior modification chip we implanted on you, it appears we're going to have to finish this in your stead.”

“W-What are you guys talking about?!” Dyson replied.

“That's what I'd like to know,” added Chris.

“I get it!” said Sam suddenly. “You put that chip on him to control his actions! That's why he's been doing all this, isn't it?!”

“That's right,” said Dyson's mom with a nod. “You see, we only want what's best for our son! He has the potential to be the world's greatest track star, but he lacks the drive. He's far too kindhearted for his own good.”

“And so, we figured we would help him 'get over the hump' so to speak by giving him a little 'push’,” added Dyson's dad. “We got that curious chip from some parents from a town by the name of the O.P. They tried it to keep their kids under control, so we figured it would be an excellent way to motivate our Dyson into becoming the world's top runner!”

“You do realize how totally insane that sounds, right?!” yelled Clover. “You two are total wackos!”

“That isn't true! We were just looking out for our dear son! You'll understand one day, sweetheart, when you have children of your own!” said Dyson's mother.

“Huh?! And ruin this perfect figure? No thank you!”

“...So you're saying Dyson was really being controlled this entire time...?” said Chris slowly, not wanting to believe it, for it meant Dyson wasn't the bad guy after all.
“I seriously can’t recall much of what I’ve done for the past couple of days,” Dyson admitted. “But judging from what you guys are saying, I have a feeling that whatever I’ve been doing, it hasn’t been good. I’m sorry.”

Chris flinched. Now the boy in front of her was starting to sound like the Dyson Glee she knew and admired. His soft, apologetic tone washed away all the doubts clouding her mind about his motives, and her ire shifted to the people that had the audacity to call themselves his parents.

“You two are idiots!” she informed them, causing them both to gasp. “My parents are dead, but if they were anything like you two, I would say they were better off that way! I can’t believe you made a sweet, innocent guy like Dyson do so many despicable things!”

“Well, she sure changed her tune fast,” said Sam, rolling her eyes. “Just a few seconds ago, she was beating the guy to a bloody pulp!”

“We know what’s best for our son! You’re nothing but an insolent heathen, little girl!” Dyson's father stated ahead of telling his wife, “We’ll just have to use a stronger mind control chip next time so our hold on him is broken so easily, Dear.”

With a smile, his mother added, “That’s right! After all, we have to ensure our Dyson's future!”

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With a smile, his mother added, “That's right! After all, we have to ensure our Dyson's future!”

“Whoa! These two really are wackos!” uttered Alex.

Without warning, black-suited men swarmed in from the entrance and quickly enclosed the perimeter. Two of them then restrained Dyson's parents. No one could make sense of what was going until a man stepped out from the crowd. He was an individual Chris straight away recognized as Jerry Lewis, leader of the World Organization of Human Protection.

“I'd have to disagree with your assessment,” he said to Dyson's folks. “That's because you won't be able to implant anymore microchips on your son when you're locked away in WOOHP's containment facility. Take them away.”

“Y-You can't do this to us!” said Dyson's mom. “W-We just wanted what's best for our son! U- Unhand me, you vile man!”

“I-I say! Release me and my wife at once!” Dyson's dad said to the men holding them. “W-We really just wanted the best for our son! Isn’t that what every parent desires?”

“Absolutely,” Jerry replied. “At the same time, you have to presume they’ll make the proper decisions for themselves. You can dictate what they do forever. Hopefully, that’s something the two of you will learn from this whole ordeal.”

Dyson's parents let his words sink in as they were dragged away.

“D-Did my parents seriously just get arrested?” asked Dyson. The infliction of his voice implied that he wasn't sure if he should have been more upset or baffled by the circumstances.

Jerry, walking over to him, said, “Don’t you worry. We won’t really throw your mother and father in jail. I figure a punishment like that might be a bit too harsh. We’ll have them do a few hundred hours of community service while also enrolling them in some parenting classes. In the meantime, why don't you go with my men? We'll take care of you for the time being.”

Dyson wasn’t exactly sure what Jerry meant by that last part, especially taking into account the way old man was smirking. Two of Jerry’s agents grabbed Dyson by the shoulders and led him out of the sewers. The rest of his men followed behind, leaving Chris to fend for herself against Sam, Alex,
Clover, and their boss. She scowled at Jerry when he acknowledged her, and her fingers were itching to attach themselves to his throat so they could rip it out.

“So, I finally get to meet this agent of Scar’s that’s been giving my spies so much trouble,” he said to her.

“Jerry Lewis. You’ve got a lot of nerve showing your face to me!” she replied.

“Is that so? Tell me, why is that?”

Refusing to speak to him any longer, Chris went on the attack. In spite of her swift movements, Jerry wasn’t thrown off, and he parried her opening strike, using her momentum to sweep her off her feet. She hastily got up and tried again, this time aiming at Jerry’s head with a side kick. When even this blow was deflected, she felt as if he were reading her mind.

“I know all your techniques because after all, the man that taught them to you was the same man that I trained personally.”

Spinning her leg, Jerry whipped her face first into the dirt. Though having plenty of vigor left, Chris remained there for a few moments and scraped her fingers against the soil. She had been waiting her entire life for an opportunity like this, yet she came to the painful conclusion that her revenge against Jerry Lewis would have to wait another day. She was hopelessly outnumbered and outmatched in this sort of situation. As such, she opted to flee and regroup. Her eyes, gleaming, spotted the exit, and she aimed her bungee cable toward it. Reeling it, she flew straight toward freedom. Sam, Alex, and Clover feared she was about to make another clean getaway.

“Not so fast!” Jerry cried. He reached into his pocket and expertly tossed something at her. The fact that it was a blue credit card though was enough to make her laugh.

“What? Is he trying to 'buy' my freedom or something?” Chris joked. Her cheerful expression faded when a pair of blades retracted from the card. Her instincts kicked in, and she pressed a button on her Guardian Bracelet to defend herself. Unfortunately, the gadget picked that instance to malfunction. Rather forming a protective bubble around her, it did absolutely nothing. This enabled the credit card to cut right through her cable, sending her downward.

“Out of all the times for one of Scar's stupid inventions to screw up...!”

Crashing, she grunted and wondered if her back might have been broken. Her inability to move made her powerless to stop Sam, Clover, and Alex from pouncing on her and holding her down.

“Excellent work, girls!” Jerry told them as he stepped over to the group with his hands in his pocket. He then crouched down to Chris and said, “Well, I have a lot of questions to ask you as soon as we take you back to WOOHP headquarters. Do try to be compliant.”

Two of Jerry's agents took Chris off of the other’s hands, and Sam and the gang waved to her jeeringly while she departed.

“Take care now!” said Sam. “It's been a real blast!”

“Yeah, I'm sure you'll look great in prison stripes!” added a winking Clover.

“Try not to get sick off the nasty jail food!” yelled Alex. “Maybe we'll come visit you while you're behind bars!”

Chris sure hoped not.
They're going to pay for this! They all are going to pay for this!
Chapter 6

Like, So Totally Captured!

Never in her worst nightmares did Chris envision a day like this.

Being restrained and escorted by her mortal enemies was bad enough, yet it was the fact she was being led down a hallway inside of WOOHP Headquarters that really got under her skin. Snarling under her breath, she was fully aware her current predicament was the result of her carelessness. She had slipped up chasing after Dyson Glee, allowing Jerry Lewis and his cronies to capture her. This left her seemingly helpless in the face of whatever fate the leader of the World Organization of Human Protection had in store for her. Escaping was her only hope, yet the pair of agents binding her arms complicated matters. Their strong grip was far too much for her to overcome, especially with a pair of handcuffs restricting the use of her hands. As such, she could do nothing more at the moment than glower at the back of the man she hated most in the world.

...Jerry Lewis is right there, and I can't do a damn thing about it!

Taking a deep breath, she steered her muddled thoughts toward coming up with a plan of action while she still had the chance. Being stuck as a prisoner of WOOHP for the rest of her life wasn't the most enchanting scenario after all.

Scar should realize I'm missing by now...

If that was indeed the case, it was likely he already sent a search party after her. Then again, she found herself questioning whether her boss would seriously be willing to risk lives and resources just to save one operative. If she were in charge of SOAP, she wouldn't be. The mere idea was idiotic to her.

I guess I'm on my own then...

Her attention moved back to Jerry Lewis walking ahead of her. The man was whistling a rather pleasant tune in spite of the situation, making Chris feel insulted.

“So, what exactly are you going to do with me, Jerry Lewis?” she asked the man sharply. “Are you going to throw me in that cesspool you call a prison with the rest of your criminals?”

“That's right, but first, I have some questions I want to ask you,” he replied.

“Tsk! You want to interrogate me then? You're wasting your time if you think I'm going to tell you anything! I've been trained to withstand any kind of torture, so you'll find anything you try pointless!”

“An interrogation? Heavens no!” said Jerry with a cheery chuckle. “Like I said, I just want to have a little chat with you. Perhaps we can even share a cup of tea together.”

Chris squinted her eyes at this, not having the slightest clue what this man was scheming.

Is he just...messing with me?
Jerry, his cohorts, and Chris in tow all entered a small, silver office through a pair of sliding doors. Everything in the room was metallic and full of high tech machinery, but bizarrely, there was also a red sofa resting in the middle. The sight of it made Chris raise an eyebrow because it stood out so much from everything else.

“Please, do have a seat,” Jerry told Chris as he leaned on his desk at the head of the room.

The men holding Chris roughly planted her on the couch, and she returned the favor by hissing at them while they exited the premises. This left Chris alone with Jerry, a situation she would have enjoyed if she were allowed the use of her limbs.

“...Why did you bring me here?” she asked, glaring a hole into WOOHP's leader. “This room doesn’t even look the part for an interrogation, so what are you planning?”

“Hmm? I thought I told you already. I just want to have a chat with you.”

“...Alright. I'll play along for the time being. What could someone like you possibly want to discuss with someone like me?”

“Actually, I'm quite curious about why you seem to hold so much anger for me and my organization. I'm certain we've never met before, yet you seem to want my head on a platter.”

“...I see. My apologies. I presumed you would recognize me on the spot, but how silly of me. Well then, if you really want an answer to your question, just take off my mask. I'm sure everything will make sense to you then.”

The proposition left Jerry a bit apprehensive, but he did as suggested and pulled off the black ski mask shrouding Chris' face. The moment he did so, he let out a sharp gasp and took a couple steps back in shock, nearly tripping over his desk in the process.

“N-No! I-It can't be!” he cried, his voice shaking.

“That's right, Jerry Lewis! It is! The past has come back to haunt you in a big way! Now then, I'm going to finally make you pay for murdering my parents all those years ago! You won't have your WOOHP agents to save you this time!”

The conversation, while pointless in Chris' opinion, was at least a good distraction. Jerry had been none the wiser to her cutting herself free using her dagger whilst they spoke. With her pesky handcuffs out of the way, she was able to lunge at the man, who reacted fast enough to get out of the way. Her sharp-edged weapon that had been aimed for his heart instead impacted his desk. This was not enough to deter her, and she began stabbing at him with enough force to cause some serious damage. Aware of this, Jerry dodged a number of the jabs before hiding himself behind his desk. Chris, not daring let him slip between her fingertips time time around, followed behind, but was confused when the only thing to greet her was a swiveling chair.

“What the...?! Impossible! Is there a secret exit over here or something?!?”

Her eyes scanned her environment carefully, though she could make no sense of things. It was as if Jerry had vanished into thin air. However, when something suddenly hit her and pinned her to the wall, she knew she had been deceived.

“I can't...move...!” she declared. Whatever was binding her was some kind of white, sticky substance. “Huh?! This is...spider web!”

Try as she might, she couldn't even move a finger against the strength of the substance. It was then
Jerry reappeared on the scene and walked over to her, tossing a couple of small marbles up and down in his hand.

"That's quite the 'sticky' situation you've gotten yourself into," he said, chuckling. "I call these the Web In A Ball. They're still going through the testing phases, but I think you personally can attest to them functioning properly. It was your leader, Scar, that initially conceived the idea for this gadget. How ironic then that it would be your downfall."

"You...talk too much!" Chris replied through gritted teeth.

Jerry, frowning at the remark, proceeded to take the dagger Chris was clutching ever so tightly in her grasp. He then inspected it closely, soon coming to the realization he recognized it.

"G-Give that back, you bastard!" yelled Chris. "You of all people shouldn't be putting their slimy hands on it!"

"...I suppose this proves my suspicions," said Jerry in a somber tone. "You really are Diane and Nathaniel's daughter then. I didn't want to believe it at first, but how else could you have Nathaniel's dagger in your possession? Still, there's one thing I don't understand. I thought you perished along with your parents over ten years ago!"

"Hmph! I suppose that's the way you planned things, right?! Unfortunately for you, I managed to survive that accident! Now then, I suggest you cut me down from here so I can finally finish this! After all the pain and suffering you've caused me all these years, it's only right that you willingly offer your neck to me as justice!"

"I'm afraid I can't do that. However, I feel I must take some blame for what happened to your parents. It was a terrible tragedy indeed. Diane and Nathaniel were two of my best agents, and they lost their lives on a mission for WOOHP. I would give anything to have them back. Nevertheless, they would no doubt be very disappointed to see their only child working in the name of evil."

"Tsk! Like you have any right to judge anyone as being evil!"

As if responding to her desperate situation, the Guardian Bracelet still attached to Chris' wrist started to beep. The gadget then activated, with the shield inadvertently cutting her free. With nothing keeping her airborne any longer, she landed bottom first.

"H-Huh?! Well, what do you know?! This stupid thing actually works after all!" she stated. "Still, it sure took it's sweet time doing so!"

"I see. So that was actually a gadget. No doubt one created by Scar," said Jerry. "He always was a clever fellow. Unfortunately, he was also had a wicked heart."

"You idiots here at WOOHP should be more thorough with your searches! Not only did you allow me to hang on to a dangerous weapon, but you also let this gadget slip by you! Now then..."

Chris nailed Jerry in the face with a straight punch, a strike that sent him reeling back. In the process of doing so, he dropped her father's dagger. She managed to grab it out of midair, feeling the object was back with its rightful owner. Her next plan of action was to make her escape while she could.

"...We'll finish this later, Jerry Lewis! Don't you forget it!"

As a groaning Jerry clutched his now bleeding nose, he gasped at the sight of her running away through the double doors up ahead. He immediately slammed his fist down on a button on his desk. The building's security system was then activated, although Jerry feared the damage had already
been done.

“...Don't think you're getting away that easily! I can't allow you to roam freely anymore, Christine. Let this be my atonement for what happened to your parents...”

#

“A-Argh! Of course he activated the security system!”

Running down a rather lengthy hallway, Chris tried drowning out the annoying siren and flashing, red lights blaring throughout the building by covering her ears and narrowing her eyelids. This was the least of her troubles considering she was wandering around like a headless chicken. No matter where she went, she ran into nothing but dead ends. The whole place was like a maze, and without a map, finding the exit would be quite the task.

"If only I had my Z-Powder. Maybe I could have used it to navigate around this confusing mess of a building. I can’t even contact Scar to help me out...”

That left her with only her Guardian Bracelet. While it certainly had its uses, helping her to freedom probably wasn't one of them. Besides, it appeared to be on the fritz again because she couldn't get it to work.

“Maybe it needs to recharge or something?”

Shrugging, she paid the gadget no mind and pressed onward, having no other choice but to do so.

#

Though she expected it, she was still annoyed to stumble upon yet another dead end after minutes of wandering. An intimidating door of steel blocked her path this time around, and she saw no conceivable way to get it open, not with her bare hands at least. It appeared the doorway required an identification card of some sort. On top of that, there was a retinal scanner right next to it, with a hand print scanner just below.

“Tsk! What sort of madman designed this?! It'd take like an hour to open even if you had all the stuff to do it!”

Heading in the other direction, she was greeted by a similar door.

“Ugh! I hate this stupid place!”

Steaming mad now, she made her way back to the center of the corridor and put her hands on her hips.

“I hate to admit it, but I'm honestly out of ideas here.”

The alarm that had been sounding throughout the building abruptly stopped. Chris, unsure if WOOHP had given up their pursuit of her, used the apparent peace to collect her thoughts. That turned out to be a mistake though; WOOHP agents arrived and swarmed around her from both sides of the hallway. Trapped, her head shifted from side to side in search of an escape route, yet she discovered none. It looked as if she was going to have to fight her way to freedom if she wanted to avoid capture.

Well, there's only about thirty of them. I'm sure I can...wait. I missed a couple in the back. Okay, I don't think this is going to work...
The black-suited agents came in for the kill, caring not if she was ready for them. Just then, a floor panel underneath her broke apart, and before she could even react to this, she was literally sucked into the crevice by a powerful force. The sole thing left in her wake was the sound of her terrified screaming.

“W-What the hell is going on?!”

Chris found herself sliding down some sort of chute, a construct with a number of twists and turns. Where it was leading her, she hadn't a clue, though she felt like she would end up throwing up her breakfast if she remained on it much longer.

The rough ride ended even rougher when she fell out of the tunnel and down onto some concrete bottom first.

“A-Agh! I-I guess I can forget sitting down for awhile...”

Fortunately, there weren't any other nasty surprises awaiting her as she got to her feet. Her new surroundings were devoid of WOOHP agents thankfully, instead being filled to the brim with prison cells. Her eyes widened at this, and she carefully moved about the expansive area until she reached a railing. Peering down from it, she gasped at the sight of dozens of floors that resembled the one she was on.

"This is...the WOOHP containment facility isn't it?" she muttered. "Hmph. How ironic that I would end up coming here after all. Where are all the guards though?"

It made little sense to her why a place with so many high profile criminals housed in it would be left unguarded. Perhaps everyone went out for lunch.

“Well, I'm not going back that way,” she said after glancing up at the tunnel that dropped her off. “...Why was I sucked into that hole in the first place? And why did it dump me off here of all places?”

There must have been thousands upon thousands of criminals housed there, a testament to WOOHP's effectiveness. Nevertheless, Chris was determined not to become one of them. Orange prison garbs didn't look that great on her anyway.

Deciding she had nothing better to do, she figured she might as well take a more exhaustive stroll to do some scouting. If there was a way out, she would find it. Upon doing so, she was welcomed by a bunch of irate glares from the various degenerates housed in the facility. She scowled right back at them, leading most of them to back off. However, she halted in her tracks when a voice called out to her unexpectedly.

“YOU!!!” it yelled. “Y-You're that girl from the Miss Mali-U Pageant, aren't you?!”

Whoever was speaking to her sounded vaguely familiar. This peaked Chris’ curiosity enough for her to face the individual, but she immediately regretted her choice when the mystery person ended up being none other than Kyla Sacks, the woman who had orchestrated a beauty competition at Malibu University just to exact her revenge on the pretty girls that entered. Sitting across from her in the same prison jumpsuit was Doctor Heisenberg, Chris' former Physics teacher and an expert in the subject. Unfortunately, his knowledge of robotics wasn't nearly as extensive.

“Yes, that is indeed Christine,” Heisenberg bitterly muttered. “I wouldn't forget that face. Not for anything in the world. After all, it's the face of the girl who put me in this cell to rot for the rest of my
“You can blame your own stupidity for your current predicament,” Chris replied. “Besides, it was WOOHP that captured you, not me.”

“Ah, yes. Even so, your actions played a role in my arrest just the same.”

“Whatever. I don't have time to waste talking to you imbeciles.”

“Y-You don't even look the least bit sorry we're in here!” screamed Kyla. “W-What are you even doing here anyway? You don't look like a prisoner to me...”

“Yes, I noticed that as well,” said Heisenberg. “It's a shame you're not trapped here with us. I've been dying to get my hands on you to exact a bit of revenge.”

“Save your lame revenge plots, Heisenberg. They never work out in the end anyway, or have you forgotten?” replied Chris. “Like I said, I don't have time to waste talking to you two, so leave me alone. I'm trying to think.”

With that, Chris commenced to walk away.

“You really are a rude little girl!” Kyla proclaimed. “You've ruined both our lives, so the least you could do is help us escape! That's what you're trying to do yourself, right?”

Chris, pausing, turned herself around. “...Why the hell would I help you two do that?”

“While it's true we are enemies, I believe we can help one another out in this situation,” said Heisenberg. “I believe I may know of a way out of here.”

“...I'm listening.”

“Good. I...”

“Wait a minute, old man!” interrupted Kyla. “I-If you knew of a way to get out of here, why the heck didn’t you tell me before instead of boring me with robotics talk?!”

“I assure you, the world of fashion isn't an interesting topic either,” Heisenberg answered. He then told Chris, “The three of us have one thing in common: we all want to escape from this wretched hellhole. Therefore, it would be in our best interest to work together for the time being. Three heads are better than one after all.”

“I...guess that makes sense,” Chris admitted. “...Fine. As much as the thought makes me want to vomit, I'll work with you both. I don't want to spend another second in this dump, so put that brain of yoursplace to good use, Doctor.”

Heisenberg adjusted his glasses. “Of course. It's what I do best.”

“Just know that I don't trust either of you.”

“Well, the feeling is mutual!” Kyla snapped. “I don't wanna work with a brat like you, but I guess I have to if I want to get back to my plans of uglifying the world's population of pretty people! Now then, bust us out of this cell!”

Chris sighed. “Sure, but first tell me who your friend over there is.”

She pointed to the man in the center of the room who hadn’t so much as squeaked. In a sea of
familiar faces, she did not recognize his. He grinned at her acknowledging his presence, sitting up from the bed he had been lying down on.

“So, you know these two knuckleheads? How can you even stand them? They’ve only been here for a little while, and they’re already getting on my nerves!” he said with a sly smile. “Nice outfit, by the way. What are you, one of Jerry's newest agents?”

“As if. Like I'd ever work for a scumbag like Jerry Lewis. I'm a spy for SOAP.”

“...SOAP? You mean Spies Organized Against Peace?” the man replied. There was the slightest hint of shock in his speech. “Wow. I've heard some stories about that group. If you're telling the truth, you must be the real deal! Well, for a little girl anyway.”

“Tch! I'm not a little girl!”

“Oh, I'm sorry. I guess you're right,” the man said, shrugging. He smirked in a manner suggesting he wasn't as apologetic as he was letting on. “My name is Tad, by the way. I'm a former WOOHP operative. In fact, I used to be Jerry's favorite. Then...then those girls showed up and ruined everything! Thanks to them, I'm stuck behind bars like the rest of these lowlifes!”

“H-Hey! W-We're sitting right here, you know!” said Kyla.

“By 'those girls' I'm presume you're talking about Sam, Alex, and Clover,” said Chris.

One of Tad's eyelids began twitched in response to hearing those names.

“...Yes, that's right,” he answered. “...You know them too then?”

“...More than I would like to, yes.”

“Then you know the pain and suffering their mere presence causes!”

“Er...sure, why not?”

“Listen, if you're going to bust my roommates here out, you might as well free me as well! Then, I can finally get my revenge on those three, no good spies for stealing my place in WOOHP! I can get Jerry back too for throwing me in here!”

Chris smiled at this. “What a coincidence. I too have some unfinished business with Jerry Lewis. ‘The enemy of my enemy is my friend.’ I believe that’s how the saying goes.”

“Perfect! Well then, let's try to get along for the time being.”

“I'm glad to see you two have become acquainted,” said Heisenberg. “Now that we're finished with formalities, I believe it prudent to say we're wasting time. Christine, free us before the guards show up. They like to make their rounds every twenty minutes to check up on us.”

“Yeah! Get a move on already!” added Kyla. “We aren't gettin’ any younger! Especially Pops over here!”

“...If you are talking about me, simply referring to me as ‘Heisenberg’ will do.”

Miffed at being rushed, Chris began fiddling with the controls to the door. The mechanism was evidently triggered by both a fingerprint and retinal scanner, just like the entryways she encountered earlier. Getting the required DNA would be more trouble than it was worth, and without the proper tools, she hadn't a hope of hacking through the security system. Unable to think of a more rational
solution, she opted to just stab at the controls using her dagger. This did the trick as the hatch cutting her new accomplices off from the outside world slid open.

“Very good, Christine,” said Heisenberg, breathing in some fresh air for the first time in a while. “Rather unorthodox tactics, but very good nonetheless. Still, I never saw this day coming. How ironic that you were the one to have me thrown in here, yet now you're here freeing me.”

“Yeah, yeah. Shut it, old man. Let's just get to work.”

“Phew! It feels good to be out of that dumb cell!” said Kyla. “It was more cramped in there than a runway!”

“I gotta admit, I'm still not used to being on the other side of that thing,” added Tad.

“Would you idiots can it already?!” hollered Chris. “If you three have the energy to chat so casually, you better know something about how to get out of here!”

Kyla shrugged. “Er...I wasn't really paying attention when they brought me here.”

“Thankfully, I was a bit more observant,” remarked Heisenberg. “The security system here is state of the art. In fact, it's the most advanced I've ever seen. Simply waltzing out the front door will be an impossibility thanks to the hundreds of agents swarming around this place too. They'll most likely be armed to the teeth with gadgets as well.”

“He's right. Even if we managed to get past them, the automated weapon system installed in the building would get us,” Tad explained.

“Agh. So, we're going to have to find a way to sneak past everyone while not triggering that weapon system then?” asked Chris. “Is there a ventilation system in this place? I'd imagine no one would be watching that, so we could easily sneak out through there. If I only had a map of this place, I could...”

“Here you are,” said Heisenberg, handing Chris the map she wished for. “I've already had that prepared. The entire building, along with its exits and entry points, are accurate to the last closet. I'm sure you'll find it quite handy.”

“H-How did you...?”

“Heh. I have my ways.”

Chris looked at Kyla for some clarification.

“D-Don't ask me!” she replied. “He always says and does creepy stuff like that...”

“I'm the one that helped make that map,” said Tad. “Working here long ago has its perks. Like the old man said, it should be one hundred percent accurate. I can't imagine Jerry's changed the layout of the place that much anyway.”

Heisenberg added, “We should be moving now. Something tells me the guards are going to be right around the corner.”

Almost on cue, a guard did indeed appear from around a corner, whistling and twirling a ring of keys in his hand as he walked. He stopped his pleasant tune upon spotting Chris and the others.

“H-Hey! What are you all doing there?!” he inquired. “Escaped prisoners?! I better call this one in!”
“Yeah, that's our cue to go!” Chris told her cohorts. “Come on! Move it!”

“A-Alright, alright! You sure are bossy, little girl!” cried Kyla.

“I'm gonna leave you here in a second, you idiot!”

Regardless of Chris' and Kyla's differences, the two, Heisenberg, and Tad were able to flee the scene, their footsteps clanking against the steel flooring. Meanwhile, the guard called out for them to come back at once.

“Yeah, they’re not coming back, are they?”

#

The ventilation shaft on the map Chris was given was fortunately rather close to her current position. Locating it and climbing inside of it as such was a piece of cake. With her new allies in tow, the group made their way through the maze-like steel, making sure to keep their voices hushed and their whereabouts a secret from their pursuers. At least, that's what Chris would have preferred. Kyla and Heisenberg arguing presently was putting a dent in that plan.

“H-Hey! Quit touching my butt, you pervert!” Kyla screamed in a whisper. “I-It's already bad enough we're in this tight space! Keep your hands to yourself, old man!”

“I am doing nothing of the sort,” said Heisenberg in response.

“Tch! Hey, brat! How come I couldn't have gone in front?!” Kyla asked Chris.

“Because I'm the one with the map, meaning I'm the one that needs to be in the lead. And don't call me brat. My name is...it doesn't matter. Old man, quit touching her butt or whatever so she'll shut up.”

“Like I just said, I am not touching her bottom. At least, not on purpose. It's so big, it's rather hard to avoid from back here.”

Kyla's face reddened. “W-What's that supposed to mean?!”

“Stop screwing around!” sad Tad, who was manning the rear. “Do you two want us to be found out?! Chris, where are you leading us? We've been crawling around in this filthy thing for ages now!”

“You three are so unreasonable.” Chris shook her head. “Judging from the map, we should be headed for the weapons laboratory. An exit to this place isn't far from there.”

Tad grinned. “Good! We can stock up on gadgets to aid in our escape.”

Kyla randomly let out a high-pitched scream that just about shattered the eardrums of everyone around.

“S-Seriously! Cut it out!” she whined at Heisenberg.

“B-Be quiet!” said an irate Chris. “You really are trying to get us caught, aren't you?!”
“I'm sorry, but that old guy touched my butt again!”

This time, both Kyla and Chris glared at Heisenberg like he were the scum of the earth. He put his hands up defensively while the slightest hint of guilt painted his features.

“...I assure you both, it's not what you think,” he pleaded, adjusting his thick glasses. “I did not mean to touch her inappropriately again. However, Miss Sacks, I must commend you. Your bottom is quite...exquisite.”

That was the last straw. Kyla, with bloodshot eyes, pounced on Heisenberg in an attempt to tear out his eyeballs. Chris saved the old man from certain death by ripping Kyla off of him.

“W-Would you calm down?! You're acting like an idiot!” Chris stated. “No, you are an idiot! Even so, that doesn’t mean you can just do whatever you please!”

“Pervert! Sicko! Jerk!” said Kyla, clawing her fingers in vain at the good doctor.

“I-I said calm down! You're gonna...!”

Chris’ plea came too late. The commotion inside the vent was too much for it to bear, so it broke apart at the seams. Everyone tumbled out it and onto the floor below as wreckage rained all around them. Pulling a screw out of her hair, Chris growled as loud as she could at the stupidity of what had just occurred.

“K-Kyla, you idiot! I told you...!”

Chris, stopping her mad rant, looked around in wonderment at her new surroundings. The room, dark and expansive, was filled to the teeth with gadgets, gizmos, and other objects to make a spy like her salivate. There was no doubt in her mind that this was the weapons laboratory stated on the map. As luck would have it, no one other than she and her companions were nearby.

“...I don't know whether to punch you in the mouth or thank you for getting us here, Kyla.”

“Er...I'll take the other thing you said if that's okay,” Kyla said behind a few half-hearted chuckles.

“Heh. Looks like we've hit the jackpot,” said Tad. He rubbed his hands together, unsure what to grab first.

“Indeed. Most of the items in here look quite impressive,” added Heisenberg. “It's nothing compared to my work though.”

“Tch. A can opener is more efficient than half the stuff you make,” said Chris harshly. The remark made Heisenberg frown, though he offered it no retort.

“I'm not really into this kind of stuff, so let's find something useful and get out of here,” chimed Kyla.

“Agreed,” said Chris. She made her way over to another part of the room, where a strange item caught her eye. “Now, what do we have here?”

It seemed to be some kind of laser, albeit an over-sized one. She picked it up and let out a grunt because of the weapon's immense weight.

“What the hell? How are you supposed to aim this thing?”

“That's the Evapoblaster,” said Tad. “Basically, it fires high intensity blasts of heat at whoever or whatever you point it at. Needless to say, it'll leave someone with a rather nasty burn. It terms of
aiming, you don’t really need to. As long as you point it your target’s general direction...well, I think
you get the idea.”

“It just sounds like a glorified hair dryer to me. I guess I'll hang onto it though. It might just come in
handy.”

She strapped the weapon to her back using a rope, finding it easier to lug it around that way.

“Oh! What do we have here? This should do wonders for my skin!”

Kyla was about to pick up a tube of lotion sitting on a table, but Tad hastily grabbed her wrist,
stopping her.

“T-That's...not the kind of lotion I think you're looking for,” he told her. “It's Stun Tan Lotion that
paralyzes anyone it comes in contact with.”

“H-Haha...t-that's not what I had in mind for my skin,” she replied. “M-Maybe I'll just put it in my
pocket instead...”

“So, what is this interesting object here?” Heisenberg asked Tad.

“I-I'm not your personal tour guide, guys!” said Tad in irritation.

“True, but having worked here before, you would have extensive knowledge of every gadget in this
room. As such, it would be far safer to ask you than to blow ourselves to pieces not knowing what
these object do.”

“...Well, I guess you've got a point. That thing you're pointing to is the Hologram Projecting Mood
Ring. You put it on, and it can disguise you and whoever else you want.”

“Fascinating. Escaping should be easy using this then. The four of us could masquerade as WOOHP
employees and walk right out the front door.”

“That's actually a good idea,” said Chris.

“Yeah, it would be, but that ring's effects only last for a short time, so I doubt we'd be able to get out
of this place before then,” Tad explained. “Anyway, let's get going. I'm just going to take this handy,
little gadget here for myself.”

Chris watched as Tad picked up some type of ray gun. Other than it being metallic and slightly
peculiar-looking, nothing about it stood out to her.

The doors to the weapon lab began to open suddenly, alerting Chris.

“Quick! Hide!” she warned.

“I have a much better idea,” said Heisenberg. He slipped the Hologram Projecting Mood Ring onto
one of his fingers as two WOOHP scientists trekked into the room. The conversation they were
having was broken off when they sighted four janitors straightening up the pace. One of them gave
the duo a curt nod and went back to work. With nothing amiss, the scientists proceeded to converse
again, while the janitors grabbed their things and left. The second they got outside, a bright light
went through the hallway, revealing Chris and company.

“That worked better than I thought it would,” said Chris happily. “Tad was right though. That Mood
Ring's effect really doesn't last that long.”
“A pity,” said Heisenberg. “Still, it's a handy little thing. I think I'll hold onto it.”

“So, where do we go now?” asked Kyla.

“According to the map, the conference room. An exit to this place will be right past it,” replied Chris. “It certainly doesn't look hard, but something tells me it's going to be anything but easy.”

“Huh? What's so hard about going through a conference room?”

“The fact that it's going to be crawling with WOOHP agents is a good reason,” said Tad. He then checked his watch, adding, “Considering what time it is, Jerry should be having a meeting with his agents at this very moment.”

“Tsk! So you're telling me we're going to have to find a way to sneak past the entirety of WOOHP in one go?”

Chris already knew the answer to her question. She just wished there was some other alternative. Probing the map one more time, she saw that the next exit would take too long to get to because they would have to circle the facility. The one near the conference room was their only hope of a clean getaway.

“It's unfortunate we don't have my robots here to gives us a hand,” said Heisenberg.

“I'm...pretty sure that would just make our situation worse,” Chris informed him.

“Why are we just standing around?!” asked Tad, perturbed. “Jerry has to know that we've all escaped by now! Strange though. Why isn't the alarm...”

Perhaps to mock Tad, the alarm system sprang to life.

Chris’s eyelids narrowed. “You just had to say something! Let’s get a move on, people!”

Thanks to the capabilities of the Hologram Projecting Mood Ring, the four were able to disguise themselves as WOOHP agents and slip into the current meeting inside the conference room while receiving only a few glances. The room was even bigger than the map showed, and Chris had to squint to see the exit it told of. It was there though, meaning she and the others were merely a hop, step, and jump away from freedom.

“I-I don't know if this is a good idea,” said an anxious Kyla. She was biting her fingernails. “I mean, look at how many WOOHP agents there are in here!”

“Relax! They don't know who we really are, so let's keep moving!” Chris instructed.

“Good idea. I don't know how long the Mood Ring will last this time around,” said Tad.

“Just a moment,” said Heisenberg abruptly. “Christine, look at the head of the room.”

Chris, confused, leered at the spot Heisenberg referred to and observed Jerry Lewis in the flesh speaking to those in attendance from behind a podium. The SOAP agent's face contorted into one of unadulterated rage, yet she understood she could do nothing but glance at the man that stole everything away from her. Escaping his accursed building took higher precedence at the moment.

“...Let's keep moving,” she told her companions through clenched teeth. The four did just that, making sure their movements were as inconspicuous as possible.
“It is vitally important that we track down those three escapees! I fear to think what they are capable of if left alone!” Jerry stated to his operatives. “They were last seen near the weapons lab, so they should still be somewhere near that area! As soon as this meeting is adjourned, I want all of you to scour the entire building! Don't leave even a single tile unscathed! The escapees are being led around by a very dangerous woman, so...!”

His speech stammered off when he couldn't help but notice four of his agents attempting to sneak past him and toward the close-by double doors.

“You four there,” Jerry started. “Where exactly are you going? Can't you see we're having a meeting here?”

“Er...t-there's something we need to attend to,” said Chris in a deep voice that sounded nothing like the man the Hologram Projecting Mood Ring disguised her as. “It's...uh...urgent, sir!”

“Whatever it is you need to do, this takes higher precedence! Please, sit down!”

Chris smacked her lips. Not wanting to blow her cover, she grudgingly nodded at Jerry's words and did as told.

“N-Now what?!” she then whispered to Heisenberg.

“Hmm? How am I supposed to know? You're the leader here. You think up something.”

“S-Since when have I been the leader of this ragtag band of crooks and villains?!”

“That doesn't matter right now, leader,” answered Tad.

“I-I just told you, I'm not...!”

An agent sitting next to Chris told her to be quiet with the gesture of his finger. It took everything in her power not to rip it off.

“W-We need a distraction!” said Kyla in a hushed panic. “We can't just sit here forever! They'll figure out who we really are!”

“Leave it to me.”

Chris had just the thing get everyone out of this jam. Just as the effects of the Hologram Projecting Mood Ring wore off, she whipped out the Evapoblaster and aimed it forward at Jerry Lewis. Her finger then eagerly pulled back on the trigger, but the heavy amount of recoil from the gun caused her to miss her intended target. Instead, the area behind Jerry was destroyed by the high intensity blast, flooring him and scattering rubble and debris everywhere.

“M-My word! What in the world was that?!” he asked. Scores of his men rushed on stage to check up on him, giving Chris the chance she needed. She first catapulted herself into the air with the assistance of someone's face before landing in the middle of the room. The exit was just up ahead now. It didn't take long for some WOOHP agents to encircle her nonetheless, cutting her off. There were no gaps in their formation, and gritting her teeth, she wasn't sure how she was going to get out of her latest quandary.

“A little help here, guys?!” she hollered at her cohorts. From the sea of spies around her, she could see her three companions making a mad dash toward the exit. Assisting her was obviously the last thing on their minds. The sole reason they stopped in their tracks was because the irate stare she was giving them felt like knives in their backs.
“J-Just what do you think you all are doing?!” she inquired.

“Er...i-it's nothing...personal!” Kyla informed her anxiously. “I just...really have to go!”

“I disagree,” said Heisenberg. “While we were allies for this occasion, Christine, don't forget you're the reason Miss Sacks and I were thrown in here in the first place. As such, we are still enemies, so you shouldn't be so surprised we would double cross you like this. Still, I must thank you for your assistance today. I couldn't have made it this far without you!”

“As for me, I don't have anything against you, kid,” said Tad, smiling. “I just can't let an opportunity like this pass me by.”

Chris' features reddened. “Y-You no good, dirty...!”

“Now, now there! Here, take this. This should make you feel a bit better.”

Tad tossed her the metallic gun he had picked up earlier. Staring at it quietly, she seriously wondered if he expected her to thank him.

“...I swear, if WOOHP doesn't get to you three first, I will!”

Heisenberg, Kyla, and Tad, unfazed by the threat, let loose an outburst of giggling and then took their leave. Chris, though wanting to tear all three of them limb from limb, was more concerned with the possibility she would be replacing them in their cell.

“You've gone far enough, Christine. In fact, all of this has gone on long enough.” Jerry made his way through the crowd until he and Chris were standing face to face. “I really don’t want to have to lock you away, Christine, but you’re leaving me with very little choice here. Your parents would be truly disappointed in you if they saw you now.”

“You've already said that, old man. Besides, I think they would be far more pissed off at you for going on all these years acting like you've no blood on your hands! I'll never forgive you for what you've done, Jerry Lewis!”

Jerry sighed. “...That doesn't matter now, does it? My agents are about to apprehend you and put an end to this little escape plan of yours.”

“They'll have to actually lay a finger on me to do that!”

The short chat had given Chris' mind enough time to work its magic. Her fingers reached up to the Guardian Bracelet on her wrist, activating it and knocking those close to her aside. Storming through everyone else like a bowling ball, Chris headed her way toward the nearest exit.

“A-After her! We can’t let her get away again!” Jerry shouted at the moaning bodies of his men. A few of them certainly tried to heed his orders, yet ended up tripping over another pile of agents. Jerry could only palm his hand across his face at this.

#

Stumbling as she made her way into an empty corridor, Chris checked the crumpled map in her possession for the direction to a way out.

“Dammit! This is what I get for placing a little faith in others!” she muttered to herself. “Heisenberg and those other jerks are going to pay! Then again, I was planning on turning my back on them the second I got a chance, so perhaps I don't have any right to complain.”
She had no clue where her feet were guiding her, though they were at least getting her farther and farther away from the multitude of cries and shouts trailing her. She ran her down yet another passageway, grinding to a halt when she sighted three figures up ahead that made her gasp in shock. The three standing in front of her responded with cries of their own.

“C-CHRIS?!” said an absolutely astounded Sam. “W-What in the world are you doing here?! How could you have...?!”

“...You three?!” bellowed Chris. “…God dammit. You girls were the last people I wanted to run into...”

“W-Wait a sec! You're that evil SOAP spy?!” cried Alex. “N-No way!”

“I so can't believe I shared so many fashion tips with someone like you!” said Clover, who was visibly heartbroken about the revelation. “Like, I seriously can't believe this!”

Chris, after a short pause, stated, “...I guess it's better this way. Having to hide my identity from you three was honestly becoming a pain in my side. That's not important right now though. I'm going to need you girls to stand aside. I've grown rather tired of this place and would like to leave as soon as possible.”

“Not a chance!” Sam replied. Her voice trembled as she tried to maintain her composure. “…E-Even if it is you, Chris, as WOOHP agents, we have to stop you!”

The three WOOHP spies settled into fighting stances, wordlessly informing Chris they really weren’t backing down. Biting her lip at this, Chris exhaled somberly. She was going to have to get serious as well.

“I really don't want to do this,” she mumbled. “Let's just hope this thing works.”

Chris armed herself with the gun Tad had gifted her, aiming it straight ahead. This simple gesture aroused suspicion out of her of foes, whereas Chris debated on what to do next. Time wasn't on her side. Sweat permeated her forehead, and banishing the doubt from her mind, she closed her eyes and squeezed back on the trigger. The area was then shrouded by a blinding flash of light.

“Ugh! M-My head…! I seriously wish I would've asked Tad just what in the hell that gun does before I went off shooting it.”

For a moment, Chris was certain she too had been caught up in that blast. When her vision returned to her, she saw that the only casualties were Sam, Alex, and Clover. That yellow ray had rendered all three unconscious.

“Huh. They aren't even hurt that much. Tsk! That ray gun was a total bust.” she said as she inspected them. “Still, maybe I better finish them off while I have the chance.”

This without a doubt was golden opportunity to do so. She stayed her hand at the prospect, mostly because of the approaching footsteps from down the hall. Escaping WOOHP HQ became her top priority again, yet she couldn't help but leer back at Sam and the others one last time.

“...Those girls are going to be seriously ticked off with me whenever they wake up.”

A small part of her was simply happy her friends would live.
“...You have got to be kidding me!”

Chris was unable to stop herself from shouting after stumbling upon an area a secret exit to the building was purportedly in. Instead, she had arrived in the garbage room. Pinching her nose from the rank smell of the place, she employed her free hand to angrily tear up her map into itty, bitty pieces. Apart of her theorized if she had been misled on purpose by the object. Heisenberg and Tad had created it after all, and Heisenberg at least had his reasons to lead her astray.

“Oh, just...don’t panic, Christine! You’ve gotten yourself out of tougher situations! Well...not really, but still, don’t panic!”

The WOOHP agents Jerry sent after her would be there in no time, so turning back would be an impossibility. Neither the Guardian Bracelet or the strange gun Tad had given her would be of much use either. The Evapoblaster might have done her some good if she hadn't dropped it back in the conference room during her escape. The single thing left she could think to do was hide, but there was no suitable place to do so. The vicinity was a wide open space of rotting debris, and the absolute last thing she desired to was immerse herself in filth.

“...Wait, what am I saying?! For a second there, I was actually worried about my clothes getting dirty! I've seriously been spending far too much time around Sam, Alex, and Clover.”

Her brain, ready to call it quits, was drawing blanks on her next move. In frustration, she pounded her fist into the large dumpster sitting in the middle of the room. Without her noticing, her limb hit a hidden switch on the green box. This in turn made an opening spawn on its side, one that wasted little time in sucking her in. The next thing she knew, she was sliding down yet another chute she had no idea even existed.

“T-This building makes no sense! How many secret pathways could it possibly have?!”

Her confusion increased tenfold when the tunnel dropped her off outside the building. More specifically, the rooftop of WOOHP HQ. Chris gulped when she became aware of herself dangerously dangling over the edge. The tunnel had dropped her off at a rather precarious position. Moving to safer ground, she looked forward at an approaching silhouette and had to squint to make the individual out.

“You certainly are persistent. I guess being sucked up her like that just now was your doing,” she told Jerry Lewis. “How strange though. You don't have any of your men with you this time. What, are you finally offering yourself up to be finished?”

“Relax, Christine. I'm not here to fight this time around,” Jerry replied.

“Really now? That just makes one of us then.”

“Like I said, I don't want to fight. I simply came here to ask you something, something that has been on my mind for a little while now. What is it that Scar has been telling you about your Diane’s and Nathaniel’s fate all these years? While it is true they perished while they were out on a mission for me, I was not the one to end their lives.”

“...If you think I'm going to fall for your lies, you're wasting your breath!”

“I speak only the truth, Christine. I can tell you everything about what happened on that terrible day you lost your parents. I can guarantee my words will hold more truth than Scar's.”

The proposition lead to something within Chris faltering. Certainly, Jerry had to have been lying to her currently, she thought. She figured he was just saying whatever it took to delay his impending
demise. Still, her curiosity was peaking. What if Jerry's claim wasn't trying to pull one over on her? If he knew something, anything about the deaths of her parents she didn't, she wanted to know. There was so little Scar had told her about the incident that the idea of acquiring more information was now burning in her head.

Before Jerry could ease her thoughts, a black helicopter came racing toward them. It slowed to a hover over the building and while it did, a long ladder was rolled out from the inside. Standing on it was the leader of Spies Organized Against Peace himself, Scar. Chris assumed she must have been seeing things when she laid eyes on him because there was no way he could actually be there with her now. Scar was real alright, proving it by flipping off the ladder and taking a spot next to her.

“My apologizes, Christine. I didn't mean to take so long picking you.”

“...S-Scar? What are you doing here?! A-And don't call me by my real name!”

“Ah, of course. My apologizes again. Anyway, I figured something was wrong when you didn't contact me after stating you were going after that invention back at Malibu University. I did some snooping around and discovered you had been captured by WOOHP. As such, I figured a rescue operation was an order. I would’ve gotten here sooner, but you know how bad helicopter traffic can get around here. Haha.”

“I'm sorry. I didn't mean to get caught. I...screwed up.”

“Don't you worry your pretty, little head about that. I'm impressed you managed to escape on your own though. And here I had already planned an ingenious way to sneak into WOOHP headquarters and spring you from the slammer. Anyway, don't you listen to a single word this foul man has to say to you, Agent C! Remember, Jerry Lewis was the one who killed your parents! You shouldn't place even an ounce of trust in him!”

“But...”

“He’s simply trying to deceive you, turn you against me by stirring up nonsense. You know it in your heart. Have faith in me, Agent C. I wouldn't steer you wrong.”

Chris nodded at her leader’s words, feeling foolish for having suspected him for even an instance. Jerry Lewis was the enemy here, the man she had hated with all her being for as long as she could remember. Why should she change her opinion of him now?

“I won't be swayed so easily by your torrent of lies, old man!” she said to Jerry.

“Is there no way to get through to you?” he replied. “A pity.”

“It's been a long time, Jerry,” said Scar. “Heh. I can't believe you’re still up and moving around. I was certain you’d be confined to a wheelchair by now.”

“...Sorry to disappoint you. You've clearly decided keep up your evil ways after all this time. I just wish I could have gotten to Christine before you were able to corrupt her.”

“Does it bother you that she's one of my loyal subordinates now, Jerry? If you ask me, I think it's all for the best. I'm certain this arrangement is what her parents would have wanted. Now then, I didn't solely come here to chat and catch up like this. I believe it's time we settle things once and for all. There isn’t enough room in this world for two spy organizations.”

“Yes, I believe so as well. However, things aren't going to play out like you think.”
Jerry pulled out an item that made Chris’ eyes enlarge: the Evapoblast.

“I think you know this one rather well, Scar. You helped me develop it after all,” Jerry stated. “Don’t worry. I’ve set the weapon to merely incapacitate you both. I wouldn’t want your cells in the containment facility to grow cold.”

As he forced his finger back on the trigger, Chris sprung into action. She shoved Scar out of harm’s way and then pointed her own weapon at Jerry. She and her target were hit by their respective blasts at the same time, and both crumpled to the floor in broken heaps. Though she was in intense pain, Chris gleefully grinned at the result of her efforts.

“I finally...got him...”

With her vision blurring, she felt herself losing consciousness. It was a familiar sensation, though this time she was confident she would rise once more.

#

Awakening in foreign places was another thing that was becoming something of a recurrence for Chris. Taking that into account, she wasn't the least bit baffled at her being in the nurse's office of Malibu University. The white curtain in front of her bed sliding open wasn't a shock to her either, and neither was the elated face of Nurse Melody Jenkins leering back at her.

“Aloha!” greeted the bespectacled woman. She was a bit too cheerful in Chris’ opinion, but then again, Chris figured she was just grumpy from having just woke up. “How is my patient doing this morning?”

“I’ve been better,” Chris admitted. Her whole body was oddly sore, and she guessed it must have been a result of being hit by the Evapoblast. Seeing what that weapon was capable of, she considered herself fortunate a few aches and pains were the only thing plaguing her. “W-Why am I here?”

“Oh, how silly of me! Of course you wouldn’t remember a thing!!” Melody replied, as she checked Chris over with the assistance of some medical instruments. “You did have quite the traumatic experience!”

“...’Traumatic experience?’”

“That's right! You fell down three whole flights of stairs!”

Hearing this made a bead of sweat roll down the back of Chris’. She assuredly would have recalled an event like that.

“All done!” Melody finished her examination by checking inside her patient’s ears. Chris was confused by this; her ears should have been the least of the nurse's concern if she truly believed her patient had tumbled down some stairs. “You sure are a lucky girl, Chris! You didn't even have a single broken bone in your body! Now that I think about it, that's...kinda strange, but all's well that end's well, right? Now then, I want you to stay here a little longer and get some more rest! We can't have you up and walking around for at least another couple of days just to be on the safe side! I know you pretty well, so I’m gonna be keeping my eye on you around the clock to ensure you stay put, missy!”

“Heh. I don’t have the energy to argue with you, so I guess I’ll agree to your terms. ...Thank you.”

“No need to thank me! Just doing my job! If there's anyone you should thank, it's these three for
bringing you here as fast as they did!”

“What three?”

Melody pulled back another curtain, and Chris held her breath at the sight of Sam, Clover, and Alex standing in front of her bed. The three, on the verge of tears, wasted little time in swooping on her and hugging her like she was going to vanish into thin air.

“You're alive! You’re really alive!” Sam declared. “W-We were worried sick about you, Chris!”

“Totally!” added Clover. “We so thought you were gonna kick the bucket! Uh...y-you wouldn't have minded if I had gone through your closet if you had though, right? I mean, you wouldn't have needed anything in there anyway!”

Sam and Alex shot a Clover reprimanding stare. She merely twiddled her fingers in embarrassment.

“You don't have brain damage, do you?!” Alex asked Chris, grabbing her head and inspecting it as if she could tell just from doing so.

“N-No...” said Chris, shoving her friend back. “I'm fine.”

Something was wrong. The way the three before her were acting, Chris would have guessed their run in at WOOHP HQ had never happened. Though confused, she decided to play along for the time being until she had a better grasp of the circumstances.

“Here, Chris. I bought you something!” said Sam, who handed Chris a thick textbook that nearly broke the recipient's arms because of its sheer weight. “It's *Everything You Need To Know About Bones and You!* You probably already realized, but it’s made by the same people who made that physics book! I figure it'll give you something to do while you're stuck in here, and besides, it's a really interesting read!”

“...Don't tell me you've already read it?” asked Chris.

“Just...two or three times,” Sam replied, blushing.

“...Thank you. Can one of you please tell me how I got here now? What's this about me falling down some stairs or whatever?”

“Er...that's the part we can't remember too clearly for some reason,” said Clover, scratching her head. “I'm pretty sure we found you unconscious outside of the campus. Yeah, that's it! Then there was this...man who told us what happened to you and to get you to the nurse's office as soon as possible!”

“Scar...” said Chris under her breath. There was no doubt in her mind Scar was the man Clover spoke of. She also deduced he was the one who told Sam and the others such a ridiculous story about her injuries as a cover for what really happened.

“I think it's about time you three got off to class,” Nurse Melody informed Chris' friends. “I'll never forgive you, Sam, if you end up missing my big Physics 101 test!”

Sam gulped.

Melody, smiling again, faced Chris and informed her, “I'm excusing you from this test due to the circumstances. Don't worry about the rest of your classes either. I've already informed the rest of your instructors about your accident. Just rest easy here for the time being!”
Nodding obediently, Chris chuckled as Melody literally shoved her friends out of the room, barely giving them the chance to say goodbye. Soon enough, Chris was left by herself. She sighed in relief. Somehow, things had turned out alright in the end, although she hadn’t the foggiest idea why. Perhaps wishing to answer that question, something on her person began to beep.

“Hmm?” Chris reached into her pocket and grabbed something that was most definitely her Z-Powder. “Huh? Didn't this get taken while I was at WOOHP?”

She shrugged and opened the gadget to see the image of Scar on the top screen waving at her. Her instincts kicked in, and she rolled her eyes.

“Hello, Agent C. How are you doing today?”

“F-Fine, I suppose. I'm just really, really confused right now.”

“A natural response in the wake of what’s happened to you. You took a rather nasty shot from that Evapoblaster. It's quite fortunate Jerry Lewis had no plans to kill you because otherwise, I would be planning your funeral right now.”

“Yeah that...makes me feel better. Now then, you wanna tell me why everyone thinks I'm a clumsy oaf that can't even go down a staircase without nearly breaking my neck?”

Scar snickered, though tried masking it behind a cough. “Ah, yes. That. Naturally, I couldn't just tell those at your university what really happened to you, so I made up that whole story about you falling. I think it worked out quite nicely if I do say so myself.”

“Tsk. If you ask me, the excuse was really lousy. Everyone here seems to have fallen for it though, so I guess that's all that matters. Still, why bring me to the nurse's office after telling everyone such a preposterous story? Wouldn't it have made more sense for you to tell them to take me to a hospital?”

“...Hmm. You know, I think you're right!”

Chris snarled and simply wished she could claw at her boss from the screen of her Z-Powder for his stupidity.

“By the way, Agent C, I need to thank you risking your life to save mine. That was quite brave of you to jump into the path of Jerry Lewis’ fire without hesitation, but then again, I would expect nothing less from a spy of your caliber.”

“Don't mention it. Tell me something though. What was Jerry talking about back there at WOOHP when he said he would tell me everything that happened the day my parents died? I thought you said you had told me everything there was to know about that.”

Scar's expressions soured slightly at Chris' question, despite him trying to hide this from her. It wasn't a look she was accustomed to, and as such, she wasn't sure what he was thinking.

“...Forget his words, Agent C. As I said before, they were filled with nothing but lies.”

“B-But...”

“I'm not asking you, Christine. That was an order.”

“...Alright,” Chris wearily replied. She hadn’t the energy to press the issue. “Answer me this then. Those WOOHP spies just paid me a visit, yet they don't seem to remember I nearly killed them a few hours ago. Why is that?”
“You’re probably not going to believe this, but something truly miraculous occurred! Remember that strange gun you used on Jerry Lewis? I’ve done some analysis on it, and it turns out the weapon is actually some sort of memory eraser! It only erases short term memory from the looks of it, but thanks to it, it seems your identity is safe once more! I also went to the liberty of hacking into WOOHP’s security cameras and erasing any footage of you. I wanted to crash their entire mainframe while I was at it, but that was the best I could do since there were numerous firewalls and other annoyances that got in my way. Only the two of us know for certain the events of yesterday.”

“Seriously? Jeez. It might have been dumb luck that saved me, but I’ll take it. That was a little too close. I really owe you one, Scar. You really saved my butt back there.”

“Think nothing of it, Christine. Well then, I believe I will allow you to get some sleep. You’ve had quite the adventure. As always, I will contact you if I have any new assignments for you to tackle. Tata for now.”

As Chris closed her Z-Powder, she noted that Scar having nothing for her to do was a relief this time around.

“...Just because he saved my life doesn’t mean he can just use my real name leisurely like that. Jerk,” she grumbled. She then fluffed her pillow and rested her weary head onto it. “Maybe I'll actually get some rest like everyone wants me to. I can barely keep my eyes open anyway.”

“C-Chris? Are you in here?”

Chris, jumping back up, cupped her hand over her ear in confusion. The voice she had just perceived was awfully familiar. It made her heart race, and she got why once she located Dyson Glee out of the corner of her eye. Timidly, he peeked into the room though came inside when he confirmed that it Chris was indeed there.

“Chris! Are you alright?! he asked, rushing to her bedside. She inched away from him a bit, feeling her face growing hotter and hotter with each passing second. “I heard what happened to you and got over here as fast as I could! Huh, y-you...look pretty good for someone who tripped and fell down the three flights of stairs!”

“Er...t-thank you...?”

“Here. I brought you some flowers. Hope you're not allergic.”

Chris took the breathtaking bouquet of roses and stared at them in wonderment.

“T-Thank you again,” she muttered. “They're...beautiful.”

“Er...you can consider them an apology for everything I've done. Actually, I'm not sure what I did in the first place, but I feel like I did something horrible to you, so...yeah!”

Chris nodded, figuring WOOHP must have erased his memory.

“I'm still kinda bummed my parents got locked up,” he added. “I got to see them the other day, so I know they're alright. They've really changed though! They've promised not to ride me so hard about my running career! I thought I was losing my mind when I heard them say something like that! This is good though! It really sucked being pressured all the time. I’m glad they finally realize I don’t need anymore stress while running. Everyone already expects me to be the best.”

“That's...good.”
There was a short silence where Chris was unable to come up with anything else to say. She did always feel sustaining a conversation was never one of her strong suits.

“You...probably don't even want to see me right now,” Dyson said suddenly. He then rubbed the back of his head and took a seat on a chair next to Chris. “I guess that's fair. I mean, after what I did, whatever it was, I wouldn't want to talk to me either.”

“NO!” Chris shouted. She covered her mouth and took a deep breath in the wake of her outburst. “N-No. T-That's not it. I'm actually...really glad I got to...see you today...”

Quickly, Chris hid herself underneath her cover so Dyson couldn't see how scarlet her features were. She expected a tirade of laughter from him, but instead, he gave her the warmest smile she could ever recall receiving.

“Seriously?! Uh...I'm...really glad to hear that! Really! T-That means a lot coming from you because I...uh...man, I'm really bad at stuff like this. What I'm trying to say, Chris, is that I really...well...like you...” he stammered. Now blushing, Dyson looked away from Chris. “Uh...t-the Track team is having practice tomorrow morning! I know you're in no condition to run with us, but if you just want to come and watch us for the time being...”

Chris slowly nodded her head. “O-Okay. I'll...come tomorrow then.”

“Great!” replied an overjoyed Dyson. “E-Er...I-I mean...t-that's good!”

After another brief silence, the two found themselves laughing at nothing in particular.

“Well, I'll let you get your rest. See you tomorrow, Chris!”

Dyson left, though Chris was tempted to tell him to stay a little longer. At least she would see him again tomorrow, she thought. If she were lucky, perhaps he would even ask her out on another date.

“W-Wait! What the hell am I saying?! Jeez, I think I really have been hanging out with Sam, Alex, and Clover too much!”

END
Chapter 7

Chapter 7

What A Bunch of LAMOS

“Oh, my head is killing me...”

Jerry Lewis, the leader of the World Organization of Human Protection, moaned and howled as he trudged his way toward his desk. His head was killing him, and clutching it, he was certain it would split open at any moment. After literally falling into his seat, he cringed at the mountain of paperwork awaiting him.

It was going to be a long day.

As he popped a couple of aspirin into his mouth and washed them down with some water, he couldn't help but find it strange how he was unable recall a single event of the day prior. Indeed, his men had informed him of a massive breakout in the containment facility, with three high profile criminals managing to escape. They even assured him that he was present during all this, yet his memories were a collective series of blanks. The one thing he was certain of was strangely waking up on the rooftop of WOOHP HQ in a daze.

“This is one of the few times I regret sending G.L.A.D.I.S. to the junkyard,” he muttered while his pen scratched against a rather lengthy sheet of paper. “Not that she would have wanted to do all of this work anyway. Lazy bucket of bolts...”

His reminiscing made him unable to focus properly. Wanting to settle down, he prepared a cup of his favorite flavor of tea, Earl Grey. Whenever his mind was stuck on standstill or he simply felt uneasy, the drink seemed to wash away his anxiety.

“Ah! That's better. Now then, I...”

“Sir!”

A WOOHP agent burst into the room all of the sudden, frightening Jerry enough that he spit the contents of his mouth all over his guest. Now soaking wet, the agent was unable to say anything at all for a bit.

“Uh...s-sir?”

“Ahem! A-Ah, y-yes?” asked Jerry, handing the man a handkerchief.

“Er...i-it's about the containment facility! Some prisoners have escaped!”

“Yes, yes. I know about that already. I've already put Sam, Clover, and Alex on the case.”

“N-No, sir! I'm not talking about the three prisoners that got away yesterday! Five more managed to escape!”

“T-Five more?!” T-That's impossible! H-How could this have happened?!”

“W-We don't know exactly, sir, but we think they might have gotten away during all the confusion
yesterday! We’ve scoured the entire building, but we’re positive they aren’t here anymore!”

“Oh dear! This isn't good...”

“It gets worst sir,” the agent informed Jerry. “One of the men that escaped was...your evil brother Terrence!”

“Terrence?!!”

The news drained the strength from Jerry's legs, and he was forced to retake his seat with a heightened sense of paranoia surrounding him. The only thing that worried him more than his brother being on the loose was him not knowing Terrence was plotting.

“If Terrence has escaped, that can only mean the other four with him are...” Jerry's features were illuminated with understanding. “I-I have to warn the girls!”

With that, Jerry leaped out of his seat and out of the room, nearly knocking over his operative in the process.

“C-Couldn't he have just contacted the girls on their X-Powders?” the agent asked.

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Chris did not consider herself a morning person. The few individuals that knew her would agree, adding that attempting to wake her up when the sun was just only rising would be a complete waste of time. The sole exception to this rule stemmed from her work at SOAP, but even then, she undertook early morning assignments with an air of exasperation.

How was it then that she was wide awake this morning and in a good mood to boot? It likely had something to do with Dyson Glee, captain of the Malibu University Track team, waving at her as her ran past on the track field. She gave a timid wave back and watched he and the other members of the team disappear into the distance.

“He really is a great runner,” she said softly. A pleasant sigh escaped her as she placed her head into her hands. It would have been clear to anyone watching her sitting on the bleachers that she was in love. “W-Wait, w-what the hell am I doing?!”

She promptly straightened herself up and checked the area to make sure no one had seen her embarrassing display.

“Still, just sitting here is rather dull. I wish I could get out there and run with the others.”

She knew that wasn’t happening though. Her injuries from her little excursion at WOOHP HQ were lingering still. Simply moving a limb was excruciating. Even so, she was willing to endure any pain if it meant spending time with Dyson. She reassured herself of this fact when he neared her again and waved once more.

“Hi, Dyson!”

The person who had greeted Dyson was most certainly not Chris. No, the voice was far more obnoxious, one she couldn't stand since it belonged to Mandy, the resident mean girl on campus. She was seated a number of rows above Chris on the bleachers with her lackey, Trent, in tow. For some reason, Trent was holding an umbrella over Mandy's head, and Chris figured it must have been to block out the sun. It was rather hot.
“Well, well, well! If it isn't the new girl!” Mandy said nastily after spotting Chris. “Hmm? I see one Stooge, but where are the other three? Hahahaha!”

“Would you leave me alone for once, Mandy? I get enough of looking at your ridiculous face during school. I really don't want to have to see it here of all places,” said Chris.

“H-Hey! How rude!” Mandy replied. “Your eyeliner must be ruining your vision if you're saying a face as perfect as mine is ugly! Hahaha!”

It was at this point Chris wished she had invested in a pair of earplugs.

Dyson came back around during his third lap, and both Chris and Mandy jumped on the chance to greet him. He waved back, though it was unclear which of the two he was acknowledging.

“And just what the hell do you think you're doing?” Chris asked Mandy.

“Hmph! I was about to ask you the same thing!” Mandy shouted back. “I see the way you're eying Dyson, but you're wasting your time! He only has eyes for me!”

“You wanna say that again?”

The mere fact Mandy was insinuating she and Dyson had some sort of relationship was enough to make Chris' blood boil.

“You heard me! There's no way someone as cool as Dyson would ever go out with a loser like you!” said Mandy as she shot Chris a cocky grin. At that moment, something or another landed smack dab in the middle of Mandy's head, sending her into a panic.

“W-What is this thing?!” she hollered. “T-Trent! Get off your lazy butt and help me!”

“Y-Yes, Mandy!” Trent replied. “Just...t-try to hold still!”

The small, pink pig squealing on Mandy refused to budge, even as Trent tried ripping it out of her hair. As a last resort, he folded up a newspaper and readied to smack the creature off. However, the pig got out of the way in time, causing Trent to hit Mandy instead.

“W-What are you doing, you idiot?!” she screamed at him. “Are you trying to ruin my perfect face?!”

Thankfully for Trent, Mandy's ire was shifted from him and onto the strange pig that was now happily squealing at her feet. The sight of it caused her face to redden and her pupils to dilate.

“Y-YOU!!!” she cried. “Y-You're that...stupid pig that ruined my life! I wouldn't forget you for anything in the world! Argh!”

“O-Oinky!”

Everyone turned to see Alex arrive on the scene. She was jogging in place, obviously just having come from Track team practice. She was more than a little relieved to see that her pet pig was in one piece. Oinky jumped into her arms, and the two embraced warmly. The scene nearly made Chris shed a tear, yet she was far too baffled by what was happening to give into her emotions.

“Oinky, where were you?!” said Alex. “I was worried sick about you!”

When Oinky squealed a couple of times, Alex nodded as if she actually understood the animal.
Whatever the pig had told her, it appeared to calm her nerves since the two hugged it out once more.

“Seriously, what is going on?” asked Chris.

“I-I'll tell you what's going on!” shouted Mandy, pointing a trembling finger at Oinky. “That stupid pig almost killed me! You should keep that thing on a leash or something!”

“Oinky is not stupid! And he wouldn't hurt a fly!” said Alex. “Isn't that right, Oinky?!”

For a third time, the two squeezed one another. Chris was positive she was going to vomit if this kept up.

“Argh! I am so outta here!” Mandy cried.

“Don't let the door hit you on the way out,” Chris told her with. Incensed, Mandy grabbed Trent's collar and dragged her intern along with her as she stomped away.

“You know, I may hate to see her come, but I sure do love to watch her go.”

“You said it!” replied Alex. “I can't believe she said those nasty things about Oinky!”

“Speaking of which, what's up with the pig?”

“Oh, Oinky's my pet pig! Isn't he adorable?!”

Chris stared at Oinky quietly for a few moments, though found nothing particularly 'cute' about the creature. Perhaps sensing this, Oinky frowned at her.

“I figured it would be against school rules to have something like a pig on campus.”

“U-Uh...s-so are you feeling any better?!” said Alex, attempting to quickly change the subject. “I didn't think you'd be up and moving around so soon after what happened!”

“I'm fine. Well, I'm fine now that Mandy's gone. I suppose I have Oinky here to thank for that.”

Though hesitant, Chris opted to reward the pig’s endeavors by petting him gently.

“Say, do you want to go to The Groove after school?” Alex asked Chris. “We're all going to meet up after our classes are over to celebrate you being okay!”

“...You girls certainly do live at that mall, don't you? Still, I suppose I'm not doing anything this evening. Fine, I'll come, but just promise me you won't buy me anymore of those triple shot espressos from that coffee shop you work at. That last one kept me up for hours...”

“Hey, Alex! What do you think you're doing?!”

Alex let out a small cry of terror when she took heed of a less than pleased Dyson standing behind her with his arms crossed.

“E-Er...I-I was just...!”

“If you've got time to slack off, you've got time to do another thirty laps!” said Dyson. “You know we still have the big competition coming up! We can't waste even a second goofing off!”

“Y-Yes sir!” Alex replied. Grumbling as Dyson went back to his training, she held Oinky out in front of Chris. “Could you watch him until I'm done, Chris? Pretty please?”
“I don’t...”

“Thanks!”

Before Chris could give a proper response, Oinky was shoved into her possession. She wasn’t even able to complain about the matter because Alex ran away before she could.

“Great. What in the world am I supposed to do with a stupid pig?”

Just when she figured things couldn't get any worse, Oinky began to lick her face all over. She cringed the entire time until the pig finally had enough of her taste. For a moment, she wasn't exactly sure how to respond.

“...I'm going to let that one slide, Oinky, but if you ever try something like that again, I'm going to fry you in my skillet for breakfast.”

The comment was quite unsettling for the little pig, prompting it to squeal in terror.

“My, my! Isn't that an exquisite pig you have there?”

There hadn’t been anyone near Chris the last time she checked, but now there was an older woman adorned in expensive clothing sitting right behind her. Her presence caused Chris to jump a bit, and a growl escaped her. She never did like being surprised.

...Impossible. No one should be able to sneak up on me. Who is this person?

“Oh, I’m sorry! Did I startle you?” the woman asked, almost like she were reading Chris' thoughts. “I just couldn't help but talk to you once I saw you holding that exquisite creature in your hands!”

“Er... thanks, but it's not my pig,” Chris replied. “I'm simply watching it for a friend.”

“I see. Still, it really is a fine pig! In fact, I'm certain that if it were skinned, it would just make the loveliest coat.”

Oinky's round eyes enlarged at what he was hearing, and without delay, he hid himself inside Chris' blouse.

“Hmph. If you say so,” said Chris, who had mostly paid the remark no mind. “More importantly, who are you? I highly doubt you approached me just so we could discuss coats.”

“Yes, you're certainly right about that, darling. My name is Helga von Guggen. I'm certain you've heard of me before! I am one of the the world's greatest fashion designers!”

“Sorry, I haven't,” Chris answered plainly. This made a bead of sweat drop down the back of Helga's head. “Don’t take it personally. I don't really keep up with fashion is all. Anyway, you've explained who you are, but not what you're doing here. What's one of the the world's so called 'famous fashion designers' doing in a place like this?”

“Actually, I came here looking for you, Christine.”

Chris froze at this and took some time to offer up a response. “...How do you know my name?”

“That's just it, Christine. I know a lot about you, more than you could ever imagine. The reason I came here today was today was to find you. You see, I have a proposition for you.”

Chris hastily got to her feet. “Whatever it is, I'm not interested. Get lost.”
With that, she started to walk away, but stopped in her tracks when she saw someone was barring her path. It was another foreign face, this one belonging to a middle-aged man with dark skin and a rather ridiculous afro. Even more absurd was his attire. It was as if he had stepped out of a late seventies disco club and into the present.

“Not so fast, foxy lady!” the man stated. “You're not...h-hey! What's the deal?! W-Why are you laughing?!”

“No reason,” Chris lied. She could hardly even speak through the giggles she was attempting to muffle. “I-I don't have time to deal with fossils like you, so I suggest you get out of my way unless you want to experience a world of pain.”

The man’s features reddened. “D-Do you have anything idea who you're talkin’ to?!”

“No, but I'm certain you'll enlighten me...”

“I'm Boogie Gus, the grooviest bad guy on the planet! Watch my moves!”

Chris had been certain things couldn’t escalate any further. She soon discovered how wrong she was. Boogie Gus began dancing right then and there, showing off an assortment of impressive moves. Unfortunately, they weren’t very appreciated by Chris. After Gus finished, he gasped at Chris rolling on the ground in an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

“That’s not groovy, baby...” he muttered.

Somehow, Chris managed to get control of herself again, quickly returning to her usual, serious demeanor.

“Okay, what exactly do you two want from me?” she asked. “If you're a traveling pair of comedians, then I have to admit, your act is rather good.”

“C-Comedians! Girl, ain’t nothin' funny about what we're gonna do to you!” declared Boogie Gus. “Check it! We're totally going to kidnap you and take you back to our boss!”

“W-Why in the world did you have to tell her that?!” said a steaming mad Helga.

Gus replied, “Oops! M-My bad!”

Helga sighed. “I suppose it doesn't matter if she knows or not since she's still coming with us.”

“Hmph. You said you knew all there was about me, Helga von Guggen, but if that was really the case, the two of you would know that me being captured by the likes of you is an impossibility,” explained Chris. “I don't know who you both work for or why you want me, but this ends here!”

She sprang into action, unleashing a flurry of kicks at Boogie Gus. The man managed to avoid most of them, but not before falling flat on his bottom. He crawled away from Chris in fear, while Helga decided to use the chance to strike. Her surprise attack proved fruitless however when Chris managed to parry it and send her reeling back with a roundhouse kick.

“Man, this chick’s got some moves!” Gus admitted. “I don't think we can boogie with her!”

“...I am convinced you are speaking a different language,” said Chris.

“Trust me. Even if he could speak English, he wouldn’t saying much of anything,” growled Helga, wiping a trail of blood away from her mouth. “Never mind him though! It seems you're as good as
they say. SOAP clearly trains their operatives well!”

“So, you even know I work for SOAP? Now I'm seriously beginning to wonder who you people are…”

None of this was making any sense to Chris. She hadn't so much as seen Helga von Guggen or Boogie Gus before, yet the two of them knew classified information that people outside of Spies Organized Against Peace shouldn't have had access to.

*Scar would never reveal my allegiance, so who then?*

By now, the commotion of Chris fighting off her two would-be kidnappers had attracted the attention of most on the Track field. With that in mind, Chris wasn't surprised to see Dyson walking toward she and the others.

“Is everything okay over here?” he asked.

Chris' disposition softened the second him came in close proximity. Helga and Boogie Gus honestly became speechless.

Blushing, Chris replied, “O-Of course, Dyson! E-Everything's...everything's fine!”

“Really now? And who are these two? Weren’t they just trying to beat you up?”

“Uh…”

“I don't know who you are, little boy, but I suggest you leave while you still have the chance,” suggested Helga. “This matter doesn't concern you.”

“That's right! We ain't messin' around over here!” Gus added.

Dyson frowned. “Look, I guess it doesn't matter who you guys are, but unless you have a visitor's pass, you're trespassing on school property. Now then, I don't want to have to call security, but…”

His scolding was broken off when he was abruptly pinned to a nearby brick wall by what looked to be ninja stars.

“W-What in the world?!” he exclaimed. His current predicament was just as bewildering to Chris, and as he tried in vain to free himself, she searched the immediate area for the source of the attack.

“Little boys should stay out of adult business,” said the rather hefty woman who had arrived on the scene. She was dressed in the sort of outfit a maid would wear, though Chris had the sneaking suspicion she was anything but the 'help.' “Why are you two having so much trouble dealing with one little girl? How deplorable.”

“We had everything under control!” answered Helga. “Things were simply taking longer than we anticipated is all.”

“Yeah, check it!” added Gus. “We're just about to catch this little SOAP spy!”

The hefty woman shook her head. “Judging by the state of things here, I doubt that.”

Something about the large woman with the English accent that was speaking currently made a light bulb go off in Chris' head. She had seen this person before.

“Are you...Myrna Beesbottom?” she asked slowly. “The famous WOOHP agent that was a master
using ninja stars?”

Myrna grinned. “Why, yes I am. How interesting. I wouldn't think someone as young as you would have heard of me.”

“I guess you could say I like doing my homework on my peers. Still, if you're aligning yourself with the likes of these two, you must be falling on hard times.”

Myrna, Helga, and Boogie Gus all took exception to the insult.

“D-Do you actually know these people, Chris?” asked Dyson. Chris gave him no response, being more preoccupied with mustering up with a plan of action. Even if Helga and Gus were total weakling, three against one was not to her advantage. On top of this, her whole body was aching all over from her moving around so much. Her wounds hadn't healed yet, and she ran the risk of reopening them the longer this conflict dragged on. If she could incapacitate at least two of her enemies, she figured she could just outrun the last one.

Some gadgets would sure be nice right about now.

“Now then, Christine, be a good, little girl and come along with us,” said Myrna. “Insubordination will not be tolerated while I'm around!”

“Hmph. I barely comply to Scar when he's scolding me. What makes you think I'm going to listen to you?!”

Before the fighting could commence once more, yet another person decided to enter the fray. It was Alex, who made her presence known by knocking over an unsuspecting Myrna with the help of a flying kick.

“Aw man! It's one of Jerry's WOOHP spies!” said visibly annoyed Boogie Gus.

“I should have known one of those pesky brats would show up sooner or later!” added Helga.

“Are you serious?!” Alex cried. “How do you guys keep breaking out of jail?!”

“I take it you know these clowns then,” said Chris.

“Yeah, but that's not important right now! Are you okay?”

“I'm fine. Just tell me who these people are.”

“Is anyone going to ask how I'm doing?!” asked Dyson. When he got no reply, he put his head down and sighed.

“They're the LAMOS!” said Alex in response to Chris' question.

Chris was unable to say anything for a moment. “…Alex, I realize these three are what a lot of people would refer to as 'dorks', but I think calling them 'lamos' is a little harsh.”

“No! That's the name of their evil group! They're all bad guys!”

“That's right! The LAMOS are back in action, baby!” said Boogie Gus. “And this time, we're here to stay!”

“Just like disco?” said Chris sarcastically.
“H-Hey! Not cool! Disco ain't dead! I-It's just...taking a break! For real!”

“Sure it is.”

“Enough talk about dead fads!” hollered Helga. “I believe we have a WOOHP agent that needs disposing of!”

“That's right,” said Myrna. “I've been waiting quite some time for this!”

“Stand back, Chris. I'll take care of them,” said Alex.

“Knock yourself out.”

The prospect of her enemies destroying each other without her having to lift a single finger was a little too good for Chris to pass up. Besides, she had already grown tired of the group known as LAMOS. If Alex wanted to be the hero and take them on all by herself, Chris certainly wasn't going to stop her.

However, a rut came in between this plan after Alex was suddenly shot with something that encased her in a red bubble. Chris was met with a similar fate and quickly found out the bubble wasn't as harmless as it looked. No amount of force broke the object, and although it was elastic, it seemed as durable as lead.

“Well, this is a new way to get caught,” she admitted.

“Agh! Seriously?!?” Alex cried as she tapped on her prison. “This is totally worse than the time I accidentally got bubble gum stuck in my hair!”

“Sorry I had to cut in like that, ladies.”

Chris glanced up to see a handsome man dressed in black staring down at her. He exuded confidence, so much so that Chris was taken aback momentarily.

“...I take it you’re with these other LAMOS.”

The man, smirking, replied, “You guessed it. Tim Scam's the name. How do you like my Bubble Blaster 9000? I made it myself.”

“I must admit, it's silly, but rather effective. So, how do I get out?”

“Heh. Very funny. I wouldn’t waste my energy trying to escape that thing if I were you. It can withstand a hail of gunfire without breaking.”

Chris smacked her lips at this. “So, even the renowned weapons specialist Tim Scam has it in for me?”

“So you've heard of me then?” retorted Scam with the slightest hint cockiness in his talk. “Well, I'm flattered. You understand how good my weapons are then.”

“What if I do? What's your point?”

“My point is that you'd best come along quietly if you don't want to be fried like an omelette by one of my more ‘potent' creations.”

“...You talk as if I even have a choice in the matter.”
“W-What do you guys want with her?!” yelled Alex.

“Yo, we're trying to capture her because someone said they'd totally pay us a lot of cash to do it!” said Boogie Gus.

“W-Would you shut up?! Who told you to say anything about that?!” Helga snapped.

“Y-You idiot...” added Myrna, palming her hand over her face.

“He always was a loud mouth,” added Tim Scam, shaking his head.

Boogie Gus frowned. “Man, ya’ll are coldblooded!”

“So, this is all about money, eh? Then mark my words. You LAMOS are going to pay dearly for your greed,” said Chris sharply.

“I'm sure we will,” replied Scam, unconvinced. “We got what we needed, so let's get out of here before more of WOOHP's cronies show up. We can finish off Alex another time!”

The rest of Scam's comrades couldn't agree more, so they prepared to make a hasty exit with their mission accomplished. Boogie Gus rolled the bubble containing Chris forward, and as he did so, he pressed his head on it and laughed.

“Looks like we finally caught ya, girl!” he told Chris. “Time to boogie on down back to our base!”

She responded to him not with words, but with a balled fist, nearly knocking out Gus' teeth with a swift punch. He reeled back, and although the attack did nothing to help in her predicament, she had to admit how satisfying it had been.

“You put your hideous face near mine again, and I'll do a lot worse.”

Gus grumbled something or another under his breath, though he didn't have the courage to speak loud enough for Chris to hear. As he continued to push her farther and farther away from the track field, Chris could hear the cries of Dyson and Alex calling after her. There was nothing they could do to help her now. In fact, Chris wondered if there was anything anyone could do to get her out of this mess.

This really stinks...

#

For the second time in two days, Chris had been taken against her will. Her prison this time was not the walls of WOOHP, but a run down, leaky submarine that appeared ready to sink into the depths of the ocean at any moment. The members of LAMOS had confined her in a dimly lit room with only the sound of water dripping from the ceiling to keep her company. Though she would have loved the use of her hands, they were bound to a metal pole behind her courtesy of some tightly tied ropes. Boogie Gus might have acted like an idiot, though she had to admit he knew how to tie a knot. No amount of struggling seemed to do her any good.

“Dammit! You’ve got to be kidding me! I’d rather be dealing with Mandy than have to go through this crap!” she muttered. “What kind of group uses a damn submarine as their headquarters anyway?!”

The second she finished speaking, a metal bolt on the wall next to her suddenly broke off, causing water to leak in. This caused her to sigh while she questioned how she managed to get herself into
this mess.

The door to the room opened, and the members of LAMOS stepped inside. Their mere presence was enough to aggravate Chris further, yet she was also glad they had come. She still had a number of nagging questions for them.

“Nice place you’ve got here,” she said. “I really like the dark, depressing atmosphere this place gives of, not to mention the fact it’s literally falling apart all around us. Yes, I estimate we’ll drown to death within the hour.”

“Very funny,” said Helga, clearly not amused.

“Hey now! You can’t just diss our sweet pad like that!” said Boogie Gus. “Don’t you know that underneath the ocean is the grooviest place to have a secret lair?”

A stream of water came through another hole in the wall, hitting Gus and soaking him completely.

“T-That’s supposed to happen!” he said quickly.

“Whatever,” Chris replied. “So, is anyone going to tell me what it is you all plan to do with me now that you’ve got me tied up like this?”

Before her captors could answer, the door to the room opened once more. Stepping inside was a older gentleman Chris had never seen before, and one who’s outfit made Boogie Gus’ look acceptable in comparison. He was dressed in the sort of thing a king or royalty would wear, even sporting a fake, powdered wig and monocle.

“Christine, is it? We meet at last! I see that my magnificence has stunned you into silence,” the man said in a suave, English accent.

Chris was indeed speechless. “…No, I was simply wondering why you were dressed like that as Halloween isn’t coming for another couple of months.”

“W-Why you...!” The man angrily balled his fist though calmed himself. “Ahem! I am Terrence Lewis, leader of the LAMOS!”

“I find it interesting you say that with such pride. I’ve been meaning to ask you something, something that’s honestly been getting on my nerves this whole time. What’s up with that stupid name? Seriously, who names their group ‘LAMOS’?”

“S-Stupid?! H-How dare you insult my evil organization like that!”

“Don’t you think it’s more insulting to name your group something so ridiculous?”

“Y-You...!!!”

“Terrence, relax! Remember your high blood pressure!” warned Helga.

Terrence took a deep breath. “Y-Yes...you're right. I nearly forgot. A-Anyway, LAMOS stands for League Aiming to Menace and Overthrow Spies! Regardless of what the acronym spells out, know that we are a fearsome group feared far and wide by the do-gooders of this world!”

“I suppose the name makes more sense when you explain it like that,” said Chris. “Still, the fact you guys openly call yourselves LAMOS' is rather...lame. Fitting, but really lame. Like, I’m still in shock over here.”
“I'M NOT CHANGING THE NAME!!!” Terrence snapped. Those near him promptly backed away, fearing for their safety. “I like it the way it is, the and that's that!”

“...Whatever.”

Chris' attitude was really beginning to drive Terrence insane, so he asked the rest of his associates to leave him alone with her, mostly because he couldn't stand being made a fool of like this with everyone watching.

“Why should we have to leave?” asked Tim Scam. “I think we have a right to stay. After all, we were the ones who captured this brat in the first place.”

“He's got a point! Anything you've got to say to her, you can say in front of us!” said Helga.

“If you don't leave, I'll have the lot of you tied up along with this girl!” yelled Terrence. “I'll even force you to listen to that horrid brand of music Boogie Gus is always going on about!”

“Sounds good to me!” said Boogie Gus. His excitement disappeared when the others began glaring at him. “What?!”

Scam and the others griped some more at Terrence's words, although they eventually did as instructed. Being left alone with Terrence made Chris somewhat uneasy.

“Alright, so why did you and your lame group decide to kidnap me?” she inquired. “Boogie Gus said something about you guys doing it for money, but there's gotta be more to it than that.”

“We are the LAMOS! Get it right, girl! And you're telling me that blabbermouth Boogie Gus actually told you that much?! Hmph! Why am I not surprised? If he's not dancing, he's running his mouth! To answer your question, yes, we were asked to capture you for money. We don't usually take on tasks like common mercenaries, but the individual who asked us to do this was offering a very large sum of money! I couldn't quite turn down such a generous offer!”

Chris looked around and replied, “Yeah, so how come you didn't use any of that cash to repair this rust bucket you call a lair?”

“Y-You..! W-We haven't been given the money yet!” said Terrence through clenched teeth. “That’s why we still have you, you insufferable…!”

“Makes sense. Is the person who is paying you to do this the same person who told you so much about me? That I was an agent for SOAP?”

“That's right! He knows quite a lot about you, Christine! There's also one little tidbit I've forgotten to mention! He's not only asked us to capture you, but to also dispose of you while we're at I!”

“What?!” Hearing this made Chris both confused and irate. “If you idiots are supposed to kill me, why are we even having this conversation right now?! You should have gotten rid of me the second you brought me here! Better yet, why didn't you just have Boogie Gus and those other imbeciles destroy me when they first attacked me?! Why drag me all the way here just to tell me all this?! Seriously, I see why you guys are called by the name 'LAMOS' now! Argh! I can't believe how incompetent you people are! It's frustrating!”

“Would you just be quiet already?! No one asked for your advice!” screamed Terrence. “If there's anyone frustrating around here, it's you, little girl! Y-You're just as annoying as my brother Jerry and his accursed Spies for crying out loud!”
Chris' eyes widened at this. “Wait, Jerry? Are you talking about Jerry Lewis, leader of WOOHP? He's your brother?!”

“That's right, unfortunately! It's not something I'm proud of! Oh, what I would give to destroy that brother of mine for all the pain and suffering he's caused me over the years!”

“Heh. Small world. I never thought a goody-goody like Jerry Lewis would have an evil brother. Still, it seems we have something in common. I'm not too fond of that man either.”

“Oh yes, I know all about your leader Scar's disdain for my brother! However, I'll have you both know that I'm the only one that's going to destroy Jerry! I won't allow anyone else to have the honor!”

“That makes us enemies then,” replied Chris, her eyelids narrowing. “Because I'm the only one that's going to be finishing off Jerry Lewis!”

Terrence cackled at this. “I don't see how! You're going to be fish food in a couple of minutes!”

“...What are you talking about?”

“Haha! You see, we've already had a new submarine lair built for our needs, meaning we won't be needing this one anymore! Unfortunately, you won't be coming along with us to our new home since you've got a date with a watery grave! In just a little while, this sub will be sinking into the depths of the ocean with you on it! Assuming you don't drown first, the water pressure will flatten you like a pancake!”

“Tch! Don't think I'm actually letting you and your flunkies get away with this!”

“Oh, I'm trembling in fright!” said Terrence sardonically, holding up his arms to add to his dramatics. “Well then, I believe it's time for me and the rest of my associates to depart. I bid you adieu, SOAP spy!”

“You piece of...!”

Perhaps more harrowing than the fate that lied in store for her was the fact Chris couldn’t reach out and strangle Terrence to death as he fled like a rat out the door. If what he said was the truth, she was going to have to think up something in a hurry if she was to have any hope of surviving.

“Wait a second! I still have my Z-Powder! Those idiots didn't take it away! Agh, dammit! There's no way I can reach it with my hands tied up like this!”

It was then she recalled her Z-Powder had a built in 'hands free' mode. She wasn't quite certain what that meant because Scar hadn't explained the features of the device very well, although he had informed her that all she had to was tell her Z-Powder to come to her. Upon doing so, the gadget shot out of her pocket, floated in front of her face, and opened.

“Whoa! Hands free indeed,” she stated. “Quick! Call Scar!”

After some beeps and clicks from the device, Scar appeared on screen. He had been toying with some kind of gadget on his front desk before he realized Chris was staring back at him.

“Ah, Christine. Is something wrong? I don't have any missions for you right now, so...”

“Never mind that! And don't call me by my real name! Listen carefully! Some wack jobs kidnapped me, and now they're planning to leave me in this rundown submarine to die! If you don't get me out
of here in the next couple of minutes, you’re going to be down one operative!”

“Oh my! This is serious! Alright, calm down, Agent! I'm going to pinpoint your location using one of our satellites! Then I can send a squad to come rescue you! Just sit tight!”

“Yeah. Like I’ve got much of a choice...”

The screen went blank, and Chris let out a sigh of relief. At the very least, Scar was certainly dependable when she needed him to be.

However, she soon found out she wasn't off the hook yet. The sub began rock violently back and forth, and she felt the sensation the whole vessel were falling down some deep crevice. The water pressure outside increased, causing a number of leaks and holes to form in the room Chris was trapped in. Her prison began to flood, with the water reaching a dangerous level. If this kept up, she would literally be swimming with the fishes.

“I don't think Scar's going to make it in time,” she muttered. She again tried pulling at her restraints, yet they absolutely refused to yield. “Come on! Come on! Break, dammit! I don’t have time for this crap!”

Just when all hope seemed lost, something popped out of her shirt.

“O-Oinky?!” she exclaimed. “T-That's right! You were with me when I got captured! Quick, you have to get my hands free from these ropes, or we aren't going to make it!”

Oinky got the message loud and clear. He leaped up to where Chris' hands were and managed to chew through the ropes constricting them. His actions had come in a timely manner as the water level in the room had risen to Chris' waist.

“I never thought I'd see the day when I was saved by a pig,” she said, stretching her arms. “Alright, Oinky! We're getting out of here!”

She tried leaving through the exit, but it wouldn't budge, so she slammed her shoulder into it a few times. This did the trick, yet she was met with a torrent of rushing water from the outside that completely filled the room. Now underwater, she held her breath and frantically searched for some means of escape. She found one in a gaping hole in the ceiling of the hallway. She then swam for her life toward it, making it out of the plummeting submarine safe and sound. It took her a minute or two to make it to the surface, where she took a number of breaths the instant she could.

“Bleh!” she emitted, coughing out some salty sea water. “That...was too close.”

Oinky, who was resting on her head wearily, couldn't agree more.

After Chris took a moment to regain herself, she checked around and was dismayed by what she found, or rather, what she didn’t. There wasn’t a boat, building, or structure of any kind in sight. Because of this, she didn't even know which way to swim, meaning they were most likely stranded in the middle of the ocean.

“Well, this is great!” she cried. “I swear to God, those LAMOS are going to pay!”

Her rage was quelled when a metal box of some sort crashed into the water out of the blue, scaring the living daylights out of her and her pig companion. The box opened, revealing a black jet ski with what looked to be rockets attached near the end. Afterward, her Z-Powder started to beep. Scar was on the other line, and he gave her a cheerful wave while she squinted back at him.
“S-Scar? What is this?”

“Hello, Agent C. I'm glad to see you made it out of that sticky situation in one piece. I guess you didn't need my help after all. Say, is that your pet pig? I had no idea you were interested in cute, little animals!”

“Forget about the pig! Tell me what this jet ski is all about! And how in the world did you figure out I escaped?!”

“Oh, that's not important. Now, about that jet ski. That baby is actually the Hydro Jet 9000!”

“What's up with everyone putting the number '9000' in the names of their stupid inventions?”

“Did you say something, Agent?”

“N-No. Go on...”

“Hmm. Anyway, I've tracked a massive submarine a little ways off from your current location. I figure it must belong to those nasty people that kidnapped you, so I've put its coordinates into your Z-Powder. You can use the Hydro Jet 9000 to follow after it. It is one of my latest creations and will allow you to zip across the waters in no time flat! That's because it's rocket-powered. It also has padded seats, air conditioning, and satellite radio for a comfortable voyage!”

“What, is it a luxury liner? I don't need all that crap. Just tell me it can help me catch the LAMOS!”

Scar frowned. “…Like I said, it's rocket-powered, so you should be able to catch up to a mere submarine no problem.”

“Good. Now then, what is this other junk in the box?” said Chris, holding up a white heat brush with a flower pattern. “Scar, if you're trying to hint that I need to start styling my hair, you can forget it. You know I'm not into girly stuff like that.”

“What you could use a new hairstyle, that item you're holding is actually a gadget I've created called the Melt Anything Away Heat Brush.”

“That's...quite a mouthful.”

“True, but that's not all. At the press of a button, the brush becomes extraordinarily hot, hot enough to melt almost anything on contact.”

“...I bet you stayed up all night coming up with that name.”

“Haha. Very funny. Now then, that bottle of perfume you're holding in your other hand is actually a sweet-smelling pheromone that will temporarily cause any male who breathes it in to fall madly in love with you.”

Chris cleaned her ears out after hearing this, she assuming there must have been seaweed obstructing them.

“You wanna say that again?” she asked.

“I'm serious!” Scar assured her. “I call it the Love Me Spray. It really works too!”

“I-I really don't know how this stuff could come in handy, but I guess I'll hold onto it,” she replied unenthusiastically. She then glanced down at Oinky and added, “I wonder if this spray works on pigs...”
The remark was enough to make Oinky squeal in fright.

“If you look carefully in that box, you should see one more item: the UPWATI.”

“The upwhatty?”

“No, the UPWATI. Underwater Power Walking Apparatus That's Inconspicuous.”

“Okay, that is by far the most ridiculous name I've ever heard for one of your gadgets.”

“Yes...I know.” The expression on Scar’s face changed to one of irritation just then. “The UPWATI...isn't actually my invention. I copied the plans from Jerry Lewis back when I was still with WOOHP. As much as using something he developed makes me sick, you should find the UPWATI quite helpful in your little revenge plot. Basically, it will allow you to breathe underwater. It also has an engine on it to enable you to swim faster.”

“It looks uncomfortable,” she stated as she slipped it on over her black catsuit.

“Trust me. You drowning under the ocean would be far more unpleasant.”

“Point taken. I don't really want to use something made by Jerry Lewis, but I guess I don't have a choice at the moment.”

“One more gadget. The Ladybug Spy Clip.”

Chris saw the item in question and placed it in her silver hair for safe keeping.

“What do I need this thing again for?” she asked.

“You never know. A spy should always be prepared for anything. Now then, I've taken up enough of your time. The bad guys are getting away, so you should hurry. Oh, and when you do see them, give them a good whack for me!”

Chris closed her Z-Powder and hopped onto the Hydro Jet 9000, unsure of how to even use the thing. It certainly looked like a normal jet ski, and a pair of keys were even sitting in the ignition. Slowly, she turned them and prepared for the worst, but nothing other than the engine cutting on occurred. Her hand pulled back on the throttle, moving the machine, yet something was off.

“...Why is this thing so slow?!” she inquired. The jet ski was moving at a rather brisk pace, certainly failing to live up to its name. “Tch! Is this thing defective or something?!”

Something caught her eye just then: a small, unmarked button near the controls. Curiosity got the better of her. Before she knew it, her finger was pressing down on it. She soon regretted this decision considering the button activated the rocket boosters of the jet ski, making it shoot forward like a bullet out of a gun. It felt as if her skin would be ripped right off her flesh, and she had to hold on for dear life so not to go flying off the machine. Oinky was in the same boat, gripping Chris' hair for dear life. The good thing was that she would be able to catch up to the LAMOS vessel in no time flat, assuming she and her companion survived the trip.

At the bottom of an uncharted part of the ocean stood a luxurious submarine, where inside, the members of LAMOS were busy celebrating their success, specifically that they were a few million dollars richer. The lot of them were sitting on a round, black sofa, each fixing their greedy eyes toward the briefcase sitting on the table in the middle. Most of them had only dreamed of the amount
of cash held inside the case, and Terrence Lewis in particular couldn't stop getting stitches in his sides at their good fortunes.

“This is our biggest score yet, everyone!” he proclaimed. “It looks like the LAMOS are back in business!”

“You can say that again!” said Helga von Guggen. She let out a number of haughtily laughs while fanning herself with a fancy, pink fan. “Never again will we have to see those drab, ugly walls of the WOOHP containment facility!”

“With this much cash, we could probably afford our own personal army or two to help us finally get rid of WOOHP once and for all!” said Tim Scam.

“It appears that our fortunes have finally turned around!” said a smiling Myrna Beesbottom.

When the last member of LAMOS didn't chime in, Terrence said, “Boogie Gus, is there a problem? Though I can’t believe I’m even bringing it up, it’s strange to hear you so quiet!”

Boogie Gus wasn't listening. His attention was focused solely on the music blasting in his ears from the MP3 player he was holding in his hand. He snapped his fingers to the funky beat, all while remaining oblivious to Terrence practically glaring a hole through him. It took Tim Scam slapping him upside the head for him to realize what was going on.

“Huh?! Oh, my bad! Didn't know we were having a discussion!” he said. “I was just listening to all the disco music I put on this MP3 player I bought with some the money we got for offin' that SOAP spy! Man, these things sure are groovy! Way easier to carry around than a record player!”

Terrence could sense a migraine coming on. “You did what?! You're telling me you used some of our hard-earned money on that useless trinket of yours?!”

“I mean...yeah! I had to listen to my music somehow! I would have gotten an 8-track player, but those things are hard to find nowadays!”

Gus sealed his lips when he got the feeling his input was no longer welcomed.

“Why in the world do we even keep him around?” asked Scam tiredly.

“Heh. I actually kind of like him,” said the man who was sitting on the other side of the sofa, someone who hadn't said a word until now. “He's the only one around here who isn't uptight.”

The man was none other than Tad, a former WOOHP employee, and one of the people who had managed to escape WOOHP headquarters thanks to Chris. His opinion of everyone save Boogie Gus wasn't well received, and their ire turned from Gus to him. Tad shrugged this off, however. He was more amused than anything else at their lack of humor.

“Hey, you're my kinda guy!” exclaimed Boogie Gus. “We should totally hit a disco club sometime and pick up some foxy ladies after this!”

Tad's face scrunched up into a look of displeasure. “Er...no thanks. Anyway, I see that you're pleased with the money I've supplied you, Terrence.”

“That's right! I can only begin to think of the possibilities for this organization thanks to all this cash! Still, there's something that I've been wondering about. Why offer up so much money just to have
use take care of one, little spy?”

“Oh, there's nothing to it really. I just considered Christine too big of a threat to allow to walk around freely. It's better to get rid of her now before she becomes a problem for me in the future. No need to worry about her now though, right? Thanks to you all, she's in the past. If anything, we should be celebrating our new partnership!”

Terrence nodded. “You're right. Everyone, let us welcome the newest members of LAMOS, Tad! I'm expecting great things from you, young man!”

The group descended into laughter once more, all while someone was watching them from a close-by window. Chris angrily leered at Tad, shocked to discover that it was he who had put a hit on her head, especially when she figured she was never to see him again.

“He's going to regret not staying back at WOOHP,” she muttered. “Oinky, we're going in.”

The pig in question popped up inside the helmet of Chris' UPWATI and glanced curiously into the LAMOS' sub. Those inside were still hamming it up, and Chris wasn't sure they would ever shut up.

“Going through the front door probably isn’t the smartest option.”

She swam to the top of the sub and retrieved the Melt Anything Away Heat Brush from her person. Turning it on produced the intense heat advertised, so hot in fact that Chris could actually feel tepid air seeping through her helmet. She cut a hole into the metal surface of the vessel, fashioning an opening large enough for her to jump through. She was greeted by a multitude of boxes and other odd knick knacks once inside.

“This must be the storage room.”

Water was now flooding the place, and as Chris watched it continue to rush through the gaping hole she had created, she groaned.

“Yeah, I clearly didn't think that one through. Guess I didn't get enough of nearly drowning in that other sub.”

Thinking quickly, she used the Heat Brush to reattach the metal slab she had burned off. This was enough to stop the water and save her life. With that headache out of the way, she could focus on more important matters.

“I hate being this pissed. I never think straight like this...”

She got on guard when the door to the room swung open. Boogie Gus, backpedaling inside, didn't see or realize Chris was standing right behind him.

“Yo, I'm sure it's just another leak!” he yelled toward someone unseen. “Let me check it out!”

His expensive shoes splashed against a small amount of water pooled on the floor when he finally did an about face. This confirmed his theory on their being a leak, though he had no idea why there was a SOAP spy glowering at him presently. For a short time, neither of them did so much as move. In Gus' case, it was mostly because he was frozen with fear.


Gus never stood a chance; he was rendered unconscious in short order when Chris slammed her fist into his face.
“I’ve really been wanting to do that,” she said. She then dragged his body to a corner of the room, content on leaving him there for the time being. “The rest of his friends should be around here somewhere.”

Peeking out of the entrance Gus had come through revealed a narrow passageway filled with a multitude of windows that gave a breathtaking view of the ocean outside. Chris stepped into it and noted another door up ahead. Her intuition told her Terrence and the rest of his goons would be awaiting her behind it, something she was certainly looking forward to if true.

“I have to admit, this place is a major improvement to that hunk of junk LAMOS was cruising around in before. Still, something’s off here. How in the world did they manage to build this thing so fast? Didn’t they escape WOOHP just yesterday? They couldn’t have used that reward money to buy it either. That old loon Terrence said they hadn’t received it yet. It’s almost like Tad was counting on escaping and coming up with this whole scheme.”

Her train of thought was broken when someone jumped out of the shadows, surprising her. Chris avoided an attack aimed her way and countered with her own. Her mysterious assailant blocked it however and tossed a flurry of ninja stars. Chris flipped backwards, and the bladed projectiles soared past her and stuck to the wall behind her.

“Myrna Beesbottom,” Chris said to the woman standing before her. “Well, I guess this saves me the trouble of having to hunt you down.”

“Oh, is that so?” Myrna replied. “You insolent brat! You dare talk to me as if I’m some common thug? Then again, I suppose I should be commending you for surviving this long and making it out of that submarine. I had a feeling I would be seeing you again.”

“While I’m flattered you placed that much faith in my abilities, I’m not in the mood to chat over some tea. Now then, get out of my way. I have business with the newest member of the LAMOS.”

“Hmm? You mean Tad, don’t you? I can’t have that now. Rude little children such as yourself shouldn’t interrupt adults while they’re talking!”

“I wasn’t asking, lady.”

“Hmph! You have no idea who you’re dealing with, girl!”

The two lunged at one another with malicious intent. In the process of exchanging blows, neither could land a solid hit on the other. Though Myrna had gotten up there in age, Chris recognized first hand that she was still to be feared.

“You still have much to learn, little girl!” Myrna screamed as she delivered a swift roundhouse kick right on Chris’ chin. “And you actually thought you could defeat me!”

“D-Dammit! I could keep up with her if it weren't for my injuries!” Chris wiped some blood from her lip and watched as Myrna barreled toward her to finish the job. “Hmph. You may have the advantage in unarmed combat, but I've got the upper hand in something you could never hope to match!”

“Whatever do you mean?”

Chris’ ace in the hole was none other than Oinky. The pig, squealing furiously, latched itself onto Myrna’s face and started clawing at her features.

“G-Get off me, you disgusting creature!” she hollered.
“That never gets old,” said Chris. Smiling, she took great pleasure witnessing the great Myrna
Beesbottom struggling to defeat a mere pig. “Now then...”

Oinky returned to Chris by way of her whistling, and Myrna was relieved to be freed. Nonetheless,
she found nothing comforting in the volley of ninja stars hurdling toward her. She could do nothing
but watch as they pinned her to the wall.

“Y-You insolent child!” she howled at Chris. “How dare you use my own instruments again me!”

“Don't leave them lying around if you don't want me to use them,” replied Chris with a shrug. “Do
me a favor though and 'hang out' there for a little bit while I pay your dear, old friend Tad a visit.”

“D-Don't think for a moment I'm going to let you get away with this! C-Come back here this instant!
It is rude to walk away when an adult is talking to you, young lady!”

Chris was no longer listening. She had already gone through the entryway Myrna had come out of
and into what must have been the living room of the submarine. The black couch she had seen from
the outside was there, though its occupants were not. Boogie Gus and Myrna were accounted for, so
Chris conjectured where the others could have gotten off to.

“They couldn't have left. I would have seen them. Is there another way out of this room?”

After taking an inspection of the area, she confirmed the entrance and exit were one and the same.
There wasn't even a closet or other space for someone to hide in, so the fact she was alone at the
moment made her scratch her head.

“I better go back in the hallway and...”

“Gotcha!”

It became clear to Chris that she had waltzed right into a trap when she was suddenly encased inside
a very familiar, red bubble. A chuckling Tim Scam, holding the Bubble Blaster 9000, then reared his
head. Trailing him were Terrence Lewis and Tad.

“I should have seen this coming,” Chris growled. “Maybe all those injuries I suffered back at
WOOHP HQ affected my brain too.”

“Haha! Good work, Tim!” said Terrence merrily. “That was easier than I thought I’d be!”

“Hey, it's what I do,” Scam smugly replied.

“Chris, how are you? I didn't think I'd get to see you again so soon,” said Tad, as he crouched down
to meet Chris eye to eye. “Then again, I didn't think I'd see you again ever.”

Chris responded, “Is that so? And here I was hoping for the same thing.”

“Heh. Nice work slipping through Jerry’s fingertips by the way! I still have no clue how you
managed to do it!”

“And I can’t figure out how you found that out so quickly.”

“The same way I managed to find out you were at WOOHP that day so I could use you to help me
bust outta there. Let’s just say I have my sources.”

Chris very much desired to learn who or what these ‘sources’ were.

“You've certainly become quite the bother, Christine,” Terrence informed her. “Tad will be liable to
take his money back if we have you running around all over the place!"

“I suppose you have a point there,” was Chris’ retort. While she spoke, she reached for something
behind her, making sure her enemies remained ignorant to the fact. “Still, I could hardly care if my
being alive is an inconvenience to you.”

“By the way, I never got to thank you for helping to bust me out of WOOHP yesterday,” said Tad.
Nothing about his tone of voice made Chris believe his words were honest. “I had forgotten just how
sweet freedom is!”

Terrence added, “Perhaps the rest of LAMOS and I should be thanking you as well! It was your
masterful prison escape that distracted the guards at WOOHP long enough for me and my comrades
to make our escape!”

Chris smiled. “Is that so? Then don’t you all owe me a favor or two? How’s about letting me out of
this bubble? I’ll consider us even if you do.”

The three hovering above her burst into laughter at the suggestion, a response Chris had been
expecting. Even so, she figured it wouldn’t hurt to ask.

“I’m afraid we can’t do that,” explained Terrence.

“Indeed. The mere fact that you’re still alive right now just proves to me that trying to get rid of you
was the right idea. It really is nothing personal though,” said Tad.

“Well, this whole thing is quite personal to me!” Chris cried. With the help of the Melt Anything
Away Heat Brush, she burned a hole in the bubble, popping it and freeing herself.

“T-That’s impossible!” Tim Scam cried. “M-My bubbles should be impenetrable!”

“I guess my boss’ gadgets are just better than yours then!” Chris answered.

Growling, Terrence shouted, “What are you doing, Tim?! Shoot her!”

An irate Scam did just that, but Chris managed to avoid the rounds of his Bubble Blaster 9000 each
time. She managed to inch closer to her foes during the chaos, and when she did, she busted out
another gadget of Scar’s. Her finger pressed down on the nozzle of the Love Me Spray, filling the
room with its aroma.

“H-Huh?! W-What is this stuff?!” yelled Tad. He hastily used his shirt to shield his nose from the
pink vapor. “P-Perfume?!”

Terrence and Tim Scam weren’t so fortunate. They got a full whiff of the spray, and it didn’t take
long for its special effects to take hold of them. The malice in their eyes faded away, replaced by a
longing for Christine that neither one of them could explain. The target of their affections raised an
eyebrow at the now peculiar expressions plastered on their faces. She then backed away when they
started to step toward her with outstretched arms.

“M-My love!” they both said in blissful unison. In the blink of an eye, they were both kneeling at her
feet and kissing her hands affectionately.

“Maybe this perfume works a little too well,” she mumbled.

“What the heck is going on?!” asked Tad.
“I'm willing to do anything for you, my love!” Terrence told Chris.

Scam added, “As am I! I love you more than any gadget I've ever created!”

An idea came to Chris just then. “Hmph. I'm having a hard time believing you two. If you two truly loved me, you would capture that man back there for me. He's been trying to hurt me. You two wouldn't let anything happen to me, right?”

“...Aw crap,” said a fearful Tad. Chris' sweet words were all Terrence and Scam needed to hear. Both of them sat up and shifted in Tad's direction, shooting the man a glare that told him how much they despised him at the moment.

“H-Huh?! W-What's gotten into you both?! It's me, Tad! Your new buddy! S-Seriously, w-why are you guys looking at me like that?!”

“No one tries to hurt my one, true love and gets away with it!” screamed Terrence.

“You just signed your death certificate, pal!” added Scam.

“C-Can't we talk about this?!” Tad pleaded. “Y-You guys aren't yourselves right now!?”

“Well, well, well. It didn't take long for your so called 'friends' to turn on you, Tad,” Chris told him with a wide smirk on her lips. “Don't worry. I'll make sure they only break a few of your bones.”

Tad, acting quickly, got out of the way when Terrence and Scam tried pouncing on top of him. He then grabbed his briefcase full of money off the table and hightailed it out of there.

“Tsk! Get back here, you coward!” Chris called after him. She tried making chase, yet Terrence and Tim Scam impended her progress by latching onto her legs tightly.

“Where are you going, my love?! Please, don't leave!” cried Terrence.

“That's right! We can no longer live without you!” said Tim Scam.

“Tsk! I guess this is what they mean when they say 'tough love!' Seriously though, would both of you idiots get off me already?!”

Chris was able to shake herself free ahead of pursuing Tad. Even as she with her gone, Terrence and Tim Scam couldn't help but muse on how cute she looked as she ran.

“I wonder, do you think she'll marry me?” asked Scam.

Terrence became upset at this. “Not a chance! The only one she's marrying is me!”

“What was that?!”

“You heard me, you gadget-obsessed freak!”

Violence soon broke out over the matter. Both men silently agreed that only the victor would have the right to Chris’ heart.

#

It took Chris some time, but she was finally able to corner Tad inside the submarine’s engine room. Out of breath and out of patience, she wasn't quite sure what she was going to do once she got her fingers on her prey.
“There's nowhere left for you to run,” she informed him. “Now then, you’ve got a lot of explaining to do. You said you had sources that told you I was a prisoner of WOOHP the day I was captured. Who are these people, and how could they know such a thing so fast? Are they also the people who built this new sub for the LAMOS? Terrence mentioned that you were paying him so his stupid group could build a new home, yet it’s already here around us. Answer me!”

Tad knew he was in deep trouble. Despite this, a strange air of confidence continued to hover around him.

“You are mistaken if you think I'm going back to the WOOHP containment facility!” he stated. “And you're also mistaken if you believe I'm going to be interrogated by the likes of you so easily! Have you forgotten? I was a former WOOHP operative, and Jerry's right hand man! A little girl like you doesn’t have a chance at beating me!”

Tad refused to go down quietly. He lunged at Chris and came at her relentlessly. None of his blows managed to get through though; Chris was able to parry them with relative ease before flooring the former WOOHP operative using a simple roundhouse kick. A number of Tad's teeth went soaring through the air as he groaned. Needing to see a dentist ended up being the least of his troubles when Chris, standing over him, cracked her knuckles. He could literally feel the murderous intent emanating from her.

“H-How could you have defeated me so easily?! T-This isn't possible!”

“Perhaps you’re just rusty. You’ve been cooped up in a prison cell all this time. Then again, maybe you just suck.”

“What?! Y-You can’t…!”

“You were mistaken, Tad, when you said I was going to take you back to WOOHP. No, that would be too good for the likes of you. Honestly, what I'm about to do to you can't be described in mere words, but something tells me you're going to wish you were back with your old pal Jerry afterward.”

Tad braced himself for the worst, yet Chris broke away from wanting to destroy him, sensing unseen danger. She turned around to confront it, and her eyes widened when a fur scarf wrapped its way around her neck. Its grip tightened enough to choke her. Through watery, reddened eyes, she was able to make out her attacker.

“This is the end of you and your meddling, little girl!” barked Helga von Guggen.

“I...knew I had forgotten about someone…”

“Hahaha! I apologize for being 'fashionably late' to the party! You may have gotten rid of my useless comrades, but don’t think I’ll be defeated so easily! As they say in the clothing industry, fashion kills!”

Tad used the turn of events to his advantage by making a hasty escape. Chris, hanging on for her life, could do nothing to stop him. She was however able to toss her Ladybug Spy Clip onto his leg without him being any wiser. Settling the score with him would have to come later, assuming she managed to survive her latest life or death crisis.

Now unable to breathe, Chris moved her trembling hand toward her Melt Anything Away Heat Brush, her only salvation at this point. Her fingers pressed themselves against it momentarily before she fumbled it away. When she reached for it again, Helga kicked it across the room.
“Not so fast, little girl! If you're that desperate to get it, I get the feeling that's no ordinary brush! That'll be enough tricks out of you for one day!”

Chris cursed her luck just as her vision started to fade. Reduced to her knees now, her brain struggled to come up with a way for her to escape Helga's clutches, perhaps owing to it being deprived of oxygen.

“Well then, any last words, you trouble maker?” a confident Helga inquired. She let out a number of haughty chuckles, but piped down when she heard a peculiar noise. Her eyes shot downward, where she was horrified to see a small, innocent pig eating the designer pants she was wearing.

“W-What?! Y-You filthy...! D-Do you know how much these pants cost me?!’ she hollered. “Unhand them at once, you vile creature! I said unhand them!”

Helga, paying more attention to Oinky now, loosened her grip on Chris, allowing her victim to breath in some much needed air.

“That was too close,” she stated between inhales. “Hmm. That's beginning to become my catchphrase...”

Having been out of the loop, Chris was surprised to see Helga trying, and failing, to fight off Oinky. She would have perhaps found humor in the whole thing if it weren't for her getting a load of the horrifying sight of Helga savagely kicking the pig across the room. Her feet moved on their own afterward as she made her way to the animal prior to snatching him up off the ground.

“Hey, don't you die on me, you stupid pig! Alex will kill me if something happens to you!” she screamed. Despite her talk, she was personally worried about her steadfast companion. “Are you alright?! Say something dammit!”

Oinky seemed to perk up as she spoke to him, but he was done playing the hero for the day. He quickly hid within Chris' clothing again, basically telling her to take over.

“Agh! That stupid creature has completely ruined my pants!” said Helga while she surveyed the damage done to the clothing in question. “Terrence would have my head if he found out I used some of the reward money to buy these...”

“You...”

Helga leered over to Chris upon hearing her. Immediately, she had second thoughts over doing so since the SOAP spy made it perfectly clear she was seconds away from tearing her apart. Pure, unadulterated anger built up inside of Chris like a bubbling volcano. Never did she think a pig being hurt in front of her would garner such emotions out of her

“...You're going to pay for that...” she serenely informed Helga.

Helga's eyelid twitched. “...uh...don't suppose we could work out some kind of truce?!”

The sounds of punching, kicking, and anguish resounded across the walls of the LAMOS submarine following Helga’s wasted inquisition.

“Lie down there for a while, you hag,” said Chris as she hovered over the battered and broken form of one Helga von Guggen. “And take your ugly scarf with you.”

She dropped the fur scarf that had nearly strangled her to death on top of Helga’s unrecognizable face ahead of giving Oinky, who was peering at her inquisitively, some attention.
“Are you sure you're alright?” she asked. “...Why the hell do I keep asking you that? You’re a pig. You can’t talk.”

Oinky let out a squeal that Chris supposed meant he was a-okay after all.

“Alright, I think it's about time we got the hell out of here. I don’t think I ever want to see another submarine for as long as I live. There’s still one thing bothering me though…”

Her concerns could be summed up in a single name: Tad. Thanks the Ladybug Spy Clip, she knew she would have his head in due time.

“I told you already! I love her more!” said Terrence Lewis.

“Get real! There's no way you love her more than I do!” Tim Scam retorted.

“What...is going on here?” asked a very confused Sam. She remained still while the two LAMOS members sitting on the floor carried on with their squabbling. They hadn't even noticed Sam, Alex, and Clover were even there. “I so wouldn’t be doing this situation justice if I said they were just acting out of character!”

“It's like they're hypnotized or something!” said Clover. She snapped her fingers in front of Terrence’s and Scam's faces but got no response. “Freaky!”

“Who is this girl they're talking about they love so much?” asked Alex.

“I haven't a clue, but none of this adds up!” replied Sam. “I mean, first we find Boogie Gus out cold in the storage room. Then we find Myrna Beesbottom pinned to the wall by her own ninja stars. Then there’s Helga von Guggen being beaten to a bloody pulp. Now these two! It's obvious someone was here before us, but who?”

“Clearly someone with a major grudge against the LAMOS,” said Clover. “Well, look on the bright side! Now we can just take all these losers back to WOOHP without a fuss and get back to shopping!”

“I...suppose.”

There were far too many questions in Sam's mind, and not enough of them were being answered. However, she wasn't able to chew over the matter because her concentration was shattered by Alex scouring the room for something.

“Alex? What's the matter?” she asked.

“W-Where's Oinky?!” Alex hollered. “Oinky?! Oinky! Here, boy! Where are you?!”

“Uh...aren't you the least bit worried about what happened to Chris?”

“Er...o-of course! Totally! I'm sure they're both around here somewhere...”

“I dunno. We've looked around this whole sub and we can't find them!” said Clover.

“That is strange.” Sam put her hand on her chin. “Something really isn't right here...”

“Argh! How many times must I say it?! She's mine!” shouted Terrence, pulling at Tim Scam's hair.
Scam grabbed a good portion of Terrence's and replied, “In your dreams! She loves me the most, you geezer! You're practically old enough to be her grandfather anyway!”

“A-Age is nothing but a number when it comes to love!”

“C-Could somebody please do something about them already?” said Alex wearily.

Hours later, Chris found herself sitting at the smoothie bar inside The Groove. She was enjoying a nice strawberry banana smoothie. While she wordlessly sipped her beverage out of a straw, she noted that it was quite delicious. It was definitely a drink she would order every time she came to the mall.

“You need anything else, miss?” said the attendant running the smoothie bar.

Chris shook her head. “I'm fine. Thank you.”

The man at the counter was about to go when Chris remembered there was something else she required.

“Say, do you have anything a pig could drink?”

The man blinked. “A-A pig?”

“Yeah, you know. Like this one.”

Oinky popped out of Chris' blouse out of the blue, scaring the poor man at the counter half to death.

“N-No. I don't believe we have anything like that,” he mumbled before walking away. His response caused her to shrug and simply go back to her smoothie. It was then Oinky began to gaze at the strawberry and banana concoction with longing eyes, a fact Chris became aware of. She certainly wasn't going to allow some animal to press their lips against her refreshment, so she was intent on ignoring him, presuming he would lose interest soon enough. When he didn't, Chris snarled and began to cave some.

“...I-I'll let you lick the cup after I'm done, but that's all!”

The prospect was more than enough to sate Oinky, the pig squealing in delight.

“Chris?!”

Chris, thinking herself rather popular today, checked behind her. Sam, Alex, and Clover approached her, and while she was tempted to wave, she put her hand down upon noting how strange her friends were acting. She had a good idea what was troubling them as they abruptly hugged her with all their might.

“Hello, girls,” she said in an impassive tone. “You're all crushing me by the way...”

“Where in the world have you been, Chris?! We've been worried sick about you!” said Sam. “Don't tell me you've just been sitting here drinking smoothies all day?!”

“Yeah! Alex said you totally got kidnapped by these bad guys!” said Clover.

“Don't worry about that. It's all in the past now,” Chris told them. Naturally, her response wasn't enough to explain the suspicious circumstances. Fortunately for her, her friends weren't able to press
her answers at the moment thanks to Oinky making another appearance. He leaped out of Chris' clothing and into Alex's arms.

“O-OINKY!!” she happily exclaimed, almost wanting to cry. “You're okay!”

The two embraced in the sort of manner that only they could, and it took everything in Chris' power for her to keep down her drink at the sight of them.

“I apologize, Alex,” she stated. “I didn't mean to keep your pet hostage. Things just...sorta happened, but I do owe Oinky a ton for what he's done for me. You have a good pet, Alex.”

“Er...t-that's okay, Chris! As long as you're both okay!” replied Alex, puzzled at whatever Chris was referring to.

“So, you're saying nothing happened to you?” asked Sam. “Nothing at all?”

Chris frowned. “No, I'm not saying that at all. What I am saying is that even if something did occur, it's not a problem now. Seriously, I'm fine. Since you're all here, why don't we just enjoy a smoothie together?”

“Sounds like a plan to me!” said Alex.

“Count me in!” added Clover. “I could totally use a recharge after all this shopping!”

Sam said, “Er...that actually sounds pretty good! I think I'll have one too!”

The WOOHP spies took a seat next to Chris, and the four began chatting about anything that came to mind. Goofing off like this made Chris both happy and uncomfortable because in the back of her head, she always had to remind herself that these three, bubbly girls before her were the enemy.

...That's right. They work for WOOHP, and I for SOAP. We...won't always be able to hang out like this, will we?

In the middle of a heated debate between Sam and Chris over the future of terraforming Mars, Chris’ Z-Powder beeped a familiar tone. Accordingly, she excused herself, informing her friends that her father wanted a chat with her. That was enough to satisfy all save for Sam, who observed Chris depart with a sour expression.

“Ugh. I guess we'll get a break from all that nerd talk for a little bit,” whined Clover. She had become exhausted merely listening to her friends talk.

“Hmm? What's wrong, Sammy?” asked Alex while she stuffed her face with the smoothie bar's complementary peanuts. “Are you still mad that old lady from the shoe store totally stole the pair of boots you had your eye on?”

“No, that's not it. It's just I could have sworn I've heard that ringtone before...”

“You're talking about Chris' phone, right?” asked Clover. “I mean, if she's gotten a call from her dad before while we were around, of course we'd have heard it before. Anyway, her phone must be really tacky because she never wants to show it to us!”

“Yeah, that's...rather weird.” Sam scratched at her head. “That beeping though...”

“I mean, what's the big deal? Why are you being so weird about Chris all of a sudden?” asked Alex. “Oinky seems to think she's okay!”
The pig squealed to confirm his feelings on the matter.

“Alex, you’re positive she got kidnapped by the LAMOS, right?”

Alex nodded feverishly. “I saw it with my own eyes! They put her in a giant bubble and rolled her away! Oinky was there too! He can confirm it, right, boy?”

Oinky mirrored his owner’s earlier gesture.

“See, that’s what doesn’t make sense to me! How could Chris go through an experience like that, but then act like nothing happened? How in the world did she escape too? She definitely wasn’t on that sub when we got to it! We practically tore that place apart making sure!”

Alex and Clover glanced at Sam in a manner that suggested they couldn’t understand what she was getting so worked up for. This was enough to make her sigh. Even if they weren’t going to press the issue, she certainly was.

#

After heading to the bathroom and making sure it was clear of people who could eavesdrop on her, Chris opened her Z-Powder to see Scar waving at her like he usually did. Also like always, the mere sight of him got her slightly agitated for some reason.

“Ah, Agent C. Congratulations on taking down the LAMOS. From my sources at WOOHP, I heard you did quite a number on the lot of their members. It seems they’ve all been arrested once more, so they should be out of our hair for the near future.”

“Wait, what sources? You have sources in WOOHP?”

“Of course. The world of espionage practically requires you have moles working for the enemy.”

“I see. Well, thanks for the kind words and all, but I feel like you’re wasting them. The LAMOS practically lived up to their name considering how easy it was for me to take them down. Still, I would be lying if I said I wasn’t satisfied after paying them back.”

“Whatever happened to that Tad fellow you mentioned before? You said he managed to escape, right?”

Chris grinned. “Oh, there’s no need to worry about him anymore. I’ve made sure of that.”

#

Tad could think of no better way to enjoy his freedom than spending it on a remote island out in the Pacific Ocean. The sun hanging high in the cloudless sky was bright, the ocean waves were crisp, and the weather was beyond perfect. Sighing contently, he laid back on his comfy chair and drank some pineapple juice through a straw.

“Ah. Now this is the life! It’s like I died and went to heaven! he said with a hearty laugh. He lowered the sunglasses adorning his face and added, “I should take a dip in the water while it’s nice and ready! I have my good friend, Chris, to thank for all of this! Maybe I should send her a postcard or something. Nah!”

A beautiful woman wearing a grass skirt walked over to Tad holding a tray.

“Would you like some more pineapple juice, Master Tad?” she asked.
“Heh. Of course I would!” he replied, taking the glass off the tray. “Ah! Refreshing!”

“Oh, there's just one more thing...”

“Hmm? What do you mean?”

Tad was left horror-struck when the woman suddenly pulled off her face, revealing the visage of Jerry Lewis, leader of WOOHP.

“Sorry, Tad, but your fun in the sun is over!” he informed his former employee. “I believe it's about time you became reaquainted with the WOOHP containment facility!”

Just when Tad assumed things couldn't get worse, WOOHP agents began popping up from all over the place. There were hundreds of them, effectively meaning he had no hope of escaping.

“W-Where did they all come from?! A-And how did you know I was here?!”

Jerry replied, “Let's just say a little 'ladybug' told us where we could find you. Take him away, men!”

Dropping his drink and his jaw, Tad considered his vacation officially ruined. Thankfully, he was positive things couldn’t get any worse. Unfortunately, he also couldn't have been anymore incorrect. WOOHP agents began popping up from everywhere, and after Tad saw there were dozens of them, he was barely able to stop himself from soiling his pants. His state of shock made taking him into custody a breeze for two operatives.

“J-Jerry! You old fool! I'll get you for this! D-Don’t think your containment facility can hold me forever! I’ll find a way to escape! I’ll escape, and then I’ll make you pay!”

Unbothered, Jerry waved and replied, “Tata for now, Tad! It was nice seeing you again!”

Tad roared a few expletives, ones Jerry and his men didn’t want to repeat, while he was tossed into a van for transportation back to WOOHP. Tears welled in his eyes; he was going to miss the luau tonight for sure.

“Well, that should be the last of the escapees. Still, I wonder who that mysterious informant who tipped us off was,” he muttered, stroking his chin. “Well, I suppose it doesn't really matter in the end! As Shakespeare once said, all’s well that ends well!”

Content with that, he began humming and dancing around in his grass skirt, much to the chagrin and discomfort of the agents watching him.

END
Chapter 8

The New New Girl

During an otherwise normal night on the campus of Malibu University, a group of giggling girls were just returning from a huge party hosted in the nearby dorms. The lot of them were exhausted from the festivities though still excited enough to keep their ongoing conversation centered on them.

“Oh my God, that was such a great party!” one of them stated.

“I know right? Liz throws the best parties!” said another. “She said she's totally going to have another one next weekend!”

“We have to be there!” exclaimed a third. “I just bought these new Yves Mont Blanc boots too! I can totally wear them and hopefully impress Dyson if he comes!”

The girl's friends watched in embarrassment as she swooned over Dyson Glee like he were actually there with them at the moment.

“Eh?! You have a crush on Dyson Glee, the track team captain?”

“I heard he already has a girlfriend though...”

“What?! Really?! Y-You girls can't be serious?!”

The girl with the crush on Dyson was about ready to burst into tears after hearing this news, but she and her friends found themselves distracted by the brilliant light directly in front of them. Shielding their eyes, its mere presence baffled them, and they were even more dumbfounded when a fourth girl seemed to step out of it. Her clothing consisted of some kind of uniform someone at a prep school would wear, an attire that stood out greatly at Mali-U. She smiled at the three staring at her blankly and looked around.

“Looks like I arrived at the right place!” she said happily.

“Uh...who in the heck are you supposed to be?” asked one of the other girls. “And where in the heck did you get that outfit? The bargain bin?”

The joke got a bout of laughter out of the girl and her friends. The fourth girl however continued to smile as if she hadn't heard anything. This was enough to kill the mood, with the other three going back to leering at her like she were some sort of freak.

“My name is Tabitha. Tabitha Connor,” the fourth girl stated. “It's a pleasure to meet you! Now then, I'm going to need all of your makeup, earrings, and any other accessories you have, please! I'm going to need them if I want to blend in!”

“...Is she serious?” said one of the other girls. Tabitha simply giggled at the inquisition.

“As much as you could use a makeover, we're totally not going to give you our stuff!” another of the girl's informed their new acquaintance.
“Yeah, get lost already! We don't really want someone seeing us with you...” said the third.

Tabitha’s smile widened as she replied, “Oh, I wasn't asking you three when I requested your things. Now then, hand them over. I am on a very important mission and can't afford to waste anymore time.”

She took a step forward toward the three in front of her. This in turn coerced them to take a step back, and each one of them suddenly got the feeling something was wrong here.

“H-Hey! Back off!” one of them yelled at her.

“Y-Yeah! W-We'll call the police or something!” another added.

Tabitha pressed on, their pleas falling on deaf ears. The sound of the three girls screaming in terror pierced throughout the night just then.

The next morning, and another day chocked full of learning for Chris, arrived. The halls of Mali-U were jam packed with students like always, but Chris wasn't upset about them barring her path like usual. Rather, she was far more agitated at the piece of pink paper in her hand. Her eyes scanned it over and over again, with her under the impression she must have been misreading it.

“This seriously cannot be right,” she mumbled.

Scratching her head, she turned down a corner and glanced up to see Sam approaching her. She too seemed rattled by something. Chris' eyes widened when she noticed a similar sheet of pink parchment in her friend's grasp.

“Huh? I never signed up for this!” Chris overheard Sam saying to herself.

“Don't tell me the exact same thing happened to her?”

“Oh, Chris! Hey! How's it going? Eh...?! T-That piece of paper in your hand!”

Chris nodded. “I'm guessing they switched out one of your classes too.”

“Yeah! I don't even remember signing up for this! Wait, it happened to you too?!”

Their chat was interrupted by the sound of an individual stomping down the hallway. From one side came Clover, who was less than pleased about something or another and angrily complaining to the paper she was holding. From the other came Alex, who was struggling to comprehend what the sheet of paper in her hand was telling her. The four met up at the center, each one of them glancing at the others curiously.

“What's going on here?” Chris asked. “W-Why do you all have the same note as me? D-Don't tell me they changed one of your classes too?!”

Clover and Alex nodded.

“This really sucks!” Clover yelled. “They totally replaced my Fashion Design class with something called 'Advanced Robotics!' I so didn't sign up for something geeky like that!”

“I knew it. They replaced my Pottery class with that same course,” said Chris.

“My Pet Grooming class was replaced by it!” said a sobbing Alex. “I-I don't even like robots!
“They're really scary!”

“Er...even though my American History class got replaced, I'm not really that upset,” Sam stated with a sheepish laugh. “I mean, I've always wanted to learn more about Robotics, so...!”

Her enthusiasm was cooled off by the sharp glares she received from her so-called friends.

“This is serious, Sammy!” Clover shouted.

“I agree. There's no way all this could be a coincidence,” said Chris. “The school couldn't do something like this without our consent either.”

“That's right! We should totally complain to the Dean about this!”

The moment Clover got through saying that, a pair of shadows cast themselves over her, making a chill run down her spine. The four girls turned around to see a pair of identical twins leering down at them.

“Is there a reason you ladies are standing around shooting the breeze instead of going to class?” one of the men asked them.

The other said, “We don't tolerate loitering in this university, ladies!”

“W-Who are these two idiots?” Chris whispered.

“Shh! T-They'll hear you! They're both named Mr. Warden, and they're the Dean of Students around here!” explained Alex. “They’re really mean too!”

Chris had heard murmurs about the Deans from random students, although this was the first time she had seen them in person. They were even more obnoxious than the rumors made them out to be in her opinion.

“Clover, why are you in particular making so much noise in the hallway?!” the Mr. Warden on the right inquired.

The one on the left added, “This is a learning institute, not one of your wild parties! If you're going to be walking these fine halls, we asks that you show some restraint when you carry on with that silly gossip of yours!”

Clover, steaming like a vegetable, held her tongue in fear it would get her expelled.

“W-Wait, maybe you two can help us!” said Sam to the Wardens. Her friends weren't so sure about that. “All of our classes got replaced by this course we've never even heard of! It's called Advanced Robotics!”

“Surely, this must be some kind of mistake,” said Chris.

The Deans inched closer to Chris, making her flinch.

“Hmm. I've never seen you before,” one of them stated.

“Agreed. Are you a troublemaker like your three friends here?” inquired the other.

“We are so not troublemakers!” Alex declared. The Wardens paid her comment no mind. They instead snatched Chris' schedule right out of her hands and studied it carefully.
“Hmm. Hmm...”

“I wish they would stop doing that and actually tell us something useful!” whispered Clover.

Chris’ schedule was shoved back into her face suddenly, with her assuming that meant the Deans had finished their assessment.

“There’s no possibility one of our counselors could have switched one of your classes by accident,” one of them explained.

The other agreed. “You all are probably trying to use this as an excuse to ditch!”

“‘Ditch??’ You can’t be serious!” cried Sam.

“You two seriously aren't going to help us?” said Chris.

“Like we said, there is no error,” replied one Mr. Warden.

“If you four have time to complain, you have time to make it class,” added the other.

“You all wouldn't want to be late for your first day of class after all!” they then stated simultaneously. The Deans began to laugh heartily before going on their merry way. Growling, Chris was tempted to beat them savagely for wasting her time, though she decided against it on the impression it would arouse suspicion.

“Are they always that useless?” she asked.

“Pretty much. They're quite insufferable whenever they think you're up to no good,” replied Sam. “Unfortunately, they always think you’re up to no good.”

“What are we supposed to do now?!” asked Clover.

“Maybe we should just go see the counselor just in case!” said a strangely nervous Alex.

“Alex, relax! We'd just be learning about robots, not meeting one!” Sam assured her.

“I-I know, but it still freaks me out!”

“Freaked out or not, we're wasting time here.” Chris took another hard look at her schedule. There was an aspect about this whole situation that was bothering her. She couldn't placed her finger on it yet. “We might as well just go to this Advanced Robotics and see if the professor there can sort out this whole mess for us.”

“Sounds good to me. Who's the instructor?” asked Sam.

“Hmm. That's strange. It doesn't say on here...”

“Well, I guess we should go anyway.”

“Whatever we do, let's hurry up and do it!” Clover yelled. “I totally didn't plan out a career as a mad scientist, so I have no interest in learning about robots or whatever!”

The four were about to depart, yet they all stopped when they heard someone calling out to them. They then shifted to see a rather tall girl with messy, black hair smiling at them warmly. Weirdly, she was dressed in some sort of school uniform none of the others recognized.
“...We don't have to start wearing uniforms to school, do we?” asked Chris. “I missed the memo if so.”

“Ew! I hope not! That outfit is a fashion disaster!” said Clover, sticking out her tongue in disgust. “Just look at that girl though! She's a freakin' giant!”

Sam shook her head. “She's standing right there, you know!”

“Uh...can we help you?” Alex asked the girl.

“Yes! My name is Tabitha, Tabitha Connor!” the girl said in a cheery tone. It was somewhat grating to Chris’ ears. “I don't mean to bother you all, but do you have any idea where the Advanced Robotics class is? I'm supposed to be there right now! It's my first day here at Malibu University, so I'm a little lost!”

“Small world. That's exactly where we're going,” said Chris. “Just follow us if you want to get there.”

Rather than responding, Tabitha oddly and quietly peered at the four standing before her for a few moments.

“Uh...is there something wrong? Can we help you with something else?” said Alex.

“Nope! I was just trying to confirm you four were who I thought you were!” Tabitha replied casually.

“O-ooo-okay...” said Clover. “Freaky much?”

“W-We really should get going,” said Chris. She was trying, and failing, to hide how creeped out she was.

“Sure thing! Lead the way, Christine!” said Tabitha.

A bead of sweat rolled down Chris’ forehead. “...How do you know my name?”

“Oh, I know all of your names, silly!” Tabitha stated. “Let's see! You're Samantha! You're Clover! And you're Alexandra! And of course, I didn't forget about you, Christine!”

She giggled after this. Chris in turn narrowed her eyelids.

*Something is seriously not right here...*

“T-That's amazing!” said a truly impressed Alex. “A-Are you psychic or something?!”

“A-Amazing? I'd say that's pretty strange!” said Sam, crossing her arms.

Clover, beaming, replied, “It's so obvious that we've become so popular on campus that even new students know who we are!”

“Yeah, I hardly think that's the reason,” said Chris weakly.

The bell signaling the start of class sounded throughout the corridor.

“W-We don't have time for this!” Sam screamed in a panic. “W-We're gonna be late!”

“You're right! Let us depart then!” said Tabitha. She went on ahead, which was strange to Chris
since she distinctly remembered Tabitha saying she had no idea where the Advanced Robotics class even was.

“...I’ve got a really bad feeling about this.”

“Did you say something, Chris?” asked Sam.

“Nothing at all. Come on. We better get going too.”

“O-Okay, but if there are any scary robots, you guys have to totally take them down!” whispered Alex fearfully.

“For the last time, Alex, there’s no such thing as killer robots!” bellowed Clover, who more than had enough of the entire subject.

“That’s what they want you to think!”

“What a fascinating conversation.” Chris, rolling her eyes, left her companions behind and closely trailed after Tabitha. “Seriously, what’s up with that uniform? Clover is right; it really is a fashion disaster.”

#

Chris, Sam, Alex, and Clover arrived at the Advanced Robotics class and were surprised to see it was nothing more than an ordinary classroom. Nothing about it made them think about robots or machines, a fact that made Alex sign in relief.

“Huh? There's nobody here?” said Sam as she glanced at the multitude of empty lab desks inside the room.

“And I thought this whole thing was strange enough...” Chris muttered.

“How come we're the only ones that have to come to this stupid class?!” asked Clover.

“Er...l-looks like we're not so alone anymore, Clover,” said Alex. The others looked over to where she was pointing, letting out a collective groan upon sighting Mandy angrily trudge her way in.

“I never signed up for this stupid class! I swear, when I find the idiot that did this to me, I'm so going to ruin them! Ruin them, I tell you!” she ranted in her usual, aggravating tone. She shrieked in pure horror when she spotted Chris and company peering back at her. “Y-You...! I should have known you losers had something to do with this!”

Chris sighed. “You are such an idiot.”

“W-We didn't do this, Mandy,” explained Sam. “Even if we could move around your classes, why would we?”

Mandy’s whole face reddened. “W-Well...whatever! I'm leaving! I'm not going to stay in a class filled with losers like you four! Besides, I totally have a hair appointment I need to get to right now!”

“Whatever! You won't see us complaining!” said Clover. It was the first time today she actually had something to be happy about. “Don't let the door hit you on the way out!”

Mandy was so furious, she couldn't even think of a good comeback. Her hand, trembling with rage, ripped open the door so she could leave, but the fact that someone was standing in the doorway startled her greatly.
“Hmm? What are you doing?” asked Tabitha Connor. She glanced down at Mandy and smiled, adding, “Class is about to start! You can't leave now!”

“Get outta my way, you fashion reject!” Mandy shouted.

“Sorry, but I can't do that. Please, have a seat! The instructor will be here shortly!”

“I'm not wasting my time here! I have a hair appointment and...!”

Without warning, Tabitha shoved Mandy back so hard, she hit the ground with a loud thud. Tabitha then shut the door behind her, making sure to lock it tight. Still smirking, she walked toward Mandy, who was a little more than frightened at this point.

“Jeez! She must really like Advanced Robotics!” said Alex.

“I...I don't think that's it, Alex!” replied Sam. “Tabitha's acting really strange right now!”

“If pushing Mandy on the floor is wrong, I so don't want to be right!” said Clover.

“...Sam is right. Something is seriously wrong here.” Chris searched around the classroom. “Why hasn't the professor of this course showed up yet? It feels like we're the only ones that's been in this classroom for quite some time too.”

“If there's no teacher that's a good thing! That means we can just leave and go shopping at the mall or something!”

“...You certainly have a one track mind, Clover.”

“Okay, Tabitha, what's going on?!” asked Sam while she pointed at the girl in question.

“Yeah! We're the only ones that get to push Mandy around like that!” Clover proclaimed.

Mandy grit her teeth and snarled at this.

“Please, everyone calm down!” said Tabitha. “Don't you know it's quite rude to try to leave once class is started? Unfortunately, I can't allow anyone to escape from here.”

“What's that supposed to mean?”

Chris had been bothered by Tabitha's unwavering cheeriness up to this point, but now it was the comment she had just heard that was provoking a sense of dread to come over her. Her fears were validated when Tabitha actually removed her entire left hand, revealing the barrel of a gun.

With the same, innocent smile, she tilted her head and politely asked, “Now then, would you all die please?”

“G-Get down!” Chris shouted. The classroom was abruptly riddled with bullets and the clamor of gunfire. Thankfully, Chris and the others managed to get out of harm's way in time because they hit the floor the second Chris told them to. Mandy, having already been on the ground, was spared as well, though Chris saw that wasn't going to last long if the girl continued to be paralyzed by fear.

“W-What in the world is going on?!?” she hollered, covering her head with her arms.

“D-Dammit! Get over here! Do you want to die or something?!”

Chris grabbed the back of Mandy's shirt and dragged her underneath the table she and the others
were taking cover behind.

*I cannot believe I just saved Mandy of all people...*

Tempted to scold the girl some more for her inaction moments ago, Chris held her tongue when she took heed that Mandy was actually sobbing.

“W-What's going on?! Who is that girl?! Why is she trying to kill us?!”

“H-How should I know?!” said Chris, shoving Mandy off of her. “W-Would you calm down already?! You're just going to lead that psycho out there to us!”

“Something tells me we've just been led into some kind of trap!” declared Sam.

Chris nodded. “We're in agreement then. You girls have any enemies who'd want to do something like this?”

“Honestly, there's too many people to name,” replied a laughing Alex.

“I can't...believe you're making jokes at a time like this.”

“Argh! You four losers better do something about this!” yelled Mandy. She then held out her fingers and added, “I just chipped nail back there, and I'm gonna be *really* upset if I break another!”

“Forget your nail! We...!”

“Wait! Girls, listen! It's quiet!” Clover whispered. Everyone ceased talking and soon understood Clover was spot on. The sounds of ammunition crashing into everything was gone, replaced with a somewhat unnerving silence that made the five hold their breaths. They supposed it would too much to hope that Tabitha was gone.

“S-Someone go out there and see where she went!” said Alex quietly.

“No way!” Clover told her. “Sam, you go!”

Sam looked around anxiously. “Er...I think Chris should be the one to check!”

Chris retorted, “...As much as I'd like to, I think I'll just stay under here...”

The four's decision was made for them when the desk shielding them was lifted up off the ground. Hoisting it over her head with ease and then tossing it away, Tabitha laid her sights on them.

“There you are! Didn't I already inform you girls that I can't allow any of you to escape?”

“Yeah, I think this would be a good time to RUN!!!” screamed Sam. Everyone made a mad scramble in the direction of the entryway, though Tabitha beat them to the punch by leaping high into the air and landing right in front it, cracking the flooring underneath her in the process.

“Huh? Where are you guys going?” she curiously asked. “Please, if you all could just sit still for a moment, I'll have you finished off lickety split!”

She pointed her gun arm at them again, but it was Alex who struck first. She punched Tabitha square in the jaw, prompting her friends to celebrate. Nevertheless, they quieted when Alex jerked her hand back and began shaking it profusely.

“Ow! T-That really hurt!” she cried. “Wait, that really hurt? Why did that hurt?!”
Unfazed, Tabitha stated, “Hmm? You're still trying to resist? I don't get it. I mean, I'm going to destroy you all anyway! Why make things difficult, sillies?”

Sam and Clover tried attacking her next, striking Tabitha upside the head with a pair of high kicks. Their blows garnered the same result as Alex’s as their limbs recoiled.

“A-Agh! T-That smarts!” said a teary-eyed Sam.

“S-She's like made of metal or something!” said Clover.

“M-Metal...?” repeated Chris. Something came to mind. “No, that couldn't be...!”

“Would you losers just get rid of her already?!” yelled Mandy, who was hiding behind another desk.

“What do you think we're trying to do?!” Clover irately replied. “Why don’t you try nagging her to death with that horrible voice of yours?! It totally works on us!"

Sam, Alex, and Clover got into fighting stances and prepared to take on Tabitha with an air of caution this time around.

“I don't know who or where you came from, but we're going to stop you!” declared Sam.

“Wait.” Chris moved in front of the three, catching their attention. “I suggest we make a tactical retreat for the time being. Call it a hunch, but I'd say Tabitha isn't exactly human. If that really is the case, then we're overmatched here.”

“Oh, how did you know? That's amazing, Christine! I can't believe you've figured that out already!” Tabitha sounded truly impressed, albeit Chris wasn't exactly flattered. “That's right! I'm not human but an android! Pretty cool, huh?”

Alex, growing frightened, hid behind Sam and Clover. “S-So she's a robot?!”

“I guess that would explain the gun in her arm,” said Sam.

“And her horrible sense of fashion!” added Clover.

“I told you girls there would be killer robots! I totally told you!” howled Alex.

“This isn’t exactly the time for 'I told you so!' Anyway, now that we've gotten that out of the way, who was the individual that sent you?” Chris said to Tabitha. “I doubt you built yourself and just decided to kill us for the fun of it.”

Tabitha frowned apologetically. “Sorry, but I'm not supposed to say! Since you're about to be destroyed anyway, I guess you don't really have to worry about that!”

“How can she just say something like that in such a cheery voice?”

Tabitha began shooting up the place again, which in turn forced everyone to lower ground once more. Probing for an escape route, Chris found it upon spotting some closed windows.

“Over there! We just have to make it over to the windows!”

Sam nodded. “You heard her, ladies! Let's go!”

“What?! Are you losers crazy?!” Mandy hollered. “We're on the third floor, in case you've forgotten!”
Her countenance became pale when Chris glared at her with complete and utter disdain.

“Alright. We'll just leave you here with the killer android then. I'm one hundred percent certain none of the others would complain.”

Mandy hastily shook her head. “O-Okay, fine, but if I break anything because of you, I'm totally calling my Mom's lawyer!”

Chris simply rolled her eyes at this.

As Tabitha's attack persisted, Chris and the others carefully edged their way over to the other side of the room, eventually reaching the windows. Fortunately, the gunfire had blown them to pieces, making jumping out of the gaping hole they used to be a simple matter. Tabitha watched her targets disappear and rushing after them, she gazed out of the opening.

“Huh? Where'd they go? That's weird! I thought they would have splattered all over the place, but I don't see them! Oh well! I'm sure they must be down there somewhere! They can't run from me forever! Teehee!”

She tilted her head to the side a bit, being quite certain of her coming victory.

#

Never in her life did Chris imagine hiding behind some bushes would be so intense. Carefully peeking her head out of them, she was relieved to see that Tabitha was nowhere to be found. She doubted the android had given up her search of she and her friends, but at least for the moment, they could catch their breaths.

“There's no telling how long it'll take her to track us down,” she said. “We need to come up with a plan. Sooner would be better than later.”

“W-Wait a second! W-Who was that girl?!” asked a visibly shaken up Mandy. Those around her might have taken pleasure in her current temperament if it weren’t for their current predicament.

“Didn't we already go through this before?! How in the world should I know?! And does it really matter right now?! She’s trying to kill us, remember?!”

“R-Relax, Chris,” said Sam, patting her on the back. “Yelling at Mandy here isn't helping, though I certainly can't blame you.”

Mandy's became incensed. “W-What's that supposed to mean?!”

Sam ignored her. “We need to think with clear heads here.”

“I guess you have a point,” Chris replied, nodding. “Tabitha must have some kind of weakness. If we just find it, maybe we can...”

“Wait a second! That girl is trying to get you losers, isn't she?!” screamed Mandy out of the blue. “I'm just an innocent bystander then!”

“Didn't Tabitha attack her first though?” said Alex.

Clover grinned at this. “I wouldn't be shocked if that robot was actually going for Mandy instead of us!”
“Tsk! Why in the world would someone want to go after me?!”
Mandy got her response when everyone began to stare at her blankly.

“Where did Tabitha even come from anyway?” asked Alex. “She’s super creepy!”
“I dunno, but I’m gonna try to call Jerry! Maybe he has some clue what’s going on!"
Sam pulled out her X-Powder, but held up when she realized she was about to speak into it in front of Chris

“Jerry, huh?” said Chris. She had to block the disdain etched into the lines of her face at hearing the name by turning away.

Sam gingerly replied, “Er...y-yeah! Jerry’s our boss at the...coffee shop we work at! I-Isn’t that right, girls?!”

Only half listening, Clover and Alex merely nodded. Though the lie was rather poor, Chris could do nothing but chuckle at it. Acknowledging it would blow her cover.

“H-Huh? I can't get through to him!” said Sam as she pressed a number of buttons on her X-Powder.

“Clover! Alex! You two try!”

They both did, but were puzzled when they too were unable to get in contact with WOOHP's leader.

“All those times Jerry bothers us during something important, these stupid things work, but when we actually need to talk to him, they spazz out on us!” said Clover testily.

“Maybe they got damaged when we were running away earlier?” pondered Alex.

“I doubt it. It's like the signal is being blocked by something!” said Sam. “How could that be? Our X-Powders should be on a specific frequency that can’t be messed with!”

Without anyone noticing, Chris reached for her Z-Powder and found that whatever was happening was also preventing her from reaching Scar.

*Looks like Sam was right on the money about something jamming the signal. Could Tabitha be behind this somehow?*

“Why are you all trying to fix your makeup at a time like this?!” asked Mandy. “Shouldn't you be thinking of a way to get us out of this mess?!”

“Quiet, you!” Chris snapped. “You really are trying to get us killed, aren’t you?!”

“Found you!” said a perky tone from above the five. Everyone gradually looked up, already knowing what was there, to see Tabitha beaming in their direction. They then got rolled aside before she punched a mammoth-sized hole in the pavement, one that would have reduced them into paste no question.

“See?! *This* is why I told you to shut your big, fat mouth!” Chris screamed at Mandy.

“T-This isn't my fault! I'm totally a helpless victim here!” Mandy pleaded.

“I’m still tempted to strangle you to death before Tabitha can do it, you...!”

“We can point fingers at one another later!” screamed Sam. “Just run for now!”
The five continued to sprint for their lives while gunfire scattered past them. Random students and staff on campus, clueless to the current state of affairs, got out of the way of the ongoing chase lickety-split.

“We need to go somewhere where there are no people!” said Clover. “They'll just get hurt if we stay out here!”

“Great idea!” replied Sam. She inspected the area and then pointed to a nearby building. “There! The auditorium! It should be mostly empty right now!”

“I don't see how going inside a confined space helps our cause!” shouted Chris.

“Do you have a better idea?!”

“Point taken. Regardless, wherever we go, we need to do it now because that stupid robot is catching up!”

Everyone glimpsed back, and all let out cries of alarm at Tabitha's remarkable speed. She was closing the gap between she and her quarry effortlessly.

“Hi!” she stated, rushing up right next to Chris. “Say, I heard you’re a member of the Mali-U Track team! That’s totally awesome! Um...but that doesn’t mean you can run from me!”

“You've already said that!”

Now agitated, Chris roughly slammed her shoulder straight into Tabitha. This knocked the android right off the path and into a row of bushes. Discombobulated, Tabitha smacked her lips and watched while the people she was after got away for the second time today.

“Aw, phooey! How come they're so good at running away?”

#

The five, wanted girls on campus squandered little time in piling inside the expansive auditorium and shutting the door behind them. Soon afterward, Sam and Chris grabbed some nearby items and used them to make a barricade in front of the entrance.

“I sure hope this holds,” said Sam after they finished.

“I doubt it will,” replied Chris. “Tabitha's too strong.”

“Jeez. You don't have to always be such a downer about things...”

“I just consider myself a realist, I suppose.”

“Those were really nice moves out there, Chris!” said Alex. She flashed her friend a thumbs up, which made Chris blush. “Way to show that tin can who's boss!”

“What are we supposed to do now?!” asked Mandy, crossing her arms and pouting her lips. “You aren't actually expecting me to stay in this dusty place for long, right?”

“Ugh! I think I'd rather go back outside and totally take my chances with that robot than listen to her anymore!” exclaimed a scarlet-faced Clover.

“Listen, Tabitha is never going to stop looking for us. If she’s really a robot that’s been programmed to take us down, that much is certain,” Sam told everyone. “If we're going to get her out of our hairs
“Once and for all, we need to stop her here and now!”

“Really? C-Can't we just ask her to go shopping...with us?” asked Clover timidly.

“H-How are we supposed to fight off a super strong and scary robot without any gadgets?!” said Alex. Her voice shook some.

“Good point. It'd be suicide without one or two of them,” Chris muttered. There was a brief silence where it took a couple moments for her to comprehend her mistake. “U-Uh...! H-Hahaha! Er...w-what I meant to say was that I wished we had a weapon of some sort to fight off Tabitha with!”

One of Sam’s eyebrows rose inquisitively. “…I see.”

“You know, I've been wondering. How come that robot is after Chris and Mandy?” asked Alex just then. “I could see why it would be after us, but what do they have to do with anything?”

“That's what I want to know,” Chris stated under her breath. It was evident to that whoever had sent Tabitha had a grudge on she and everyone present. That helped narrow the list of potential subjects down greatly, and chewing on the matter some more, there was solely one, demented person that came to mind who had the motive and resources to do all this.

Loud banging on the doors broke Chris' train of thought.

“We've got company!” Sam stated. “Mandy! Chris! Hurry up and hide! We'll take care of Tabitha somehow! She might be an android, but I doubt she’s invincible!”

“Er...y-you're not including...us in that 'we', are you?” said Clover, twiddling her thumbs. Sam glowering at her was the only answer she needed, and she and Alex groaned.

“You don't have to tell me twice!” said Mandy, who disappeared on the double. Chris, on the other hand, remained put.

“Huh? What are you doing?!” Alex asked her.

“Yeah! Get moving, missy!” Clover added.

“I don't think so,” Chris replied. “I might not look it, but I can handle myself in a fight. Besides, something tells me you girls are going to need all the help you can get. You said Tabitha wasn’t invincible, Sam, but neither are you three.”

Sam sighed at this. “Well...I guess you’ve got a point. Okay, you can help, but just be careful!”

“Don't worry about me. If anything, I'm more concerned about you three.”

At that moment, the entryway to the auditorium and everything that had been barricading it were sent flying past Chris and the WOOHP spies. Tabitha skipped inside the building afterward, humming a sweet tune.

“There you all are!” she exclaimed. “Could you please not run anymore? Chasing you all around campus is actually quite exhausting!”

“I didn't think robots could get tired!” Alex said.

“Or tell jokes,” added Chris.

“All this will be over in a flash, so just sit tight! Besides, don't you think running away some more
would be...incomprehensible?” said Tabitha.

“That's what a bucket of bolts like you might think, but we aren't giving up!” Sam cried. Chris observed her friends charge at Tabitha, and she shook her head at their futile attempts to hurt the android. Tabitha responded by smacking her attackers back.

“...Their stupidity really amazed me sometime. You think they would’ve learned punching and kicking is a no go,” mumbled Chris with a shrug. “That android has to have some kind of weakness though. If I can just find it…”

Tabitha suddenly aimed her gun arm at Chris. “Hold still please!”

Chris didn't flinch at this, paying more mind to Alex aiming some sort of pink hairdryer at the android. An intense gust of hot air then sent Tabitha flying back.

“I forgot I had Wind Tunnel 9000 Turbo Blast Hair Dryer in my bag!” Alex rubbed the back of her head and laughed, whereas her friends gave her an expressionless glance. “O-Oopsie!”

As Tabitha began to stir again, Chris shouted, “It's fine! Just shoot her again!”

Alex nodded her head and focused the gadget at Tabitha once more before pulling back on the trigger. The severe heat was enough to slow the android down, yet Tabitha was able to withstand it as she gradually pressed forward. Parts of her skin began to melt, revealing a metallic exoskeleton. The sight of it, while surprising, proved to Chris and the WOOHP agent that their theory on Tabitha not being quite human was correct.

“Uh...I don’t think it's working!” Alex shouted.

“Don’t you let go of that trigger, Alex!” cried Clover.

“Can't you turn that thing on a higher level or something?!” asked Chris.

“Not without it melting her hands!” Sam replied. “Just...keep going, Alex!”

Smiling, Tabitha said, “Your efforts to resist are futile! You should totally just give up already!”

The skin around one of her eyes had been heavily damaged, enough so that a glowing, red eye was revealed hiding behind it.

“Alright, I've had enough of this!” declared Chris all of the sudden. She reached onto her person and retrieved her father's dagger, next rushing at Tabitha without so much as a word to her now baffled friends.

“H-Hey! Get back here!” yelled Sam. “What, are you crazy?!?

“Duh! Of course she is, Sammy!” added Clover. “She’d totally have to be to not complain about all this heat frizzing up her hair like it is!”

Alex promptly switched off the Wind Tunnel 9000, not wanting to burn Chris to a crisp. At the same time, Chris leaped into the air and stabbed a dazed Tabitha in the chest with her weapon, flooring the both of them.

“Agh! That hurt!” moaned Chris, lying on top of the unmoving android. “Did...that do it?”

Tabitha unexpectedly moved her head toward Chris in a robotic manner. “Nice move! Too bad it won't matter in the end when I destroy you all!”
Chris had to cover her mouth with her hand to bottle up the drawn out scream she emitted. She afterward jumped to her feet and away from the seemingly immortal Tabitha.

“You gotta be kidding me!” she grumbled. “There has to be someway to stop her!”

“I'm afraid there isn't, my dear Christine!” said an individual, one who wasn't in plain sight.

“Who's there?! Show yourself!” Sam ordered.

The person cackled. “What do you mean? I'm right here, Samantha!”

“Hey! There he is!” said Clover, pointing upward. The mysterious individual then dropped down from the rafters and landed next to Tabitha.

“I should have known!” said Chris. She began gritting her teeth instinctively at the man standing before her. “Heisenberg!”

The former physics teacher turned villain derived much enjoyment out of her reaction to his presence.

“It's been some time, Christine,” he said. “Tell me, how are you getting along with my lovely Tabitha here? I have to say that she's by far my greatest creation.”

“Hey, you're that wacko science teacher that was trying to take over the world with robots!” said Clover.

“He's also one of the people that managed to escape from WOOHP the other day!” said Sam. “He might have something to do with the LAMOS then!”

“'LAMOS?''' Heisenberg echoed. His voice was filled to the brim with curiosity. “Hmm. That name does sound familiar. Ah! That's right. That was that rather eccentric group that approached me and asked me to join them. While I considered it, I had to decline on the grounds my talents would be wasted on the likes of them. Besides, my time was better spent coming up with a plan for revenge against you girls.”

“I had a feeling that was the case,” said Chris. “I thought it might've been you behind all this at first, but that robot of yours was so well made, I figured a hack like you couldn’t possible be the culprit. Guess I was wrong.”

Heisenberg adjusted his glasses a bit. “Yes, you and everyone else who ever dared question my genius. Tabitha here is the fruit of my lifelong efforts. Her designation is H-800, model number 1000. She will be the first in a long line of all powerful androids I plan on creating to assist me in my dreams of world domination! While I admit my last scheme ended in complete and utter failure, no one can even dare to hope to stop me this time, not when I have my precious Tabitha!”

“I see your time in the WOOHP containment facility didn't knock the crazy out of you,” said Sam as she shook her head. “Still, I'm a little worried. We can't even beat one of his robots! How are we supposed to defeat an entire army?!”

“Tsk! I'm beginning to believe he’s bluffing!” Chris informed her. “There's no way he could have built Tabitha when you think about it! You've seen her in action! He could hardly put together a functioning can opener beforehand, let alone build an army of androids as strong as her!”

Heisenberg growled at this. “You never did appreciate my talents, Christine! No matter. You can try to deny my genius all you want, but I believe the results of it are staring you right in the face, ready
to snap your neck at a moment's notice. Perhaps you should use that last moment wisely, girls.”

Tabitha beamed at this, pleased with being praised by her creator.

Fixing his glasses again, Heisenberg added, “I decided to disguise her as an ordinary college student
in the hope she would be able to catch you four off guard. I figured she would have finished
disposing of you already, but I suppose I underestimated you all somewhat. Perhaps you four being
able survive this long is a good thing though. How else would I be able to see your demise with my
own eyes?”

“This guy sure likes to hear himself talk,” Clover whispered.

“Seriously! This is so like sitting in history class. I'm about to fall asleep over here!” replied a
yawning Alex.

“...I'm not certain you girls are actually taking this seriously...” said Heisenberg, annoyed. “I'm not
fond of being made a fool of, you know.”

“So we know why Tabitha is here now, but you've neglected to explain one thing, doctor!” said
Sam. “Why go after Mandy and Chris? What do they have to do with this?”

“Heh. You are wrong if you believe Christine to be an innocent party here, Samantha.”

“Huh? W-What are you talking about?”

Chris theorized if Heisenberg actually had the audacity to reveal her secret to her friend here and
now. He certainly had no reason not to, and judging by his expression, he seemed all too ready to do
so.

Instead, Heisenberg simply stated, “Let's just say Chris isn't the girl she claims to be.”

Sam, Clover, and Alex shot Chris a glance of confusion mixed with suspicion that made the recipient
more than a little uncomfortable. She had to change the subject and fast.

“Mandy...!” she blurted out. “W-What about Mandy?! Why try to hurt her?!"

“Oh, that girl. Her involvement in this was a simple error on my part. You see, I needed a way to
gather you four together without it looking too suspicious, so I went into the Malibu University
database and created that fake Advanced Robotics class. I also made a few alterations to your
schedules. In doing so, I incidentally changed a fifth girl's classes. I suppose that must've been her.”

“So, let me get this straight: you made us deal with that walking headache of a girl known as Mandy
because of a mistake?! I was already ready to punch your teeth in, but now I might break a few of
your bones while I'm at it!”

“Hmph. Is that anyway for a proper lady such as yourself to speak to someone my age? While I'd
love to see you try all that, Christine, I'm sure you're well aware by now that my lovely Tabitha here
is all but indestructible. I don't see how you could possibly come after me when you can't even get
past her!”

Waving his arm, Heisenberg gave Tabitha to signal to strike. She was more than eager to fulfill this
command while she came in for the kill.

“Incoming!” Sam shouted. The four avoided the android's swift attacks, although they were
uncertain for how long they could keep doing so.
“What are we going to do, guys?!” said Alex. “We're toast at this rate!”

“Yeah, I just bought this outfit, and I don't think it'll look too good with our blood on it!” Clover cried.

“Perhaps one of you should make your escape while the rest try in vain to fight of my Tabitha,” said Heisenberg with a few chuckles. “You’d ensure your own survival at least.”

“None of us would ever do something that despicable!” Sam retorted.

“Speak for yourself,” said Chris out of earshot. She had to admit that Heisenberg's plan, while cowardly, low down, and dirty, was likely the best option available to her. At this rate, Tabitha really would end up finishing them off. Having nothing to gain from sticking her neck out for her enemies, her eyes casually made their way to the now gaping hole leading toward the outside.

*If I'm lucky, they'll all end up getting rid of one another for me...*

Still, she felt an overwhelming sense to pay Heisenberg back for all the grief he had caused her today. Leering up to the ceiling, an idea hit her just then.

“Hey, Alex? You think you can make it to the top level of the auditorium where those spotlights are?”

“Huh? Er...s-sure! Why though?”

“Do you have a plan, Chris?” asked Sam.

“Something like that. We need to hurry though before Heisenberg catches on. Once you make it up there, Alex, I'll let you know what to do next.”

Alex, though baffled, did as requested and soon went on her way.

Heisenberg shook his head, disappointed. “It doesn't matter what you girls are planning because my lovely Tabitha here is unstoppable. Did I not make that clear? If you desire, I'll ask her to make your deaths a tad less excruciating if you grovel before me.”

“Yeah, just keep dreaming, old timer!” exclaimed Chris.

“H-Hey! Where are you going this time?!” asked Sam when Chris made a mad dash at Tabitha.

“Stalling for what?” said Sam and Clover.

“Told you she was crazy!” Clover then chimed.

Meanwhile, Chris proceed to slash wildly at the android with her dagger.

“Just die already!” she proclaimed. Her blows, while possessing all the strength she could muster behind them, were merely glancing off Tabitha's rock hard skin.

Tabitha sweetly informed her, “Sorry! Being destroyed isn't in my programming!”

Chris' assault was halted after Tabitha reached out and wrapped her fingers around the SOAP spy's neck. Her grip was both tight and unrelenting, with Chris feeling the air being literally drawn out of her lungs.
“Let...me...go!” she managed to wheeze out.

“Sorry, but I can't do that! I have to destroy you after all!”

Sparring Chris from such a fate was the timely arrival of Sam and Clover. They nailed Tabitha in the head with a pair of flying kicks. Despite this doing nothing to hurt the android, it was enough to force her into releasing Chris, who hit the floor gasping for air.

“Thanks...for the save...” she muttered.

“Clover’s right! You really must be crazy or something!” exclaimed Sam. Momentarily upset, she calmed and even smiled prior to offering her hand to help Chris up.

Hesitantly, Chris accepted the gesture. “I admit, that was rather stupid.”

“Exactly!” said Clover. “That's why we should work together!”

“...Fine,” Chris answered after mulling the suggestion over. “I'm going to need your assistance luring that android toward the center of the room. Think you can do that without getting your heads blown off?”

“I guess this is apart of your plan too?” asked Sam. Chris nodded. “Well, I guess we'll just have to follow your lead for now. We just have to get her to come to the center, right? Easy enough!”

“Yeah...easy...” muttered Clover, not sounding nearly as enthusiastic.

Growing frustrated, Heisenberg shouted, “Tabitha! Finish these pesky spies off once and for all! I am a very busy man and have no interest in waiting all day for you to end this!”

“Sorry! I'll totally destroy them right now, boss!”

She began shooting at Chris, Sam, and Clover, causing the three to dive behind a row of seats for cover.

“Quick! Plan! Now!” yelled Sam.

“We already have a plan!” Chris informed her. “L-Look, w-we just need something to use as a weapon! Something better than this old dagger I have!”

“Don't look at me! Alex is the only one with something as far as I know!”

“Oh, I know! We could use my new Yves Mont Blanc boots!” said Clover. She held up the shoes and Chris whistled, noting they were quite nice. “Er...on second though. I just bought these and really wouldn't want anything to happen to them...”

Chris rolled her eyes so hard at this, she assumed they would get stuck in the back of her skull.

Without warning, Tabitha landed in front of them. Before Sam and Clover could even react to this, Tabitha picked them up by their shirts and tossed them away. She then reversed back to Chris.

“Wow! You're still trying to resist?” Tabitha inquired as she caught Chris' punch in her hand effortlessly. “I so don't get it! Don't you know you and your friends don't have any chance at beating me? How come you're still trying though? I'm really confused!”

Chris let out a cry of anguish when Tabitha squeezed down on her fist. A number of faint, popping sounds were heard.
“O-Okay, yeah! T-That’s definitely a broken finger or two!” a cringing Chris hollered.

“Good! Now then, finish her!” Heisenberg commanded.

“You got it, boss!”

Tabitha was about to strike, but she and Heisenberg were left perplexed when Chris let out a number of confident laughs.

“I hadn't even realized it when the others and I dived under those seats. Looks like my plan worked better than I thought!”

“Huh? What are you talking about?”

Looking skyward, Chris shouted, “Alex, now! Use that hair dryer on those spotlights!”

Alex got the message loud and clear and turned her Wind Tunnel 9000 on the spotlights hanging in front of her. The intense heat from the gadget melted the wiring holding the spotlights up. They responded by tumbling downward. Tabitha glancing up to view them gave Chris the perfect opportunity to escape her grasp, and she leaped out of the way right as the multitude of spotlights crashed down on the android. Heisenberg braced himself but was far more horrified by what just transpired.

“N-No! H-How can this be?! How could my perfect creation be destroyed?!”

Chris grinned. “Looks like you’re still a hack after all, Doc.”

“Y-You! What have you done?!” exclaimed Sam.

“Yeah! That plan was genius, Chris!” exclaimed Sam.

“But I broke all my nails when Tabitha threw me!” said Clover. She sniffled and held up her fingers to show everyone just how serious her claim was. Pointing to Heisenberg, she fiercely added, “You owe me a manicure, buddy!”

“That's not the only thing he owes us!” With a manic countenance, Chris ogled Heisenberg in a fashion that made him shudder. “Now that Tabitha is out of our hair, I think we can pay this imbecile back for nearly having us killed, ladies!”

Stepping back, he cried, “G-Get away from me!”

“Not a chance! You're going to regret showing your face here today!”

Beating Heisenberg into a bloody pulp was the sole thing occupying her mind, hence the reason she didn’t regard something vaulting out of the wreckage beside her. It was Tabitha, or what was left of her at least. She was quite the sight, having been reduced to her silver exoskeleton. In spite of this, she appeared perfectly functional.

“Oh, come on! You’ve gotta be kidding me!” cried Sam.

“Tsk! What in the hell does it take to stop that monster?!” added Chris.

Tabitha merrily stated, “Resistance is futile, Christine! I'm gonna get you eventually!”

A cold sweat saturated on Chris’ forehead. Not wanting to admit it out loud, she was seriously questioning her chances of survival. She had thrown basically everything she had in the tank at
Tabitha, yet nothing had worked. Panic started to replace logical thought in her head.

“Chris, catch!” said Alex, tossing the Wind Tunnel 9000 at her friend. “Don't give up!”

Alex's words of encouragement resounded within Chris oddly. It felt illogical to hold out hope for victory at this point, yet the way Sam, Clover, and even Alex were desperately telling her to fight on with their eyes was enough to make her believe she could accomplish the impossible.

“...I swear, their stupidity is contagious.”

Tabitha lunged at her, whereas as Heisenberg was confident his revenge would be exacted at last. In the interval, Chris focused herself before squeezing back on the Wind Tunnel 9000's trigger and blasting the android out of the air. Chris kept up her offensive, walking right up to Tabitha, firing upon her at point blank range. Tabitha held her arms up in an effort to block this, but her exoskeleton began to melt and crackle. Sparks and electricity erupted from her person, and her upbeat speech became slurred.

“Y-You will...be...terminated...C-Christine! P-Please...d-die...now!”

Finally, Tabitha became silent. Her body slumped and fell to its side, while the red glow from her eyes faded. Chris dropped the gadget in her grasp in the aftermath. Her hands had been burned slightly by it.

“You're terminated, loser!”

“Is it...really over?” asked Clover. She was covering her vision with her hands, though she peeked through the slits in her fingertips.

Tiredly, Sam replied, “I certainly hope so...”

“It’s stuff like this I’ve been trying to warn you guys about all these years!” said Alex.

“...Impossible! My lovely Tabitha should have truly been unstoppable!” said Heisenberg. He sank to his knees. “Where did I fail?! Where did I make a mistake?! I-I must start over! Indeed, my Tabitha will have to be even stronger! I'll have to improve on the plans! More durable armor! Smarter AI! I will not lose next time!”

“Sorry, Doc, but there isn’t going to be a next time!” Chris stated. She tried pouncing on him, but dodged this and then made a bee-line for the exit. Chris, Sam, and Clover made chase.

“That bastard! He really thinks I’m gonna let him get away?!” snarled Chris.

“Y-You might want to relax there,” stated Sam. She could almost see the foam coming out of Chris’ mouth.

“That guy sure can run for someone who’s so old!” said Clover.

“Look out below!”

Heisenberg reached the exit yet never made it through thanks to Alex landing on top of him out of the blue.

“Ouch! I think I broke my butt...” she stated while rubbing the afflicted area.

Moaning, Heisenberg mumbled, “M-Maybe this whole revenge thing isn't worth it in the long run...”
“Well, that’s one way to stop him,” said a wide-eyed. “That was crazy though, Alex! You could have broken your neck!”

“If we’re lucky, that ruptured a kidney or two of his,” added Chris jubilantly. Something rolled out of one of Heisenberg’s pockets just then. Chris reached down to it and retrieved a small, crumpled parchment. Much to her shock, it was detailed schematics on Tabitha's design.

*Finders keepers. Scar should find this rather interesting.*

“Say, what's that?” asked Clover, who was peering over Chris’ shoulder.

“Nothing.” Chris quickly put the paper away. “Just his...grocery list.”

Heisenberg let out an irate snarl while a pair of WOOHP agents placed him in handcuffs and led him out of the auditorium unceremoniously. Jerry Lewis surveyed him go ahead of moving his attention to another group of his men collecting the broken pieces of the being once known as Tabitha Connor for future research. He became dejected upon tallying the extensive damage done to Malibu University property, damages he was going to have to pay off in secret.

“You girls certainly know how to make a mess of thing. And the school just finished reconstruction on this auditorium too,” he said as he faced an apprehensive Sam, Alex, and Clover. “Still, you managed to stop Heisenberg once again and prevented his android from causing too much trouble. Most importantly, the three of you are unharmed. Good job, Spies.”

“Thanks Jer, though I could really use a nap right about now,” said a relieved but exhausted Sam. “I was starting to get worried there for a sec that we really were going to kick the bucket!”

Clover, sulking, said, “And my new boots ended up getting ruined anyway!”

Jerry chuckled. “WOOHP will get you a new pair of shoes free of charge. Consider it a reward for your efforts here today, Clover.”

“Yes,” said Clover, sulking even more.

“Really?! Thanks, Jer! You know, I've never really meant it when I've called you a boring, old coot!”

Frowning, Jerry didn't bother indulging the remark with a response.

“What are you going to do with Heisenberg now?” asked Alex.

“We'll be taking him back to the containment facility, hopefully for good this time around. However, we'll be putting him in a cell by himself. We've seen what happens when he's given the chance to collaborate with other prisoners. We'll also have to erase the memories of anyone that saw what happened here today.”

“Good. I don't think Chris would really want to remember something like this anyway,” said Sam.

“Chris?” asked Jerry.

“Oh, she's our friend who...” Sam stopped and glanced around, realizing Chris wasn't among them anymore. “Huh?! Where'd she go?! She was just standing right next to us a minute or two ago!”

“Wow. She’s *really* good at just vanishing!” said Alex, astonished.

“Maybe she went to change her outfit? I’m honestly thinking of doing the same,” said Clover as she
glanced herself over.

As mysterious as Chris' disappearance was, it looked to verify that Sam's steadily growing suspicions concerning her friend were accurate. Excusing herself, she rushed out of the auditorium. She had a good idea where Chris was presently.

#

Chris, retreating to the safety of her dorm, winced as she placed her singed hands into a bucket teeming with ice in an effort to reduce the pain and swelling. It was at that point she pondered paying Heisenberg back for all the misfortune he had caused her was really worth the amount of trouble she had experienced today.

“I was a bit too sloppy back there. Sam and the others would have to be idiots not to suspect something of me after everything that happened. Then again, these are the same girls that seem more concerned shopping and talking about boys constantly...”

She reached into the drawer next to her bed and retrieved a roll of white bandage tape, using it to dress her wounds. With them taken care of, her only problem would be trying to come up with an excuse for her fleeing the scene without a word considering her peers were bound to ask.

“Maybe I should have gone to Nurse Melody instead...”

Her body and her mind were completely spent. Without really thinking about it, she collapsed onto her sheets and gradually closed her heavy eyelids.

“Good thing I got out of there before WOOHP showed up to haul Heisenberg off. No way I was going to deal with that sort of headache. Then again, I suppose they're going to be searching for me anyway since I was a witness to what happened. They'll probably want to erase my memory while they're at it. Hmm. Maybe I should talk to Scar and see if I can get out of this school before that happens. I think my undercover mission has run its course.”

Her dorm became darker and darker, which in turn made her to sit up. It was then she saw that sun was going down, ushering in night fall. She had been so busy fighting Tabitha that she hadn't noticed how fast time was flying by.

“...Why didn't I just let those girls get killed back there?” she muttered, rolling over on her bed. “They've been nothing but a thorn in my side. Heisenberg getting rid of them for me would have been nothing but a boon. It doesn't make any sense...”

She moved her bandaged hand up to her face and got the impression that there must have been something wrong with her. Her mindset and priorities had been screwed up ever since she started this mission, so she decided once she got away from the college atmosphere, she would be herself again.

“I can just be a normal spy again. That’s right...”

That didn't seem right nonetheless. In fact, she felt that for the first time in a long time, she had been being true to herself. Being a SOAP spy was the facade, a lifestyle she had been going along with solely to exact her revenge on WOOHP. She had never had a problem with it, not until now. She had never had the opportunity to be a 'normal' girl, and now that she had, perhaps she favored that particular lifestyle.

“That can't be right,” she said fiercely as if debating herself. “I work for SOAP. I'm out to destroy WOOHP. That's all that should matter. I don't need friends or a normal life. Those sorts of things are for idiots like the majority of people who gawk around campus without a care in the world. I'm just
tired is all. That's right. I'm just going to get some sleep. Hopefully, all this nonsense will be out of my mind by morning. Besides, Scar might have a mission for me coming up. I don't want to be unprepared by a lack of sleep.”

A series of knocks at her door ruined her plans for rest, and grudgingly, she got up to see who in the world had the nerve to bother her.

“Sam?” she asked with a hint of surprise in her voice. “Can I help you with something?”

“Good! I figured you'd be here! Anyway, I just wanted to check up on you after that...situation that just went down. Me and the others were worried about you when you suddenly disappeared on us like that.”

“I was just tired is all. I was actually about to go to sleep before you came...”

Sam had mentioned Clover and Alex, but Chris noted she was alone at the moment.

Strange. Those three are pretty much conjoined at the hip...

“Can I come in? I need to talk to you about something,” said Sam. “Oh, wow! Your hands! I just noticed them! Are you sure you’re alright?”

“I’m fine. It’s nothing.”

“You said it was ‘nothing’ when you fell down three flights of stairs!”

“...Are you going to come in or what?”

Chris' intuition was telling her that something wasn't quite right here. Even so, she gestured Sam inside her dorm prior to shutting the door and locking it behind her. She then moved over to her bed, took a seat, and crossed her arms.

“So, what did you want to talk about?” she then inquired.

“Okay. There's something that's been bothering me. It...has to do with you, Chris. You've been acting really strange as of late. I wasn't going to say anything because we're friends, but I think it's gotten to a point where I pretty much have to.”

“What? Have you been keeping a close eye on me?” Chris joked. “If you have something to say, just come out and say it. My feelings aren't easily hurt.”

Things became quiet for a little while where Sam gave Chris the impression she was debating on what to say or do.

Staring at Chris intently all of a sudden, Sam said to her, “Let me ask you this. Have you ever heard of an organization called Spies Organized Against Peace?”

Hearing this was enough to morph Chris' visage into one of complete and utter shock. It was also a good answer to Sam's question, although Sam herself wasn't exactly happy about that.

“Chris, I know this is going to sound crazy, but I think you're the spy working for SOAP that's been showing up during our missions these last couple of weeks!”

Chris didn't respond. She wasn't quite sure how to. Instead, she began to glare at Sam, who replied in kind. The tension in the air was thick, and Chris wasn't sure it could be resolved without resorting to violence.
It was another bright and sunny day on the streets of Beverly Hills. Walking them were a pair of girls from Malibu University, chatting and conversing while they continued their daily shopping spree. The two were in the middle of a heated debate about designer shoes when they spotted an unfamiliar boutique across the street.

“Is that a new store or something?” one of them asked. She then read the name and repeated it. “‘Sacks of Scents?’ Never heard of it before.”

“Hey, it looks like a perfume boutique!” the other girl exclaimed. “We should totally go inside and check it out!”

Her friend placed her finger on her chin. “I dunno…”

“Come on! It'll be fine!”

She forcibly dragged her reluctant companion along, and the two crossed the jampacked street before making their way in front of Sacks of Scents' entrance. Now that she was this close, the girl who suggested they check the establishment out in the first place was having doubts.

“This place might be out of my price range…” she admitted.

“Alright then! Let's just go!” her friend replied quickly.

“Leaving so soon, ladies?” The owner of Sacks of Scents, a gorgeous woman wearing black sunglasses, stepped out of the building through the electronic doors and gave the two staring back at her a friendly, inviting smile. “Please, I invite you to have a look inside and see what we have to offer! I doubt you'll be disappointed by our selection.”

“W-Wow...you're really pretty, miss! You must be a supermodel or something!” one of the girls stated with glittering eyes.

“Ex-model,” the owner bitterly muttered, low enough that she wasn't heard.

“A-As much as we want to go in…”

“Speak for yourself,” the girl's friend grumbled.

“As much as we want to go in, I don't think we have the kind of money to get something out of this place…”

“Nonsense!” the Sacks of Scents owner replied. “We're giving out free samples to pretty, young girls such as yourself, so please do come inside!”

“Really?! I will then!”

As her friend happily skipped into the establishment, the other young woman sighed and guessed
there was no harm in following along.

“Perfect. Everything is going according to plan,” said the remaining woman. Removing her sunglasses, Kyla Sacks smiled sadistically and peered up at her boutique. “Now then, there’s just one other matter I need to attend to before I really start to heat things up!”

Elsewhere, the tense situation inside of Chris' dorm hadn't wavered a bit. Still reeling from Sam accusing her of being affiliated with Spies Organized Against Peace, Chris wasn't sure how to word her response. She felt anything she said would cast her in a bad light, yet remaining quiet wasn’t helping her case either. Unable to think up a decent excuse, Chris shifted her gaze to the floor. She eventually decided it was better to say nothing than say something incriminating, and if Sam continued to press the issue, she would just have to take care of her 'friend' to keep her quiet.

“...Does that mean I'm right, Chris?” Sam asked, crossing her arms. “I really didn't want it to be you, but now I...”

Chris forced herself to laugh all of a sudden. She then broke her vow of silence by saying, “I really don't have a clue what you're talking about, Sam! What, did you stay up late watching detective movies or something? Or maybe you bumped your head fighting that crazy android?”

“Like I said, I really don't want that SOAP spy that's been interfering with all our missions to be you, but you fit the part a bit too perfectly. All this trouble started the second you enrolled here at Mali-U. It can’t be mere coincidence the SOAP spy started appearing at the same time. Also, every single baddie we've had to deal with in the past few weeks has had a connection to you, Chris!” Sam, now in deep thought, started to pace the floor. Chris merely observed. “You were one of Professor Heisenberg's students, you were a contestant in Kyla Sacks' beauty pageant, and you're a good friend of Dyson Glee! Not to mention the fact Tabitha Connor was just as ready to kill you as she was the rest of us today! Then there’s what Heisenberg said about you not being as innocent as you’d like us to believe!”

“What does any of that prove? I'm sure there are a number of people at this school that have encountered those very same people. I don't see you interrogating them. And you're really bringing up something that loon Heisenberg said? He’s insane, and you know it. Seriously, don't you think you're over thinking all this a bit?”

“Well, you're right about that. At first, I did believe all those things were coincidences too. I mean, Mandy always gets caught up in our missions, but that doesn't make her the SOAP spy. I figured you were just unlucky like her. However, I really started getting suspicious of you after you got kidnapped by the LAMOS.”

“...Like I said, I don't know why those guys kidnapped me. Maybe they just mistook me for someone else,” Chris replied. There was quite a bit of anger in her voice, unbeknown to her.

“Okay, so how did you escape?”

“W-What does it matter?! Shouldn't you just be happy I did?!”

“Don't take that the wrong way. I really was relieved to see that you weren’t harmed or anything, but it sounds to me like you're hiding something. What happened on that sub? The LAMOS aren't the most competent villains, but if you're really just an ordinary college girl, escaping them shouldn't have been so easy. And if you really were just a normal girl, they wouldn't have gone through the trouble of kidnapping you in the first place!”
“Jeez!” Losing her temper, Chris laid down on her bed and stared up at her ceiling. “Can't you save all these accusations for another time? After fighting Tabitha, I'm rather tired. Shouldn't you be getting some sleep as well?”

Sleeping was the cowardly way out, but Chris didn't care. She shut her eyes and hoped Sam would get the message her presence was no longer welcomed there. However, her intuition told her something was amiss, and upon opening her eyes once more, they widened at the sight of her friend about to pounce on her. Sam missed, with Chris rolling to the side in the nick of time. Chris didn't even bother to question why her friend was evidently trying to kill her, instead counterattacking with a roundhouse kick. Sam blocked this and retaliated with a straight punch. Dodging, Chris grabbed Sam's arm and tossed her into the wall, putting a huge dent in it. This only served to upset Sam however as she quickly got to her feet again and leaped on top of Chris. The two tussled on the floor, knocking random objects over and generally making a mess of things. By the time they pushed off one another, their hair and clothing was just as disordered as the dorm room.

“What...the hell was all that for?!” Chris, gasping for air, inquired.

“I was...trying to prove a point,” Sam, just as tired, replied. “You fight just like that SOAP spy! Are you going to tell me even that is a coincidence?!”

“Maybe it is!”

“Stop lying to me, Chris! It's painfully obvious now who you are!”

Chris paused before answering, “...I see. I suppose it would be pointless to keep up this charade any longer. I'm just beginning to look silly. Yes, Sam, you were right. I am the spy from SOAP that's been getting on your nerves these past couple weeks. Don't worry, the feeling is mutual. You damn WOOHP agents have caused me more trouble than you're worth! I was tasked with going undercover here and posing as a college student. Everything was going well too, at least until you idiots showed up and began getting in my way!”

Sam found it strange. This was the very thing she was trying to goad Chris into saying, but now that the truth as out, she couldn't help but feel incredibly dejected. She considered Chris a friend, in nearly the same light as Clover and Alex, despite having only recently met her. Taking this into account, her next words were hard for her to get out.

“...Chris, I'm placing you under arrest! As a spy for SOAP, I have no choice but to bring you in for questioning at WOOHP!”

“After all that, that's all you have to say to me? Tsk! You should already know you're wasting your breath! There's no way I'm going along with you quietly!”

“...So be it then!”

The two were about to have it again, but suddenly, a group of women wearing bright, green leotards burst through a nearby window and flipped into the room. The six of them surrounded a baffled Chris and Sam at once, with none of them looking as if they were in the best of moods.

“Let me guess. These are some of your allies from SOAP, right?” Sam asked Chris.

“Never seen these girls before in my life,” replied Chris.

Trying to space themselves from the new arrivals, Sam and Chris accidentally backed into one another. They then faced each other, but relaxed when they realized there were bigger fish to fry at the moment.
“I say we call a temporary truce,” said Chris. “I don't know who these girls are, but I take it they aren't going to leave here without bumping heads. We can settle our differences after we take care of them.”

Sam nodded. “Sounds good to me. Don't forget though. I'm taking you in, no matter what.”

“Not if I get away first.”

“Like I'd let that happen.”

The two flashed one another a smile the same moment the group encompassing them went on the attack. Even while being outnumbered, Chris had no problems parrying the strikes aimed her way, and she countered by slamming her palm into one of her attackers, flattening them into her bed. She then dispatched the other when she leaped into the air, connecting with a kick across her victim's jaw. Sam, also handling her foes effortlessly, threw bodies left and right with a quick series of blows. One of the girls managed to get behind her and might have done some damage if it weren't for Chris punching her lights out.

“T-Thanks...” Sam mumbled.

“...Don't mention it,” replied Chris in the same sheepish tone. Both of them were caught off guard when two of the leotard-wearing girls sprang to their feet and abruptly grabbed each of them by the waist. Struggling to get free, Chris and Sam managed to turn toward the other before kicking off each other, driving their aggressors into adjacent walls and rendering them unconscious. There was no time for them to relax after that though since the rest of the strange women managed to pick themselves off the floor. Once again encircled, Chris and Sam glanced at each other and nodded. Chris, grabbing both of Sam's arms, proceeded to spin her friend around and around. While trying not to throw up, Sam planted her foot into each one of their enemies, face planting them all over. Soon, groaning, broken forms filled the room.

Chris blew a bang of her hair away from her vision. “That takes care of that. I'm surprised though. It seems that we make a very good team.”

“Agreed. Maybe this would be a good time to ask you to just quit working at SOAP and come to WOOHP! You're a really good spy, Chris, but you're playing for the wrong team!”

“I'm quite comfortable with the team I'm on, thank you. And as tempting as your offer sounds, I would never join WOOHP, not after what they did to me!”

“What? Y-You talk as if you're nothing but a spy twenty-four seven!”

“‘What they did to you?’ What are you talking about?”

Chris, having spoken without really thinking, replied, “I-It's nothing. Forget I said anything. The bottom line is that I'm still your enemy, so you should treat me as such. There is no room for mercy or compassion in espionage.”

“What? Y-You talk as if you're nothing but a spy twenty-four seven!”

“And you aren't? That's simply the way I've always lived my life, Sam. It's all I know.”

It was all she knew? Sam and the others might have complained about Jerry overworking them or summoning them for missions at inconvenient times, yet their boss still permitted them plenty of free time. For Sam, being a spy was more of a part time job than anything. She couldn't even imagine doing it every waking minute of her existence.

“Well, what are you going to do now? Arrest me? I suppose there's nothing stopping you now from
revealing my secret,” said Chris.

Sam answered, “...Maybe, but I think we should figure out who these girls are and where they came from before that.”

As if reacting to being spoken of, the leotard-wearing young women got to their feet yet again. Snickering, they all slipped on gas masks, much to Chris and Sam's confusion.

“They sure can take a beating,” said Chris. “But I don't like the look of this.”

Without warning, something came flying through the gaping hole Chris' window used to be. The small, black ball stopped rolling, and the second it did, it began spewing white smoke all throughout the room.

“Sleeping gas!” Chris and Sam said at the same time.

“That's hardly fighting fair!” exclaimed Sam.

“Forget about fair! We've got bigger problems!” Chris told her. “D-Dammit! I'm already...!”

Wobbling around, Chris' entire body felt like jelly. She was unable to keep herself balanced, so she crashed on the floor with her consciousness fading. Her eyelids grew heavier and heavier, yet she could still make out the silhouette of someone approaching her, a person she could have sworn she had seen somewhere before.

“Good night, my lovely!” the individual mocked ahead of laughing.

#

“H-Huh? What?”

By the time Chris awoke, she saw she was no longer in her dorm but a small room she didn't recognize. Her hands and feet were bound by thick ropes to the wall behind her, and no matter how much she squirmed around, she couldn't break them.

“This sort of thing is beginning to happen far too much for my liking. Did the LAMOS break out of WOOHP again or something?”

Right next to her was a sleeping Sam, also tied up. Chris managed to swing her body into her friend hard enough to rudely remove her from dreamland.

“H-Huh?! W-What's going on?!” she uttered with a yawn.

“Rise and shine, princess. Looks like we both got captured by those weirdos that ambushed us.”

Sam took a gander around. “Guess you're right. Do you know what's going on though?”

“Not a clue. Last thing I remember is seeing someone before that sleeping gas knocked us out, but I didn't get a good look at their face to figure out who it was exactly.”

“I see...” For whatever reason, Sam leered at Chris rather suspiciously.

“...What?”

“I was just thinking. You...wouldn't have anything to do with this, would you?”
“You're only saying that because I'm a SOAP spy.”

“Of course! You'd ask the same if you were in my place!”

“Jeez. You just don't relent, do you?”

“Just answer the question, Chris!”

“No, of course not! Why the hell would I kidnap myself along with you?!”

Not entirely swayed, Sam replied, “Well...I guess you have a point.”

“Of course I do. Now then, let’s figure out a way to get out of this mess.”

A short pause in the discussion made Chris raise an eyebrow. She really didn't need Sam spacing out on her right now.

“Were you faking it?” Sam asked abruptly.

“What? Faking what?”

“I want to know if you were just pretending to be our friend the whole time! Were you faking it?! Was it a part of your mission?!”

What a strange series of questions, Chris thought. Sam seemed to have a knack for asking awkward things at awkward times.

“...My mission was to pose as a college student at Malibu University. That was all. No one ever said anything about making friends. So, to answer your question, no, I wasn't faking it. I suppose I...really did enjoy our time spent together. Maybe...a little.”

Chris pondered what she had even just remarked. She could sense her face growing hot in embarrassment. Perhaps she was being a bit too talkative right now. Spilling the beans on her affiliation with SOAP was bad enough, but now she was sitting there talking about how nice it was to have friends. If Scar or anyone else from SOAP were to see her, she would be a total laughingstock.

“Well, you aren't as cold and calculating as you'd like people to believe!” Sam teased. “My offer still stands then! You should leave SOAP!”

“And join WOOHP? Again, no thanks.”

“Well, I should at least try to contact someone at WOOHP to get them to rescue us. Then maybe we can figure out who kidnapped us and why.” Sam was ready to do just that until remembering something important. “Wait, t-there's no way I can reach my X-Powder tied up like this! Ugh! The hands free feature is busted too!”

“I'm in the same boat. I think I left my Z-Powder back at my dorm anyway. Do you have any other gadgets on you?”

“Nope. What about you?”

“None whatsoever. I usually keep them in my dorm, but I didn't get a chance to grab any before this. Looks like we're on our own.”

Again, Sam stared at Chris skeptically. “You're sure you don't have anything to do with this?”
“Yes, I'm sure! How many times do I have to say it?!” Chris replied with steam half near shooting out of her ears in frustration.

The double doors to the room flung open in the middle of their discussion. A group of leotard-wearing girls acrobatically flipped inside.

“If I could clap, I would,” said Chris sarcastically. “Is the circus in town or something?”

“Very funny,” said Kyla Sacks as she came in behind the others, smiled, and removed her sunglasses from her tanned face. “However, I doubt you'll be laughing after I get through with you!”

“Well, well, well. Another idiot from my past. I should've know you were behind all this, Kyla Sacks. What do we owe this very unpleasant reunion?”

“Yeah, why did you kidnap us?!” asked Sam. “And what's up with your face?”

“I uh...was tanning and still had that bottle of Stun Tan Lotion from when I escaped WOOHP! I used it on accident. I was paralyzed for a couple of hours, but my skin does look divine, so I’d say it was worth it!” explained Kyla. A bead of sweat rolled down the back Sam’s and Chris’ heads.

“...Does it look like I care about something like that?” said Chris plainly. “If you're going to dispose of us, you should have done so already instead of tying us to this wall here. Then again, why am I even wasting my breath? None of you bad guys adhere to common sense anyway.”

“While destroying you two has weighed on my mind, I believe I may have use for you alive,” Kyla retorted. “Yes, I'm certain I can put both your talents to good use!”

“What, is this some kind of job interview then?” said Chris, again with a sardonic tone.

“We're not interested if that's the case,” added Sam.

“Who said either of you had a choice in the matter?” Reaching onto her person, Kyla retrieved a small bottle of clear perfume. “Once you two get a whiff of this stuff, you'll practically be begging to do as I say!”

“Sorry. I'm not into girly stuff like that,” Chris informed her.

“Oh, but I really do think you should try this particular scent out! It's my latest creation and all the rage with girls your age!”

“Yeah, this isn't going to turn out well,” said Sam. She and Chris got a full blast of Kyla's perfume, and the moment they did, a strange sensation came over them.

#

The next day arrived without further incident. Sitting on the Malibu University campus with her cell phone in her hand and a frown on her face was Clover. No matter how many times she peered at the glowing screen, she couldn't comprehend what it told. Alex, walking up to her, noticed this and shrieked when Clover randomly punched her phone before tossing it straight into the dirt.

“I don't believe this!” she then snarled.

“You don't believe what?” asked Alex.

“Oh, hey there! Do you believe the nerve of that Mandy?!”
“I totally can’t! Wait, what did she do this time?”

Clover was offended Alex was so out of the loop. “Y-You haven't heard?! She's been spreading nasty rumors about me all over campus!”

Alex gasped. “N-No way! We have to stop her then!”

“Totally! I just don’t get how anyone could think I'd be caught dead at that one, tacky clothing store at The Groove! They have the ugliest selection of dresses ever! Heck, I can’t even remember it’s name! Mandy's so gonna pay for this!”

“W-Wait, that's the nasty rumor you’re talking about?!” Alex palmed her hand across her face. “I totally thought it was something serious, Clover!”

“H-Huh?! How can you just say that?! You know I have a reputation to uphold!”

“Forget about that for a sec! I was actually looking for you so I could tell you I can't find Sam or Chris anywhere!”

“Those two? Oh yeah, that's right!” Clover snapped her fingers. “Sammy never came home last night! Did you check for Chris at her dorm?”

Alex nodded. “Nobody answered the door. I figured Chris was just ignoring me like she usually does, but I didn’t hear her scream for me to go away, so she could’ve been there! Didn't Sam say something about visiting Chris before she left yesterday?”

“Yeah, she totally did! I figured they were just off having a late night study sesh or something. Those two are total bookworms.” Now concerned, Clover put her phone away. Dealing with Mandy could come later. “But if you can't find them...”

“T-They better not have been off studying! Why didn't they invite me?! I'm the one who needs to do some serious cramming!” Alex declared, her eyes welling with tears. “M-My parents are going to kill me if they see my latest report card!”

“That's why I made sure to take only classes that had to do with fashion! You won't see me dissecting an icky frog or writing a long term paper about the Great Depression!”

“...I should have totally gone to my counselor and done that...”

The garbage can sitting next to them started shaking just then.

“They better not have been off studying! Why didn't they invite me?! I'm the one who needs to do some serious cramming!” Alex declared, her eyes welling with tears. “M-My parents are going to kill me if they see my latest report card!”

Hello, ladies,” said Jerry. “We've got some dirty business to get down to.”
“Already there, Jer!” Clover, picking a wad of gum out her hair, replied.

“Just send a limo next time for crying out loud!” exclaimed Alex.

“Of course. I'll get on that right now,” said Jerry, rolling his eyes. He walked over to his desk and pressed a button, which made the room go dark and the screen behind him come to life. On it, several pictures of girls appeared. “There have been a string of disappearances in the area around Malibu University. The girls you see behind me are the victims.”

“Hey, I recognize some of them!” said Alex. “They go to Mali-U!”

“How come Mandy couldn't just disappear too?” said a displeased Clover.

Jerry went on with the debriefing. “All of the missing young women have one things in common: they vanished after last being seen near a new perfume boutique in town. Naturally, we believe there’s some sort of connection. I want you girls to investigate there and find out for certain if this establishment has anything to do with the disappearances.”

“Can we at least take a shower first?” asked Alex. She got her answer when Jerry glared at her. “O-Okay then...”

Whipping out their X-Powders, Clover and Alex pressed a button and changed into their colorful catsuits.

“Wait! Speaking of missing people, we can't find Sam, Jer!” said Clover.

“Chris either!” added Alex.

“Oh dear. Perhaps this isn't a coincidence, girls. Allow me to try to track Sam's X-Powder.” Jerry took a seat at his desk, pulled out a computer, and typed something in. “Hmm? That's odd.”

“What is it, Jerry? Did you find Sammy?” said Alex.

“I can't locate her. Something's blocking the signal from her X-Powder.”

“I think something bad must have happened to Sam and Chris!” said Clover. “We've gotta find them!”

“I suppose you two better get moving then.”

“Sure thing! Just gadget us up, Jer!”

Jerry got to his feet. “Certainly. Today, you two will be using the Suction Cup Bottom Gogo Boots, the Tornado in a Can of Hairspray, the Bubble Protection Bubble Gum, the Laser Lipstick, and lastly, the M-Ray Contact Lenses.”

He tossed a pink, heart-shaped backpack with the specified gadgets at Clover and Alex.

“Thanks a lot!” said Clover. “We'll figure out what's going on for sure! Then I can pay Mandy back for making everyone think I buy tacky clothing!”

“Would you stop worrying about that?!” Alex blurted.

Jerry smiled, waved, and stated, “Tata, ladies! Good luck on your mission!”

His finger pressed another button on his desk, causing the flooring underneath Clover and Alex to
disappear. They shrieked as they were once again WOOHPed. Now left alone, Jerry stroked his chin at something Alex had said that refused to leave his thoughts.

“Chris? Where have I heard that name before...?”

#

Clover and Alex got straight to work, driving out to the perfume boutique Jerry informed them of to scope out the place. They sat across the street from it in Clover's car, and Clover, holding a pair of binoculars, carefully eyed their environment. Other than people going in and out of the boutique, she didn't pick up on anything out of the ordinary.

“‘Sacks of Scents?’” she said, turning her attention to the large, obnoxious sign hanging about the store. Pink, neon lights illuminated it every couple of seconds. “What a weird name!”

“It looks really popular though!” said Alex while a group of giggling girls trekked out with their purchases. “How come we've never heard of this place before?”

“Well, Jerry did say it was pretty new. Anyway, maybe we should go inside and take a look around? I have a date coming up this Friday and could use some new perfume!”

Alex frowned. “Is that all you ever think about?”

“You're saying you don't?!”

“Well...I do want to buy something too! Okay, let's go inside!”

Momentarily forgetting about their mission, the two readied to shop until they dropped with no regrets. However, they stopped in their tracks when they spotted two girls walking into Sacks of Scents that looked quite familiar.

“Hey! Isn't that Sam and Chris?!” exclaimed Clover.

Alex squinted and answered, “I think it is! What are they doing over here?!?”

“Only one way to find out!” Clover slipped on the M-Ray Contact Lenses, allowing her to see through the walls of the boutique. “Whoa!”

“Whoa?!! Whoa what?! What do you see?!!”

“That place really is packed! They must have a nice selection in there!”

Alex nearly fell on her head. “W-What about Sam and Chris?!!”

“Er...I-I see them! They're talking to some lady in the back! Wait a minute! Now they're going out the back door of the store! We can catch them if we hurry! They might have free samples!”

Hurry they did, leaping out of the car and rushing toward an alley near Sacks of Scents. There, they encountered Sam and Chris, though the two didn't react to having visitors, instead facing the opposite direction.

“There you two are!” said Clover. “Where have you been? Have you just been hanging out at this place all day? I never took you two as the kind to go on a shopping binge, though I am pleasantly surprised!”

“You mean to tell me we've been worried about these two, and they've just been buying up perfume
“all night?!” asked Alex. “That is so lame! They could’ve at least invited us.”

Neither Sam or Chris said a word. They didn't even bother to turn around, irritating Clover in the process.

“Uh...hello? Anybody home? Alex, they're totally ignoring us! What's their problem?!”

Alex gasped just then. “M-Maybe they were buying us presents and are upset because we found out!”

“Really?!” Clover held out her hands longingly. “No need to be mad! I'll just take my present now!”

Finally reacting, Sam gave Clover something, but it wasn't what the latter expected. She lunged at her friend and tossed a flurry of punches, attacks a surprised Clover barely managed to avoid.

“W-What are you doing, Sam?!” said Alex. Chris tried knocking her head off with a roundhouse kick, but she ducked in time and held her arms up defensively. “You too, Chris?!”

Clover and Alex were quickly overwhelmed and sent crashing into the ground by the joint might of Sam and Chris, who both snickered as they approached their prey.

“A-Alright, already! You can keep the presents!” said Clover. “No need to get so bent outta shape about it!” When Sam and Chris persisted, Clover snarled and became enraged. “That's it! You two asked for it!”

She pulled out the Tornado in a Can of Hairspray and didn't hesitate to aim it at her friends and press down on the nozzle. Per the gadget's namesake, this generated an extremely powerful tornado that sucked up an unsuspecting Chris and Sam, spun them about, and then finally dropped them back down roughly. Seeing stars, the two were effectively dealt with, allowing Clover and Alex to hover over to them.

“What was that all about?” asked Clover with a shrug.

“I dunno, but I'm starting to think they aren't mad we found out they're buying us presents,” replied Alex sheepishly.

#

Clover and Alex decided to bring Sam and Chris back to WOOHP in the hopes Jerry could figure out why they were acting so bizarre. As a safety precaution, Jerry restrained the two to chairs using well-tied ropes, much to the relief of Clover and Alex. Neither one of them found the idea of another fight interesting.

“Hmm...” mumbled Jerry. He circled around Sam and Chris with his hand on his chin inquisitively.

“Do you have any idea what's wrong with them, Jerry?” asked Alex.

“Yes. I believe they're under the influence of a powerful mind control agent.”

“'Mind control?!’” exclaimed Clover. “How'd that happen?!”

“I'm not certain, but it seems to be something they inhaled. I need to do further test to be sure though. Would you girls have any idea what could have done this to them?”

“Something they inhaled?” A light bulb lit up in Clover's head. “Sacks of Scents! That's the perfume boutique you told us to investigate! Maybe it was perfume there they breathed that did this!”
“We should go back and do some more snooping!” suggested Alex.

“Good idea, girls. Meanwhile, I'll try to cook up an antidote to reverse the mind control on these two here. Good luck!”

He WOOHPed them back to action ahead of diverting his focus back to Sam and Chris, gazing at Chris’ face in particular.

“Where have I seen this girl before...?”

Her identity was on the tip of his tongue, yet every time he got close, a mental block of some sort interfered. Getting a migraine, he gave up for the time being.

“Perhaps I’m simply imagining things.”

#

Night fell over Beverly Hills, giving Clover and Alex the perfect cover during their infiltration of the now closed Sacks of Scents. Thanks to the Suction Cup Bottom Gogo Boots, they were able to scale their way up the side of the building.

“Argh! I always need a pedicure after I put these things on!” Clover whined.

Alex, a bit pale, replied, “And I always get kinda motion sick!”

The two made it to the top, where the coast seemed clear.

“I’ll check the inside of the building!” Alex slipped on the M-Ray Contact Lenses and aimed her sights at the floor below her. “Doesn't look like anybody's inside right now!”

“Let's move then!” replied Clover, pulling out the Laser Lipstick. Burning a circular hole into the roof, she kicked the loose slab away, allowing she and Alex to jump inside Sacks of Scents. The darkened store was devoid of sound or activity. Other than a plentiful stock of perfumes, the two noted nothing out of order.

Clover's eye glittered like diamonds at the sight of everything. “Wow! This place is amazing! No wonder there were so many people in here earlier! If this place totally doesn't turn out to be the lair of some baddie, we should come back here with Sam and Chris!”

“Assuming those two aren't trying to kill us still.” Alex chuckled weakly. “Let's look around some more.”

They did so, checking every nook and cranny of the boutique. After a minute or two, they both regrouped, shrugging at uncovering nothing of interest.

“Maybe we were wrong about this place, Alex,” said Clover.

“That's weird! There's usually a hidden switch or button in places like this.”

Out of the corner of her eye, Clover spotted an absolutely breathtaking bottle of perfume, one that was practically calling her over to it. Alex watched her scurry toward it while shaking her head. Her friend sure could get sidetracked easily.

“I wonder what fragrance this is!” Greedily snatching up the perfume, Clover's eyes darted around. “Well...I'm sure no one will mind if I just spritz a little on!” She was about to, but her hand stopped upon her sighting a shiny, red button. It rested in the spot where the bottle in her hands once was,
being carefully hidden under it. “Hmm? What's this?”

Her finger pressed down on it, resulting in a nearby wall sliding open and revealing a lit hallway.

Alex came over to Clover and yelled, “Bingo! I knew it!”

“Suspicious much? Looks like someone doesn't want us to see something!”

“Let's go find out what!”

The two dashed down the corridor, turned a corner, and stepped through the opening awaiting them. The second they did, a pair of sliding doors slammed shut behind them, making them yelp in surprise. They tried to get them to open again, yet they refused to budge.

“I guess we're stuck then!” said Alex.

“Right! No turning back!” added Clover, pumping herself up.

Turning around, their eyes widened at the sight of an enormous factory. Dozens of young women in green leotards were busy making what Clover and Alex determined was perfume.

“Whoa! You'd so never know this was going on back here from the outside! Who are all these girls!?” asked Alex.

“T-They must be all the people who’ve gone missing these past couple of days!” said Clover. “This is where they’ve been all this time!”

“And they've been making perfume! That's where Sacks of Scents gets all its product!”

Everything made sense to the two now, save for the reason these girls vanished without informing anyone of their whereabouts. Sensing a disturbance, the leotard-wearing young women everywhere ceased their hard work and turned to the WOOHP spies, who huddled up in response.

“Er...w-were you girls working? W-We'll just leave now!” said Alex.

Clover added, “Y-Yeah! S-Sorry to interrupt!”

The other girls weren't having any of that. They charged at Clover and Alex with ill intentions. Retrieving the Tornado in a Can of Hairspray, Clover used it to whip up a powerful cyclone. Bodies were flung here and there, and Alex high-fived Clover for her quick thinking.

“That was a close one! Nice going!”

Clover sprayed some of the hairspray on her head. “It's good for split ends too!”

In the midst of their celebrating, another group of girls crept up on them from behind and pinned them both to the floor with their combined weight.

“W-Watch the hair!” whined Clover.

“Totally not nice going...” Alex moaned with her face pressed down.

#

Tied up on a wall, Clover and Alex soon learned they weren’t breaking free via brute force. Their restraints were far too strong for that.
“Gah! W-Who tied these ropes, Boy Scouts?!?” said Alex, annoyed.

“Agh! This sort of thing always happens...” Clover admitted. “You'd think we'd have totally learned by now!”

Someone walked into the small room they were being held just then, accompanied by another group of leotard-wearing women. Kyla Sacks, beaming, removed her sunglasses, pressed them against her cheek, and leered up at the WOOHP agents.

“Well, well, well. We meet again,” she said. “You know, ladies, Sacks of Scent closes at 9 PM. You must have really wanted some of my product to break in here like this. I don't blame you though for wanting to get in on the action! My perfume is the only thing everyone on the streets is talking about these days!”

“Y-You're the owner of Sacks of Scents?!” said Clover. “I knew there was something off about this place! No way perfume is so cheap nowadays! You're messed up, lady! How dare you use body spray to trick pretty, young girls everywhere!”

“Are you the reason all these girls have been disappearing too?!” asked Alex.

“Correct,” Kyla replied. “You see, Sacks of Scents is my latest venture to utterly destroy the pretty girls and beauty queens of the world!”

“Huh? How are you going to do that with perfume?”

“Easy. My particular brand of perfume doesn't just make you smell pleasant. It also contains a potent mind controlling agent created by yours truly! Anyone I spray it on becomes my loyal slave! It's so easy to sell too! Young women these days are so shallow! They've bought up my product in droves just to look and smell nice for all the stupid boys out there!”

“So that's how you have all these girls under your thumb! She must have gotten Sam and Chris like that too!” said Clover.

“I don't get it though! If you hate pretty girls, why would you want them working for you?” asked Alex.

“Don't you see? If all the supposedly beautiful women are under my thumb and helping making my perfume, it'll give the shunned, less attractive girls out there their time in the limelight! Never again will someone be ostracized for being less graceful or a bit more homely than their peers! What makes it all the better is that all the beautiful women out there will be their own downfall! Hahaha!”

“As crazy as that plan is, and don't get me wrong, it's absolutely nuts, you have to admit her idea is kinda admirable!” said Clover honestly.

“Regardless, we're not letting you get away with this!” Alex said to Kyla.

Kyla laughed again. “As if you two have a say in the matter! My perfume hasn't just bit a hit here in Beverly Hills but all over the world! My plans are coming to fruition even as we speak! Even if you did manage to escape, you two would be powerless to do a thing to stop me!” She then paused and thought to herself for a moment. “...I considered using my perfume on you two. After all, I could certainly use another pair of able hands. However, I really don't have any use for you, so I think I'll just let my loyal subjects take care of you in my stead! Now then, my lovelies, I have some business to attend to. Kisses!”

With that, she took her exit, leaving Clover and Alex at the mercy of Kyla's brainwashed legion of
“Tell me you've got a plan to get us outta this mess!” Clover asked Alex.

“M-Me?! Sam's the one that usually comes up with stuff like that!”

“Well, Sammy's not here this time, so we're on our own! Come on, Alex! Think!”

Alex nodded and soon came up with a nifty idea. Squirming about, she attempted reaching for something on her person.

“What are you doing?” asked Clover.

“Trying to get the Bubble Protection Bubble Gum!”

“How...?”

“I had a feeling something like this would happen, so I put it somewhere I could easily get to!” explained Alex. She then placed a piece of the gum in her mouth. “Here goes!”

“Hurry, Alex! We're too pretty to get torn apart!”

Alex blew a pink bubble that got bigger and bigger until it surrounded she and Clover. As a side effect, the gum eroded the ropes binding their limbs.

“Outta the way! Outta the way!” Clover yelled as she and Alex toppled the mob coming for them like bowling pins. “This gum better not get in my hair!”

“We have to stop Kyla before she brainwashes the entire world!” said Alex.

“Fine with me! Her perfume doesn't smell all that great anyway!”

“...That’s totally not what you were saying before…”

Clover got a message on her X-Powder and opening it, Jerry's face was on the screen.

“Hello, girls! I'm happy to inform you that we've managed create an antidote to the mind control affecting Sam and your friend Chris! They're back to normal now!”

“That's great, Jer! We're going to need a lot more of it though!”

“Hmm? What do you mean?”

“All the girls that disappeared are brainwashed as well!” said Alex. “Kyla Sacks is behind everything! She's using her perfume to get rid of all the pretty girls in the world!”

“Oh my!”

“Don't worry! We're going to stop her for sure! Just make sure you have more of that antidote ready!” said Clover, hanging up.
Kyla kept a vigilant eye on the girls toiling away to make her patented perfume. “Pick up the pace, you louts! I'm not paying you to laze about! Then again, I suppose I'm not paying any of you at all! Haha!”

An intense blast of wind half near blew her off the metal platform she was standing on. She soon discovered the source of it when Clover and Alex barreled toward her wielding the Tornado in a Can of Hairspray.

“Agh! I missed!” said Alex.

“You two?! How in the world did you manage to escape?!” said a flabbergasted Kyla. “Never mind that! My loyal subjects will take care of you meddlesome brats!”

“Not this time!” Clover informed her before she and Alex used their bungee cable to scale up to where Kyla was. “You're not going anywhere!”

Kyla took a step back. “Tsk! Y-You girls think I'll be stopped so easily?!”

“That's right! Our boss already has an antidote for your crazy perfume!” said Alex.

“You should give up while the going's good!” added Clover.

“An antidote?! Seriously?! D-Darn it! And it took me forever to come up with that mind controlling formula! I'm not a chemist, you know! Curse you girls! This is exactly why I can't stand beautiful, young women like you two!”

“Well, what can I say? It takes a lot of hard work to keep up this image!”

Any fear Kyla had vanished, being replaced by pure, unadulterated anger. “Ugh! This is the worst! My plans might be ruined at this point, but you two have another thing coming if you think I'm giving up with a fight!”

Neither Clover or Alex expected much from what they figured was an empty threat. However, Kyla made it clear she wasn't messing around when she lunged at Alex, grabbed the girl's arm, and employed a powerful, shoulder throw to send her sailing through the air.

“What the heck?!” Alex cried.

“What the...?! You're going to pay for that!” said Clover. She tried swinging at Kyla, but ex-model responded by using Clover's momentum to shove her down to the ground. “W-What the heck?! How do you keep doing that?!”

Kyla replied, “When I was a model, I practiced judo to help me keep my perfect figure!”

“Is that so? Not bad, but I'm not losing to some old hag just because of that!”

Kyla's eyelid twitched. “O-Old hag?! W-What are you saying?! I'm not that over the hill yet! Look, I don't even have any wrinkles or anything! In fact, my skin is flawless! Why must everyone sit there and try to deny what's plainly obvious?! I am the most beautiful model in the world! That's the reason I was always ostracized by my peers! Everyone else was simply jealous and couldn't appreciate my unique talents! So what if I tripped on runways or always messed up when I was on stage?! Darn those other model who used to ridicule me!”
Clover listened to all this, regretting having egged Kyla on. “W-Who is she talking to?”

Kyla erupted into mad laughter on spur of the moment, prompting Clover to jump in fright. “That's okay though! Now I'm the one who's making fun of all those so-called beautiful and more skilled models out there! It is them who will be under my thumb now! Yes, this is perfect! Hahaha!”

The surface under her feet began to creak and break, a side effect of having being hit by the Tornado in a Can of Hairspray earlier.

Kyla, taking heed of this, muttered, “Uh-oh...”

She then tumbled toward the ground alongside the metal railing. Clover, being spared from a similar fate, waved to the woman as she departed.

“Have a nice trip! See you next ‘fall!’”

Fortunately for Kyla, someone managed to catch her before any harm could befall her.

“You...?!” Kyla exclaimed at the sight of a green-suited Sam. “W-What are you doing here?!”

“I'm just here to join the party!” replied Sam.

“Whatever! I command you to take care of your pesky friends up there this instant!”

“Sorry, but I'm not interested in following your orders anymore!”

“Y-You aren't under the effects of my perfume?! Don't tell me...?!”

“It's not just me either! Say goodbye to your army of captives!”

“C-Come again?”

“Sam, look out!” shouted Clover from above. The minions Sam mentioned were closing in on her.

“Perfect!” said Kyla, grinning. “I don't know what you were planning, but it's over now!”

“I don't think so!” Sam pointed a finger at the sprinklers above at the same time they came to life and rained water on everyone. The girls under Kyla's control halted in their tracks, blinked, and then all searched their surroundings in confusion.

“How?! W-Where am I?!” one asked.

“Yeah, w-what's going on?” said another. “How'd I get here?”

Kyla herself inquired, “How?! My mind control...i-it's been broken!”

“That's right!” said Sam. “Before I got here, I slipped the antidote for your perfume into the water system! All I had to do then was activate the sprinklers and presto, no more mind controlled people!”

“D-Darn it! You insufferable WOOHP agents are always getting in my way!”

Clover and Alex landed near Sam and without warning, gave her the biggest hug they could.

“Sammy! You're alright!” said Clover.

“We were worried sick about you!” said Alex.
“Really, I'm fine!” Sam told them. “Y-You two are squishing me though!”

“It's a squishing of love!” Alex stated, squeezing harder.

“Say, where's Chris?” asked Clover. “Is she alright too?”

“C-Chris? Well, she's...um...well...” Clearly, Sam had been hoping no one would ask that. She awkwardly shuffled in place and tripped over her speech, which heightened Clover's and Alex’s curiosity. “Er...about Chris, she's...”

WOOHP agents poured into the perfume lab suddenly, and a pair of them grabbed a hold of Kyla before placing her in handcuffs.

“D-Darn it! My plans were so close to succeeding too!” their prisoner stated, practically seething. “I swear, WOOHP is going to pay for this!”

“Yeah, yeah! We've heard it all before!” said Clover nonchalantly.

“Have fun in prison though!” added Alex.

“And say hi to your good buddy Doctor Heisenberg when you get there!” Sam taunted.

There wasn't much Kyla could do other than blow the three as raspberry while the WOOHP agents hauled her off to serve another term in the containment facility. Watching her go, Jerry Lewis made his way over to Sam, Alex, and Clover and nodded in approval.

“You've done it again, Spies,” he started. “Allow me to congratulate you on a job well done. Thanks to your efforts, we've put a stop to Kyla Sacks sinister ambitions before she got a chance to do some serious damage. We've informed the sellers of her mind controlling perfume around the world of its effects, so they've taken it off the market. We're also giving out the antidote to those already affected by it as we speak. Things should be back to normal within a couple of days.”

“Awesome! Isn't that great, Sammy?” Judging by the look on her friend's face, Clover guessed she thought otherwise. “Sam, is something wrong? You've looked down ever since you got here!”

Sam, pressuring herself to smile, replied, “Huh? W-What are you talking about?! I'm totally fine!”

She repeated the phrase 'totally fine' under her breath, trying to convince herself of it more than the others.

#

With a bag containing all her possessions slung across her shoulder, Chris took one last glance back at Malibu University. She would never come back to this place again, she thought. Although her time spent at the school was short, she nevertheless sensed she was leaving something behind by departing so shortly.

“A lot of strange things have happened to me here,” she muttered. “This was just supposed to be another undercover mission, but...”

She shook her head and attempted to cast aside these feelings of attachment. Being a SOAP spy meant she couldn't allow her personal emotions to get in the way of her missions. Her time at Mali-U was simply that: another assignment. Not only that, but most of her college experience could be summed up in a simple word: annoying. If Mandy weren't driving her insane, it was all the classes she took, or crushing on some silly boy. As such, she didn't get why she had any reservations or
complaints about leaving. It was the best thing that could happen to her. Despite this, she found herself again staring back at the place she called home for the past couple of weeks.

“Maybe I should have said goodbye to Dyson Glee at least. ...No. I need to put him and everything else here behind me. I'm never seeing any one of them again. All this will be a distraction for me in the future.” But what did her future hold? Up until a little while ago, she wasn't even sure she had a future. “I still don't understand. Why did Sam let me go? She had me right where she wanted me, yet she still let me leave WOOHP. Why?”

The memory of what occurred remained fresh in Chris' head. Having just been freed from the effects of Kyla Sacks' mind control, she found herself horrified to find that she was once more inside of WOOHP. Thankfully, no one there besides Sam knew of her true identity, although she didn't count on this remaining a secret to everyone else for long. She expected imprisonment or even her memory being wiped clean, but instead, Sam kept her mouth shut and somehow convinced her boss to let Chris go without so much as a hitch. It made little sense to her.

“Is she planning something?” In a haze of confusion, Chris walked down a busy sidewalk and paid no heed to environment. She bumped into a man talking on his phone for instance, but she still didn't glance up even when he yelled after her. “This must be some sort of trap. Yes, I just have to think harder about all this. I'll figure out what she's up to.”

Deliberating the matter was pointless. That was the answer she eventually settled on. Even if Sam's desire was to use the situation to her advantage, Chris saw no way how. There remained just one explanation for her strange actions, an explanation Chris was reluctant to admit even possible.

“She was...protecting me.”

She crossed a busy intersection and stroked her aching temples. She truthfully wasn't sure what to think anymore, although she figured Scar would reprimand her for her weakness if he could see her presently.

“Wait, Scar?!” she exclaimed. Sitting in the café in front of her, Scar himself raised the cup of tea in his hand to acknowledge her. “M-My eyes must be playing tricks on me!”

Her boss motioned for her to come inside and join him. Doing so, she took a seat across from him with her eyes shifting around cautiously.

“Stop that now. Relax,” Scar said to her. “We're in a café. You should be enjoying yourself! Can I get you something to drink, Christine?”

“Don't call me Christine,” she replied. “What are you doing here?”

“Hmm? I'm not allowed to enjoy a nice cup of tea every once in a while?”

“I-It's not that...” A mortified Chris lowered her head when everyone else in the café began peering hers and Scar's way because of her boss' strange appearance. “C-Can't you take that stupid mask off for three seconds?!”

“Hmm? Am I embarrassing you, Agent C? How odd. You're beginning to sound a lot like the students at your former university.”

Chris realized he had a point. “W-Whatever! You didn't answer my question though! What are you doing here?”

“I simply decided to come and pick you up personally now that your undercover mission is over.
Indeed, I believe we've gotten as much out of Malibu University as we're ever going to.”

“And what do you mean by that?”

“I mean, I originally sent you there to get Doctor Heisenberg's Lightspeed Power Suit, yet you managed to come back with quite the sizable haul. I know I've already thanked and commended you for this, but again, you have my praise.”

“Thank you.” Chris blushed a bit at his kind talk. “What now?”

“I believe we finally have enough assets to make our move.”

“W-Wait! Y-You don't mean...!”

Scar smirked from underneath his black mask. “That's right. I believe the time for us to destroy the World Organization of Human Protection once and for all has finally arrived.”

Those were the words Chris waited over ten years to hear. At last, her revenge against WOOHP was at hand. Her entire form teemed with excitement now, and she couldn't wait to get to work. Seeing this, Scar held up his hand, which in turn settled her down.

“Before we do anything, Agent C, I need to ask you a question.”

“Alright then. Shoot.”

“Can you actually go through with this?”

“Are you seriously asking me that? Of course I can! Getting rid of WOOHP was the main reason I joined SOAP after my parents died! It's literally all I've ever been able to think about, Scar!”

“I'm aware. However, the reason I asked this is because I can't help but notice you've become somewhat...attached to those three WOOHP agents that attend Malibu University.”

“I-I'm not sure what you mean,” replied Chris. She didn't sound all that convincing.

“I'm sure you do, and I'm also sure you understand that if we decide to go on the offensive, you'll have to destroy those three. Are you comfortable in doing so? I highly doubt they'll see things your way, even if you try to change their minds. Therefore, there is only one thing you can do.”

Chris bitterly stared at the table as a waitress brought her a nonfat latte that Scar had ordered for her before she arrived. Paying the beverage no mind, she wasn't sure why her leader was reprimanding her like this. Everything he was fussing at her about, she already understood. She would be a fool if she didn't. Of course, that didn't mean she held no reservations about disposing of Sam, Alex, and Clover. The prospect actually made something in her chest ache.

“I will allow your actions to speak for you, Agent C,” said Scar, sipping his drink. “We'll move out tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow? I see. I won't let you down, Scar! We'll finish this!”

Pleased by her enthusiasm, Scar felt confident the end of WOOHP, and Jerry Lewis, would soon be a reality. “You know, Christine, the day you came to me was a blessing in disguise. Out of all my agent, you are by far the best.”

“Thanks,” Chris replied, stealing a jelly-filled donut from the plate in front of Scar, inducing a frown out of him. “And don't call me Christine. You know I hate that.”
The dorm room at Malibu University that once belonged to Christine was empty and quiet now. The only thing remaining was her old bed and papers that littered the floor. Reaching down and picking one up, Sam saw that it was some old homework Chris had completed. She presumed the other wrinkled parchments were similar. A breeze swept through the room, and Sam let it snatch the paper out of her grasp.

“I guess she really is gone then,” she said drably. “I didn't want to believe it, but...”

“She could've at least said goodbye!” yelled Alex, cutting Sam off. “Man, she cleaned this place out! There isn't even a shred of evidence left here! If there's one thing I'll give Chris credit for, it's that she's thorough!”

“Are you seriously complimenting her right now?! She's totally that SOAP spy! I can't believe it!” Clover rested her head in her hands and glowered while she sat on Chris' bed. “She just lied to us the whole time about who she was! If I ever see her again, I'm gonna totally give her a piece of my mind!”

“She...had her reasons. I'm sure of it,” mumbled Sam.

“Huh? How come you're defending her? She's the enemy!” replied Alex. Oinky, her pet pig, poked its head out of her shirt just then and squealed weakly. “Aw! See, even Oinky's upset at everything! I can't believe I trusted Chris with you that one time!”

“You should've told us from the start that you knew who she really was, Sam!” said Clover.

Sam could offer up no words or excuses to this. Her friends were spot on. Instead, she stared out of a nearby window, desiring to take back things already done.

“This one's gonna come back to haunt us...”

“Well, let's not let that mean, ol' Chris get us down!” said Clover. She cheered up to the best of her ability and sprang to her feet before wrapping her arms around her friend's shoulders. “We probably won't ever be seeing her again anyway! What's say we go down to The Groove and do some serious shopping?"  

“The Groove? I-I dunno, I'm not really in the mood,” said Alex.

“Me neither,” added Sam. “I don't even wanna study...”

Clover groaned at this. “C-Come on! I-It'll be fun! Whadya say?!”

Seeing her friend laugh, Sam knew her heart wasn't in her words. All of them, whether they wanted to admit it or not, felt something from Chris’ sudden departure. Perhaps the only thing stopping them from seeking out their friend was pride.
“Hmm? My X-Powder's ringing,” said Sam as she pulled the device out. She let out a long, drawn out gasp at what it told her. “N-No way!”

“What? Is Jer bothering us with another mission again?” asked Clover. “Well, tell him to get someone else because we're so going shopping!”

“I don't even have any money!” Alex sniffled at this fact. She was in between paychecks from her job at the coffee shop, though she called off from work today because of the situation with Chris.

“N-No, it's not that, you guys! WOOHP is under attack right now!” exclaimed Sam. With their jaws lowered at this development, Clover and Alex took a gander at Sam's X-Powder, nearly fainting afterward.

“I-I guess we aren't going shopping then,” Clover mumbled.

“Dang it! I was actually coming around to the idea too!” said Alex.

“Forget about that, girls! We gotta get to WOOHP!” said Sam. She got the feeling Chris' disappearance and this attack on WOOHP had something to do with one another. “I really hope I'm wrong!”

#

“...Agh! Why is it so boring around here?!” said the man sitting behind the front desk at WOOHP headquarters. Yawning, he rubbed his tear-stained eyes and sat back in his chair, wishing something, anything of interest would happen. “Jeez, how in the world did I end up with a job like this? I'm just...the guy who sits at the entrance of a building of a spy organization. This certainly wasn't what I planned out for myself.” He slumped even farther back in his seat and mulled his words over. “...Then again, maybe I shouldn't be complaining. I mean, yeah, it's always boring just sitting here because no one really comes in this place, but I gotta think of the positives. I've got a steady paycheck, and I'll probably be able to retire comfortably in a couple of years. Well...maybe if Jerry weren't such a cheapskate!”

He chuckled but leered forward when light from the entrance opening reflected off his black sunglasses. A young woman stepped inside, and the man promptly straightened himself up, cleared his throat, and put on a big smile.

“Welcome to WOOHP!” he started. “Er...c-can I help you with something today, miss?” As the girl smiled back at him, his eyelid twitched at her phenomenal height. “Holy...! You must drink a lot of milk, miss!”

“Hi! I was wondering if I could see Jerry Lewis today!” the girl stated.

“Huh? J-Jerry? Sorry, kid, but he's currently out at the moment. Besides, he never said anything about having an appointment today. If you really want to speak with him, you're going to have to write your name down here. We here at WOOHP will get back to you at a later date about your appointment.”

“Really? That won't do though! I need to see Jerry as soon as possible!”

“It's like I just said though. He isn't in right now!”

“Are you sure? Can't you double-check or something?”

The man rolled his eyes at her persistence. “...Listen, kid. Even if you did write your name down
here, I seriously doubt Jerry would wanna see you, not unless you're his niece or something. Just...go home, alright? I've got a...uh...lot of work I need to get through!"

“Not without seeing Jerry first!”

“D-Dammit! T-This kid...!” the man searched around for assistance but noted he was the sole person present. “...Why is it you need to see Jerry so badly? What's your name?”

The girl's grin widened as she answered, “It's Tabitha! Tabitha Connor!”

“Tabitha...Connor? Why does that name...” Realization hit the front desk attendant. He wasted little time in standing and reaching for a walkie-talkie. “I-I'm gonna need a squad up here at the...!”

Tabitha snatched the device out of his hands and effortlessly crushed it between her fingertips, leaving him speechless. “Now, now! It's not nice to tattle-tell! We can't have you informing everyone we're here!”

“W-We’re...? What do you...?!”

His shaking eyes moved over to the entrance again. Dozens of Tabithas were swarming inside the premises like locust.

“...This is why Mother said I should've chased after another profession,” the WOOHP agent stated. He readied to combat the threat facing him, yet one of the many Tabithas dispatched him with a punch to the jaw.

“There we go! Go ahead and sleep for a while!” she said sweetly. She then faced the others and added, “Here we go, everyone! Let's find Jerry and destroy him!”

Her comrades in arms gave a resounding cry and followed after her while she marched into the heart of WOOHP. Once there, the Tabithas proceeded to destroy everything in sight along with taking down any unsuspecting WOOHP agents that stood in their path. Within minutes, the entire building had been wrought with complete and utter chaos. Kicking a grate aside and jumping down from the inside of a vent, chaos suited Chris just fine.

“I'm in,” she said. “That was easier than I thought it would be.”

Taking a step forward, she inspected the unconscious WOOHP agents filling the hallway. She then heard gunfire all around her, as well as the distinctive giggling of the army of Tabithas.

“That again, I guess there wasn't really anyone in the condition to stop me. I might as well have just come through the front door like those androids.” Chris playfully jabbed her finger against a sleeping spy and tittered joyfully. “Well then, let's get started.” She grabbed her Z-Powder off her spy leotard and opened it. “Scar, it's me. I made it inside WOOHP without any difficulties.”

“Good job, Christine,” said Scar's smirking image on the small screen.

“Don't call me that.”

“Ah, of course. My apologies. Give me a status report. What's happening in there?”

“Everything's going better than we anticipated by the looks of it. WOOHP wasn't ready for that army of Tabitha Connors SOAP mass produced, Scar. They're quickly taking control of the building as we speak.”
“Excellent. All of this is thanks to those wonderful schematics you stole from Doctor Heisenberg, Agent C. Those machines, while quite talkative, should make this little operation of ours progress smoothly. Nevertheless, we shouldn't get careless. While those robots are making a mess of things, I want you to head straight for Jerry Lewis' office. I'm confident you know what to do once getting there. Good luck, agent.”

Pressing her Z-Powder shut, Chris definitely had some ideas. “At last, I can avenge my parents! I just have to wait a bit longer!”

Two WOOHP agents, attempting to help their allies in an adjacent corridor, stopped in their tracks when they stumbled upon Chris.

“W-Who are you?!” one of them asked.

“No doubt she has something to do with what's happening!” said the other. “We should take her in for questioning!”

Chris wasn't in the mood for another WOOHP interrogation, so she quickly dispatched one of her enemies with a swift roundhouse kick ahead of downing the other by punching him below the belt when he attempted to grab hold of her. He cringed, let out a rather humorous cry, and then fell to his knees.

“Sorry. I don't usually fight that dirty…” Chris said to him. She then laid him out with the aid of a spinning heel kick. “…but then again, there's certainly nothing nice about what I'm about to do to your boss. Now then, where was Jerry's office again?”

She vaguely recalled what path to take from her prior visits to WOOHP, and as such, she got on her way to accomplish her mission. Without a doubt, it would be her most important one.

#

Although Chris didn't know it, Jerry wasn't in his office at the moment. Rather, he was walking the streets and humming a sweet tune with an unmarked box in his hands. Without a care in the world, he took in a deep breath, letting the sweet-smelling air penetrate his lungs. The skyline, cloudless and sunny, was glorious in his opinion. Honestly, he couldn't imagine a more perfect afternoon.

“How did Mother know I was all out of Earl Grey? Bless her heart! I think I'll head back to my office and whip up a fresh batch!”

There wasn't a better way he could think of to spend the rest of his day. There weren't any open cases going on or anything of real importance for him to fret his head over for once. He would use the opportunity to relax.

“Really now! I'm always working! What's wrong with me taking some time off?!” he demanded of no one in particular. Catching himself and the suspicious glances being thrown his way, he cleared his throat. “C-Clearly, I do need a break!”

He began humming again, though he broke off from it upon seeing the state WOOHP was in. Fires burned on a number of floors, and random bullets came flying out of windows, sending sharp glass tumbling below. Jerry stepped back to avoid some, and out of shock, he dropped his box of Earl Gray.

“W-What in the world is happening?!”

Standing outside slack-jawed wasn't going to solve anything, so he ran inside of WOOHP, took an
elevator up, and arrived at one of the main floors. There, the destruction was even worse than on the outside.

“J-Just what in the world could have happened here?! D-Don't tell me...!”

“Found you!” yelled a Tabitha. She pointed at Jerry and within seconds, was inches away from him. “Come here and give me a big hug!”

When she wrapped her arms around Jerry's waist, he felt the hug anything but friendly. In fact, he winced as she squeezed down tighter and tighter. It didn't take much imagination to think of what would happen if he didn't find a way to escape this predicament.

“Get away from him, you metal freak!” screamed Sam. Her foot planted its way into the side of Tabitha's head, sending it clean off her neck. Her body hit the floor, and Jerry, struggling to breath, flashed Sam a thumbs up.

“Samantha! It's good to see a friendly face!” Jerry stretched his aching back. “Argh! I may need to see a chiropractor after this...”

“Good to see you're alright, Jerry! I got worried these Tabithas might have gotten to you!”

“Hey! That was really rude!” said Tabitha's head in the distance. Annoyed, Sam and Jerry chose to ignore it.

“Sam, do you have any idea what's going on?!” asked Jerry. “And what do you mean by 'Tabithas'? Are you saying there's more of her?!”

“That's right! This place is crawling with these things! Other than that though, I really don't know why this is happening! The automated systems here at WOOHP told me, Clover, and Alex the place was under attack, so we got here as fast as we could! Alex and Clover are on the other side of the building helping who they can! We can't stay here though! Those Tabithas will find us in no time! They really seem to be looking for you, Jerry!”

“Me?!” Jerry fixed his tie and then put his hand on his chin in deep thought. “…I see. It's likely I know who's behind this whole dastardly plot then! Come, Sam! We need to go to my office so we can get a full assessment of what's going on! We'll stop this, no matter what!”

Sam nodded, but couldn't get herself in the same positive demeanor as her boss. That was because there was a chance everything that was happening somewhat was her fault.

“Hiya! Take that and that and that!” cried Alex. With a blurring array of kicks, she sent a Tabitha flailing into a wall, destroying her. “Ha! I'm totally not afraid of robots anymore! Just bring it on!”

Her confidence faded when another giggling Tabitha latched itself onto her back.

“A-AHHH! GET IT OFF! GET IT OFF! SOMEONE HELP!!!”

Clover came to her rescue, throwing the Tabitha over her shoulder and smashing her to pieces. With her heart racing, Alex clutched her chest and shot her friend an anxious nod.

“I mighta...jumped the gun on that whole 'not being scared of robots' thing.”

“You think?” replied Clover, shaking her head. She helped her friend to her feet, adding, “Didn't we
lock up that loony Heisenberg?! Where are these Tabithas coming from?!

"Considering how criminals seem to get out of the containment facility on a regular basis, I wouldn't be shocked if he broke out and is trying to kill us again."

"Eh, good point. Jer really needs to step up security there!"

"Don't say that! He'll just get us to do it!"

"T-That'd be so like him!"

A third person appeared in the corner of their eyes, interrupting their casual chat. They expected more Tabithas, so both got ready to rumble. Instead, they both gasped at seeing none other than Chris.

"...Dammit," mumbled Chris. She too wasn't sure what to say. "...I really didn't want to run into any of you guys, but I guess that was just wishful thinking."

"C-Chris..." said Clover slowly. Her body froze, and her mind went blank. She earlier claimed to have a mouthful for Chris if she ever encountered her again, but right now, she struggled to even get a single word out.

"You've got a lot of nerve showing up here!" Alex, on the other hand, knew exactly what she wanted to tell Chris. "So, you really are that SOAP spy after all!"

"Yes, that is correct. Guess Sam couldn't keep her mouth shut. Then again, why should she have? I suppose that's in the past now. I have a very important mission to accomplish, so I'll ask you two to step aside," said Chris calmly.

"You seriously think we're gonna fall for that?!" asked Clover, holding out her arms to form a brick wall using her body. "You're not going anywhere, Chris!"

Alex mimicked this. "Yeah! We'll stop you, no matter what it takes."

"Tsk! I don't have time for this! If you two won't move, I'll make you!"

"Don't think we'll hold back just because we were friends!"

Friends? Hearing this made Chris laugh. Only Sam, Alex, and Clover held such delusions. Chris had long since cast aside those feelings, or at least, that's what she convinced herself of. As Clover and Alex charged at her, a tiny part of her had reservations about what she had to do.

"If it's these two, I really do have to make it quick..."

Clover and Alex's opening strike, dual flying kicks, hit nothing but thin air, and they smacked their heads against the wall. Moaning in pain, they got up and were confounded at how Chris had traversed one side of the hallway to the other in an instant.

"Try again," Chris taunted, crossing her arms. Her frustrated opponents did just that, but they again ended up swiping at nothing, with Chris somehow moving back enough to avoid damage. Unwilling to give up, Clover and Alex kept up their assault, yet Chris zipped around everywhere in the blink of an eye. "Well, I guess I can give you both an A for effort."

"Okay, what's going on?!" asked Alex. "Is she a witch or something?!"

"Seriously! That kind of speed can't be normal!" added a red-faced Clover. "Especially when she's
moving around in high-heeled boots!” nonchalant

“It doesn't matter how hard you two try. You'll never hit me,” claimed Chris.

“Huh?! How come?!” said Alex.

“...I'm wearing Doctor Heisenberg's Lightspeed Power Suit underneath my clothing. I believe you two have seen in action. Therefore, you know how serious my claim is.”

“What?! No fair!”

“Fair or not, Alex, we're still going to stop her!” said Clover. “Let's go!”

Awestruck at her friend's stubbornness, Chris resolved herself to end things in one blow. Her tremendous speed gave her the upper hand, letting her get behind the attacking WOOHP spies. Afterward, she made her move, yet her eyes widened when her fist went right through her targets.

“Holograms?!”

The apparent holograms vanished, and the real Clover and Alex pounced on top of Chris from the shadows.

“Dammit,” she uttered, grinding her teeth. “How in the world did I fall for such a trick?”

“Sorry, Chris, but you're not as unbeatable as you think!” said a triumphant Clover.

“Even if you can move fast, it doesn't matter if you can't move at all!” said Alex. Chris frowned when she realized Alex was quoting the words she herself used against Doctor Heisenberg.

“As embarrassed as I am, I must admit you two fooled me good.” she then remarked, taking heed of the ring on Alex's finger. “I see. The Hologram Projecting Mood Ring. How ironic the gadget that helped me escape this place would assist in my capture when I come back.”

“Don't try anything funny, Chris! We’ll hurt you if we have to!” said Clover.

“Yeah! Just sit tight until we figure out what to do with you!” added Alex.

“You two are wasting your breath. I've no desire to surrender, even in this situation,” replied Chris. “Rather than acting like imbeciles, you should be using this opportunity to finish me off once and for all. There really is no room for compassion in espionage.”

Clover and Alex were uncertain how Chris could say something so heartless so candidly. Unfazed by their reaction, Chris closed her eyes to get a moment to gather her scattered thoughts. Per her earlier claim, she wasn't ready to give up just yet, not when Jerry Lewis was so close. An idea came to her then, she having no clue why she hadn't come up with it sooner. She gradually moved her hand downward, hoping not to draw her captor's attention.

“Were you the one who sent all these Tabithas?!” Clover inquired.

“In a manner of speaking, yes, though it was actually SOAP as a whole who plotted this attack,” Chris admitted. “Though they aren't as strong as the original, we figured they'd be more than enough to overwhelm the agents here at WOOHP. Seems we weren't wrong. They obviously aren’t a match for you two however.”

“Why are you doing all this?! Just to get Jerry?!” asked Alex.
“Yes. Our plan is to destroy WOOHP, yet taking down each and everyone one of its operatives is far too time consuming. If we destroy its leader, the rest of the pieces will come tumbling down. A classic battle strategy but an effective one nonetheless.”

“How come you wanna destroy WOOHP?!” Clover inquired next.

“...Per our name, SOAP is out to destroy any facets of peace. Since WOOHP’s entire reason for existence is ensuring it, we must stamp it and anything else like it out. Also, I suppose my leader wants revenge.”

“Revenge? For what?” said Alex, turning her head.

“You'd have to ask him. I have my own reasons for wanting your organization gone.”

“And those would be?” Clover raised an eyebrow when Chris kept her lips sealed this time around. “Well, I guess it doesn't matter! How come you're being so talkative now though?”

“I wonder.” The chat gave Chris ample time to grab a metallic cube off her person. She pressed a button on it, and without warning, a blinding, white light emanated off it. “And this is why you two should have finished me off while you had the chance.”

“W-What the heck?!” cried Alex as she shielded her eyes.

“I don't feel so hot,” said Clover groggily. “This whole room is shaking!”

Strength was sapped from their bodies, enabling Chris to easily push them off of her. Stars twinkled in their eyes, whereas Chris brushed herself off and exhaled disapprovingly.

“I better switch this thing off before it starts to mess with me too.” With haste, she deactivated the cube in her possession. The brilliant light that had shone at full length in the corridor died with it. “I never imagined this silly Cube of Confusion would ever come in handy. Not that I'm complaining.”

“We should totally hit the mall later and do some shopping...” muttered Clover. It was obvious she was out of it. Her head moved about erratically, and she smiled at no one in particular while she spoke.

Alex, in the same sorry state, answered, “I could totally get Oinky some cute, new clothes while we're there...”

“...Okay then.” Chris shrugged her shoulders. “I'll just leave you two to your planning. In the meantime, I'm going to pay your boss a visit.”

When she endeavored to get there in a hurry, she discovered, to her dismay, that the Lightspeed Power Suit was out of power.

“Great. This is what I get for not charging its batteries before I got here. Oh well. Guess I'll have to go the old-fashioned way.”

#

Maybe Jerry sensed he was being spoken of unconsciously because he let out a tremendous sneeze. He wiped his nose clean with some tissue, dismissing the gesture as his allergies flaring up. Besides, he was far too absorbed in the computer screen in front of him to fret over the matter.

“I've managed to seal off a number of vital areas in the building,” he said. His fingers clacked against
a keyboard, they and his brain racing against time. “Those machines outside won't be getting their hands on anything of importance. Still, they've made a rather good mess of the security system. Thanks to their efforts. I can't see what's happening in most places from inside of this office.”

Sam expected news like this. Hearing it lowered her spirits anyway. She and Jerry fled to the latter’s office in the hopes of finding a way to save WOOHP. Instead, the room had become more of a prison to them. Being the one safe area left, it was also their only salvation from being torn apart by an army of upbeat androids.

“I don't like this,” she declared. She forced herself to keep a straight face, despite her nerves eating at her. “I know SOAP is behind all this! They have to be!”

“Yes, I believe we are in the same line of thinking. This definitely has Scar's handiwork written all over it. Perhaps it was foolish of me, but I never imagined he would go this far just for a bit of payback. I should have thoroughly prepared for something like this.”

“You said this Scar used to be a WOOHP agent, right, Jer?”

Jerry paused before answering, “…Indeed, but that was a long time ago. Now, he's simply a man with sinister ambitions. We must stop him at all cost!”

“But how? We won't be able to do much of anything if we can't even leave this room!”

“Calm yourself, Samantha. If I know Scar as well as I think he'll do, he won't be in much of a hurry to finish us off. He's the sort of individual that would rather try to destroy everything we hold dear before then. That gives us an advantage and some time to plan a counter attack.”

“I-I guess, but...!”

The automatic doors that led into the room, the ones that were supposed to be sealed, slid open just then. Black boots then tapped against the flooring, and letting herself in, Chris placed her hands on her hips and took a gander around.

“Nice office you got here, Jerry,” she said nonchalantly. “Then again, I guess I've been here a couple times before. That couch over there is still tacky as hell, Jerry. You really should get a new one.”

“How did you...?!” Jerry kicked over his rotating chair while he stood. “T-There's no way you should've gotten past those doors! Not with all the security measures I put in place!”

“Hmm? You really thought those measly locks could keep me out? You seem to forget I'm a spy. Infiltration is one of my specialties. I'll admit though that getting in here was quite the hassle. I thought the Tabithas might've taken out all your men, but there were still a few looking for a fight. You must pay them rather well.”

“Chris...!” The name left Sam's mouth and nearly left a gash on her lips from the magnitude in which she said it. “…I let you leave WOOHP scot free because I figured it would knock some sense into that thick skull of yours, but I see I made a mistake!”

“I never said I would be a good girl when you let me bo, Sam. You're a smart person. I was certain you would've known what to do once you discovered my identity, but I guess not. Sorry things had to end up this way, but I guess fate just has a sense of humor sometimes.”

Jerry was completely lost at what they were discussing, his head moving from each one of them as they glared at the other.
“My business here isn't with you, Sam,” Chris said in the wake of a lengthy silence. “Outta my way. I don't want to hurt you if I don't have to, but I've got a mission to accomplish.”

“Yeah, right!” Sam replied. “You're only out for revenge! You’re just using your status at SOAP as an excuse for your own selfishness!”

“...Fair enough. You're right. Even if I weren't a SOAP operative, this is something I would've done. Now then, are you going to stand aside or not?!”

“Not a chance! Just go home, Chris! It's not too late! I don't want to have to fight you either, but I'm not letting you or your boss destroy WOOHP!”

“...I don’t have a home, Sam! You can thank that murderer behind you for that! I don't get it! Why are you defending this place?! Why are you defending Jerry Lewis you?! You, Alex, and Clover should be on my side!”

Sam was taken aback. “What are you talking about, Chris?! Jerry wouldn't...!”

“...Now I remember!” said Jerry. His features illuminated comprehension. “You're...Christine! That's right! You were here at WOOHP! I captured you!”

“I thought you were just getting senile, but I guess the effects of the memory erasing gun has finally worn off, old man,” replied Chris. “I'm actually glad you remember me! There wouldn't be any fun in killing you if you couldn’t!”

Jerry paced the floor in deep thinking for a few moments. He then answered, “...While I could see why you would want to destroy me from your point of view, you appear to have a couple of the facts mixed up, Christine. It sounds to me as if Scar has been telling you something other than the truth in terms of what happened to your parents in that accident long ago. I garner he has led you believe I'm the one that ended their lives. Allow me to inform you once and for all that this isn't the case.”

“Tsk! I've heard that before from you! You're simply saying that to try to weasel out of what's coming to you! I don't care how many WOOHP agents I have to crush to get you! I will avenge my mother and father! Today is the day WOOHP and you end! I'll make sure of it!”

“Chris, stop it! I'm serious!” hollered Sam. Her voice shook with anger and fear. “Don't do something you'll end up regretting!”

“I'm not going to regret this! Trust me!”

“My, you certainly are impatient. Just like your mother, I suppose.” Jerry rubbed his tired eyelids and walked past Sam, close enough to Chris to put himself in harm's way. “You really do resemble Diane a great deal, though knowing her, she would be scolding you a great deal if she could see you now.”

“S-Shut up! Like you have a right to criticize me over anything after what you did! And don't talk about my mother like you two were friends or anything!”

“And you're always shouting like your father Nathaniel. You really are their child.”

Finding no comprehension in Jerry's words, Chris let her rage take over, and she swung at WOOHP’s leader, intending to shut him up forcefully. Sam caught her trembling fist instead.

“S-Seriously, Chris! Just listen to what Jerry has to say! Scar's lying to you! Even without me knowing the whole story, I can tell that much! Why can’t you?!”
“W-What would you know?! You think you have a right to make that determination?!”

“Maybe if you weren’t always so secretive about things, I would know!”

“There’s a reason I keep to myself! People tend to hurt me, Sam! I don’t want anything to do with them!”

“You don’t mean that, and you know it! I think you’ve been wanting friends all along!”

Chris hesitated. “...Get out of my way, Sam! I’m done talking!”

“Never!”

“I SAID MOVE!!!!”

“I WON’T!”

It was inevitable things would come to this. Chris predicted as much. She snarled at Sam like a rabid dog, wanting to crush the woman standing before her. However, she couldn't bring herself to do it, not when her friend gazed at her with those eyes, eyes overflowing with sorrow, pity, and compassion.

“...D-Dammit!” Chris backed down, prompting Sam to release her hold on her. “...W-Why?! My head and my heart are screaming two different things! Why can I never seem to bring myself to finish you guys?!”

“...I’m glad to see Scar hasn’t turned you into a monster like him.” Jerry inched even closer to Chris and she responded by taking a wary step back.

“S-Stay away from me, you...you...!”

“Christine, listen to me. It is very important you understand what happened ten years ago was no accident.”

“I-I know that! You killed my parents! It was no accident either!”

“No! Remember! Remember back to that day! Scar may have filled your head with lies, but you of all people should be able to recall what happened!”

Reliving the events of ten years prior wasn't difficult. They often flooded her thoughts, overwhelming her at times. She never wanted to recount them. She wanted nothing to do with them. Falling to her knees, she clutched at her throbbing heart.

“What is it you're trying to tell me, old man?!” she howled at Jerry. “WHAT IS IT?!”

That fateful day ten years ago stood out for being extraordinarily warm. Because of the weather, Christine’s mother had draped her daughter in a red, summer dress held up by white straps. Nevertheless, the sun managed to bother her anyway, making tiny drops of sweat coat her forehead.

“It's hot!” a much younger Chris complained, being carried along by the arm. “Mommy, I'm thirsty!”

The woman holding her hand smiled down at her. Her features and silver hair greatly resembled Chris', so much so that it would have been clear to anyone she was her mother. The bright, orange catsuit she wore contrasted greatly with the drab, gray, and generally quiet airfield the two were
walking in. Only the sound of the jet in the background buzzing could be heard for miles on end.

“Just hang on a little longer, sweetie. They'll be something to drink on the plane,” Diane informed her daughter. She then fanned herself with her hand. “Boy, it sure is hot though! The weatherman called for rain today too! Even with all this wondrous technology we have nowadays, they still can't get the forecast right.”

“Mommy, where are we going?!” asked Chris.

“Hmm? Did I forget to say it? Huh, I guess I did with everything else that's been happening! I’m sorry, sweetie!” said Diane. She laughed at her simplemindedness. “Guess what, Chris? Today, you're going to get to see what Mommy and Daddy do for a living!”

“R-Really?! You mean I get to go on a mission with you?!”

“That's right! We're gonna fly in a big jet across the ocean to deliver something for WOOHP!”

The news transformed Chris in a bubbling ball of excitement. Never before had her parents brought her along for one of their missions. They usually left her behind in the care of relatives, not coming back for days at a time. Chris was often sad and lonely until their return, but this time, things were different.

“Ugh! What an ugly jet! I-I thought I was seeing things in the distance, but...”

Staring Chris and her mother straight on was a very pink plane with white flowers patterned all over its bright hull. It was truthfully painful to look at, and Diane found herself cover her face.

“Wow! Are we really going to ride in that?!” asked Chris excitedly.

“Unfortunately,” Diane muttered. She caught herself and quickly added, “E-Er...I-I mean, yes we are, Chris! Isn't it...er...I-lovely?”

This was Chris' first time seeing a plane this close, so to her, it really was. She wouldn't have cared if it was purple for that matter.

“No doubt this was Jerry's idea.” A vein throbbed on Diane's head. “Is this a joke?”

Up ahead, a large, burly, and brown-haired man waved his hand feverishly to get Diane's and Chris' attention. The second she saw him, Chris wrenched her hand free from her mother's grasp and fell into his arms.

“Daddy!” she exclaimed.

“Haha! There's my girl!” Nathaniel, her father, stated. “Say, have you gotten taller since the last time I've seen you?”

“Mmhm! I've grown this much!” Chris exaggerated her increased stature by raising her arms as high as she could. “I'm gonna be as tall as you some day!”

Nathaniel chuckled heartily again. “Is that so? Looks like I better watch out!”

He snatched Chris up and placed her on his shoulders, much to her amusement.

“So, are you ready to go on a 'super secret mission' with your folks?” he said to her afterward. She nodded her head eagerly. “Haha! Atta girl!”
Diane walked over to the two, saying, “Don't you think that jet is a bit too much?”

“Hey, it was Jerry's idea. He said a lot of the younger agents are really into this sort of thing,” Nathaniel replied. “I agree though. We're gonna stick out like a sore thumb in something like this.”

“Yeah, that's a bit of an understatement!”

“Haha! I'm sure things will be fine. After all, we're not going to be doing much in it other than dropping something off. I've been wondering though if bringing our dear Chris along is a good idea.”

“It should be perfectly fine. There won't be a hint of danger after us today. I would've been far more concerned if we'd brought her on our previous mission.”

“Ah, the one with the evil, mad scientist trying to take over the world with mind controlled gorillas? Yeah, that was indeed a hairy situation! Um...no pun intended! I still can't believe we made it outta that one in one piece!”

“You were this close to getting peeled like a banana by one of those gorillas!”

The two shared a laugh recounting the hair-raising experience, and Chris stared at them both curiously. It sure didn't sound all that thrilling to her.

“I guess you're right, honey. Today will be a brisk jog in comparison!” said Nathaniel.

“It'll be nice for Chris to see us at work. After all, maybe some day she'll want to become a spy just like us!” added Diane.

“Mhmm! I wanna be a spy just like you two!” Chris exclaimed.

“That's my girl! She's got out blood running through her veins alright!” said Nathaniel.

“I certainly hope I'm not interrupting anything.”

When everyone turned around, Chris noticed a man with shaggy, black hair leering back at them. His gaze seemed fixed on her specifically, and she froze up because of this. It was as if his black eyes were piercing right through her, searching for something or another.

“Scar! No, you're here just in time in fact!” Nathaniel told Scar warmly. “We were just here having some family time!”

“'Family time?' I see. How enriching.”

“Where were you by the way?”

“Me?” Scar gestured toward the jet behind him. “I was simply fine tuning our transportation before the mission. You can never be too careful when flying the skies. Only problem I found was that thing not having any sort of cloaking system.”

“'Cloaking system?' Is there someone we'll need to hide from?” asked a concerned Diane.

Scar chuckled. “No, no. I'd just rather not be seen in such a hideous thing.”

“Well, I certainly agree with you there! I don't know what Jerry was thinking.” Diane smiled slyly and noted even when she wasn't looking directly at the plane, she could sense its hideousness bearing down on her.
“Is that the daughter you two prattle on about so much there?”

“You bet! This here's our little ray of sunshine, Christine! Chris, say hello to Scar here! You see, he's apart of our three-man-team at WOOHP! I couldn't ask for a better partner in the world!” proclaimed Nathaniel.

“Ahem!” Diane uttered as loud as she could.

“E-Er...except for my loving wife, of course! Haha!”

Scar bowed. “It's a pleasure to meet you, Christine.”

Flinching, the way Scar said Chris' name made her strangely anxious. She wished he wouldn't say it again from now on.

“Nathaniel. Diane. I must compliment you two on producing such a fine daughter. Perhaps I'll be able to start a family of my own one day,” added Scar.

“U-Um...n-nice to meet you, Mister Scar,” replied Chris timidly. She never was good with first encounters. “Uh...w-why do they call you Scar? There's nothing on your face!”

“Heh. It's merely a codename. I never really understood where it came from either. Anyway, I believe we should get going. Are you bringing your daughter along for this mission?”

“That's right!” answered Nathaniel. “You don't mind, do you?”

“If that's what you two desire, you'll hear no complaints from me. Anyway, we'd better get going. We're already running late, and Jerry will most likely scold us if we delay any further.”

“He's lucky we're getting on that plane at all!” bellowed Diane. “I'm gonna tell him to scrap it the second we get back!”

No one was going to disagree with her on that.

“Ready to go, kiddo?” Nathaniel asked Chris, raising his arm enthusiastically.

“Yeah!” She emulated him and added, “Let's go! Let's go!”

“Haha! Alright, hold your horses! Here we go!”

The two cheered some more as they got on the jet, making Diane smile. It wasn't often they got to spend time together as a family like this. Missions tended to get in the way of that. Admittedly, she and her husband were away from Chris more than they liked.

“You know, we're thinking about retiring from this whole spy thing,” she told Scar.

The news astonished Scar greatly. “Really now? This is the first I've heard of the matter. How serious are you both about this?”

Diane shrugged. “It wasn't a problem at first. We didn't have a kid, so we could go on as many missions as we wanted. As much as we love being in this business, Nathaniel and I have realized juggling work and time with our child is becoming impossible. We're simply going to miss out on too much of her life if we keep going like this. We've both talked about it, and we've told Jerry we'll do a couple more missions before hanging up our catsuits for good. He's not too keen on the idea, but I think we'll be able to turn him around to it eventually.”
“...I can see why Jerry wouldn’t want you to go. I’d be just as stubborn about it. I feel any partners Jerry gives me after your departure wouldn’t be remotely the same as working with you two. However, I respect you and Nathaniel's decision here. Just know that I will miss you both.”

“Aww! That’s so sweet! We'll miss you too, Scar! You're always welcome to come over and visit us after we retire! After all, you are Chris’ godfather! Right, we'd better get going! That package isn't going to deliver itself!”

Diane patted Scar on the head affectionately before joining Nathaniel and Chris on the jet. Scar remained put however, mulling Diane's words over.

“...I never expected them to bring their daughter along, but it's far too late for me to change my plans now. Forgive me, Diane, if you'll regret having deemed me worthy enough to be that child’s godfather after today.”

On board the plane, Diane strapped Chris into a leather seat and took the chair next to her.

“Whatever you do, Chris, stay in your seat, alright?” said Diane.

Chris nodded. “Mommy, when is the plane going to take off?”

“In a little bit, sweetie. Just hang in there for a little while longer.”

Chris frowned. If there was anything she hated more than waiting, she couldn't think of it. Her attention shifted to the oval-shaped window beside her. It gave her a clear view of the outside. She couldn't see her father or Scar, making her search around. The second she did, the two entered the plane and took up positions in front of its controls.

“Let's see here...” Nathaniel scouted the wealth of buttons, levers, and switches awaiting him. “Well, I guess everything on the inside is familiar at least.”

“Heaven forbid the controls be as ugly as the exterior,” Scar mumbled.

“Still, I wonder why Jerry sent all three of us on this mission. The autopilot could practically handle a simple delivery like this!”

“Actually, I asked to tag along.”

Nathaniel raised an eyebrow at this. “Really now?”

“Jerry was originally only going to send you and Diane, but I had nothing better to do, so here I am. I hope you both don't mind.”

“Of course not! The more, the merrier!” Nathaniel stated. He then checked the status of his passengers. “Hang on tight, everyone! Things are about to get bumpy!”

Soon enough, the jet screeched off the runway and barreled into the sky. Chris felt some nausea as it do so, although she was far too thrilled with the prospect of flying with her parents to pay it much mind. Her beady eyes shifted about the outside of her window whilst she took in how high up she and the others were.

“Wow!” she said in a drawn out gasp. “Everything looks like ants! Mommy, this plane is really fast!”

“That's right, kiddo!” Nathaniel shot her a thumbs up. “While this thing might look silly, it's still the
pinnacle of WOOHP technology! I doubt there's a faster jet in the entire world!"

"It's a shame then this amazing technology is in the hands of such a poor pilot. You'll most likely end up wrecking the thing," Scar joked.

"W-Watch it now!" Nathaniel replied. "I might just crash it on purpose if you keep that up!"

"I'd certainly hope not. You wouldn't want to kill your precious daughter on her first flight."

Nathaniel's face turned a deep crimson at the remark, and he was unable to think up a comeback for it. Scar, amused, noted he could usually outsmart his cohort when it came to a battle of wits. This time was no different.

"Mr. Scar's kinda weird," said Chris. "Mommy, what kinda mission did you say you were doing today for um...W-WOO...WOO..."

"WOOHP, dear," said Diane. "And like I said, we're going to deliver a very important package to another branch of our organization in another country."

"What kind of package?"

Diane winked and replied, "It's a secret!"

"Aww, no fair! I wanna know what it is!"

Scar glanced back at the two, but said nothing and turned forward again.

"Pipe down back there, squirt!" Nathaniel stated. "If you wanna see it so badly, you'll have to wait until we get where we're going!"

Being told to wait again wasn't something Chris was comfortable with, yet she knew better than to speak back to her parents, so she nodded and went back to sightseeing.

"She's an inquisitive child, isn't she?" asked Scar as he co-piloted the jet.

"Haha! Tell me about it! We can hardly get her to be quiet for even a minute or two back home!" explained Nathaniel. "Still, we love her to death, you know? She gives us something to come home to. I just can't wait until the day she becomes a fine WOOHP agent like us! Hell, I think she'll be even better than us!"

"...'WOOHP agent', huh?" Scar repeated in a low voice.

"You say something?"

Scar shook his head. "Nothing at all. By the way, even though we shouldn't run into any trouble on this mission, it would be best to keep our eyes peeled."

"Yeah, yeah, Mom! No need to nag my ear off! Seriously, Scar, you worry too much!"

This might've been the case, though Scar didn't allude to it and simply went back to operating the plane.

#

The lengthy trip stretched into the wee hours of the night. Diane and Chris had dozed off, leaving Nathaniel and Scar to pilot the plane in relative silence. Neither had said a word to one another in
some time, though it wasn't because they were upset. The two, though good friends, usually struggled to come up with conversation topics. It more or less had to do with their differing personalities. Scar was the intellectual type, whereas Nathaniel was strictly a man of action. As such, there was a sort of unspoken rule between them that they didn’t have to force a discussion.

“God, this is boring,” said Nathaniel just then. He yawned and wiped the tears from eyelids after he stretched his limbs. “At least we’ll be there soon enough. I'm gonna switch the plane over to autopilot. Feel free to get some rest if you want, Scar. Looks like our passengers have already clocked out on us!”

Chris murmured a bit and shifted while resting her head on her mother's shoulder. The sight of this made Nathaniel feel all warm and tingly inside. It was moments like these that made him truly appreciate his loved ones.

“Hmm? Oh, I apologize, Nathaniel. I didn't hear a thing you said.” Scar lowered the book shrouding his face. “I was engrossed reading about the American Revolution.”

“H-Hey! How long have you not been helping me fly, you jerk?!”

Scar avoided the question. “Have you ever heard of a man by the name of Benedict Arnold? Everyone calls him a traitor, but I for one find his tale fascinating. He may have betrayed those close to him, but what's so wrong about becoming incensed at being under appreciated? That was the reason for his actions, the reason he threw everything and everyone he ever cherished away.”

“Eh? Is this a history lesson or something?”

“...Heh. I suppose all of that had nothing to do with anything. I was merely speaking out loud.” Scar slammed his book shut, and a small cloud of dust shot out of it. He then glimpsed back at Chris and Diane. “You know, I envy them. How is it they can sleep while knowing danger could be afoot at a moment's notice?”

“Danger? What are you talking about? Right now, we're nothing more than glorified mailmen! I mean, the only danger we're in is getting a ticket for flying around in something so ugly!”

“You certainly have a point there.” Scar chuckled. “Still, it isn't wise for them to be letting their guards down. I suppose I could understand a child, but Diane...”

“...Okay, you’re beginning to freak me out. You talk like you know something’s going to happen,” said Nathaniel. His tone was serious now. So was his expression. “Something you want to let me in on, Scar?”

“I haven't the slightest clue what you’re talking about. I'm not a psychic, so there's no way I would be able to predict something like that. My words are merely cautionary.”

Nathaniel wasn't buying it. Despite him being unable to explain it, the tension inside the jet had increased to the point of discomfort for him. His instincts were telling him Scar was hiding something, something important.

“By the way, what exactly are we carrying on this plane right now?” asked Scar.

“Jerry didn't tell you during the debriefing?”

“...No. Like I said, I jumped on board this mission at the last second, so I really didn't get a chance to get the details.”
“I see. Well, I don't know what it is exactly. All I know is that it's an incredibly powerful weapon, and if it gets into the wrong hands...well, let's just say we don't wanna think about something like that. I figure that's why Jerry gave you the okay to join us. The more people guarding a thing like that, the better.”

“...Interesting. Thank you, Nathaniel.”

Scar went back to reading, while Nathaniel paused at his partner's gratitude. There was more to it than that, yet he couldn't determine the undertones. In spite working with Scar for so long, Nathaniel could never get a read on the man. He was as mysterious as he was effective during missions, a fact that made Nathaniel both happy and cautious.

“Does it bother you Jerry often leaves out important facts of our mission like this?” Scar then inquired.

“I don't follow you.”

“I'm simply saying that he's always asking us to do dangerous things, yet he tends to leave important details out. Here we are risking our lives ferrying some unknown item, and he hadn't the decency to tell us what it was or who could be after us for having it. It’s quite grating if you ask me.”

Nathaniel, trying to avoid eye contact with Scar now, felt his friend had a point. However, that sort of thing never seriously bothered him. He assumed there were plenty of things Jerry, and WOOHP as a whole, needed to keep secret from his operatives to protect their affairs. Still, working for WOOHP was a privilege as much as it was a choice. Privileges such as those came with some restraints. Whatever they were carrying on this plane, Nathaniel knew it was important, important enough that Jerry tasked him and the others with getting rid of it. Having his boss place that much faith in him satisfied him enough.

“What type of leader is that?” Scar went on. Bitterness tainted his speech. Nathaniel figured he would've been an idiot not to take heed of this. “Quite honestly, I'm becoming dissatisfied with Jerry Lewis and WOOHP.”

“Thinking about transferring to the spy agency down the street?” Nathaniel joked.

Not catching this, Scar replied, “...I'm also dissatisfied with being under appreciated. I've given my life, and practically my soul, to WOOHP, yet Jerry Lewis doesn't care. No, he casts aside my ideas and accomplishments like they were meaningless. He doesn't think me worthy enough to succeed him as the leader of WOOHP. What a fool he is! A majority of the technology we employ in the field is thanks to my efforts, and he hadn't the decency to tell us what it was or who could be after us for having it. It’s quite grating if you ask me.”

Nathaniel didn't like where the chat was veering. He quietly continued to fly the plane though felt himself and his family in increasing danger the longer they stayed near Scar. This wasn't mere intuition; his gut was practically screaming at him.

Awkwardly clearing his throat, he said, “Look, there's probably a reason Jerry has been passing you up for a promotion. Perhaps he's just not ready to retire yet, or he just doesn't think you're ready yet. You really are a good operative, Scar, but...”
Suddenly, Scar slammed his hands onto the dashboard resting in front of him. Nathaniel jumped at this, immediately wishing he could take his words back.

"Not ready yet?! What in the hell are you talking about?! Of course I'm ready! I've been ready! Everyone knows I'm the best operative at WOOHP right now! You and your idiotic wife would be dead if it weren't for my endeavors! I've saved you both more times than either of you could ever realize! That isn't the issue here! Don't you see?! Jerry's simply afraid of me! He's afraid of everything I've accomplished so far, and rightly so! Jerry realizes I'm a far more capable leader than he is, so he's intentionally leaving me to fester as a field agent for as long as possible! The old fool! I suppose I'll give him credit at least for acknowledging me as a threat! Even so, how long does he think he can hide behind his audacious title as leader of WOOHP?! Nothing lasts forever! I will take my rightful place in due time! If I have to go through him or anyone else that stands in my way, so be it!"

This wasn't right. None of this was right. A look of utter disgust lined Nathaniel's expression as Scar descended into mad laughter. This was not the man he thought he knew as a friend all these years. No, that person had clearly been nothing more than a disguise, a facade played up by Scar to maintain a certain image. The vile fiend before Nathaniel was the real Scar, a being no longer wrapped under false skin. How hadn't he noticed it beforehand?

"Scar, you...!"

"Hmm? What's going on?" Diane awoke from her slumber, unable to sleep with all the commotion. "W-What's with him, Nate? Did you tell a funny joke or something?"

Nathaniel, unable to answer his wife, wished that were simply the case. He clenched his jaw and slowly moved his head to Chris, who remained asleep in spite of everything.

#

An intense heat woke Chris up. It was different from earlier, and she could tell it wasn't the sun this time around. It was much closer, with the scent of burning fuel stinging her nostrils. Rubbing her sleep-ridden eyelids, she opened them to see an incredible inferno blazing in the distance. Wreckage from some time of vehicle was the probable cause, and sighting a piece of it, she noticed its pink, flower-patterned design was familiar.

"Huh? W-What's going on?"

She felt some type of blanket covering her, but more than that, someone was carrying her in their arms. Looking up, she saw Scar, her parent's associate. He paid her no mind, even as she poked at the black cloth covering the lower half of his face. She couldn't remember him wearing it before.

"What's this for, Mr. Scar?" she inquired. His countenance, deadpan and mysterious, made her retreat some. "Er...w-what's going on?"

"The...plane we were in. It crashed," he informed her plainly.

"W-What?! ‘C-Crashed?!’ H-How did that happen?! I-I don't...!"

"I couldn't save them," Scar muttered. He was more talking to himself than to Chris. "W-WOOHP killed them, yet there was nothing I could..."

"W-WOOHP?!"
“Dammit!” Without warning, he fell to his knees and started sobbing. “I COULDN'T SAVE THEM!!!”

“W-Where are my parents?! Where's Mommy and Daddy?!” Now panicked, Chris' fear magnified when Scar ignored her. “I-I want Mommy and Daddy! I-I'm scared!”

She burst into tears, unable to cope with her confusion. For some time, she and Scar did nothing but weep. The flames in front of them crackled furiously in response.

“They're gone...” Scar composed himself enough to tell her this. “…Nathaniel and Diane are gone...”

“G-Gone?!” Gone where?! I wanna see them?!”

Scar shook his head. “I'm afraid that's impossible, Christine. They've...gone someplace you'll be unable to see them from now on.”

Chris didn't understand. All she really got was that she wanted to cry even more now. Scar did attempt to stop her.

#

“That's right. You're telling me to remember, but there's no way I could forget something like that!”

Back in the present, Chris shoved her memories aside and rose to her feet. Strolling down Memory Lane like this merely served to increase her already boiling anger to the breaking point.

“After I calmed down some, Scar told me what you and WOOHP did!” she continued. Her words were slightly muffled by how hard she was clenching her teeth. “That plane we were on was suddenly hit by a missile, a missile sent by none other than WOOHP! We checked the wreckage, and the remains of that missile definitely bore the WOOHP emblem! Scar even traced it back from the source! He said it came from this building! You people shot down that plane! You people killed my parents!”

“N-No way! T-That's impossible!” cried Sam. Even after hearing the story, she couldn't believe her boss would have it in him to do something so despicable. “Chris, w-why would WOOHP want to get rid of your parents?! You said it yourself they were really good agents!”

“Tsk! Maybe that's why he got rid of them! Scar told me they were talking about retiring so they could spend more time with me, but Jerry here didn't want them to go. In fact, Scar said the old timer was vehement about the matter. He didn't want to lose his best agents, so maybe he made sure they couldn't slink off to another spy agency or something! Or maybe he was just so petty, he didn't want them to live in peace!”

“Wait a sec! J-Jerry, tell her...!” Sam gasped at Jerry holding his head to the floor without saying anything to defend himself. It was practically an admission of guilt. “J-Jerry?! N-No! Y-You can't be serious!”

The doors to Jerry's office opened again. Clapping his hands, Scar himself made his presence now by stepping in front of Chris.

“Jerry Lewis, it's been far too long!” he yelled. “I haven't been this far inside WOOHP's walls in quite some time. I see you've moved things around a bit. Well, I guess it doesn't matter now. All of this will be gone soon enough. As will you. Of course, you've probably been preparing yourself for this day, the day I rightfully take my place as leader of the World Organization of Human Protection!”
END
The man nonchalantly making his way inside the office of Jerry Lewis was none other than Scar. The head of Spies Organized Against Peace smiled a devilish smile as he stopped beside Chris. She wasn't exactly sure how to react to his sudden appearance.

“You've done a fantastic job, Christine. Of course, I expected these results from an operative of your caliber. You always were my best agent,” he told her. She remained quiet, not even chastising him about using her real name. “Now then, stand aside. I have some unfinished business with my former employer here.”

“Scar. I honestly hoped to never see your face again,” said a scowling Jerry. “It appears you've been keeping yourself busy all these years. Have you had fun brainwashing Christine?”

Scar let out a hearty series of chuckles. “‘Brainwashing?’ What a colorful word! I've done nothing to my wonderful agent here other than tell her the truth about you. You think me malicious for that? If so, I must've learned it from you.”

In the same cool manner as his speech, Scar made his way over to the couch in the center of the room, took the middle-most seat, and crossed his legs before fixing his sights on Jerry once more.

“Of course, I'm not here to reminisce on the past,” he went on. “I'm quite certain, Jerry, you are well aware of why I am here.”

“I would presume revenge, though I'm lost as to how I've ever wronged you.”

“...Come again?” The look on Scar's face transformed to one of wholesome ire. “Tsk! Even now, you dare to overlook my genius?! Play the part of a fool for as long as you wish, old man! It won't save you or your wretched organization in the end! My army of androids will have this building under my control in a mere matter of minutes! As such, there's nowhere left for you to run, Jerry! We'll finish this today.”

“So that's it then.” Chris spoke under her breath, adding in a much louder voice, “WOOHP is finished!”

“I-Is that what you really want, Chris?!” asked Sam. “You can’t be serious!”

Chris faced away from her friend in defiance. She wasn't in the mood to answer anymore questions, fearing doing so might actually make her regret what she had done up to this point.

“...I thought you might've been a good person, Chris, but it's obvious I was wrong,” said Sam bitterly. “I guess there's nothing left to do but stop you!”

“Are all your operatives this foolish, Jerry?” asked Scar. “Anyway, all good things must come to an end, young woman. Just like your friendship with Christine here, the same goes for WOOHP, Jerry Lewis’ WOOHP anyway.”
“Sorry, Scar. Though you seem quite confident you've won, neither me, my operatives, or this organization are going anywhere anytime soon!” declared Jerry.

Scar raised an eyebrow. “Is that so? Enlighten me.”

“You don't get it, do you? WOOHP was created to assist those in need. So long as people are willing to help others, WOOHP will live on. Even if you destroy this building and everyone inside of it, you'll never get your way! Your ambitions are nothing in the face of human compassion!”

For a moment, Scar was left speechless. Then, everyone observed him erupt into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. Jerry in particular found the whole display quite sad.

“You had me going there for a bit there.” Scar held his aching sides and wiped his tear-stained eyes clean. “Human compassion? That tirade you were going on about there sounds like something out of a fortune cookie! Or maybe you really are beginning to lose your mind. You are getting up there in age. Whatever you believe, your time on top of the spy world has come to an end.”

“Not if I can help it!” said Sam, slipping into a fighting stance. “You two are going to have to go through me if you want to lay a finger on Jerry!”

“Sorry, Samantha. As much as I appreciate the kind gesture, I can't allow you to throw away your life here!”

Jerry pressed a switch on his desk, and a trap door opened up beneath Sam. Though she attempted to stop herself from falling into the abyss by hanging onto the edges, her fingers slipped, and she disappeared screaming Jerry's name. Being outnumbered would be a problem now, but Jerry figured as long as Sam, Clover, and Alex escaped the building safely, he and WOOHP had a fighting chance.

“Sam...” muttered Chris somberly.

“Hmm? Well now, that wasn't very smart,” Scar said to Jerry. “You certainly could have used the help. Then again, I suppose you do have a tendency to cast aside people on or surpassing your level out of fear.”

“Save your breath, Scar. This matter is between you and me!” barked Jerry.

“Fair enough.”

“Tsk! This has much to do with me as it does you guys!” stated Chris.

“Heh. Of course, Christine. I'll let you get your fill in as well. We promised to destroy WOOHP together after all.”

“I believe it's about time you've told that girl the truth, Scar. You've pulled her along on a string long enough!” said Jerry.

“You're still going on about that, old man?” asked Chris. “I'm not listening to your lies anymore! Scar wouldn’t…”

“...Don't be so hasty, Christine. After all, his story isn't as farfetched as you believe,” Scar said without warning.

Hearing this made Chris' whole body freeze on the spot. Surely, she must have simply misheard her boss, she thought. Though assured of this, she still decided to turn to him, asking, "...And just what
“Regrettably, that isn’t the case, Christine. Everything Scar has told you about your parent's death has been nothing more than a fabrication. While I did send them, and Scar, out on that mission, I didn't end their lives. The true culprit is standing right beside you,” explained Jerry. “He’s the man you’ve been serving faithfully under all the years, a man that has used your confusion and anger to his advantage.”

"N-No..." Chris repeated this a few times under her breath and inside of her head. Why should she believe anything Jerry Lewis had to say? This had to be another of his numerous lies. It had to be. Scar would deny his claims, she thought, and she leered his way again to hear just that. However, when her boss remained tight-lipped on the matter, fear sprang up in her heart. "W-Well?! Say something, Scar! What's the problem?! Tell him he's wrong! Answer him! Answer me, god dammit!"

It took some time, but Scar finally gave her the response she desired, although he doubted it was the one she anticipated.

“...I've grown tired of keeping up this facade. You've no idea how irritating it is to take care of a helpless, little girl, Christine. Fortunately, you were useful to me as a spy, but now that you've served your purpose, I no longer have any need of you.”

This coming out of Scar's mouth was too much for Chris. She backed away from him apprehensively, leering with eyes as wide as the sky. She again tried to convince herself that what she was hearing and what was actually being said were two wholly, different things.

“Y-You can't be serious! T-This really is just another one of your stupid jokes, right, Scar?!! Come on, tell me you’re just kidding around again, Scar!”

“I'm afraid not, Christine” retorted Scar. There wasn't a shred of compassion in his tone. He then sighed. “I really didn't want to kill Nathaniel and Diane. Then again, my plans had come so far, I really had no choice but to dispose of them. Your parents were fools, Christine. If they'd simply gone along with my ideals like you did, they might be here today. Of course, something good did come of their demise: you. Yes, they left me quite the tool to mold and shape as I saw fit. If you'd like, I can tell you about what actually happened to your dear parents in their final moments.”

Chris, shaking in anger and confusion, eagerly shot her head up at this claim.

#

“What in the world is your problem, Scar?” asked Diane from inside the pink WOOHP jet she, Nathaniel, Christine, and of course Scar, were traveling in. His crazed laughter pierced throughout the vessel, unsettling Diane more and more with each passing second.

Finally, he and the interior of the plane became quiet again but unsettlingly so. Meanwhile, Nathaniel and Diane waited for Scar to say or do anything to explain his bizarre actions. He chose to adjust his focus to the front of the plane instead as he listlessly stared at the darkened skyline outside from the large window.

“...I'm going to ask you again, Scar. What is your problem?” said Diane slowly and carefully. The last thing she wanted to do was set her friend off again.

“...I suppose I just had an epiphany is all, Diane.” Scar, swiveling his head over to her, added, “...WOOHP has no future with Jerry Lewis at its helm. I'm certain you and your husband here are
smart enough to realize that. I'll dispose of that man and claim the organization for myself. Indeed, that's the only future WOOHP could hope to have if it wants to thrive and prosper.”

“Y-You can't be serious!”

“I am very serious, Nathaniel. In fact, I want you both to join me in my plans. The three of us have always functioned well as a team. Something like this would be a cakewalk if we combined our efforts. Jerry would never see it coming either.”

“I-I can’t believe this! You're insane, Scar! Do you really think you could get away with something like this?!” asked Diane. “It's...too horrible to even think about!”

“Of course I could. You severely underestimate my abilities if you truly believe I couldn’t. Covering up Jerry's demise wouldn't be too hard. We could stage some sort of accident. I don’t care what so long as that man is out of my hair once and for all. Besides, the three of us are well-respected enough within WOOHP that I doubt many will question our sudden rise to the top. What do you say?”

“As tempting an offer as that is, I think we're going to have to decline!” bellowed Nathaniel. “I don't know what's gotten into you, Scar, but if you're serious about this whole twisted scheme of yours, we're going to have to stop you here and now!”

“That's right! You won't lay a finger on Jerry!” said Diane. “Now while we’re around!”

“Hmph. How noble of you both.” Scar shook his head. “I had my suspicions you two would respond in this manner, though I suppose it didn't hurt to try. I presumed maybe you two at least could see the truth, but perhaps Jerry's foolishness has rubbed off on you both. Maintaining peace in a world such as ours is a complete and utter waste of time. Despite all our hard work over the years, things always descend into chaos after a short period of peace. It's simple human nature for our species to behave in such a way, so when you really think about it, groups such as WOOHP are truly pitiful. They futility fight the inevitable. I no longer wish to be apart of such a cycle. My talents are wasted on such a thing. Rather than try to combat tyranny and strife, we should accept it and learn how to use those aspects to our advantage.”

Everything became hushed once more. Scar perceived this as a moral victory.

“...Some of things you said are true,” began Diane. “Even so, that doesn't mean we should let criminals and other bad guys do as they please! There are plenty of decent people on this crazy planet of ours! Don't you think they're worth protecting from the tyranny and strife you mentioned?! You want use to just go along with it?! Get real! The same people you’re celebrating are the same people that could hurt my daughter!”

Diane, losing her temper, calmed when her eyes wandered to the still sleeping Chris. She questioned how the girl could be resting even though things inside the jet had descended into madness.

“...That's right! We have to protect the ones we love! That's what WOOHP is all about! That's the reason we put our lives on the line everyday taking down all the wackos in the world! If you don't even get that much, Scar, you're a lost cause!” she added.

Scar paused at this, perhaps taking the time to chew her words over. “...Love? You're saying that's what this is about, what WOOHP is about? Then things are even worse off than I imagined. Love is simply a word humans came up with to cope with their loneliness. In the end, all of us merely care for our own goals and ambitions, yet we prance around and pretend to care for one another. That sort of dishonesty makes me sick to my stomach. Don’t you believe it’s time we dropped that facade?”
“Is this a philosophy lesson now?” asked Nathaniel sarcastically.

Paying the question no mind, Scar directed his attention to Chris. “...I suppose you two must really love your daughter.”

“...What's that supposed to mean?” Nathaniel already had an idea what Scar was getting at, although he felt it didn't hurt to be certain by asking.

Scar abruptly got to his feet, causing Nathaniel and Diane to tense up. “Right now, this plane is carrying a highly explosive missile capable of wiping out a city or two if it were to be used. It was created by a very dangerous individual, one who is now locked up in the containment facility at WOOHP. The reason we are transporting it to another WOOHP location is so that it can be dismantled safely. Jerry lacked the resources to do so at our headquarters.”

“W-What?! H-How could you know all this?! Jerry didn’t tell us a thing!” cried Diane.

“Hacking into WOOHP's mainframe and stumbling upon the information was a simple matter for me. Of course, I wouldn't have had to resort to such uncivilized measures if Jerry weren't being so tight-lipped about everything we do. Obedient, little sheep such as you two likely wouldn’t question this however. The reason I asked to join this mission was so I could commandeer the weapon we have on board for my own purposes. It doesn't make sense to let something like it go to waste just because an imbecile like Jerry Lewis wants to preserve 'peace' or whatever nonsense he tends to prattle on about.”

“Bastard! Like hell we're letting you pull off whatever it is you're planning!” Nathaniel stood this time around. His massive frame towered over Scar as he glared down at his now former comrade.

“Hahaha! You really think you of all people can stop me at this point?! No, Nathaniel, you are far too late to do anything but sit back and enjoy the ride!”

“What do you mean we're already too late?!” said Diane, alarmed. “What have you done, Scar?!”

The only response she received was the sound of Scar snickering triumphantly. His words, while cryptic, were to be taken seriously, and Nathaniel instantly began to prod around for anything out of the ordinary.

“D-Dammit, the controls!” he proclaimed after a bit.

“Nate? W-What's going on?!” asked Diane. Her husband was frantically hitting every button he could find on the control panel of the plane.

“Bah! It's too late!” Nathaniel slammed his fists against the dashboard in frustration, ready to break the bloody thing.

“What?! What's too late?!”

“Heh! It looks like he's figured it out!” Scar reveled in the other's despair and vexation. “I've done a few...modifications to the autopilot, you see. I've set this plane on a crash course with a nearby city, one that's densely populated.”

Diane's eyes widened. “N-No! I-If this thing were to crash there...!”

“Yes, I see your imagination is working nicely!”

“N-Nathaniel, disable the autopilot before...!”
“I tried! I can’t! Whatever he did looks like it’s permanent! But when?! When did he...?!?” Nathaniel reminisced back to when Scar first arrived that day. “T-That’s right! He said he was messing with something inside the jet before takeoff! Dammit! If only I’d noticed sooner!”

Scar retook his seat. “The method of how I did all this is irrelevant at this point. The two of you should instead be trying to figure out a way to stop me. Not that you can, of course, though I admit it'll be interesting to see you try anyway.”

“...Why?! Why are you doing this!!” Nathaniel demanded of Scar.

“Why? My, you two are certainly full of questions today. Do I really need a reason at this point? Perhaps I simply want to see the look on Jerry’s face when hears about all this. Yes, that would be reward enough!”

“Y-You can’t just do something like that! You just can’t!” cried Diane.

“And yet here I am about to do just that!”

“You do realize you're going to be blown to bits like the thousands of people you're about to kill, right?!?” yelled Nathaniel.

“You think so?”

“...You've readied an escape route, haven't you?” asked Diane resentfully. “It's not like you to plan something this extravagant without having some sort of contingency to ensure your own survival.”

Scar grinned. “You know me well, Diane.”

“...More than I'd like to at this point...”

Scar, inching his hand behind him, retrieved a metallic gun of unknown origins. He aimed it at an unsuspecting Nathaniel and blasted him with an intense beam of light. As her husband crumpled onto the floor, Diane watched him with her hands over her mouth in horror.

“You needn’t worry. I didn’t kill him...yet,” said Scar, holding up his weapon proudly. “This is actually a new invention of mine. It’s rather nice, isn't it? It renders the victim quite paralyzed for a short time. Oh, and it also leaves whoever it hits wracked in unimaginable pain.”

As proof of this, Nathaniel let out a series of cries and hollers, unable to move an inch while doing so.

“I don’t really have a name for this thing yet,” Scar continued. “I presented it to Jerry, but he rejected it on the grounds of it being too 'barbaric.' That's going a bit too far, don't you think?”

“Y-You monster!” Diane replied. Tempted to check on her husband, she stopped in her tracks when Scar pointed his gun at her. “...How long have you been planning this?! Days?! Weeks?! Months?!”

“Let's just say long enough. I'm surprised neither you or your husband saw this coming. Then again, neither of you were the sharpest tools in the shed. How could you be when you unfailingly go along with everything Jerry says?!”

“He's a good man, Scar! He's doing good things for the world!”

“Keep believing in that delusion.”

“Tsk! I'm done trying to get through to you! I’m just going to go through you instead!”
Diane charged straight for the man she no longer considered a friend, and in response, Scar fired off a shot at her. Rolling to the side, Diane slammed her shoulder into Scar, sending the two of them into the dashboard behind them. They tussled and fought for control until Scar kicked her back toward Christine.

"Whoa! S-Sorry, sweetie! I nearly flattened you like a pancake!" she joked.

"Touching." Scar, standing over her, neared his gadget at her a second time. "If you wish, I can take care of you and your precious daughter before the plane even crashes. It’s the least I can do after our years of working side-by-side."

“I don't care what you do to me, but I'm not letting you lay a finger on Christine!"

Diane grabbed a thick, black blanket and carefully wrapped her daughter inside of it without disturbing her. Despite Scar being baffled by this, he hadn't the time to ask Diane what she was plotting because a pair of thick arms wrapped themselves around him. He looked behind him, cackling at the sight of Nathaniel.

"Impressive. My gadget should have immobilized you for a number of hours. Perhaps it needs a bit more fine tuning."

"Like I’d let you harm a hair on my family's head! I'm putting a stop to this! I’m putting a stop to you, Scar!"

"Yes, you keep saying that, yet your words hold no meaning to me. You can't even stop this plane."

"That's where you're wrong, Scar! I can still engage the manual override!"

"Impossible. We've already established I and I alone have complete control over this vessel."

"Wrong again, Scar! We still have a hand we can play here!"

"W-What?! What are you trying to say?!!"

"Ah, I almost forgot about that!" said Diane, puzzling Scar even further. "Oh, you don't know? What a shame! In case of an emergency, we can use our WOOHP IDs to override the autopilot! It’s a new feature they added to these things a couple months back!"

"W-What?! T-That can't be! Jerry didn't...!"

"Of course Jerry didn't tell you," said Nathaniel. "It's clear to us now that he doesn't trust you! Even though we didn't see it, maybe he already figured out who you really were and what you were capable of!"

"You think you're so smart, Scar, but it seems Jerry's always one step ahead of you!" said Diane playfully. "There’s a reason he’s leader of WOOHP, while you’re not!"

This latest wound to his pride made Scar's rage increase tenfold. How could Jerry trust the likes of them with such valuable information, but not him? It was inconceivable.

"That old fool!" he muttered through clenched teeth. "I-It doesn't matter if you can disengage the autopilot! I've already armed the missile, meaning it's going to explode at a moment's notice! You won't have time to reroute this plane anywhere safely!"

"...Worse come to worse, we can simply crash this thing somewhere it won't hurt anyone," replied
Nathaniel.

“...Surely you aren't saying you both would needlessly throw away your lives for people you don't even know?!”

“That's the difference between us and you, Scar: we're more than willing to help those in need. You, on the other hand, only care about yourself!”

Becoming increasingly incensed, Scar replied, “You both are imbeciles! You wish for your daughter to go down in a blaze of glory as well?!”

Diane shook her head. “Chris has a future! A bright one! Even if the two of us, or even WOOHP for that matter, can't stop you, Chris certainly can!”

Scar watched as Diane picked Chris up before walking over to plane's hatch. Upon opening it, she was greeted by an intense gust of air that half near swept her off her feet.

“This is it, Christine,” she said, warmly gazing down at her child. Chris moved a bit from underneath her blanket, but remained fast asleep. “I hope you won't be too upset with your father and I once you learn what happened here. Just do us a favor and promise to be a good girl, okay? I just know you'll do great things! After all, you're our daughter! Never forget though that we love you! We always will!”

A heavy-hearted Diane gently tossed Chris out of the plane. Seconds later, the blanket wrapped tightly around her daughter expanded until it formed a parachute that began harmlessly floating downward. Tears welled in Diane's eyes as she viewed her daughter grow farther and farther out of sight.

“I figured I'd only be sending her off like this for college or something, but...”

“I see. That blanket was actually a gadget,” said Scar. “Clever.”

“Diane, here! Take my ID card!” Nathaniel tossed his wife the mentioned item. “You just need to insert them into those slots over there!”

“Got it!” Diane practically slammed the cards into the control panel. “Alright! I've got control now! Okay, I see a forest right below us! It'd probably be alright to bring the jet down there!”

“Sounds good! Just hurry!”

“Alright, alright! No need to rush me! It's not like I have any experience intentionally crashing a damn plane or anything!”

Squirming in Nathaniel's grasp, Scar stated, “T-This is pure lunacy! You two may have a suicide wish, but I don't!”

Without warning, he drove the back of his head into Nathaniel's nose. There was nothing fancy or graceful about the move, but it at least forced his captor to release him. Seeing red at this point, Scar took hold of his gadget and aimed it menacingly at Nathaniel, who hadn't yet recovered.

“This is something I should've done a long time ago!” he roared.

“Look out!” Diane saw what was occurring, and at the last moment, she kicked Scar's arm up. Because of this, he accidentally shot himself in the jaw.
"A-AAA-AGH!!!” Scar howled at the top of his lungs. His pain, indescribable, caused him to rock back and forth until he came dangerously close to the still open airlock. Despite Nathaniel and Diane trying to save him, he fell right out of their grasp and out of the plane, vanishing into the night.

“Well...I...suppose that takes care of one problem,” said Nathaniel. Though he was hardly upset to see Scar go, it was still hard for him to swallow the fact his friend had been as vile as the villains they swore to apprehend. “Guess that's the end of our team, huh, honey?”

“Nevermind that! We gotta do something about this plane!” exclaimed Diane. 

“The plane? A-Ah, that's right! Who knows how much time we have left until that missile detonates!”

Pressing down on the throttle as hard as he could, Nathaniel wasn't able to get the plane to budge. It was solely when Diane joined in did they manage to sharply direct the jet toward the ground, a decision they wouldn't be able to take back at their present altitude.

“Diane, you better get out of here while you can. No sense in both of us dying and leaving Chris all alone.”

Diane smirked. “…You know it's far too late for me to leave. Besides, I can't abandon you. You’re my husband. I’m worried about Chris too, but I also think she’ll just be fine. She's a strong girl. She has our blood flowing through her! Whatever the world throws at her, I'm certain she can tackle it head on!”

“Hahaha! You're right! I should know better than to underestimate our little girl!”

The two held hands as the plane sunk lower and lower. Soon enough, the vessel was mere seconds away from the making impact.

#

Scar awoke in a total daze. Having no clue where he was or even what had transpired beforehand, he groggily fought himself out of the parachute covering him so he could get a proper look around. He was in a dense, pitch-black forest, one where he could hardly see three feet in front of him. Both his head and his jaw pained him greatly, and as he growled like a rabid dog, he suddenly recalled Nathaniel and Diane as the cause of his suffering.

“Those two imbeciles! They're going to...!” He stopped mid-sentence, noticing a faint glow in the distance. “What's this? I smell burning fuel. ...I think I have an idea as to what's going on now.”

He ripped a piece of his parachute off to use as a temporary bandage for his jaw wound ahead of dashing toward the source of light. The closer he got to it, the stronger the scent in the air intensified. Black smoke greeted him soon after, and before he knew it, he stumbled onto the wreckage of a pink jet with the WOOHP insignia on it.

“...Tsk. So they managed to save the day after all.”

He stepped forward, ignoring the intense heat lashing at his person. Something was here amongst the charred rubble and debris, he thought. He wasn't sure how he knew, he just did. Indeed, his instincts led him to stumble upon something, something that made an absolutely terrifying smirk dance across his features.

#
“That something, of course, was you, Christine,” said Scar, back in the present. His current smile matched the one from ten years ago. “I could hardly believe my eyes at the time. Thanks to your mother's endeavors, you hadn't a scratch on you from that immense fall you took. You know, I considered ending your life right then and there because of what your parents had done to me, yet I decided against it. I had the feeling you would be far more useful to me alive and well. So, I trained you how to be a spy for SOAP, and I taught you WOOHP was your mortal enemy. I have to say that everything worked out better than I ever imagined. You were an excellent spy, Christine, everything your parents billed you to be. Still, I find it rather humorous your parents hoped you would join WOOHP one day. Instead, you were helping me to destroy it!”

Scar placed his hand on his face, allowing the sound of his insane cackling to reverberate through Jerry Lewis’ office. Chris, unable to think or even speak in response to his tale, remained motionless the whole time. Although her head told her his claims were lies meant to upset her, her heart knew the truth. Perhaps it always had. Dropping to her knees, she took her aggression out on the floor by pounding it over and over with her fists.

“D-Dammit! H-How could I have been so stupid?!”

Jerry, looking on, longed to say something, anything because he felt partly responsible for Chris' despair. He questioned if he should have searched harder for her instead of presuming she had gone the way of her parents, or maybe he could have tried a bit more to rid the world of Scar and his aspirations before even more tragedy struck. Erasing these thoughts from his psyche, he decided to turn his frustrations on where they truly belonged.

“You're nothing more than a monster, Scar! You aren't even human at this point! Nathaniel and Diane were your friends, yet you betrayed them! And for what?! Petty revenge against me for not acknowledging your abilities?!”

“I've grown past silly things such as 'friends' or 'love.' All I care about is getting what I rightly deserve!”

“And what exactly do you believe you ever deserved?! The reason I never promoted you is because I could sense your sinister ambitions! I hoped pairing you with kind people like Nathaniel and Diane would change your ways, but it's clear that was a terrible mistake on my part!”

“No, I'm the one that made the mistake!” declared Chris at that instance. She shot her reddened eyes at Scar, eyes that were brimming with hatred. “I guess this whole thing must've been real funny to you, huh?! Yeah, I bet you were giggling it up behind my back all these years! Well, the game is over now, Scar! I'm going to make you regret not killing me that night you found me!”

Scar smirked. “Really now? So, you actually believe you can defeat me? Remember, Christine, I'm the one that taught you everything you know!”

“Don't call me by that name! You don't have any right to use it!”

“Hmph. You never did like being me being so informal with you. Come now, I thought we were friends! Besides, you think you can just turn your back on me now that you know the truth? Hmm? Turn your back on all the malicious things you did in the name of SOAP?”

Chris, snarling at this, knew Scar had a point. She wished going undercover at Malibu University were the worst of her crimes.

“N-None of that matters now!” she replied. “I'm not gonna be used like a puppet anymore! Even if I destroy myself in the process, I'm taking you down, Scar! It's the least I can do for my parents!”
“‘Your parents?’ Ha! Nathaniel and Diane are likely rolling over in their graves over all the things you’ve done in their absence! How long do you plan on running from the truth? They made you out to be some sort of savior, someone who could stop me when the time came. Instead, you’ve become everything they were always foolishing prattling on about, everything they gave their lives to stamp out! You’re a criminal, Christine! The same as me! That’s right! We’re exactly the same!”

Something within Chris snapped after hearing this. Scar might have been just egging her on, but she didn’t care. Beside herself with rage, she lunged at him and reached out to crush him within her fingertips. Though he backed away, she was able to snatch the black mask covering his lower face right off.

“W-What the...?!” she said in response to what had been hiding behind that veil. Scar's entire jaw was composed of silver metal, and in the center, two menacing rows of teeth greeted her as he beamed. “I-I thought you might've been hiding a zit or an embarrassing birthmark under there, but...!”

“Hmph, frightening, isn't it? Your mother disfigured me like this. What you see now was all I could do to repair the extensive damage,” said Scar, pressing his hand on the cold steel. “Yes, she got me good. I don't believe I'll ever forget the anguish I felt that day.”

“You deserved that and more, you freak!” replied Chris, narrowing her eyelids.

“...You know, I really can't stand those eyes of yours. They remind me of Diane's.”

Chris' eyelid jerked. Yet again, Scar had the gall to speak ill of one of her parents. Having heard more than enough from him, she went on the offensive once more, launching a variety of punches and kicks. All of these were effortlessly sidestepped, and for a moment, Chris felt like Scar knew what were coming before she did.

“See? You can't hit me with my own moves, Christine!”

“W-Would you just shut that rusted mouth of yours for once?!”

She tried closing it forcefully, though Scar made the prospect easier in theory than execution. After parrying another of her strikes, he drove his fist in the dead center of her stomach. Chris, mistaking his blow for a truck running her over, recoiled backward and threw up a fair amount of blood. Her limbs, incapacitated by a mixture of pain and hesitation, refused to move when she commanded them to. This left her easy prey for Scar, who stood above her to deliver the finishing blow. He never got the chance to however because he halted and swerved the other way to see Jerry flying at him.

“Nice try,” he said, blocking his former mentor's kick with his forearm.

“I-Impossible!” cried Jerry.

“Not at all actually. You see, I knew the day when we would be forced to go up against one another would come, so I've studied your moves carefully over the years. I've managed to come up with a number of counters for them. This here is one of them.”

He tossed Jerry into a wall using a simple gesture, knocking his former boss out cold instantly. Chris, now on her lonesome against Scar's wrath, sluggishly made her to a standing position. Everything around her seemed to be spinning, while her legs wobbled around violently. When she glanced up, Scar's outstretched hand was there to meet her. His cold fingers wrapped themselves around her neck, and he lifted her before shoving her against a wall.

“R-Release me at one, you...!”
“Now, now, now, Christine. You shouldn't take that tone with your godfather of all people.” Scar tightened his grasp, and Chris' face reddened in response. “After all, I'm about to reward you for your years of hard work.”

“What?! Aren't you going to kill me like you killed my parents?! If that's the case, just get it over with already! I'm tired of hearing you babble on about nothing!”

“Hmm? I'm planning to do no such thing, Christine!” Scar replied casually. This put Chris on edge even more. “Like I stated, I'm going to thank you for being such a good spy.”

“Seriously, what the hell are you talking about?! Are you mocking me?!”

“Oh, nothing of the sort. It was thanks to your assistance that I was finally able to take WOOHP for myself. As such, I'm going to take good care of you.”

He pulled out a gun, an object Chris recognized straightaway as the memory erasing weapon she stole from weapons lab here at WOOHP during her escape from the place a while back. Scar placed the butt of it right between her eyes, making them tremble.

“Since you're so broken up about everything that's happen, I'll help get rid of those painful memories in your heart. Goodbye, Christine. The life you once knew is now over.”

Unable to do anything, Chris looked on as his finger wedged back on the trigger.

#

With a worn bag slung across her shoulder, Christine listlessly made her way down the side of a dirt road. It was rather hot today, and as she wiped some sweat off her forehead, she stared up and frowned. There wasn't a single cloud in the sky to shade her from the overbearing sun.

“I really can't stand the heat...”

The remark came out of her mouth without her really thinking. It might have been true, but she wasn't sure why. Trying to recall the reason made her head hurt, so she gave up.

“...What was I doing before this? Why am I here?”

Car after car zoomed past her whilst she kept forward. None of them provided her with the answers she required. A persistent, sharp pain shot through her skull, and at first, she attributed it to the buzz of the vehicles.

"...That's not it," she muttered. She couldn't help but feel it actually had something to do with her forgetting something of the utmost importance. “Something...important? But what? What is it I can remember? It's on the tip of my tongue...”

Stopping, she pulled a canteen of water out of her bag and greedily guzzled the liquid. Its metallic taste made her cringe, not to mention it was as warm as the air hovering about her, yet she was far too thirsty to complain. After finishing it off, she let out a sigh of relief. She then focused on the skyline again.

“I really hope it rains soon...”

Just then, a large, eighteen-wheeled truck pulled up to her, its tires screeching against the concrete street. Coughing because of the black smoke it emitted, she curiously waited to see what this was all about. A hefty, bearded man shot his head out of the truck's window and raised an eyebrow at her.
“You...look a little lost over there, kid,” he stated. “Need a ride?”

Chris deliberated the proposition. “...I'm not sure. I feel like I'm supposed to be somewhere right now, but I can't quite remember.”

“What, did you hit your head or something?”

“Maybe...” Chris placed her hand on her temple, noting the dull soreness remained.

“If you want, I could take you to a hospital or something. There's one not too far from here.”

Chris shook her head. “No thank you, though I appreciate the offer. Still, I'm positive there's some place I need to be...”

The truck driver, not really understanding what she was saying, opened the passenger side door to his vehicle. “Get in. If there's some place you wanna go, I'll get you there. Still think we should get you to a hospital though.”

After some apprehension, Chris climbed inside of the truck. Getting into a vehicle with a complete stranger probably wasn't a good idea, but she felt totally lost, willing to take any kind of aid. Upon sitting down, a cool breeze from the air conditioner danced against her sweat-laced skin.

“Thank goodness,” she said in ecstasy.

The sound of the truck's engine roared to life as the driver hit the open road again.

“What's your name, kid?” he asked, trying to focus on driving and talking. His red mustache danced humorously when he spoke. Chris had to suppress a giggle.

“My...name?” she replied slowly. “I...don't remember.”

“Not even that, huh? Any parents?” The trucker's thick mustache again flailed about.

“Parents? I...think so, but I don't think they're around anymore.”

“Any friends or family in the area?”

“I really don't know. I don't even know where I am right now.”

“Hmm? We're near Southern California. Well, more specifically, Beverly Hills.”

Chris repeated 'Beverly Hills' under her breath and felt it sounded familiar.

“It's a little ways off, but I can take you there if you want. Maybe you'll find someone you recognize, or at the very least, someone who recognizes you,” the truck driver said.

“...Thank you. I don't get it though. Why are you being so kind to me? You don't even know me.”

The truck driver scratched his beard. “Hmm. I don't really know. I just saw you walking along the road back there, and my gut told me to stop and see how you were doing. That's really all there is to it.”

Chris left it at that but smiled while she began peering out the window beside her. She no longer regretted climbing inside this eighteen-wheeler.
The hours flew by, and Chris, having taken a nap, stirred to the view of the sun being replaced by the moon alongside a vast array of stars in the night sky. The truck she hitched a ride on was just parking in front of a well-lit diner. Switching off the vehicle, the driver turned to her.

“Rise and shine,” he said with a friendly smile that was obscured somewhat by his bushy facial hair. “You must be hungry, kiddo.”

“Not...really,” Chris muttered. Her stomach growling the second she finished saying that didn't do much to help her case. “Alright, maybe just a little.”

The trucker laughed. “I'll get you something to eat inside. Come on.”

Chris thanked him, and the two exited the truck, making their way inside the restaurant. It was mostly empty, save for a family enjoying a meal in the back and a man dining up front. Chris took a seat near him at the counter, whereas the trucker mentioned something about heading for the bathroom prior to disappearing. Now left alone, Chris awkwardly inspected the place. A woman in a pink uniform walked up to her from behind the counter, startling her a bit.

“Can I get ya somethin', hun?” she asked, pulling out a notepad to jot Chris' order down.

“N-No. I'm honestly not that hungry,” Chris replied. Again, at the sound of food, her stomach tossed and turned. She blushed in response. “...R-Really, I'm okay right now.”

“If ya say so.” The woman readied to walk away to tend to other customers, but she paused and quietly stared at Chris for a bit. “Hmm, ya look familiar, hun!”

“I do?”

The woman snapped her fingers. “The Groove! That's where I've seen ya before! I was shoppin' a while back and saw ya hangin' out with some friends! Ya'll seemed to be having a good time!”

Chris hadn't the slightest idea what this woman was talking about, yet at the same time, it didn't feel as if she were making the story up. Even the name 'The Groove' rang a faint bell.

“What are ya doin' so far outta Beverly Hills, missy?” the waitress asked, now far more casual with her guest. “Takin' some time off school?”

“Not...exactly. I believe I'm searching for something. Maybe I'm actually searching for someone. I'm not sure. My...mind is a total fog right now.”

“Wow. Ya seem really down on the dumps, missy!”

Chris weakly smiled. “I guess you could say that...”

“Sounds to me like ya just need to take some time off from whatever's botherin' ya! Say, are ya lookin' for a job?”

Moving her blue eyes up from the menu on the counter, Chris raised an eyebrow at the inquisition.

The spectacle the trucker beheld as he left the confines of the restroom wasn’t one he had anticipated. Chris, wearing a pink uniform, ran all about the diner scribbling down customers orders and bringing them their requested meals. Scratching her head using her pen, she nodded feverishly at a man who was telling her what he wanted faster than she could jot down.
“Heh. Ain't that something.” The trucker grinned underneath his bushy beard and walked up to the front counter. He then told the waitress who had offered Chris a job, “Guess it'd be alright if I left her in your hands then, ma'am.”

She nodded and smiled back at him while he took his leave. Chris didn't notice this, being far too preoccupied asking a customer if he wanted his eggs scrambled or sunny-side up.

#

“I'd like a large cup of coffee! And don't forget the sugar this time, sweet cheeks!”

Chris' eyelid twitched at a rather unruly customer barking orders at her. She angrily wrote his order onto her notepad, nearly breaking the lead of her pencil from the sheer pressure she placed on it. The older gentleman took no heed of her ire and went back to eating the plate of scrambled eggs, sausage, and pancakes on the table in front of him. Leaving him to it, Chris readied to get his coffee when she held up at hearing the man begin to gag.

“Yuck! What is this slop you guys are serving here?!” he demanded to know. He spat the contents of his mouth into a napkin before dropping it on the ground. Chris, leering at it, knew she would have to clean that up. “Do you guys have a monkey cooking back there or something?!”

“...Sure. His name is Bubbles, and he makes the best damn flapjacks in the world,” answered Chris. Her voice buzzed with sarcasm, making her volatile customer's face redden.

“Tch! Are all the waitresses here this sassy?!”

Chris put her hand on her hip. “...Look, you come here every morning, order food, and then complain about it. I really don't get it. If you don't like what we serve, just don't come back. None of us here are going to cry about your absence. I'm beginning to think you just like seeing me. While I'm flattered, I'd prefer to keep our relationship as professional as possible.”

The customer looked as if he wanted to say something to defend himself, but unable to come up with anything, he simply scowled and stormed out of the diner. Chris smacked her lips. He would be back tomorrow and probably the next day as well. No matter how much Chris tried wrapping her brain around the strange routine, she couldn't come up with an answer for the man's peculiar tendencies.

“No doubt he'll complain about his damn coffee not having enough sugar again too. Last time he was here, we had to use an entire bag to satisfy him. If he really thinks it’s that bitter, why doesn’t he just order something else?”

Fortunately, the road stop diner was now empty with his departure. Not many came to eat so early in the morning. She noted the sun was barely up at this point. She usually worked the night and early morning shifts in the restaurant, meaning she only had a couple more hours before she could clock out. Yawning, she couldn't wait to go to bed after a hard night's work.

“Tired, hun?” asked the head waitress everyone affectionately referred to as 'Anna.' Chris wasn't even sure that was her real name or not. “Just hang in there a little longer! I'm gonna need ya when that breakfast rush comes in about an hour or two!”

Chris nodded, holding back another yawn. “Y-Yes, ma'am.”

Anna studied Chris without a word for a couple of moments. This seemed to be one of her regular habits, although Chris wasn't sure why.

“Somethin' about ya seems different today,” she then stated.
“Really now. I feel exactly the same as always.”

“Not at all! Yer practically burstin' with energy today, hun! You didn't even curse out that guy who just left like ya always do!”

“I don't...always do it...” The shade of Chris' cheeks became beet red.

“I knew it was a good idea to hire ya, missy! I could tell you were special from the moment I laid my eyes on ya! Other people here at the diner didn’t think ya could do the job properly, but I just told 'em to be quiet and watch!” Anna continued. Another one of her traits was to go on rambling about nothing in particular for extended periods of time. “Yer a real help around here! Having ya here is good for business too! Everyone's always comin' 'round now talking about the 'Mysterious Waitress' I hired!”

“T-Thank you,” replied Chris sheepishly. She wasn't accustomed to such praise. “You...really did me a favor by hiring me, ma'am. I'd be lost without this job.”

“Speakin' of that, have ya remembered anything about yerself yet?”

“Not really.” Chris clutched her temple as if trying to spur her memories. “I'm still drawing a blank on pretty much everything.”

“Well, don't try to force anything! Yer welcome around here for as long as you wanna stay! Yer so fast and efficient that I wouldn't mind if ya were around forever!”

Anna smiled warmly and walked away to take care of cleaning up behind the counter. Watching her go, Chris couldn't help but dwell on her boss calling her 'fast and efficient.' She really was, unnaturally so in fact. It was almost as if she had been trained to do things in a prompt fashion.

“...What was I doing before this?” she muttered. “It was something...shady. That much I'm sure of. Wasn't there this...guy who used to get on my nerves too?”

The name of this person danced on her thoughts. It didn't come to her however, and she shrugged, assuming she must have been imagining things in her sleep-deprived state.

The door to the diner creaked open out of the blue, accompanied by the sound of the bell above it ringing. The sound of it made Chris jump a bit. Three girls around her age then stepped in, taking seats near the back. The suspicious manner in which they entered made Chris scratch her head.

“I seriously hope they’re not trouble. I’m not in the mood to deal with trouble,” she mumbled.

“Aren't you going to take their orders?” asked Anna with a playful grin.

“R-Right. Of course.” Chris nodded and retrieved her trusty notepad. It was mostly empty now from Chris having written some many orders over the past couple of days. Cautiously, she made her way over to the three girls, who in turn ceased their hushed whispering to look up at her. “Um...are you girls ready to order? If not, I can give you some more...”

“CHRIS!!!” the three screamed at the top of their lungs. Removing the sunglasses and baseball caps obscuring their features, Sam, Clover, and Alex leaped to their feet and wrapped their arms around an absolutely baffled Christine.

“It is you!” said a weary-looking Sam. The heavy bags underneath her eyelids implied a lack of sleep. “We've been searching for you everywhere! So you've been here this whole time?!"
“Er...y-yes,” Chris replied slowly. “Do I...?”

Clover cut her off. “We've totally been worried sick about you, missy! The folks around here were saying they saw someone working in this groady, old diner that looked like you, but we didn't think you were actually here! By the way, that uniform is totally tacky!”

Anna, naturally annoyed having her establishment insulted, shot a nasty glare at Clover, who only laughed anxiously in return.

“Good thing we checked here after all!” said Alex happily. “Er...c-could we still get something to eat though? I'm kinda hungry after all the hiding we've been doing!”

While Sam and Clover groaned at Alex's laxness, Chris wasn’t really certain how to respond to the whole situation.

“Sorry. I think I'm the only one out of the loop here. You three seem to know me, but I have absolutely no clue who you are.”


“Yeah, you're going to have to be a bit more specific. And who the heck is ‘Chris?’”

Alex's jaw lowered in shock. “W-What?! D-Did you hit your head or something, Chris?!”

“She's lost her memory!” cried Sam in realization. “No wonder she didn't come back to WOOHP as soon as she could!”

Chris, losing her patience, said, “Look, I really don't know what you three are going on about, but if you aren't going to get anything to eat, you're going to have to leave.”

Sam, Clover, and Alex had no issue with that, so long as Chris came with them. They forcefully pushed her out the double doors, and amidst her complaining about the fact, Anna chuckled while cleaning an empty glass.

“Guess she found her friends after all...”

#

“Q-Quit pushing!” cried Chris as the heels of her shoes dug against the soil. “A-Are you three trying to kidnap me or something?!”

Her alleged abductors released her and allowed things to grow uncomfortably quiet. Chris, checking behind herself, wondered if she should make a break for it while she had the chance.

“Well, I didn't see this coming,” said Sam, breaking the silence. “If you really have lost your memory, Chris, it's come at a bad time. Things haven't exactly been going well since you were last at WOOHP.”

“That Scar guy has totally taken over everything!” exclaimed Alex. She flailed her arms around passionately as she spoke. “He's so using WOOHP to do really bad things! Like really bad!”

“Since most of this is your fault, you should totally be helping us kick your boss' butt, Chris!” added Clover.

Chris moved her head from one desperate expression to the next. Clearly, these girls needed her help
for something. She just wished she understood what.

“Er...sorry to burst your bubbles, but I think you've got the wrong person here. By the way, I still have no idea who this ‘Chris' person is you three keep going on about.”

“Huh?! You don't even remember that?!” blurted Clover.

“Duh! That's your name, silly!” chimed Alex.

“M-Me...?” Chris responded. The label did have a certain ring to it, an oddly familiar one at that. Pondering it made a sharp pain shoot through her skullhead. “A-Agh!”

“Are you alright?!” inquired Sam.

“Y-Yeah. I'm...used to that by now. Anyway, I think I'm finally beginning to remember something! That’s right! M-My name really is Chris! How could I have forgotten?!”

Her friends, thrilled by the news, inched closer to her.

“Quick, do you remember anything else?!” asked Sam.

“Yeah, like how you lost your memory in the first place?!” added Alex.

“How about our favorite store at The Groove?!” said Clover. “Because you said you were gonna buy me a new purse before all this crazy stuff went down!”

Chris frowned. “Really now, Clover? I highly doubt I...w-wait, how do I know your name?! I...think I know all of your names actually! You're Sam.”

Sam nodded. “That's right!”

Chris then pointed at Alex. “And you're Alex, right?”

“Yes, that's me! Looks like your memory is coming back after all!”

Slowly, but surely, that appeared to be the case. Nevertheless, there was another thing Chris sensed it was essential to recall, something unbelievably vital. Whatever it was remained a mystery to her since she wasn't able to pry anymore information from the locked vault that was her mind.

“Well, I suppose this is a start,” said Sam. “Still, if we're going to stop that madman Scar, we'll need to help Chris get all of her memories back ASAP! She might know something we don't about all this, like one of Scar's weaknesses!”

“Scar...?” Who is that? And why is stopping him so important?” asked Chris.

“Duh! The fate of the world itself could be at stake if we don’t do something about that wacko!” explained Clover dramatically.

“You gotta know something, Chris! The last thing Jerry told us was to find you, so we totally figured you must have something up your sleeve!” said Alex.

“Sorry to disappoint you, but I really don't. At least...I might have but don't remember. Anyway, this whole thing sounds rather urgent. I seriously don't get how I could possibly be of any help to you three though. I'm just a waitress,” said Chris.

A smirking Sam answered, “Trust me. I think you'll do fine.”
The past couple of days had been rather rough for Jerry Lewis. In spite of his best efforts, his organization had been taken over by a total lunatic. That very same individual was also keeping him captive, leaving him powerless to change things. Jerry glowered at the person in question, disgusted at the fact the man was sitting behind his own desk as if he were the one in charge of WOOHP.

“You know, it's not nice to stare, Jerry.” Scar, taking amusement in his own words, kicked his feet up on Jerry's desk, knocking over a picture of Jerry and his mother. “Heh. Sorry about that. I know how much you treasure that old bag of. How's she doing by the way? We haven't chatted in ages. Perhaps I'll take a trip to jolly, old England after all this blows over and see how she is for myself.”

Jerry's eyes widened. “I don't care in the least what you have planned for me, Scar, but leave my dear mother out of this!”

The distress in Jerry's voice was music to Scar's ears. He got a good laugh out of it too, and Jerry wished he could break the glowing restraints binding him to the chair he sat in so he could shut up his former pupil once and for all.

“I thought I already told you not to bother squirming around like that,” said Scar. “I created those chains myself. The harder you struggle, the tighter they get.”

“I've noticed.” Jerry tried relaxing when Scar's little invention squeezed against his flesh harder. “You've had me tied up like this for a few days now. What exactly are you planning to do with me?”

“You know, I haven't quite decided yet. It's not everyday I get an opportunity like this, so I'm trying to make the most of it.”

“How charming...”

Reaching for piping hot cup of Earl Grey tea, Scar pressed it up to his metallic lips, letting the drink swim around in his mouth for a bit.

“Revolting,” he stated after spitting it back out. “I don't understand how anyone could guzzle down this dirty mop water on a regular basis.”

“I suppose your palate, like your demeanor, isn't refined enough for it,” said Jerry plainly.

“Hmph. Despite being restrained, it seems that mouth of yours hasn't ceased working yet. Whatever. Mock me for as long as you can, Jerry. You're time in this world is running thin.”

Scar opted to partake on something more to his liking. He retrieved a bottle of wine and poured the red substance into a clear glass. His nostrils flared up at its sweet aroma.

“I'll savor this wine like I'm savoring my final victory against WOOHP.” He took a healthy sip of it, adding, “Ah! They both taste sweet.”

“You'll never get away with this, Scar! Do you truly believe you can get rid of me like you did with Christine?”

Scar's head shot up at this. “…Christine, you say? Heh, you know as well as I do that that person no longer exists, Jerry. Indeed.”

“You think erasing her memory will get her out of your hair, do you?”
“...Like I said, that individual no longer exists, so there's no point speaking of her further. I never was one to dwell over the dead.”

“You destroyed Chris and the rest of her family single-handedly! You're telling me there isn't an ounce of you that feels remorse for your despicable actions?!”

“It is indeed a shame what happened to Diane and Nathaniel.. Such a shame.” Scar inhaled the rest of his drink before pouring himself another glass. “They were unfortunate victims in my grand scheme. Of course, they didn't have to die. If they'd only cast aside their foolish notions of 'justice' and 'love', they might be here today. Chris as well. You know, I actually took a liking to her. She was almost like a surrogate daughter for me.”

“I don't believe that for a second! You never cared for that poor girl in the slightest! You simply used her for your own gain!”

Scar chewed the claim over. “...Perhaps. I'll admit she did try at my nerves. Her face looked so much like Diane's that it was difficult for me not to lash out at her. Anyway, using her skills to my advantage certainly paid off in the long run, so to answer your question about me feeling sorry for my actions, no, of course not. I've obtained everything I've ever wanted, so why on earth would I be feeling anything like regret?”

Talking with Scar was enough to make Jerry's stomach turn. How such a heartless monster could even exist was beyond him.

“I should've done something about you a long time ago, Scar. Everything you've put Christine through is as much my fault as it is yours.”

“Heh. Does that make us accomplices then?”

Jerry remained silent this time around, questioning if that really was the case.

“Lighten up, old man. You should learn to laugh while you still have the opportunity,” said Scar. “I'll even pour you a glass of wine for old time's sake!”

Holding out the mentioned glass, Scar's attention changed to the sliding doors leading into the office when they opened suddenly. A Tabitha android bounced her way inside, saluting once she reached the front desk.

“Yo! We've totally taken over the building! Sorry it took so long, boss! Those WOOHP agents weren't going down without a fight!”

“Very good. I want you and your compatriots to secure a perimeter around the building. I don’t want anyone or anything leaving this place without my permission.”

Tabitha wasn’t listening. “Hey, what's that you're drinking there! Is it juice?! I want some juice!”

“Tabitha, focus. I need you to...”

“Gimmegimmegimmegimmegimmegimmegimme!”

“It's not juice!” yelled Scar, wanting to smack the android. She became still afterward. “Forget about that! Did you take care of that other thing I asked you and your brethren to do?”

Tabitha put her finger on her chin, having to think about it. “We sure did! We released all the prisoners from the containment facility just like you asked!”
“WHAT?!” gasped Jerry. “D-Do you realize what you've just done, Scar?!!”

Scar stirred his finger around the edges of his glass. “Hmph. I'm fully aware, Jerry. I just wanted to stir up a bit of...’trouble.’ I'm sure you don't mind.”

“You really are a madman! You have to stop this at once and return those criminals to their cells! Just think of the amount of damage they could cause!”

“Precisely! Isn't it wonderful?! An insane look swept across Scar's visage. “The best part about all of this is that there aren't any WOOHP agents to stop the chaos from spreading!”

“That's right! We got all of 'em!” said Tabitha proudly.

“Wrong, Scar! You haven't disposed of all my agents!” Jerry proclaimed.

“...I don't like the confidence in your voice right now,” replied Scar. “Are you perhaps referring to those three, bumbling agents of yours that managed to slip between my fingertips? Haha! It seems you have confidence in their abilities, but even if they're that good, they'll have a hard time trying to apprehend so many criminals and attempt to stop me! Give it up, Jerry! Neither they or anyone else is coming to your aid!”

“You underestimate my agents! Sam, Clover, and Alex always find a way to get the job done! I have complete faith in them!”

“...You know, you really sicken me when you talk like this. You used to shower Nathaniel and Diane with that sort of praise as well, but never me.”

“Do you really think you were ever worthy of such praise?”

Growing incensed, Scar abruptly tossed the glass in his grasp at Jerry. It missed, hitting the wall beside him. Red liquid spilled to the floor, and as it do so, Jerry shook his head disapprovingly.

“I have a wonderful idea!” Scar composed himself again and sat back down. “Before I dispose of you, Jerry, I'll allow you to witness the destruction of your precious spies!”

“...What exactly do you mean by that?”

“I'm glad you asked. You see, I had my army of Tabithas promise all the rogues and scoundrels they released from the containment facility to agree to something prior to their liberation. Unsurprisingly, most of them were more than willing to comply with my little request.”

“And that was?”

“Oh, it's quite simple. I just asked the lot of them hunt down and destroy those three spies you're always doting over. The spectacle should be quite entertaining. I’m just curious to see how long they last. If they're as skilled as you claim them to be, I’m sure they’ll do just fine!”

The rather casual deceleration was met with a drawn out gasp and expression of utter dismay from Jerry. Grinning, this was precisely the reaction Scar desired.

“...Things are about to get a bit more interesting, don't you think?”

END
Chapter 12

Beginning of the End Part 3

Chris, sighing contently, inhaled the sweet-smelling breeze rushing past her as she soaked in her lush surroundings. Taking back the word 'lush', she supposed it was ill-suited to describe to torrid air and sand that littered the sides of the road. The desert she was presently traveling through went on for miles, and squinting, she wasn't able to spot anything of importance in the distance. If one were to become stranded in such an expansive space, she doubted they would be able to escape without succumbing to the elements first.

“...The air does smell nice though...”

She faced forward and carefully eyed the other occupants of the red car she was in. Sam and Clover were busy whispering to one another. Though unable to hear them, Chris could read their lips at certain points and determined they were discussing what to do when they got to WOOHP. Chris still had no clue what WOOHP even was, but she did get that she and the others had to get there as soon as possible to stop some kind of crisis.

“You know, it would help if you included me in on your conversation. I won't be able to help if I don't even know what's going on.”

Sam looked up at her. “Er...s-sorry, Chris. We weren't trying to keep it a secret from you. Honest. You're absolutely right though. We'll try to answer whatever questions you have. You must have tons considering you lost your memory.”

“Good. Firstly, why is Alex the one driving this thing?”

The reason Chris wanted to know was because the car would swerve to the left or the right from time to time like the driver were trying to dodge some invisible obstacles. It made Chris nervous enough that she was tempted to ask to switch places with her friend.

“Hey! Are you trying to say I can't drive or something?!” yelled Alex. She momentarily removed her concentration from the road to glare at Chris, forcing the others to inform her to dodge a cactus off road before it was too late. “T-That was close! Uh...I mean, I-I totally meant to do that! Yeah!”

Sam weakly replied, “Y-You're doing fine, Alex. Just...pay a bit more attention.”

“Seriously! This is my car, so if you wreck it, you're so paying for a new one!” Clover informed her in no uncertain terms.

“If it's your car, why aren't you driving?” asked Chris.

“Well, I would, but I totally just got a new manicure and don't want to ruin it!”

Desiring to say something, Chris simply closed her ajar jaw, shook her head, and went back to gazing at tumbleweeds roll past the vehicle.

“She's not serious!” Sam assured Chris. “Alex sorta insisted on driving, and we really didn't have the
time to argue with her, so we just let her.”

“And it was so a good decision!” Alex declared. Her confident grin faded when the car hit a rather deep pothole. “A-Agh! S-Sorry! I didn't see that one!”

“That's why I'm telling you to pay attention!” pleaded Sam, who was beginning to worry.

“Is there no faster way to get to this WOOHP place?” asked Chris.

Alex growled. “Hey, back seat driver, I'm going as fast as I can! This bucket of bolts is a used car though, so it doesn't move all that fast!”

Chris held her arms up defensively and sighed.

“Oooh! What I wouldn't give to be WOOHPed right now!” said Clover. “Jer always picks the dumbest times to drag us to him except for when we really need it!”

“Scar must have done something to him. Otherwise, he would have already done that,” said Sam. Reaching for something in the glove department, she grabbed a pink, compact mirror.

“Are you really checking your makeup right now?” asked Chris dryly.

Sam frowned. “It's not that kind of mirror. This is called an X-Powder. It's actually a high-tech gadget. Then again, I guess you already knew that. Well, I guess you did before you lost your memory...er...-y-you get my point!”

“Er...sure I do. Would you mind giving me a refresher course anyway? What does that thing do exactly?”

“Well, usually, it would let us contact WOOHP, but the signal is down right now. I'm guessing that Scar guy has something to do with that.”

“What a jerk! I'm so gonna punch that guy in the mouth the next time we see him!” said Alex. The others fearfully peered at her in a manner that suggested she keep her eyesight forward and her rage in check. “I know, I know! Pay attention! Got it! You guys don't have to be so mean about it...”

Clover, sitting up a little to see the road ahead, whined, “Ugh! Just how long does this stupid road last?!?”

“Seriously. It feels like we've been driving forever,” voiced Chris.

“Ahem! Who is this 'we' you're talking about?!” Annoyed, Alex scowled at her friends.

“S-Sorry.”

Sam, retrieving a map of the area, said, “We should reach Los Angeles in a little while. Just...try to hang in there, girls. Complaining isn’t going to help us get to WOOHP any faster.”

“Speaking of which, what exactly do you three intend to do when you get there?” asked Chris. “Judging from your apprehension, I’d say this Scar fellow won't be so easy to take down. Do you have any weapons or something similar to fight him with?”

“No,” replied Sam, shaking her head. “I was hoping you might have some gadgets on you.”

“Me? Why would I...” Chris paused, reminding herself she was supposed to be some sort of spy. With that in mind, it wouldn't be strange for her to possess things of that nature. “...Let me double
check.”

She rummaged through her bag, recalling it being on her person when she first awoke, though she wasn't sure where it had come from. There were a variety of unnoteworthy things inside, including a now empty water canteen, changes of clothes, items for keeping proper hygiene, and a black, fountain pen.

“Maybe you could stab the guy with this or something,” she joked, holding the pen up. Wincing at the deadpan looks she received, she chose not to fool around anymore. “Sorry. Seems like I don’t have anything of interest after all.”

Alex pouted. “Guess we're on our own then…”

“Mind if I borrow that pen?” asked Clover. Chris nodded and gave it to her. “Thanks!”

“What do you need that for?” asked Sam.

“I need to write what to get at The Groove after all this blows over! There's no way I'm gonna remember while trying to take down that Scar guy and save WOOHP!”

A bead of sweat rolled down the other’s heads as she committed her thoughts to paper.

“Only you could be so relaxed despite what we're about to do, Clover,” said Sam.

Clover didn't hear this. She was far too busy finishing off her shopping list. The last item was a pair of Yves Mont Blanc boots, yet when she attempted jotting this down, she was surprised to see a smoldering hole burned into her notepad. The pen Chris gave her had fired out a red laser beam that went right through the bottom of the car.

“Seriously?! My parents are gonna kill me when they see that!”

“W-What...just happened?!” inquired Sam, who was bracing herself.

“I-I dunno, but I'm just gonna keep on driving!” muttered Alex.

“Would...that constitute as a gadget?” asked Chris innocently. No one was able to give her an answer because everyone was distracted by the car's radio coming to life on its own.

“Hello out there, listeners! I hope you enjoyed that last track titled Evil By Day, Evil By Night! You can only listen to it and other great hits on 107.5, the SAGA!”

“Hey, didn't I tell you not to touch my radio without asking, Alex?!” said Clover testily.

“H-Huh?! My hands have been on the wheel the whole time! How could I have turned it on?!”

“She's right, Clover! It literally just came on by itself!” said Sam.

“I’ve never heard of this particular radio station. It must be new,” chimed Chris.

The DJ, speaking in a suave voice, went on with, “Alright, listeners! Our next track was specially requested by someone truly vile! That's right, Scar of SOAP, this one's for you! I like to call this song Bye Bye, Spies!”

Without warning, loud and obnoxious heavy metal music blared out of the car's speakers. The vehicle's occupants covered their ears, feeling an intense pain shoot through their whole bodies.
“W-What's going on?!” Sam questioned.

“Gah! I've heard of music so bad it hurts, but this is ridiculous!” said Chris.

“We...gotta turn off the radio!” cried Clover. “Alex!”

“T-Trying to drive here!” replied Alex.

“R-Right! Leave it to me then!”

Clover repeatedly jabbed her foot against the radio, but for whatever reason, it refused to turn off. Adding to the group's woes was Alex losing control of the car and crashing into a stop sign.

“A-Agh! That one is going to leave a mark,” Chris muttered as she rubbed her aching head. “Good thing I had my seatbelt on.”

“Is everyone alright?!” asked Sam groggily. “H-Hey, the music! It's stopped!”

The radio, like most of the car, had been totalled by the crash.

“Well, I guess that's one way to do it!” Alex flashed a thumbs up. “Er...sorry about your car, Clover!”

Clover was too busy seeing stars to pay Alex's comment any mind. Sam, carefully climbing out of the now ruined vehicle, stepped in front of it to inspect the damage. She grimaced at the billowing, black smoke coming out of the nasty gash created from the impact.

“Bad news, girls. Looks like we're going to have to walk from here.”

Her friends exited the car too prior to all of them groaning at their terrible luck. There was nothing to save them nearby, and according to Sam's map, there wouldn't be anything of that nature for a number of miles.

“I totally don't have the shoes for this!” yelled Clover.

“Forget about that,” said Chris. “What the hell was up with that music earlier?”

Footsteps danced against the road behind the girls, prompting them to face the individual making them. The older gentleman, having long, silver hair that covered the left side of his face, smirked. Chris' eyes widened when she noticed his left arm was replaced by a metal prosthetic.

“Ladies, it's been too long!” he said.

“Do you three know this clown?” asked Chris.

The man's face reddened. “C-Clown?! Just who do you think you are, young lady?!”

“You first. If you're going to ask for someone's name, you should at least have the decency to give them yours first.”

“Sebastian Saga?!” shouted Sam. “How did you get out of the containment facility at WOOHP?!”

Sebastian Saga replied, “It was quite simple actually! Some fellow by the name of Scar has taken over WOOHP, and he was nice enough to release us prisoners from our very unjust imprisonment!”

“W-Wait a sec! What do you mean 'us prisoners?!”” asked Clover.
“It's just like I said, girls! *All* of the prisoners have been released! Needless to say, they'll all be coming after you in due time! Not like they're going to get a chance though! I'm going to personally dispose of you pesky spies once and for all!”

“D-Did you hear that, girls?!?” cried Alex, clearly panicking. “Do you realize how many criminals we’ve locked up over the years?!”

“Unfortunately,” replied Sam bitterly.

“Seriously, who is this clown? You three obvious know him from somewhere,” said Chris.

“D-Did she just call me a 'clown' again?” mumbled Sebastian. “Why, that little…!”

Clover said, “All you need to know is that he's bad news, Chris!”

Chris nodded. “...I see. I guess you guys are gonna have to fight him then.”

“Whadya mean 'you guys'?!?” asked Alex. “You gotta help too!”

Chris shook her head. “No thanks. This doesn't have anything to do with me, so I think I'll just stay on the sidelines. Besides, I'm just a waitress. I don't know anything about fighting.”

“Oh no you don't, missy!” Clover yanked a squirming Chris by the ear and dragged her to the front. “This is your problem as much as it is ours now!”

“C-Come again?! H-Hey, you're pulling too hard, Clover! S-Seriously, stop it!”

Grumbling, Sebastian made his way over to the silver van behind him before putting on some earplugs and grabbing a remote control. A pair of over-sized speakers came out of the roof of the vehicle at the press of a red button. With another press, irritating rave music clamored out of them. The girls responded by hastily shielding their ears once more.

“Ugh! Not again!” exclaimed Alex.

“Can't this guy make at least one decent song?!” complained Clover.

“A-Am I the only one who can't move over here?!” asked Chris.

“N-No, it's the same with me! That music must have some sort of paralyzing effect!” answered Sam.

“That's right, ladies!” Sebastian stated as he inched toward his powerless victims. “You all should consider yourselves fortunate! You're the first to sample my latest track!”

“Argh! Pretty sure my eardrums are bleeding right now!” cried Alex.

“Sammy, plan, NOW!!!” shrieked Clover.

“I'm thinking, I'm thinking!” Although she claimed this, Sam struggled to come up with anything. The horrid music was just far too distracting. “C-Chris, do you still have that pen?!”

“S-Sure, but there's no way I could get to it like this...” Chris muttered.

With that option out, Sam had to go to Plan B. She managed to move her hand into her pocket, despite it feeling like lead, prior to retrieving a simple piece of tissue.

“Uh, Sammy? I don't think this is the time for you to be blowing your nose!” said Alex.
Ignoring this, Sam ripped the paper in half and placed the separated bits into both of her ears. Thanks to this, she wasn't able to hear Sebastian's music, which in turn allowed her the use of her limbs. Before he took heed of what she was up to, she charged at him and rendered him unconscious using a flying kick. A bunch of his teeth sailed across the air while his body hit the ground with a thud.

“Yeah!” proclaimed Sam.

“I can understand you wanting to celebrate, but **please** do something about that stupid song **first!**” Chris barked.

“O-Oh! Right! I’m on it!”

Sam hurried inside the van, finding the off switch for the speakers in due time.

“That was close!” Alex sighed in relief. “Thanks, Sam! Nice thinking with the tissue thing!”

“Yeah! Who'd've thought something so simple would end up saving our skins!” said Clover.

“Impressive. You three really are spies,” added Chris. “I would've never thought to do something like that.”

Sam, pulling the tissue out of her ears, replied, “Trust me, Chris. You would.”

Chris raised an eyebrow at this, but left the matter alone and faced the now unmoving Sebastian Saga. She poked at his face with her finger, garnering a low moan from the man.

“What a pushover,” she muttered. “What do you guys want to do with him?”

“Just leave him there. We'll have WOOHP come pick him up after we take care of the mess there,” stated Sam. “I'm honestly more worried about what Sebastian said about all those criminals that got out of the containment facility.”

Chris, standing, gestured behind her friends. “Would...those people over there happen to be more of them?”

Sam, Clover, and Alex really didn't want to turn around to find out who or what she was referring to. They forced themselves anyway, and all of them gasped at the same time.

“Haha! Are you girls shocked to see us again?!” asked Terrence Lewis, leader of the LAMOS. Standing beside him were the other members of the group, each grinning as smugly as he was. “It doesn't matter how many times you lock us up! We won't stop until you and my insufferable brother are destroyed!”

“The LAMOS?! I'm so not in the mood to deal with them!” said Alex.

“Totes! These guys are like a nasty cockroach that just keeps coming back!” said Clover.

“Regardless of how we feel about them, this is bad, girls! We're not equipped to take them all on at the same time!” said Sam.

“...Wait a second. These guys are called the...LAMOS?” Chris, though trying her hardest not to, burst out in uncontrollable laughter. Crying, she added, “T-That's the **stupidest** name I've ever heard of! Ahahahaha!”

A pounding vein popped up on Terrence's reddening forehead. “W-Why you! Still mocking us, I
“Yo, not cool!” said Boogie Gus. “This chick is always like this!”

Helga von Guggen, who was just as irked, stated, “Tsk! I should've known she would be here with the rest of her friends! Just seeing her face again is making me upset!”

“Hey, this is actually a good thing!” Tim Scam hoisted his patented Bubble Blaster 9000 over his shoulder as he added, “If she's here, we won't have to waste time tracking her down after we take care of her buddies over there!”

“That's right! It's time for these rambunctious brats to be disciplined once and for all!” cried Myrna Beesbottom.

“That's strange. You people talk about me like you know me or something,” said Chris, putting her hands on her hips. “Have we met before?”

Terrence nearly choked on his own spit. “C-Come again?! How could you possibly forget who we are?! We certainly haven't forgotten you! If it weren't for your meddling, we would have...!”

“Nope. Still drawing a blank here. Pretty sure I'd recall a wacky group such as yours.”

Terrence's colleagues had to hold him back from lashing out at Chris over her ignorance.

“Not so fast there, Terrence. She's obviously just trying to provoke us,” said Tim Scam calmly.

“Yes. You're probably right.” Fixing his ruffled clothing, Terrence again beamed. “Your tricks won't work on me, girl! Now then, enough fooling around! Let us settle this matter once and for all!”

Chris, giving up, merely shrugged her shoulders.

“You LAMOS got another thing coming if you think we're going down without a fight!” Clover proclaimed.

Yeah! We totally don't have time to waste on you losers! Jerry needs our help!” added Alex.

“Yes, and I've already grown tired of dealing with you lot,” said Chris. She relaxed her body into a fighting stance that came natural to her. “If we're gonna do this, let's get this over with already.”

“You foxy ladies really think you'll be able to keep up with our rhythm this time around?” said a self-assured Boogie Gus. “Check it! We're totally gonna get a nice reward for taking you girls down!”

“That's right! That Scar fellow promised us a nice amount of cash and a new submarine if we defeated you brats!” Helga explained. Alongside a haughty series of laughs, she added, “You might have gotten the better of us last time, but we're the ones who'll be walking away victorious this go about!”

She began tittering even harder, making one Tim Scam shake his head.

“There she goes again...” he uttered.

“Ignore her. We have bigger fish to fry!” replied Myrna.

Terrence agreed. “Scar also said I could have a shot at that lousy excuse for a brother of mine if we did this! Quite honestly, that's all I needed to hear!”
Though Terrence was eager to make a move, it was Boogie Gus entering the fray to start off. He almost nailed Chris with a leaping kick, but she rolled out of harm's way in the nick of time, somewhat startled by his swift movements.

“Heh! Let's dance, girl!” he said to her. “Lemme see you cut a rug!”

“No thanks. People tell me I have two left feet when I'm out there on the dance floor.”

Chris struck back at him with a straight punch. Gus dodged it and attempted kicking her upside the head. Blocking this intuitively, Chris turned his momentum against him, flipping and then flooring him.

“Whoa! Looks like you still got the moves!” he exclaimed, hand springing to his feet. “Ha! You won't be able to boogie with me much longer though after I step it up!”

Growling, Chris answered, “Do you always talk like this?! I can't even figure out what you're saying half the time! Not to mention it looks like you two-stepped your way out of a time machine! Tell me, how was it frolicing with the dinosaurs?”

Gus, mortified by the insult, blared, “W-What?! No way! You're still dissing my style! Tsk! Now I get it! Check it, you're just jealous those rags you got on now aren't half as happening as what I'm wearing!”

“Is that so? You look like you got into a fight with a flea market and lost.”

Gus was beside himself with rage. He readied to go back on the attack. However, Myrna Beesbottom abruptly pushed him aside and nearly caught Chris off guard with a furor of punches and kicks.

“H-Hey! Y-You can't just step in the middle of my groove like that!” said Gus. No one paid him any mind though, and he twiddled his thumbs in defeat. “Not groovy, yo…”

“I've had enough of your incompetence! I'll handle things from here!” Myrna told him.

Unable to counterattack, Chris held up her arms to block Myrna's assault. A kick to her midsection blasted her across the sandy ground. With the wind taken out of her, she clutched her stomach as Myrna stood over her triumphantly.

“Hmm? You've gotten much slower since our last fight, girl! Are you that frightened of me?”

“Tsk. I have no clue why you freaks keep talking as if you know me. To be honest, it's a bit insulting.” Chris got up and tried ignoring her pain. “Besides, it's not like I even know what I'm doing right now. My body is just moving on instinct at this point.”

The remarks perplexed Myrna, but she hadn't the opportunity to inquire about them. Alex flipped over Chris just then and punched her so hard, the former WOOHP agent began seeing stars.

“You alright, Chris?” asked Alex.

“I'll live. Hmm. You saving me like this is giving me déjà vu…”

“Ngh! Don’t think you're getting away striking at your former nanny without a proper dose of punishment, Alex!” said Myrna, holding her bloodied nose.

“Nanny?” Chris repeated.
“T-That’s was like forever ago!” a blushing Alex quickly clarified. “And it was totally Jerry’s idea!”

“Having a nanny isn't anything embarrassing, Alex. Lots of kids have had them.”

“Er...t-this was only a couple of months ago though...”

Chris froze in place. “Er...right. I'll just leave it at that then...”

“L-Little...help...over here....girls!” wheezed Sam. Helga von Guggen was strangling her to death using a fur scarf.

“Haha! I believe you'll find this scarf is to...'die for!'” taunted Helga.

“I'm comin', Sammy!” Clover shouted. “And that is one ugly scarf!”

“W-What?! How could you say such a thing about my latest work?! Clearly, you know nothing about fashion, little girl!”

Clover's eyelid twitched. “Me?! Your eyesight must be spotty, grandma! I'll have you know that I'm so at the top of my fashion design class! Not to mention the fact...!”

“A-As impressive as that is...Clover...HELP!!!” Sam proclaimed.

“R-Right! My bad! I'll just...!” Clover found herself suddenly placed inside a giant, red bubble the second she was going to spring into action. “Hey, what gives?!”

Tim Scam walked forward and said, “Heh. Allow me to introduce you to my Bubble Blaster 9000, Clover! Stay cozy in there while I take care of the rest of your friends!”

“Lemme outta here, you creep!”

“Sorry. No can do! Don't think you'll be able to break out of there on your own either. You see, that's because my bubbles are special in that...”

“You talk too much.”

Chris nearly got an unsuspecting Tim Scam from behind. At the last second, he spiraled around and fired on her, encasing her in a bubble as well.

“...Dammit. You move rather quickly for an imbecile,” she said, touching her prison inquisitively. “I thought I had you.”

“Heh. You almost did. I guess I'm just used to your tricks now!”

“Hmph. I guess I really must've fought you guys before if you can predict my movements. Still, why bubbles? I mean, you're right about us not being able to do anything, but I'm still breathing in here. Why not just a heat ray or something to finish me off? You could've at least taken the air out of here so I'd suffocate over time. Guess I'd starve to death eventually, but...”

Tim Scam cocked his eyelids. “...Believe it or not, stuff like that costs time and effort. While someone of my skills could easily put something like that together, being locked up at WOOHP left me with few resources and alternatives.”

“So, that somehow gives you an excuse for making an oversized children's toy?”

“W-Why you...!” Grinding the rows of his pearly, white teeth, Scam soon came to his senses. “Wait,
I know what you're doing! The others might not be so bright, but I'm not falling for this! You're trying to get me upset so I make a mistake! Heh, you can taunt me all you want, but in the end, you and the your spy pals are finished!"

“Man, is that all you guys know how to say?” A familiar sense of exasperation hit Chris like a tidal wave. Even if her memory remained hazy, her gut reminded her how much the LAMOS tended to try her patience. “If you're going to kill me, just get it over with already. Anything's better than listening to you people prater on like this.”

Though she was ironically safe from harm inside her bubble, there was no telling what the LAMOS would do to her when they got the chance. Freeing herself as soon as possible had to be a priority.

“G-Gotta do something to help Chris and Clover!” said Alex. That was easier said than done considering she was trying to fight off both Boogie Gus and Myrna Beesbottom with middling success. “Jeez! Would you two just be like me during biology class and disappear?!”

“Haha! This is great! It's almost like a dream!” Terrence wasn't sure whether to cheer some more or shed tears of joy. Compromising, he did both. “If only Jerry was here to see the demise of his precious spies!” He turned to Tim Scam and said, “Take care of that last brat over there, would you?”

“Gotta do something to help Chris and Clover!” said Alex. That was easier said than done considering she was trying to fight off both Boogie Gus and Myrna Beesbottom with middling success. “Jeez! Would you two just be like me during biology class and disappear?!”

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“Heh. You got it, boss.” Tim aimed his Bubble Blaster 9000 at Alex, who was too preoccupied to take notice. “Checkmate!”

Chris, careful to move without drawing any attention, retrieved the laser pen from her pocket. She activated it and steadily burned her way to freedom. Like a snake shedding its skin, she slithered out of her bubble cage, crept up on Tim Scam, and then tapped him on the shoulder.

“What is it now? I'm trying to concentrate here!” he said, under the impression it was Terrence trying to get his attention again. His expression filled with horror when he saw otherwise.


Her fist collided with his face, and along with breaking his nose and knocking a tooth out, she downed Tim Scam for the count.


“Y-You...! How did you...?!” Terrence stopped himself, getting it didn't matter how Chris escaped. “You certainly are persistent! As much as you've been a thorn in my side, I can appreciate talents such as yours! Someone like you, while young, would be a tremendous asset to the LAMOS!”

“If you're about to ask me to join you, save it. I don't know why, but something tells me we've done this song and dance before, and I've said no then too,” replied Chris. She then cracked her knuckles. “If I were you, I would be preparing myself for a world of pain, old man.”

“Uh...c-can't we discuss this like civilized beings?!”

He let out a bloodcurdling scream while the sound of bones cracking and flesh being hit was heard for a short time.

“Lie there for a bit please,” said Chris tiredly. She wiped her hands clean and glared back at a now battered, bloodied, and broken Terrence Lewis sprawled on the ground. “Now that he's out of my hair...”
Her next move was to aim her laser pen at Sam, specifically, the scarf literally sucking the life out of her.


“You're beginning to sound a lot like Terrence,” said Chris mockingly.

Gasping for fresh oxygen, Sam managed to get out, “Thanks...C-Chris...”

“Hey! Did you guys forget about me or something?!” whined Clover. “I'm sorta claustrophobic, so get me outta this bubble!”

Chris rolled her eyes and rescued her other friend on the double.

Meanwhile, Alex was sent reeling by another of Myrna Beesbottom's attacks.

“Haha! Is that all you've got, child?” Myrna asked. “Jerry's obviously been going soft on you girls when it comes to training! That’s why you needed someone like me to begin with!”

“Yeah! Can't ya keep up with our moves, little lady?” said Boogie Gus, flashing a grin.

“Mind if I step in?!” asked Clover out of the blue. “Want to know the one thing that you and disco are about to have in common, Boogie Gus?! You’re both dead!”

Boogie Gus' eyes became as wide as saucers after Chris came barreling toward him from above. “Whoa! Foxy ladies are just flying through the air all of a sudden!”

She kicked him square in the jaw, and Myrna had to sidestep his sailing body.

“I thought Tim took care of you, but it's clear he's as useless as Gus and Terrence!” she declared.

“Guess you're going to have to find yourself some new partners!” retorted Clover. “Then again, that probably would've been a good idea before you joined the LAMOS!”

“You tell her, Clover!” cheered Alex.

“Insolent little brat! I'll...!” Myrna was nailed with a leg sweep courtesy of Chris before she could strike at Clover. Breaking her fall, Myrna eyed Chris with extreme malice. “And just what do you think you're doing, young lady?!”

“Sorry, ma'am. Just giving you a dose of your own medicine. You and your LAMOS pals aren't the only ones who can gang up on people!”

“You thinking what I'm thinking, Chris?!” asked Clover enthusiastically.

Chris nodded. “Let's do it!”

Myrna soon ascertained what they were referring to when they both sprung upward, flipped, and came careening downward with their legs extended. Myrna managed to block the dual strike at the last second, yet the momentum still drove her backward and into Boogie Gus, who only seconds before got to his feet again.

“Yo! Not cool!” he yelled as Myrna rolled over him like a bowling ball.

“Nice one!” Clover high-fived Chris, though the latter looked less than receptive to it. “Er...by the way, I so didn't have a clue when I asked if you were thinking what I was thinking.”
“Me neither. I...just did the first thing that came to mind,” Chris admitted. “Guess we just naturally make a good team.”

“Ugh! My head,” voiced Terrence. Even he didn't know how he found the strength to get up after being half near pummeled to mush. He felt about the space where one of his teeth used to be with his tongue ahead of snarling. “That Chrisine! She'll pay for this!”

Helga von Guggen crashed in front of him out of the blue and looking up, he determined Sam to be the cause.

“Terrence! You sure you want to get back up??!” she asked as she rushed at him to deliver the finishing blow.

“Ha! Don't get overconfident just because you managed to defeat one of my pitiful subordinates! This battle is far from over, girls!”

“Shut up for a second, gramps!” Chris yelled. Putting the battle on hold, she cupped her hands on her ears and then added, “...Does anyone else hear that?”

Those present indeed picked up on whatever was causing the disturbance.

“That whistling...” Sam began. She then gasped. “Everyone get down!”

The others heeded her words and were relieved they did because the strange noise belonged to a small missile that obliterated the space they once stood.

“What in the...?!” exclaimed Terrence in response to the raging fire and billowing smoke coming from Ground Zero. “Tim, is that another one of your silly gadgets or something?!”

If it was, Tim couldn't answer because he was still out cold.

“R-Right...” Terrence continued. “You spies must've had something to do with it then!”

“Hey, don't blame us! Where would we even get a missile from anyway?!?” replied Clover.

“And I'm pretty sure we would've used something like that off the bat if we could,” said Chris. “Not to mention it would be extremely idiotic to aim it at ourselves!”

“Gah! I'm confused! If we didn't do it, and the LAMOS didn't do it, who did?!” Alex inquired, feeling her brain getting crossed up like pretzel.

“Something tells me we're about to find out!” said Sam.

A red-haired lady dressed in a frilly, pink dress laughed at their confusion in the background. The bottom of her dress, acting like a helicopter's blade, kept her afloat in midair.

“Nice dress,” said Chris, whistling. “Doubt you could buy that at the mall.”

“Thanks! Anyway, it's been far too long, girls!” the woman bellowed. “I certainly hope you remember me!”

“Unfortunately,” groaned Sam.

“I've already had it up to here with all these baddies showing up!” declared a steaming mad Clover. “This is almost as bad as that time we got stuck on WOOHP Island! Or that stupid blimp...”
“How are they finding us so easily?!” said Alex.

Sam mulled the perfectly good question over ahead of snapping her fingers. She snatched her X-Powder out of her pocket and flipped it open, coming to an astonishing conclusion.

“That's how they're tracking us! They're using the signal from our X-Powders! Of course! Scar could easily tell everyone where we are because he has access to the computers at WOOHP! Alex! Clover! Get rid of your X-Powders! Hurry!”

Alex nodded and did so post-haste, but Clover hesitated.

“How do we have to? I've got a lot of cute boy's phone numbers in here!” she said. She relented when Sam tapped her foot on the ground impatiently. “Alright, fine! It's not like I enjoy getting stalked by all these bad guys either!”

Chris observed Clover shatter her beloved X-Powder against the sand, which in turn made her pull out her Z-Powder.

“I don't know if this is the same or not, but I'd better get rid of it too just in case.”

The red-head in the distance spotted Chris and said, “Hmm? Wait, there's one more of you than before!”

“Don't mind me. I'm just...actually, I'm still not sure why I'm here,” Chris replied.

“Well, since this is our first encounter, I may as well introduce myself! My name is Wera Vann, the world's greatest wedding dress designer! I...”

“Look, lady. That's nice and all, but I didn't ask for your backstory. I'll just assume you're here to kill us like the rest and go from there.”

Wera's skin flushed the same color as her hair. “W-Why you! You're certainly a rude one!”

“You'd be grumpy too if you hadn't slept at all since the day before and been attacked by some old DJ, a group of idiots, and some ninny in a flying dress.”

Wera responded, “F-Fair enough! Nevertheless, I'm here to destroy those girls behind you, so I might as well add you to the list! If you seriously don't know who I am, I'll just have to show you!”

The metallic, flower-shaped ornaments adorning the front of Wera's dress were for more than style. They also happened to be missile launchers, ones she put to good use by unleashing them upon Chris and the others. They scattered and avoided the first missile, but the second caught Chris by surprise and sent her flying. Thankfully, Sam, Clover, and Alex managed to catch her.

“T-Thanks,” she told them. “What is up with that dress though?”

“Basically, she's weaponized it. Don't relax yet. I doubt those missiles are the only thing she's packing,” explained Sam.

“A...weaponized dress?” Chris was honestly lost for words. “...Alrighty then.”

“I say we totally make a run for it!” said Clover. “No way we can take on that dress without any gadgets!”

“Yeah, but how? She'll blow us to bits before then!” Alex reminded her.
Overhearing them, Wera asked, “Leaving so soon, ladies? The fun has just begun!”

Grabbing a whip made of cloth off her high-powered dress, Wera cackled madly and lashed it at her enemies over and over.

“Hey! Watch it! That stings!” said Clover, grimacing.

“Any more bright ideas, Sam?!” asked Chris.

“You know, I'm not the only one with a brain around here! You three think of something for once!” replied Sam as she covered her beautiful face with her arms.

“Jeez. Someone's testy.”

Once Chris decided she had enough red welts on her skin, she reached out and grabbed the weapon prior to attempting to reel Wera in.

“H-Hey! Hands off, sweetheart!” Wera yelled, tugging the other way.

“Not a chance! Now come here!” Chris replied as she tightened her grip. Sam, Clover, and Alex took hold of the whip themselves to give her a hand. Their combined weight was enough to drag Wera out of the sky and close enough for them to finish things.

“No, no, no, no!” Wera cried. Unable to stop herself, she merely watched as four, separate fists hit her in the mouth. “H-How...?!”

“Have a nice trip!” exclaimed Sam while Wera blasted off like a rocket ship.

“See you...how about never?!” added Clover.

“That sounds heavenly,” said Chris. “And the same goes for everyone else we've had to fend off.”

“Man, I'm tired!” Alex sat down and brushed some sweat off her forehead. “Can we ask Jerry for a vacation after this? We've totally done about a month's worth of missions today!”

Chris took a spot next to her, just as beat. “You three mean to tell me you do stuff like this all the time?”

“You do too, Chris,” said Sam.

Chris frowned at the comment. Continuously being told she was a spy didn't get less bizarre with exposure.

“Um...d-did they forget about me or something?” asked Terrence. “Hello! Girls!”

Chris and the others became alert at his presence though relaxed once they saw who it was now waving their arms at them frantically.

“I figured you would've taken a hike already,” said Chris. “Unless you want us to knock you around some more, scram!”

“Ha! I thought I already informed you girls that I'm not going anywhere until I have my revenge!”

“Your revenge?! What about mine?!” said someone adjacent to Terrence. It was Sebastian Saga. With Sam's footprint still etched on his face, he directed a finger trembling with animosity toward Terrence. “I don't know who you are, but I was here first! If anyone's going to destroy these
meddlesome spies, it's going to be me!"

“It seems we have a problem then!” replied Terrence. “The LAMOS have some unsettled business with these girls! Whatever they've done to you can't possibly compare to the injustices they've dealt us!”

“That’s right!” declared Helga von Guggen. Her left eye was black, matching the color of the dress she wore. “Beat it, pal, unless you want us to take care of you first!”

“Check it! The LAMOS are the only ones groovy enough to take down these spies, ya dig?!” said Boogie Gus, dancing over to his comrades. He stopped in his tracks when he got a close enough look at Sebastian, causing him to lower his sunglasses. “Yo, what's with those threads, man?!”

“M-My clothes?! You're one to talk, buster! You do realize disco has been dead since...forever, right?!” Sebastian snapped back.

“W-What?! Totally not true, man! Why does everyone keep saying that?! Disco isn't dead! It's just...taking a break!”

“Are you still going on about that? My goodness.” Myrna, clutching her arm, hobbled past Sebastian and over to her fellow LAMOS members. “I've had quite enough of this, Terrence! I don't know who this man over here is, but let's just get rid of him already so we can accomplish what we came here to do!”

Terrence nodded. “I've got no arguments with that!”

“What about my revenge, huh?!” shouted Wera Vaan, who flew back into sight. She was forced to use her sleeve to hide her blood-drenched nose. “Look what those girls did to my beautiful face! It's obvious I deserve the first shot at them! You people are just going to have to settle for what's left!”

“Now wait just a minute!” Sebastian countered. “Whatever happened to 'first come, first serve'?!”

Wera replied, “I think 'ladies first' is more appropriate here!”

“Forget all that! There's more of us than of you two! Strength in numbers!” Terrence declared.

“What does that have to do with anything?!” Sebastian asked.

The three parties kept on debating the matter, leaving Sam, Alex, Clover, and Chris to stare at them absentely.

“Boy, you three certainly are...popular,” said Chris.

“Yeah, but this is one popularity contest I don't mind not being apart of!” replied Clover.

“Hey, this is our chance to get the heck out of here!” Alex motioned toward Sebastian Saga's silver van in the background. “We can use that to escape!”

“Great idea, Alex! Come on!” whispered Sam.

The four nodded and executed their plan by carefully tiptoeing their way to the vehicle. As Sebastian placed Terrence in a headlock, they made a break for it and piled inside, with Alex taking the driver's seat.

“Sweet! The keys are still in the ignition! I'll drive then!”
“NO!” the other three shouted in harmony.

Sam then hastily added, “I-I mean, t-that's okay, Alex! W-Why don't you let one of us take the wheel this time around? I mean, you've gotta be tired after having to drive before!”

“B-Besides, you wouldn't wanna ruin your mani driving so much!” stated Clover timidly.

“...Er...w-what they said,” mumbled Chris.

Alex got the feeling her presence wasn't desired in front of the weird. Pouting her lips and crossing her arms, she moved to one of the seats in the back.

“I'll drive,” said Sam, taking Alex's place. “Gah! I-It's a stick shift?! Who still drives these things?!”

“Not trying to be funny here, but I suggest you step on the gas, Sam. Even if those guys we just fought are complete idiots, it won't take long for them to realize what we're up to,” warned Chris.

“Ugh! What's with the tacky seating?!” asked a gagging Clover. The seats of Sebastian Saga's van were lined a leopard pattern, and having to sit on the décor made her nauseous. “I guess music isn't the only thing that guy has bad tastes in! I'm just gonna hold my head down the whole trip so no one sees me in this thing...”

Sam turned the keys and started the van's engine. The loud disturbance caught the attention of the villains they were trying so desperately to escape from, making them groan.

“H-Hey! Where do you four think you're going?!” Terrence barked.

“T-That's my van! G-Get out of there, you brats! I still have a few payments to go on it!” said Sebastian Saga. He dashed over and began pounding on the driver's side window, which induced a shrill scream out of Sam.

“Pretty smart, but I'm not letting you girls off the hook so easily!” said Wera. She fired another volley of missiles at the silver van, hoping to reduce it to scrap.

Sebastian ducked for cover, whereas Sam wasted little time in slamming her foot on one of the pedals. The van reversed in time to dodge the explosives before making a U-turn and zooming off into the distance. Sebastian tried going after them on foot, but a wall of fire created by Wera's missiles ended any chance for a pursuit.

“Y-You’ve got to be kidding me!” he grumbled. ‘T-That was my only ride out of this place! What in the world am I supposed to do now?!”

Terrence, just as peeved, took his aggression out on the dirt and sand below, stomping a mudhole into it. He then pointed up at Wera. “Thanks to you and your idiotic dress, they got away!”

“Excuse me?!” Wera clenched her teeth so hard, she was in danger of breaking them. “Let's see how incompetent it is when I turn it on you!”

“Bring it on!”

“D-Don't get so flustered, Terrence! Remember your high blood pressure!” Helga cautioned.

“Y-Yes, I suppose you have a point. Wait a minute...NO YOU DON'T! If I want to get angry, I'm going to get angry! This is unacceptable! We are the LAMOS! We're not supposed to be embarrassed on an everyday basis like this!”
“Well, with a name like that, what else would you expect?” said Wera dryly.

“For the last time, I'm not changing the name!”

Grabbing at his aching skull, Tim Scam came to and searched his surroundings in confusion. He then stared up at Wera and gave her a thumbs up.

“Hey, nice dress!”

“Thank you! It's about time someone around here appreciated my work!”

Sebastian Saga's silver van, now in the ownership of Sam, Clover, Alex, and Chris, made its way down the crowded and always active streets of Beverly Hills. The sight of familiar establishments and terrain relieved the three WOOHP spies greatly. Despite it being a mere number of days since they were last home, it felt like an eternity. The sidewalks, teeming with the faces of otherwise happy people, would soon be replaced with dread unless something was done to stop Scar and his sinister machinations.

“How long until we get to WOOHP?” Sitting in the passenger's seat, Chris rested her head in the palm of her hand and stared out the window with a bored look. “It feels like we been driving around this city for hours.”

“It's in Los Angeles, but don't worry. You'll know when we get there. No way you could miss the building,” replied Sam. Her head swiveled to the back seats of the van where Clover and Alex were fast asleep. Their gentle snoring put a smile on her lips. “I don't blame them for passing out like that. We honestly haven't gotten much rest since we've been on the run.”

Chris yawned. “Yeah, I...know the feeling.”

“The good thing is that they'll be plenty of time for all of us to get a good night's rest after we finish this.”

Out of the corner of her vision, Chris made note of the black bags under Sam's eyes. “...You know, there's nothing wrong with you getting a bit of rest as well.”

“I'm fine.”

As soon as she finished speaking, the van ventured slightly out of its lane, nearly colliding with another car. Yelping, Sam hurriedly corrected the vehicle's course.

“The hell you are!” roared Chris. It like if her heart was going to burst out of her chest. “Come on. Let me drive from here on out. You said I can't miss WOOHP once I see it, right? Therefore, you don't even need to be awake. You'll be of no use to anyone if you pass out during the fighting, so use this time to regain your strength. Besides, out of all of us, I've had the most sleep. It'll be fine.”

Sam sighed, not wishing to give in. Nonetheless, she answered, “Alright. You win, Chris. You know, you aren't as mean as you'd want everyone to believe!”

Chris rolled her eyes at the comment as Sam pulled the van over. The two got out of the car, and Sam handed Chris the keys.

“Thanks again,” she said wearily, ready to pass out on the spot.
“Don't mention it. Just promise me you will sleep.”

“I-I promise! Y-You don't need to glare at me like that!”

Chris fixed her face, not meaning to glower in the first place. Once Sam took her spot in the passenger's side, Chris found her focus on the building in front of her. Construction workers were taking down large, neon letters off the structure. Something was amiss about the whole scene to her.

“What's the matter, Chris?” Sam got back out of the van and stumbled upon the reason for her friend's gazing. “Ah. I guess you don't remember, but that's the perfume shop that wacko Kyla Sacks was operating. I think it was called Sacks of Scents.”

“Kyla...Sacks? Who is that? Do I know her?”

“You...did. What I mean to say is you will once you remember everything.”

Chris repeated the name 'Kyla Sacks' to herself over and over again until the image of the smug, ex-model popped into her head. An intense pain galloped through her cranium afterward.

“A-Agh!”

“H-Hey, are you okay, Chris?!” asked Sam, rushing to her friend’s side.

“Y-Yeah. S-Sorry. I didn't mean to startle you. It's...nothing. Come on, let's go. We'll need to move with some urgency if we want to save this Jerry of yours.”

Without another word, Chris got inside the van and started the engine. Sam, still concerned, closed the door behind her as she retook her seat. Soon enough, the van was once again headed for its destination.

“...By the way, Sam,” Chris began.

“Y-Yeah? What is it?” Sam had almost fallen asleep when Chris called upon her.

“...I don't know how to drive a manual transmission...”

For a second time, the van strayed dangerously off the road.

“W-Why didn't you say that before I gave you the keys?!” cried Sam, jerking the steering wheel with force.

“W-Who lets an amnesiac drive in the first place?!” Chris retorted, pulling just as hard.

“You can't use that as an excuse for everything!”

“Oh yeah?! Well, it's all I have at the moment! That and a freaking pen that shoots lasers!”

With things growing more hectic by the moment, the two genuinely questioned if they would even make it to WOOHP in one piece.

END
Chris, now the sole one awake in the van belonging to one Sebastian Saga, continued her drive through the jam-packed roads of California. Her dry, red, and irritated eyes struggled to stay focused on the road, and as she was about to yawn, she was suddenly forced to slam down on the brakes to avoid rear ending another car. In the aftermath, her head shot toward her somehow still snoozing passengers.

“...That was close. I should've had Sam draw me a map,” she said wearily, yawning a second time.
“Where the heck is this place?!”

She drove past an ice-cream shop she was certain she had seen three times before and growled. Sam and the others insisted she wouldn't be able to miss WOOHP when she approached it, but no matter how many times she circled around its supposed location, she found nothing. Shaking her head, she stopped at a red light, giving her a chance to think.

“What the heck am I even doing? It's like I'm being dragged on a wild goose chase. Is that what this is? Were Sam, Alex, and Clover just screwing with me with all this WOOHP nonsense? I seriously don't know anymore. I'm too tired to make sense of things right now. I'd be far easier to just go home and forget this whole thing.”

Though the traffic light changed to green, Chris and the van remained in place. Exasperated, she placed her forehead against the steering wheel and took another gander at the resting girls that claimed themselves her friends.

“They seemed sincere enough in their intentions. Besides, they don't seem like the sort of people who would stab me in the back. Does that mean I can trust them? I can't even trust myself at the moment with my memory in a haze like this. Am I really Christine? Am I really a spy? Am I really apart of all this?”

Who was Christine? From the people she met up to now and the story Sam, Alex, and Clover spun, she surely wasn't anyone pleasant. Maybe it was better Chris couldn't recall a thing about her past. It was thanks to her that Jerry Lewis, and likely the entire world, was in peril. Taking down this Scar was her priority now, but how would she feel if she got her memories back?

“...Maybe I should've just stayed back at that diner on that dusty, dirt road. I wouldn't be any trouble to anyone there. I wouldn't have to fight idiots and weirdos constantly either. This Scar guy and everything else has nothing to do with me anymore...”

She might have desired to believe her own claims, yet inside she knew they weren't true. Whether she liked it or not, this entire, bizarre state of affairs was her problem to deal with. She would never be satisfied unless she took care of them with her own, two hands. On top of that, there was a history between she and Scar, a bitter one at that. Not remembering every detail of it did little to saté her rising anger, and without warning, she punched a close-by window.

“W-What the...?” she questioned. For a split second, she pictured the face of a man smirking at her
from under a mask. “Who...was that? ...Scar?”

By now, there was a sizable line of cars behind the motionless Chris. The blaring of their horns snapped her back to reality.

“W-Wha? Huh? Where's the fire?” asked a groggy Alex, rubbing her eyes.

“Yeah? What's up, Chris?” asked Clover alongside a stretch and a yawn. “I was totally having a dream about a cute boy just now!”

Sam, now up as well, said, “Everything okay, Chris? You seem kinda upset.”

“Y-Yes, I'm fine. I'm...sorry for waking you all up.”

As she pressed her foot on the gas and got the van moving again, the others looked at each other and silently debated if they should press the issue.

“Hey, wait a sec!” yelled Alex out of the blue. “How come she gets to drive?!”

“I don't think that's important now, Alex,” said Sam. This response wasn't enough to stop Alex from pouting and crossing her arms.

“Huh? We aren't at WOOHP yet?” asked Clover.

Chris stiffened on the spot at hearing this. “…Come again?”

Clover hesitated before innocently replying, “I-I was just asking if we were...uh...at WOOHP yet...”

For a moment, Chris said nothing. Whether this was bad or good, Clover didn't know.

“...If we were at WOOHP, don't you think you would know?” said Chris finally. Her calm speech didn't raise any red flags, yet a chill still shot down Clover's back all the same. “Therefore, we can’t possibly be there yet. Got it?”

“H-How come you're so grumpy all of a sudden?!”

“...'Grumpy?' ‘All of a sudden?'” Chris gradually and methodically rotated her head to Clover, scaring her friend half to death because of her grim expression and blood-red eyes. “Of course I'm grumpy! I've been driving around this city like a blooming idiot for ages now, and I haven't had a wink of sleep in hours! So yes, excuse me if I'm a bit irritable at the moment!”

Chris, foaming at the mouth, bashed on the van's horn repeatedly to get the slow driver in front of her to move aside. She was tempted to just drive right through them.

“J-Jeez...” said Clover, who shook a little. “I-I was just asking...”

“H-Haha. T-Try to relax there, Chris. I get that you're tired, not to mention there's probably a lot of stuff bothering you about all this, but we need to focus if we're going to save WOOHP and stop Scar, alright?” said Sam carefully.

“...Alright,” Chris replied after a sigh. She could hardly keep her eyelids open at this point. “…Could you three just promise me something before we get there? I gotta get this off my chest while I have the chance.”

“S-Sure, Chris,” replied Sam, raising an eyebrow. “As long as it's something we can do.”
“And as long as you aren’t asking to borrow any of my clothes,” said Clover. When the others glared at her, she put her hands up and replied, “H-Hey, I-I was totally joking just now! Just...trying to kill the tension! Jeez!”

“You so weren’t,” Alex said under her breath.

“...If I do happen to get my memories back and decide to turn against you three, I want you to take care of me,” said Chris. Her friends were left taken aback.

“‘Take care of you?’” repeated Sam. “C-Come again?!”

“Yeah, what’s that supposed to mean?!” asked Alex.

“...You girls know exactly what I mean,” replied Chris. Trying to explain herself while keeping a vigilant watch on the road was a bit challenging. “Look, as strange as it sounds, you three know me better than I know myself right now. You know what I’m capable of. If I were to have a change of heart about this whole ‘save the world’ thing, I’d only end up making things worse than I already have. That’s why I’m saying to just take me out if I get in the way if the opportunity arises. I get that this is something I’m asking a lot of you three, but honestly, you’re the only ones I trust at this point.”

“Uh...seriously?” said Clover in the wake of a short pause. The casual response left Chris flabbergasted. “Trust me, Chris. You’re the last person who’d wanna help Scar!”

“R-Really?”

“Yeah!” said Alex. “Jerry told us what Scar did to you and your parents before we lost contact with him!”

“Me and my...parents?”

“That's right,” said Sam. “I-I know it's a bit too late to say this, and it's not like we had anything to do with it, but...we're sorry, Chris. No one should have to go through what you and your parents did! Actually, we're not just doing all this to save Jerry and WOOHP! We're also doing this because we're your friends! Even if you've done some awful things in the past, we'll stand by your side! And we'll make sure Scar doesn't get away with this! I know we've only know you for a little while, but that's honestly how the three of us feel! Like I said, you might’ve done some bad things while working for SOAP, but that doesn’t make you a bad person, Chris!”

She, along with Alex and Clover, looked ready to burst into tears at any moment. Chris wasn't even sure what they were referring to, yet she felt ready to cry herself and even wished to thank them for their kind, selfless words. It was a strange sensation for sure, but this more than anything convinced Chris her friends were telling the truth.

“Uh...WOOHP should be on the left,” Sam informed Chris as she composed herself.

Chris nodded and turned the van down the specified street before parking. She then took heed to the remains of a building. From the size of the rubble and debris, she judged the edifice must have been rather tall.

“Are they doing construction over there? Strange. I don't see tape or anything signifying...”

“N-No way!” Sam cried, making Chris turn to her. “I-It's gone!”

“What's gone?”
Clover, pulling at her blonde hair, added, “Seriously?! This so can't be happening! How could it just disappear like that?!”

“What's the problem?” asked Chris again.

“D-Did Jerry say anything about moving?! Do we have the right address?! Oh my gosh! Do you...do you think he was kidnapped by aliens?! Maybe the whole building was abducted!” whispered Alex. She was on edge now, scrunching up in her seat with a paranoid expression on her features.

“I-I don't think so, Alex,” Sam replied. “Maybe...!”

Having enough of being ignored, Chris yelled on spur of the moment, “SERIOUSLY! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU PEOPLE GOING ON ABOUT?!”

Her friends half near died of fright from this, so she calmed down and apologized, blaming her behavior on her sleep-deprived state.

Sam told her, “WOOHP should be right here, yet it's gone! Someone destroyed the building!”

“...Scar,” muttered Chris.

Sam nodded. “Yeah, that's what I'm thinking. I didn't think he'd go this far though.”

“N-Never mind the building! Where's Jerry?!” said Clover. “You don't think he was still in there when the building went down, do you?!”

“I-I don't think so, Clover.” Sam was mostly saying this to convince herself.

“Neither do I,” said Chris, surprising the others some. “...I don't remember too clearly, but something tells me this Scar isn't the type of guy to end things like this. If he really has a grudge on your Jerry, he'd want to get rid of him in a more extravagant way. Letting him get crushed by a collapsing building isn't that. No, I think this is just Scar's way of telling us he knows we're coming and that he's serious about stopping us. Anyway, that's all just a theory of mine. Take it with a grain of salt.”

“Whoa, Chris! It's kinda scary when you talk like that! You'd totally make a good baddie!” said Alex. “Well, I guess you already are one. Or were, or...whatever! Man, this whole amnesia thing is really annoying!”

“Tell me about it...”

“Even if that's true, what are we supposed to do now?!” Clover threw her arms up in frustration. She hadn't been this peeved since missing a sale at The Groove she had been waiting on for months the other day. “Assuming Jer is alive and well, finding him is so gonna be a pain! He could be anywhere in the world!”

“You're right. We might've been able to track him with our X-Powders, but those are in the past now.” Sam tapped her finger against her chin. Thinking she and the others out of tight situations was her specialty, though she was drawing nothing but blanks currently. “Chris, you got any ideas?”

“Me? Well...” Chris frowned and awkwardly shuffled in her seat. She hated being put on the spot like this, especially when she was just as stumped for answers. “S-Sorry, I really don't remember anything else about that Scar guy. M-Maybe if you give me some time...”

She flinched when Alex grabbed her by the shoulders out of the blue. Chris couldn’t complain once she saw the conviction etched into her friend’s face.
“Come on, Chris! You gotta try and remember as hard as you can! We need you!”

Chris, slightly weirded out, slowly nodded. “…Fine. L-Like I said, just…give me a moment.”

She took a deep breath, closed her eyes, and channeled every ounce of brain power she had. She and Scar had a history together spanning years. Assuming that was the case, rousing those memories to the surface should have been a piece of cake. However, after moments of straining and grunting, absolutely nothing came to her.

...This is beginning to become rather annoying. What is it? What is it I can't remember? I'm starting to think I don't want to remember.

In spite of her struggles, there was one thing in particular that stuck with her. It was hazy, but she could recount being in extreme peril, a bright flash of light, and then...nothing.

Does...that light have something to do with my amnesia? Scar...yes, Scar. He...did something? Something to my memories? I...

The more she dwelt on the matter, the more it felt as if a jackhammer was grinding against her skull. Unable to bear the pain any longer, she gasped and opened her trembling eyes.

“You okay?!?” asked Clover.

“H-Huh? Yeah, sorry.” Chris nodded to confirm her speech. “Guess I was thinking a little too hard there. Heh.”

“Remember anything important?” asked Sam.

“No...really. Well, I confirmed that I really don't like this Scar person, so there's that.”

“Oh well! I guess we're just gonna have to track that guy the old-fashioned way,” said a sullen Alex. “If I was a bamillion year old English dude like Jerry, where would I be?”

“That's easy! Just think of the most boring place in the world!?” joked Clover.

“Then I guess The Groove's out,” said Sam with a laugh and a smile. “I don’t suppose we could just go to England and double check every tea party?”

“...I envy you three,” said Chris. The others gazed at her for clarification. “Sorry. I just couldn’t help noticing you girls can still joke and laugh with one another despite everything basically going to hell in a handbasket. I may not remember much about my past life, but I can tell I never got the chance to do much of that.”

“C-Chris...” Sam started. She didn't get to finish her sentence because the van she and the others were in began to rock back and forth all of a sudden. “Yeah, I got a bad feeling about this!”

As the van shook again, Alex shouted, “Seriously! Not cool! Is there like an angry mob outside or something?!”

“Oh! It could be some of my adoring fans!” stated Clover. “I sent a tré cute picture of myself to Malibu Monthly and...!”

“Not now, Clover!” shouted Sam as the van jerked a third time. “As interesting a story as that sounds, we've got bigger problems on our hands!”

Those 'bigger problems' emerged as red nails stabbing their way through the roof. “...Next time you
get one of those 'bad feelings' of yours, Sam, keep it to yourself!” said Chris.

The person slicing through the vehicle, a red head, peeked in and waved.

“Hello, ladies! Missed me?!” he inquired.

“Manny Wong?!” Sam exclaimed in complete shock. “He's...!”

“I don't need to know.” Chris hastily waved her hand in Sam's face. “I'm just going to assume you guys foiled whatever stupid thing he was scheming, threw him in jail, and now he wants you three dead.”

Manny had to squint through his purple shades to get a good look at Chris. “What's this? There are four of you now? Ah! You must be the girl Scar told us about!”

“Um...'us?'” inquired Alex.

Unfortunately for Sam, Alex, and Clover, Manny Wong wasn't the sole individual from their past dropping by for a visit. They discovered this after a red boot extended its way through the front window of the van and out the back. Although shaken up, everyone present avoided it in time.

“Man! A few inches closer and we'd have shoeprints right through us!” exclaimed Sam.

“You've gotta be kidding me,” said Clover weakly in response to the confident-looking man standing outside. “Yves Mont Blanc!”

“Wait, the Yves Mont Blanc?” asked Chris, rubbing her peepers. She had to have been imagining things, she thought. “The famous shoe designer?!”

“Y-Yeah! He's totally...! W-Wait! You're telling me you of all people know who that is?!”

“What? I'm not allowed to buy a pair of shoes every now and then?!”

“Sorry to 'step in' so suddenly, ladies!” taunted Yves in a thick, French accent. His shoe retracted into a more manageable size as he lowered his leg. “We meet again at last! I've a bone to pick with you three and...!”

“Hey! What's the big idea?!” Manny hollered at him. “You nearly hit me, you shoe-brained idiot!”

“Pardon? I cannot hear ze words of a lowlife manicurist!”

Manny's eyelid twitched. “L-Lowlife manicurist?!” I guess the stench of your hideous shoe designs has finally gone to your head! If you're going to torture us all with those ugly boots by swinging them around, you could at least have the decency to hit someone!”

“Hmph! Maudit! How would you like it if I put zese boots through your teeth, Nitwit of Nails?!”

“I dare you to say that again, you French...!”

“Knock it off!” cried a purple-haired woman wearing a dress styled after a lush, green plant. “I swear, babysitting you is beginning to drive me mad! Remember what we're here to do! Scar said he would reward us handsomely if we took care of those meddlesome pest over there! He didn’t say anything about squabbling with each other.”

Albeit ready to claw each others eyeballs out, Yves and Manny heeded their compatriot’s advice and
calmed themselves.

“Even Violet Vanderfleet is here?!” Sam wasn't sure whether to be afraid or depressed. “This isn't good. We're hardly in any condition to take the three of them on. Besides, we still need to find out what happened to Jerry and Scar!”

“Um...m-maybe if we just stay put, they'll go away?” suggested Clover. “They seem to be having a lot more fun beating each other up anyway!”

Her idea fell apart at the seams, mostly due to the van being snatched right into the air by something unseen. Chris again figured she must have been hallucinating when she checked out the window for the source of the disturbance.

“Is that a giant, venus fly trap?!?”

“That is so a giant, venus fly trap!” answered Clover, her jaw lowered in awe.

“ABANDON SHIP!!!” cried Sam.

The plant in question let out a tremendous hiss before swallowing Sebastian Saga's van whole. Luckily, the four spies were able to leap out of it well in advance.

“Did you just see that?!? asked a wide-eyed Alex. “I’m totally glad that wasn’t my car!”

“I never thought I'd see something with a bigger appetite than you, Alex!” exclaimed Sam. Alex simply frowned at the remark.

“You've gotta be kidding me,” said Chris in deadpan fashion. “Seriously, a line has got to be drawn somewhere! Now giant plants are trying to kill us?! This is nuts!”

“I...uh...guess we're gonna need to find another ride...” Clover chuckled timidly as she spoke.

“You won't have to worry about that, girls! You won't be getting out of here in one piece anyway!” Manny Wong bellowed their way.

“Zat is right! And once we take care of you silly girls, I'll finally be able to get back to plotting how to properly punish all zose who ridiculed my shoes!” said Yves Mont Blanc.

“Not to mention I still need to destroy all the ignorant fools who dared question my beautiful nail designs!”

“Meanwhile, your destruction will allow me to get revenge on all the men in the world who had the nerve to dump me!” added Violet. Being aware of all the condemnable glances being thrown her way, she promptly cleared her throat and added, “I-I mean...all the men in the world who had the nerve to dump women in general! R-Right!”

“Sure, lady...” Alex rolled her eyes.

“I've just got one question before we get started,” said Chris. “Are all the villains you three face this hopelessly insane?”

Overhearing this, Violet growled. “C-Crazy?! How dare you! There have been a lot of girls out there that've been hurt by selfish jerks! What's wrong with trying to get justice for them against the vile male population?!”

“As much as I want to believe in your intentions are pure, I legitimately can't take you seriously
when you're working with two of those so-called 'vile males.'"

Violet turned her head back at Manny and Yves, who both shrugged.

“Don’t get the wrong idea, little girl! T-This is just a temporary truce until we all get what we want! A-Anyway, you're beginning to get on my nerves! Just who are you anyway? Scar said to destroy you, but nothing other than that.”

Chris answered, “Heh. I'm still trying to figure that out myself.”

“Eh? She’s a...how you say...a strange one indeed,” said Yves.

Leering at his freshly polished fingernails, Manny replied, “Seriously. No wonder Scar wants her gone.”

This claim tugged at Chris’ heart. It was hard enough trying to accept that Scar had put a price on her head to begin with. Not knowing the reason made it ten times more infuriating. The mere mention of Scar's name tended to have that effect on her though, a subconscious one she honestly couldn’t explain considering she could barely recall the man. Balling her shaking hands, she began to scowl at Violet, Yves, Manny, finding them all repulsive out of the blue.

“...What's your problem?” asked Violet, flinching some.

Chris forced herself to grin. “...Nothing. I’m just flattered you all think so highly of me is all.”

“Flattered? Interesting, considering you're about to become plant food!”

The meaning behind Violet's threat escaped Chris until she detected a shadow looming over she and the others. The massive plant from earlier unleashed a shrill yell while it lunged its mouth at the four. At the last second, Chris shoved her companions aside, leaving her to be eaten alone.

“CHRIS!” Sam, Alex, and Clover all shouted.

Violet, snickering, said, “That was too easy! I hoped she'd put up a better fight!”

Her confidence waned once the plant that was enjoying its meal started to act strange. Its color changed from green to red, and after it bellowed an anguish-induced cry, it exploded. Chunks of it flew everywhere, coating those close-at-hand in a slimy, green substance.

“... ‘Ew’ so doesn’t begin to describe how nasty this is!” howled Clover. Her facial features changed to one of repulsion when she placed her fingers in her hair, feeling the plant juice enveloped in every strand. “I'm totally gonna have to wash my hair for months to get this groady stuff out!”

“Ugh! It tastes as bad as it looks!” said Alex, spitting some out.

Sam brushed some off of her clothing. “...This is so not how I envisioned my day today...”

Chris, covered in slime from head to toe, stepped out of the remains of the plant. The only thing everyone else could make out on her face was her wrath-filled eyes.

“...Alright, that pissed me off,” she admitted.

“How in the...?! Y-You should be getting digested right now!” said Violet. “How did you escape my precious plant so easily?!”

“I had to use some imagination,” Chris told her, displaying her laser pen. “Guess your plant had a
bad case of heartburn.”

Violet grumbled at the remark and then faced the motionless Yves and Manny.

“Well?! Don't just stand there, you blithering fools!” she screamed. “Attack!”

“Have you forgotten, madame? We are not your henchmen!” Yves shot back.

“That's right!” added Manny. “We're supposed to be working together here!”

Violet's entire face became disturbingly scarlet. “I DIDN'T ASK FOR YOUR WORTHLESS OPINIONS! JUST GO BEFORE I HAVE ONE MY PLANTS EAT YOU TWO NEXT, YOU BLITHERING IMBECILES!!!”

Hugging each other out of fear, Manny and Yves swallowed their prides and did as she commanded.

“Incoming, girls!” said Sam.

“Looks like they’re finally getting serious,” stated Chris as she put up her dukes. “Good. I need to work off some steam from nearly being turned into lunch.”

Clover said, “Only you could sound so casual after something like that!”

“Did you guys say something? Hey, why’s it so quiet?” asked Alex, who was having difficulty getting something out of her ears. “Ew! I think some of that gunk got in there!”

“Yeah, could you stop! I’m seriously trying not to throw up over here!”

Manny Wong brandished his nails and slung them at oddly chatty spies. They responded by going off in different directions to dodge.

“Guess those aren't just for show then,” said Chris. It would be her flesh the razor-sharp nails pierced rather than the concrete ground if she wasn't careful.

“En garde, little lady!” Yves said to her. He took her off guard and would've taken her head off with his red boot if it weren't for Clover dragging her down before tragedy could strike.

“Thanks,” Chris told her. “Man, this really is nuts. First it was an overgrown plant, now it's fingernails and designer shoes.”

“Uh...you know, you kinda get used to it after a while!” said Clover.

Chris doubted that very much.

“Hey, Chris! You still got that pen?!” asked Sam.

“Er...yeah, it should be...hey, wait a sec!” Checking every pocket and opening on her clothing, Chris became alarmed when she noticed her laser pen was gone. “Where did it...?!”

“Hmm? What's this?” Violet reached down and picked up something that rolled at her foot. Humored by her luck, she held up what Chris so desperately desired. “I believe you dropped something!”

“Dammit! I must’ve dropped it when Clover saved my skin just now!”

Any hope of retrieving it vanished when Violet had a smaller one of her plants eat it.
“Good boy!” she said, petting it tenderly.

“...Any other ideas, Sam?” asked Chris. Irritation riddled her speech.

“That pen was like our only chance of winning!” cried Alex.

“Not to mention I totally never finished that shopping list I was writing!” added Clover.

“Seriously! All of you need to calm down!” Sam yelled. Her friends, despite having lingering complaints, piped down and nodded at her. “Don’t you girls see how silly you sound?! We don't need gadgets to win! If using stuff like that was all it took to be a spy, anyone could do it!”

“Yeah, but...!” Alex started.

Sam cut her off with, “It takes brains too! The gadgets might've helped us with all those missions in the past, but we don't have them here, so we can't rely on them! What we do still have though is our heads, and if we put them together, I'm confident we can get out of any mess!”

“...You certainly are the optimist. That was well said however, Sam,” said Chris after a brief pause. “That all sounded like something out of a bad family flick, but I guess I'm a sucker for cheesy stuff like that.”

“That was kinda corny,” chimed Clover. She then stuck her tongue out playfully and added, “But yeah, I guess you've got a point, Sammy!”

Alex nodded. “Right! No gadgets then! Er...what do you suggest we do though?”

“Er... about that. I still haven't actually thought of anything!” said Sam. The others fell on their heads in disbelief.

“Aw. That speech was rather...touching!” said Violet Vanderfleet sarcastically, taking a step toward her foes. “In the end though, it doesn't matter what you brats say or do! You three could barely beat us last time on that blimp when you had your fancy gadgets! What exactly do you think you can without them?! Manny! Yves! Show these girls how serious we are this time!”

On cue, Manny began slinging nails at Chris and the others once more.

“Alex! Handle him for the time being!” said Sam.

“Right!” Alex replied. She lunged fearlessly at Manny, dodging a seemingly endless supply of nails as she did so. “Say, you wouldn't happen to have any in a shade of yellow, would you?”

“I certainly do! Here! I'll give you a free sample!” yelled Manny. He retrieved a bottle of bright and glittering nail polish of the requested color ahead of slinging it on the ground. The second Alex's feet came in contact with it, she slipped and slid all over e.

“This would be totally fun if I so weren't about to be killed!” she hollered.

“Got you!” said Yves Mont Blanc, ready to strike.

“Not so fast!” cried Clover. She nailed him across the chin using a swift kick, nearly taking his head off in the process.

“Clover! We meet again it seems!” he said as he held the afflicted area.

“How could someone so good at making shoes be so totally twisted?!”
“It's simple really! While you in particular have always appreciated my work, Clover, the world at
large does not! Zat is unforgivable! Thus, zey must pay! I will destroy anyone who gets in my way
of accomplishing zat, even my own fans!”

Clover shrieked and ducked when Yves extended a boot at her. “Hey, watch it! My hair's already
messed up enough thanks to that stupid plant! W-Wait a sec! Are those your new designs?! Oh my
gosh, they are so cute! Can I buy a pair?!”

Stopping, she slapped herself on the face.

“W-What am I saying?! Get it together, Clover! You'll have plenty of time to go shoe shopping after
you take care of this wacko!”

With Manny Wong and Yves Mont Blanc busy fending off Alex and Clover respectively, Violet
Vanderfleet was left alone to deal with Chris and Sam, or at least, that's what Chris assumed.

“Huh? Where the hell did Sam go?!”

“Well, look at that! It appears your friend has left you high and dry!” taunted Violet alongside some
haughty laughs. “I suppose she's as good at running away as she is at making speeches!”

“And it seems you never know when to shut your mouth, lady! Sam or no Sam, I'm still taking you
down!”

Finding and chewing out Sam would have to come another time. Beating Violet senseless was at the
top of Chris' list of things to do at the moment. However, right as she readied to go on the offensive,
someone catapulted off her left shoulder, knocking her off balance.

“W-What the..?!”

It was Sam. Armed with a grocery bag full of items, she reached into it and brandished a silver can.
She aimed it threateningly at Violet, who smirked.

“And just what are you going to do with that? Style my hair?”

“While you do need a new hairdo, lady, that isn't what I had in mind!”

Violet was hit with a full blast of the spray, and she coughed while fanning the purple-colored vapor
away.

“Huh? Are you just messing with me or something?” she asked Sam. Her lips then curled into a
frown. “You'll pay for that! No one makes a fool of me!”

In a rage, Violet sicked one of her plants on Sam, or at least that's what she tried to do. Much to her
horror and confusion, her shrubbery were withering and dying at an alarming rate.

“W-What is this?! What's going on?! How did you...?!?” With widening eyes, she caught a closer
look at the can in Sam's grasp. “W-Weed killer?! You went out and bought weed killer?! You've got
to be kidding me!”

“That's right! Still wanna try using those overgrown dandelions now?” asked a jubilant Sam.

Violet, backing away, retorted, “C-Curse you! How could my wonderous plants be defeated by a
dumb, little trick like that?!”
She continued to back peddle, all the while trying to think of some way to turn things back toward her favor. It was then she bumped into someone. Turning around to learn the individual's identity and chastise them for their clumsiness, she hastily swallowed her tongue.

“Well, well, well. Who's plant food now?” asked Chris, cracking her knuckles. Her expression was absolutely sadistic, leaving Violet powerless to do anything but cower in terror. “I'm going to enjoy this.”

Sam turned away from the scene as the sounds of Violet Vanderfleet being beaten senseless resounded. She nevertheless peeked a couple of times and cringed, questioning how human bones could bend so effortlessly and in a wide variety of directions.

“Ah! I nearly forgot! Alex!” Sam pulled another item from her plastic bag and chucked it. “Catch!”

“Got it!” said Alex. Expecting a weapon to defend herself with, she instead pondered why she held a tiny bottle filled with a clear substance. “Er...is this what I think it is?!”

There was no time for her to open it and confirm her suspicions, not with Manny Wong desiring to claw her to pieces anyway.

“What's the matter, little girl? Scared yet?” he jeered. “I want you to see some of my new designs up close and personal!”

Alex, screaming in fright, reflexively held her arms up to shield herself, and in the process, Manny accidentally shattered the bottle Sam gave her. Its contents splattered on him, forcing him to pinch his nose to block out its strong scent.

“Wait a second? Is this...nail polish remover?!?” he cried. His now bloodshot eyes got a gander of his nails. The fine polish that adorned them was gone. “M-My beautiful designs! NO-OOOOOO-O!”

“Um, dramatic much?” said Alex.

While Manny Wong sobbed and bawled like a baby, Clover was preoccupied trying to stop Yves Mont Blanc from kicking a hole right through her.

“Got anything in that magic bag of tricks for me, Sammy?!” she hollered, lowering her head to dodge Yves' protracted shoe.

“Yeah! Try this, Clover!”

“Got it!” Clover happily declared as she caught something. Her excitement waned some when she ascertained what it was. “A...shoe horn?”

Yves laughed. “And just what are you going to do with zat, petite dame?!”

“Oh, you so won't be laughing after I get done with you because this is one accessory I know how to use!”

“H-Hey, what are you doing?! W-Wait a moment! Arrêtez!”

Clover struggled with him to get a hold of his leg. Once she did, she employed her not so harmless shoe horn to wrench the red boot right off Yves' foot prior to grabbing the other shoe and doing the same. The Frenchmen, now barefoot and unarmed, gasped sharply at Clover holding his prized designer shoes up as trophies.
“G-Give zose back! I haven't even finished ze designs yet!” he pleaded.

Clover wasn't listening. Her eyes, sparkling like diamonds, glued themselves completely to Yves' shoes. “I can't believe I got the latest Yves Mont Blanc shoes before anyone else! Everyone at school is going to be so jealous! Especially Mandy! Oh, I can't wait to see the look on her face! Hahahaha!”

“Er...h-hello? I really do need zose shoes back...”

Yves gave up when Clover, squealing at her good fortunes, paid him no mind again.

#

Being tied up and left helpless wasn't what Violet Vanderfleet, Manny Wong, and Yves Mont Blanc had in mind when they decided to ambush Sam and the others. All the same, that was precisely the predicament they found themselves in now.

“Tsk! You girls will pay for this!” said Violet. She squirmed around and attempted to break free of her restraints with no success. “W-What's with these ropes?!”

“Ha! You're crazy if you think you're getting out of that! I was totally the best at tying knots in my old Girl Scout troup!” said Alex proudly.

“You're going to get even more wrinkles if you keep brooding like that, grandma!” said Clover.

“G-Grandma?!” 'Insulted' didn't even begin to describe how Violet felt at this.

“Would you please stop moving around so much!” Manny said to her. “You're going to make me chip a nail!”

“I'll chip more than that, you...!”

“Pipe down, you two! You'll have plenty of time to argue once you're back under WOOHP custody!” said Sam. “I think they've fought more with each other than us today!”

“Ha! Perhaps you need to get your eyes checked, little girl! Have you forgotten WOOHP is no more?! The remains of it are sitting behind us in fact!” replied Violet happily.

“Haha! Indeed! Good riddance as well!” added Yves.

“Hey, there's always WOOHP Island! I doubt Scar has gotten to that place yet!” Alex reminded them. This effectively shut both their pie holes.

Sniffling, Manny proclaimed, “I don't care where you send us! I'm still in mourning over what you evil girls did to my nails!”

“You're still fretting about that? Even when I chip a nail, I'm not this whiny!” said Clover.

“And that's saying something...” Alex muttered.

“Never mind him and give me back my boots already!” said a glowering Yves.

Clover blew him a raspberry. “Never! Consider them my reward for having to put up with you jerks!”

“Lucky you. All the rest of us get to take away from this is a bunch of migraines,” said Chris dryly while she stroked her temples. Leering at the now empty grocery bag Sam held, she added, “I'm
wondering how you managed to sneak off to the corner store while no one was paying attention, Sam.”

“Uh...yeah, about that...” Sam rubbed the back of her head apologetically. “Sorry. I didn't mean to disappear like that without saying anything, but I knew I had to act fast if I was going to get what we needed before Violet and her cronies caught onto me!”

“It's fine with me. I had a feeling you weren't the type to sneak off and save your own skin.”

“That was totally nice thinking, Sammy!” said Clover, giving her friend a thumbs up.

“Hey! I thought you said we didn't need gadgets earlier!” Alex pouted as she said this. “You gave a big speech and everything!”

Sam blushed in embarrassment when Alex and the others admonished her with their staring.

“Y-You really can't count common household items as gadgets, can you?” she stated in her defense.

“I mean, it's basically the same thing the way we used them,” said Chris plainly.

Wanting to protest some more, Sam merely shook her head and gave in.

“I'm just glad we won,” continued Chris. With her arms crossed, she walked over to the tied up villains and crouched down.

“W-What do you want now?” asked Violet with an air of caution.

“I'm just trying to figure out what we should do with you imbeciles.”

Sam, kneeling beside her, answered, “We should question them for information. They probably know who destroyed WOOHP, meaning they also probably also know where Jerry and Scar are now.”

Violet's ear jerked as she overheard this. “Ha! You two might as well save your breath! As if we'd actually tell you anything!”

“Oh, so that means you guys do know something!” said Clover slyly. Violet, noting her errors, snarled under her breath.

“If anyone here should be keeping their big mouth shut, it's you!” Manny hollered in Violet's direction.

“I dare you to say that again, you nail-obsessed freak!”

“Big words coming from a lady that's been dumped by every man on the planet!”

“Not every man, just the lousy ones...which is all of them! And another thing...!”

“If you are looking for zat man named Scar, he said he something about going to a nearby university,” said Yves Mont Blanc without warning. “Zat wasn't too long ago, so if you hurry, you may be able to catch up with him.”

Mortified, both Violet and Manny couldn't fathom why their comrade was spilling the beans on such vital information. Sam didn't either, leaving her just as bewildered and a lot more suspicious.

“You sure are chatty all of a sudden!” she stated. “What gives?”
“That's a very good question!” said Violet through gritted teeth.

Yves moved his head away from her in defiance. “Hmph! Zat is because I've grown more zan tired of having to deal with ze two of your and your constant bumbling! Even if it means going back to prison, I'd happily take zat fate zan align myself with you imbéciles any longer!”

“Sounds good to me. Let's have it then, frenchie,” said Chris.

“...Fine. Ask away!”

“Y-You idiot! Don't you dare say another word!” Violet warned him.

“You said Scar took Jerry and went to some university, right? What university?” asked Sam.

Yves mulled the inquisition over. “...I cannot remember which one exactly, but I did overhear him saying it was...how you say...close-by?”

Clover gasped. “Y-You don't think he's talking about Mali-U, do you?!”

“He's gotta be! That's like the only one near here!” shouted Alex.

“Why would he go there though? It doesn't make sense,” said Sam.

His logic confounded Chris as well. Though she wasn't familiar with this Mali-U, she couldn't think of anything of importance at a local university other than obnoxious students and long-winded lectures. Still, a man like Scar didn’t act without reason.

*Maybe he wants to brush up on his math...*

“W-Wait a sec!” she said out loud as something came to mind. “S-Sam! There are a lot of students at this Mali-U place, right?!”

“Yeah. Since it's the middle of the day, there should be a lot of classes in session now.”

“We need to move then. It's probably obvious to say at this point, but your Jerry isn't the only one who's in danger now if Scar really did go to that place.”

“Agh! S-She's totally right!” said Clover, who placed her hands at the sides of her head in a panic. “We can't just let Scar do as he pleases! What'll happen to all the cute boys I haven't dated yet?!”

“Oh no! I totally left Oinky back at the penthouse! No way I'm letting Scar lay a finger on him!” said Alex. Passionate fire brimmed in her eyes; this was personal now.

“Oinky?” mumbled Chris.

“I'd explain, but at the moment, we need to get a move on!” said Sam.

“We gotta find a new ride first!” said Alex.

“Leave it to me!” exclaimed Clover. She scanned the immediate area and soon spotted something of use. “Over there! I think that bus goes to Mali-U around this time!”

“It better! Come on!” Sam ordered.

“Ugh. I hate taking the bus. There's too many old guys who like getting all touchy-feely when it's crowded,” muttered Chris.
The four dashed off in a flash. This was all well and good, save for the fact they apparently forgot about the still tied up Violet Vanderfleet, Manny Wong, and Yves Mont Blanc.

“...So, they're seriously just going to leave us here?!” said Violet, trying to hold back a rage that was building inside her like a volcano. “...Okay, Violet. No need to get mad. No need to get upset. Everything's okay. That's right. Everything's...”

“They could've at least untied us! Now I'm stuck with you two!” Yves complained.

These words made Violet snap and Yves shrieked like a little girl when she tried ripping his ear off using her teeth, unable to do so with her restrained hands.

“This is all your fault! You and that stupid manicurist over there!” she howled. Blood rushed to every corner of her face, making it resemble the shade of the crimson rose she wore in her hair. “I swear, I'm going to kill you both long before we get arrested again!”

Manny and Yves, after much begging and pleading, managed to settle her down somehow. A bit of time passed where the three said nothing to one another.

“...Now what?” asked Violet, shattering the silence.

“Oh, I know! I can paint everyone's fingernails while we wait! I've got some new designs I've been cooking up, and now is as good as time as any to try them out!” said Manny.

Violet rolled her eyes and took quite awhile to reply. “...How are you going to do that when OUR HANDS ARE STILL TIED UP, YOU IMBECILE?!”

“...Oh yeah. Good point.”

Everything grew quiet again, leaving Violet plenty of time to assess her rather questionable life choices leading up to this point.

“...I should've just become a nurse like Mother wanted...”

#

Considering Dyson Glee was the best runner on the Malibu University track team, most assumed there weren't many that could keep pace with him in the school, let alone the whole state. Dyson himself was finding out otherwise.

As he ran as fast his legs were willing down the expansive hallways of Mali-U, he kept a vigilant watch over his shoulder. The individual chasing after him wasn't far behind; he knew this even without getting a visual of them. Pounding footsteps trailed his own, threatening to near dangerously close if he slipped up even an inch. He tried listening to these noises intently, but the sound of his own sharp breathing made so difficult.

Giving up, he ducked down another corner and stumbled upon something of interest: an old supply closet. He didn't even take the chance to wonder if it was unlocked while he lunged at its doorknob. Relief hit him in waves when he heard the lock click open upon turning it. Closing and sealing the door behind him, pitch blackness greeted him on every side. The sole light was from a crack at the bottom of the door. He didn't mind this though. If he couldn't even see three feet in front of him, he knew his pursuer would be just as blind to his whereabouts. Nevertheless, he became alarmed once more at the unsettling silence outside. The trailing footsteps were so loud beforehand that it made no sense for them to have suddenly vanished.
“...What the hell is going on?” he whispered. “Things around here are nuts!”

Tempted to crack the door open and see the situation behind it, he shook his head and withdrew his advancing arm. While he did so, his elbow hit something adjacent to him, giving him quite the fright. A broom fell over and hit the door, creating a very loud banging sound that Dyson was certain would attract the person after him. He held his breath and waited, not wanting to risk capture by even taking in air.

*Come on! Come on! Where are they?! I know they're out there!*

On cue, someone began shuffling on the other side of the closet. The shadow of footsteps then appeared at the crevice below the door. Whoever was after Dyson was literally inches away, separated by a now seemingly worthless slab of wood. Still, he didn't budge. After what felt like ages, the person walked off, and he sighed in relief.

“...That was too close. Now that they're gone, maybe I can actually find out what's going on around here.”

The second he reached for the doorknob to leave, he heard a distinct giggle that made his blood run cold. Slowly, he shifted his head to the source of the disturbance and found a pair of eyes staring back at him.

“Found you!” said the carefree voice of Tabitha Connor.

Dyson let out a bloodcurdling scream before bursting out of the closet and running back the way he came. He didn't care where he went, so long as it away was from the giggling girl skipping after him.

“Hey, come back!” she shouted. “It's your turn to chase me since I found you! Haven't you ever played tag before?!”

Ignoring these remarks, Dyson said to himself, “Seriously! What the hell is going on?! H-How could that girl have been in that closet and outside?! Does she have a twin or something?!”

He soon discovered that while his theory held some merit, he wasn't exactly on the money. Rather than there being merely two Tabitha's, he managed to stumble on an entire army of them. They responded to his horror-stricken expression by surrounding him post-haste.

“Hi!” they all said in unison.

He tried fleeing the other way, yet another Tabitha brigade was waiting there as well. With nowhere else to run, Dyson, feeling like a rate in a maze, backed into a row of lockers.

“S-Stay back!” he cried, swatting his arm at the air. “Just who in the hell are you girls?!”

“We're Tabitha!” all the Tabitha's informed him, adding, “Tabitha Connor!”

“Tabitha...Connor...?!”

The name did little to answer all of his pressing questions, and he was unable to ask any because a trio of Tabithas apprehended him. He scratched and clawed in an effort to escape, yet he was quickly and easily overpowered.

“Just where are you all taking me?!” he angrily inquired as a Tabitha carried him over her shoulder. “Wait, doesn't this way lead to the school's gymnasium?”
“That's right!” replied the Tabitha holding him. “We're gonna go and have a lot of fun with Mister Scar and the others!”

“Mister Scar? Who's that? Your boss?”

The Tabithas collectively giggled instead of giving him a straight answer. While annoyed, he decided it didn't matter in the long run. The gymnasium was just up ahead; he would be able to verify the ongoing situation himself.

“Here we are!” said Tabitha, kicking open the double doors leading into the expansive gym of Malibu University. It was mostly used for basketball or volleyball games against rivals schools, yet Dyson soon saw its services were being used for something entirely different today.

“What the...?!” he said in response to the hundreds of students and staff of Mali-U confined inside. With everyone here, this explained why all the hallways, dorms, and classrooms of the university were so empty when he passed them earlier. “They're...keeping everyone here hostage!”

Tabitha abruptly put him down and patted him on the head affectionately. The gesture left him speechless for a moment.

“Er...y-you still haven't answered my questions! What's going on?! Why did you bring me and everyone else in the school here?! What do you people want?!”

Tabitha, more lost than he was, tilted her head. “H-Huh? Slow down! You're making my head hurt! You sure do ask a lot of questions!”

“Of course! I think I have a right to after being dragged here against my will!”

The fact that Tabitha actually looked like she were ready to cry made Dyson relent. At that same moment, an incredibly shrill voice called out to him.

“Hey, Dyson! Over here!” said Mandy in the distance. Dyson wasn't the only one who felt like his ears were bleeding from having to withstand her voice. Those around her had to stop themselves strangling her in an effort to quiet her down. Mandy, flailing her arms to attract Dyson's attention, took no heed of this. “Dyson! DYSON!”

“Should I...really go over there?” Dyson shook his head and opted to go after all. Mandy would seal her lips at the very least. Hopefully anyway. “H-Hi there! It's been awhile! I'm glad to see you're alright, Mandy!”

The second she got the opportunity, Mandy latched herself onto Dyson's arm, threatening to rip it off even. He could tell from the way she gripped it that she had no intention of letting go anytime soon. It was then he debated if he might have been in better hands with the killer androids that brought him here.

“Oh, I'm so glad you're okay, Dyson!” said Mandy. Blushing, she giggled and felt like she was in heaven. Mumbling, she added, “Especially since that other girl isn't here...”

“Other girl?!” Dyson repeated. Guessing she meant Chris, he searched around the gym in vain for her, a frown appearing on his mouth. “...She isn't here. Does that mean she got away in time? I sure hope so.”

Mandy, irritated he had the gall to think of another girl while in her presence, casually stomped on his foot.
“AGH!” he howled.

“Oops! Sorry!” Mandy said innocently. “I totally wasn’t watching where I was stepping!”

“N-Not a problem! Accidents...happen.”

“A-Anyway, I was so scared before you got here, Dyson!”

“I don’t see how. You have Trent right there beside you.”

Trent weakly smiled. He was glad someone was acknowledging his presence since Mandy chose to ignore him for the most part.

“Hey! Stop making that face, Trent!” Mandy shouted at her intern. “For your information, Dyson, Trent hasn't been any help whatsoever! He couldn't even fight off those stupid robots when I asked him to!”

“S-Sorry, Mandy. I guess twenty on one isn't my specialty,” replied Trent. There was a hint of snarkiness in his words.

Mandy crossed her arms and replied, “Hmph! That's so not an excuse! ...But I guess I can forgive you since you do seem to be sorry about it!”

Despite Mandy's tough girl act, Dyson could tell she appreciated Trent sticking with her during these trying times. He certainly couldn't think of anyone else who willingly would.

“By the way, would either one of you have any idea what's going on?” he asked. “And what's this about robots?”

“How should I know what's going on?! I just wanna go home already!” Mandy whined. Again, those nearby had to plug their ears from her knife-like intonation.

Trent cleared his throat. “Er...what she means to say is that everyone you see here, including us, were dragged here without much of an explanation. Those 'robots' she's referring to is all those girls that look-alike.”

“The Tabithas? I see. Thanks,” replied Dyson. “I suppose we'll find out why we've been gathered here in due time.”

The chatter from those present intensified just then.

“Huh? What's going on now?” asked Mandy.

Dyson pointed forward, saying, “There. Look!”

Look Mandy did, setting her sights on an old man in a suit being lowered from the ceiling by way of a metal chain. Everyone within the gymnasium wasn't sure what to make of this, nor were they sure how to react to another man they spotted standing on the rafters.

“Hello, everyone!” Scar, leader of Spies Organized Against Peace, said to his ‘adoring’ audience below. “I thank you for taking time out of your busy schedules to come here today.”

“We totally didn't come here because we wanted to, you freak! I could be out shopping right now!” cried Mandy, steaming like a vegetable.
“Are you the one behind all this?!” asked Dyson.

Scar took a bow and beamed. “My, my. Aren't we all riled up? To answer your question, young man, I am. My name is Scar. It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance. I believe all of you have already met my lovely android assistants.”

“Hi again!” said all the Tabithas scattered around.

“So, they really are robots,” muttered Dyson.

Scar gestured over to the unconscious old man on the chain. “And it would inconsiderate of me to forget our other guest here. Ladies and gentleman, this man here is Jerry Lewis, former leader of WOOHP, the World Organization of Human Protection. I apologize on his behalf for him not introducing himself, but as you can see, he's quite incapacitated at the moment.”

On cue, Jerry awoke from his slumber, partly because the chatter of the crowd had increased thanks to Scar's words. His vision came back slowly, and when it did, he was puzzled at the hundreds of people peering back at him.

“Scar...” he said under his breath, quickly deducing the situation.

“Oh! Good morning, Jerry! We were just talking about you!” said Scar cheerily.

“You didn't have to bring so many people into this, Scar! I thought it was me you wanted?!”

“It was you I wanted, and now I have you. So, what do you think I have in mind now?”

Jerry hadn't a clue. He did however have a feeling it was nothing good.

“Let us outta here!” said someone in the crowd.

“Yeah! You don't have any right to keep us here like this!” stated another.

“Let's just call the cops already!” added a third.

Scar replied, “You're more than welcome to try, yet I believe you'll find the local authorities quite busy in their efforts to round up all of WOOHP's newly freed prisoners. No one will be coming to your aid, but fear not. I have no plans to hurt any of you.”

Mandy placed her hands on her hips. “Well, what are you gonna do to us then?!”

“I don't trust him one bit! We should go while the going's good!” declared someone nearby.

“Yeah! We're getting outta here whether you like it or not, pal!” proclaimed the man standing next to him.

“Come on, everyone! Let's go!” said the gym teacher.

Inspired by these remarks, the students and faculty of Malibu University grew loud, rowdy, and ready to strike back. The Tabithas were quick to react, holding back the masses before they could make a mad charge at the exits or Scar.

“H-Hey! Quit shoving!” said Mandy as people brushed passed her to join in. “T-Trent! What are you just standing around for?! Do something!”

“Yes, Mandy!” Trent replied. As he sprung into action, another hyped up group of students trampled
all over him.

“That's gonna leave a mark,” said a grimacing Dyson. “Still, just who is this Scar guy? What does he want with us? Something tells me we need to get outta here before we find out.”

Mandy didn't really care where she went, so long as she was with Dyson. Clutching his arm like a vice-grip now, she gazed at him with hearts fluttering about in her eyes.

“Er...s-stay close, Mandy,” said Dyson, although he doubted she would have any problem doing so. “I'm gonna try and bust us outta here while the others confuse those robots! There's gotta be someone on the outside who can help us!”

“Okay, Dyson! Lead the way!” his companion replied dreamily. He wasn't sure she was even listening.

The two were about to execute his plan, but they heard the sound of someone groaning, stopping them.

“A-A little help here?” uttered Trent. Footprints covered his body from head to toe as he lied a broken mess on the ground.

“Right. I sorta...forgot about him,” admitted Dyson, feeling guilty.

Meanwhile, Scar remained strangely content in spite of the ongoing revolt below him.

“Well, Scar? What do you intend to do about this latest mishap of yours?” said Jerry.

Maybe chewing that very thought over, Scar didn't respond.

Sam, Alex, Clover, and Chris hopped off the bus and directed their attention straight ahead at Malibu University. Without delay, they charged into the campus and instantly noted how empty it was.

“Maybe everyone's in class?” said Chris. “Man, this is a huge campus though. Pretty sure I used to get lost trying to find my classes.”

“You remember attending here then?” asked Sam.

“Er...a-a little bit. This place is definitely familiar.”

“That's good! That means you're getting some of your memory back!” said Clover.

“Where's that Scar guy?” asked Alex. She checked high and low, even climbing up to a classroom window to peek inside, but couldn't find any trace of their target. “Jeez! Don't tell me we came all the way here for nothing!”

“I don't think so, Alex. Something strange is going on here for sure,” said Sam.

“Totally! This place is a ghost town!” said Clover. Sighing, she sat down on a bench, pulled out a compact mirror, and began fixing her makeup. “Ugh! Chris was totally right about all the gropey guys on the bus! We're taking a cab next time!”

“Is this really the time for you to be doing that?” Chris asked, frowning.

“Of course! Regardless of the situation, a girl's always gotta look her best!”
“...I'll keep that in mind.”

“Makeup aside...” Sam began. “...We should split up and take a good look around. There's a lot of ground to cover after all. Since it's so quiet, I doubt all the students and staff are in class at the moment, but they may still be here at the school. Chances are, Scar has captured them.”

“But why?” asked Alex. “Nothing's he does makes any sense! First he blows up WOOHP and lets all the criminals out, and now he's here at Mali-U!”

“Chris, any ideas?” asked Clover.

“Me again?” Chris replied tiredly. Grumbling, she put her finger on her head to focus her thoughts. “Is there anything of significance at this school?”

“Not really. I mean, there have been a lot of baddies here over the past couple of weeks, but that's it,” said Sam. “Other than that, this is a normal school.”

If Sam's claim was true, Chris was even more stumped. She imagined that even if her memories were intact, she still wouldn't have a clue why Scar was doing all this.

“Sorry,” she finally said. “Nothing's coming to mind. At this point, we'd be better off not wasting time sitting around and just go confront Scar personally. He can tell us what we want to know.”

“Fair enough,” Sam answered. “Let's...”

Her sentence trailed off when she noticed a fifth person listening in.

“Tell me that isn't who I think it is!” said Clover.

“It's not who you think it is,” replied Alex, smiling feebly.

“I didn't mean for you to actually say it!”

Chris squinted at the tall girl bouncing around in the distance. “Tabitha...Connor?”

Sam nodded. “Seems you remember her. I'm hoping you also remember how dangerous she is. There's probably more of her around too.”

“Guess that means Scar really is here,” said Clover.

“Maybe Jerry too!” added Alex.

“Huh? What are you four doing there?” asked Tabitha. “Didn't we already gather everyone up?”

“What's the plan, ladies?” Chris said to her friends.

Without another word, Sam, Alex, and Clover let out a war cry and ran headfirst toward Tabitha, leaving Chris both behind and puzzled.

“H-Hey! Wait a sec! Don't just run off like that!” she said ahead of following after them. “Gah! I'm still not even sure what the hell is going on right now!”

The plan to take out Tabitha was simple: hit her hard and fast. Sam, Alex, and Clover knew beating her with brute strength was out of the question, so that left outmaneuvering her and wearing her down. Everything seemed to go well at first; Tabitha couldn't keep up with their swift movements.
“Hey, no fair!” she cried as she shielded her face from their attacks. “There's too many of you!”

Suddenly, Tabitha became faster, fast enough that she began easily parrying the blows thrown her way.

“Agh! We just had to get her mad!” Alex complained.

“If only I could move that fast while shopping! I'd get everything before everyone during sales!” said Clover.

“Less talking and more punching!” ordered Sam.

The two complied with her orders, yet no matter how hard the three tried, they could no longer land a hit on their foe. As quickly as the fight started, Tabitha finished it, knocking the three in separate directions with a single swipe of her arm.

“That was actually kinda fun!” she exclaimed with a giggle. “Now then, I gotta get you guys to the gymnasium or Mister Scar is gonna be mad!”

A growing shadow however over Tabitha, and at the last second, she blocked a diving ax kick from Chris.

“Huh?! W-With one arm?!” said Chris in total shock. “I put all my weight behind that!”

“Oh, that was a good one! I thought you were going to hit me for sure!” mused Tabitha.

“Tsk! Don't mess with me!”

“Hey, no one likes a meanie!”

Tabitha sent Chris flying with a mere gesture of her hand before the latter could attack again.

_Huh?! I… can’t break my fall! Dammit, she threw me too hard! How can she be that strong?!_

It was only after Chris' body flew through a bench did she stop. As she tried to stand, torrential pain shot through her entire body, and she began coughing violently.

_I think I might've broken a bone or two. Are those crushed ribs? ...Yep, those are crushed ribs._

She understood now why Sam, Clover, and Alex had been cautious and attacked in unison.

“Okay, now it's your turn!” said Tabitha, standing over Chris.

“...What?”

“I tagged you, so now you're it! Don't cha know how to play tag? It's like...this!”

A wide-eyed Chris quickly dove aside when Tabitha slammed her hand into the ground, leaving a well-sized crevice in it.

“Now you got it!” said Tabitha. “You have to catch me now!”

“Bite me!”

“Hey, that's not very nice!”

Tabitha was sent skidding backward out of the blue. The culprit, nailing the android in the chest with
the help of a flying kick, landed in front of Chris.

“That wasn't very nice either!” whined Tabitha.

Chris blinked a few times. “...O-Okay. Who the hell are you?”

“Wow, you really are rude, aren't you? Sam and the others told me stories, but I never imagined you were so grumpy!” the girl next to her replied. Smiling, she held her hand out to help Chris up. “Oh, I'm Britney, by the way! You must be Chris!”

“...Tsk. It seems everyone knows my name but me ironically.” Chris accepted the kind gesture and grunted some as she forced weight on her spaghetti-like legs. “Yeah, that's me alright. By the way, nice outfit.”

The fair-skinned, long-haired Britney wore a blue catsuit that told Chris she didn't care about being conspicuous or not. A jolt to her memory reminded Chris that Sam and the others dressed in similar, and just as bright, clothing when they were out on missions.

“So that's how you know my name. Sam and the others talk too damn much.”

“Yeah, they kinda do!” Britney replied. Her voice was sugary sweet, enough so that it actually made Chris grimace. “I wish we had more time to chat, but it looks like we've got other things to worry about!”

Chris moved her head forward and replied, “...Good point.”

Tabitha after Tabitha were crawling out of the woodwork. Chris counted over a dozen of them en masse.

“Still think you can fight, Chris?” asked Britney.

“I'll manage. Like hell I'm losing to a bunch of can openers!”

It seemed Chris had no other choice but to place her faith, and her life, in the hands of the mysterious Britney. Hopefully, the ridiculousness of her spy attire had no bearing on her fighting skills.

END
“Ugh. D-Did someone get the number on that bus?”

Alex, awaking in a total daze, sat up and clutched her head, feeling it could split open any second. Having no recollection of why she was on the ground, she found herself even more lost at the spectacle unfolding in front of her. Chris and Britney were tackling a seemingly endless hoard of Tabitha Connors, holding their own in spite of their inferior numbers.

“Whoa...”

Britney employed a quick throw to dispatch a Tabitha, just as another of the machines threw a punch that nearly took her head clean off. Avoiding it, she used her foe's momentum to toss them across her shoulder and onto the pavement, smashing the android to pieces. She wanted to celebrate though figured this a bad idea considering three more Tabithas neared her.

“There's like no end to these things!” she yelled.

“Tell me about it!” shouted Chris in the distance. Two of the mechanical menaces were hot on her tail. It took everything she had just to fend off their blows. “Dammit! This is beginning to piss me off!”

In frustration, she drove her fist into the face of one of the Tabithas. She immediately came to regret this action since she nearly broke her fingers against the brick wall-like machine. Short on air and patience, she vaulted a fair distance away from her foes to regroup with Britney.

“You alright over there?” Britney asked her.

Chris clutched at her right side and discovered it difficult to even drawn enough breath to speak. “Y-Yeah. I'll live. I didn't realize how hard it was to fight with broken ribs though.”

Her remarks made Britney wince. “T-That doesn't sound good. You sure you should be fighting with injuries like that? You could end up making them a lot worse.”

“...It's not like I have much choice in the matter.”

“G-Good point! Just try to hang in there then! We'll make it outta this one somehow!”

“You sound confident.”

“Of course! We can't give in now! The fate of the world is at stake!”

While Britney's words were certainly the truth, the way she said them in that 'sugary-sweet' tone of hers got on Chris' nerves strangely.

“Yes, Mom,” she robotically muttered.

Britney didn't catch this slight, being far too preoccupied by the ever-growing number of Tabithas
around she and Chris. It appeared no matter how many the two took down, there was another waiting in the wings to replace a fallen comrade.

“They've gotta have some kind of weakness...”

“Well, if you find one on 'em, let me know,” mumbled Chris. “Because we aren't beating them by normal means. You wouldn't happen to have anything useful on you, would you?”

Britney apprehensively replied, “N-No. Sorry. Haha. I...sort of used all the gadgets I had on the way here. You wouldn't believe how many criminals I had to go through to get this far!”

“That's just lovely.” Chris smacked her lips and craved to bang her skull against the nearest wall. “Looks like we're doing this the old-fashioned way then. Alright, I think we should...”

She almost bit her tongue at the sight of a pair of Tabithas about to strike at she and an equally unprepared Britney. Fortunately, someone came to their aid, knocking the bubbly androids aside using a flying kick and sending them sailing into a group of their comrades.

“Hey! That really hurt!” one of them complained.

“Yeah!” Alex triumphantly yelled. She shut her mouth though when pain suddenly shot through her whole leg. Grabbing at it, she moaned, “Ugh! I-I totally forgot those things are made of metal!”

“Tell me about it,” said Chris wearily. “That would've been nice to know before I nearly broke my hand.”

“Hey, Alex! It's been awhile!” said a beaming and waving Britney.

“Sure has! How's Australia been?”

As Alex and Britney hugged, Chris couldn't help but smile at the tender moment.

“Tsk. What am I, chopped liver?” she joked.

“Aw! Of course not! Get over here!” Britney dragged Chris into a three-way hug, much to the latter's chagrin. “You know, you're not as mean as you look, Chris!”

“Y-You're crushing my ribs...”

“Uh...that's not the only thing of yours that's gonna get crushed if we don't do something!” shouted Alex in reference to the advancing Tabitha army.

“You girls ready?” asked Britney.

Chris cracked her knuckles. “Let's just get this over with before I pass out...”

The three took up fighting stances, intending to go on for as long as they could or at least until a more favorable option came to mind. The Tabitha army was happy to oblige them, charging to attack once again.

Just then, an object rolled at and then stopped near Chris and the other's feet. The three of them peered at it curiously before they let out a drawn out gasp. They quickly realized the black, spherical ball was some sort of explosive when it began ticking like a clock. Armed with this knowledge, the girls screamed in terror, scattered like roaches, and finally dived to the ground to take cover. The supposed bomb went off, but there was no explosion. Instead, the item let loose a wave of electrical energy that was harmless to Chris and company, yet deadly effective against the Tabithas. Their
circuits were instantly fried, and the lot of them toppled over, writhed about, and eventually shut down completely.

“...Alright, what the hell was that?” Chris asked after things became utterly quiet.

“I dunno, but it was totally awesome...” said an awestruck Alex.

“Y-Yeah. It...was,” said Britney, just as dumbfounded. She cautiously walked over to the motionless pile of androids to confirm the battle was really over. “...How? I don’t...”

“Jeez. If you had a weapon like that on you, you should've just used it from the start.” Exhausted beyond wit's end and not wanting to move any longer, Chris crawled her way over to a tree and sat against it. The rough bark felt like a queen-sized mattress to her stiff back. “What, did you wait until the last moment when we were about to die for dramatic effect or something?”

Britney raised an eyebrow. “...Huh? That wasn't me back there! I thought maybe you might've done that!”

“...What? I couldn't have...”

“Hey, don't look at me!” said Alex defensively when her friends did exactly that.

“Okay, now I'm confused.”

Footsteps, perhaps ones belonging to someone who could answer the girl's pressing inquisitions, sounded behind the three. Fully expecting another group of Tabithas, they relaxed at the sight of a handsome youth in a black catsuit grinning at them. Without saying a word, he leisurely strolled past them and kneeled down at the destroyed Tabithas, whistling at the damage done.

“Man, that thing worked better than I thought!” he exclaimed. “Those androids never stood a chance!”

“Okay, I'm even more confused now,” a frowning Chris admitted.

The black-haired youth heard this, making him face the others and ask, “Yo! You girls alright?”

“Blaine?” cried Alex.

“That's right! Missed me?” Blaine responded.

“That's right?” repeated Chris. “Let me guess: another weird friend of yours?”

“That's right!” said Britney, again brimming with her usual cheeriness. “I was wondering when where you were!”

“Sorry. I got held up by...”

“BLAINE!!!” shouted a wrathful voice the scared the daylights out of everyone, especially the one being called. Marching into the scene was Clover, scowling at Blaine hard enough to kill. “I can't believe you! It's totally been months since I've last seen or heard from you! Would sending a phone call or a text kill you?!?”

Blaine held his hands up defensively. “C-Clover! Er...h-hey there! I-I've just been busy with missions and schools and stuff! Besides, aren't we broken up?”

Clover's already crimson face grew even redder. “Yeah, 'cause you totally dumped me for Mandy of
all people!"

"W-What does any of this have to do with this mission?! In case you've forgotten, we've got a megalomaniac to stop!"

"Like I even care about that right now! Listen here, buddy...!"

The two continued arguing like cats and dogs, leaving Chris more than a little puzzled.

"Trust me. I'd stay out of this if I were you," said Sam, grasping at her arm. Chris nodded slowly.

"Sam! How's it going?" said Britney.

"Considered we've almost been killed a bunch of times today, not too bad! Glad you and Blaine got here alright. I was starting to get worried."

"Yeah, sorry about that. Actually, Blaine and I would've arrived together if it weren't for us being held up."

"Those robots ambushed us the second we got here, so we decided to split up to avoid being captured," said Blaine. "I'd say it worked out alright."

"Like your relationship with Mandy?" Clover crossed her arms and bore her teeth as she spoke.

"Ouch," said Alex, grimacing.

"Absolutely savage," added Chris.

"Where is all of this coming from, Clover? The last time you saw Blaine, you couldn't keep your hands off him!" said Sam.

"I'll tell you why I'm mad!" Clover began. The others sat back patiently for what they were certain was going to be an interesting tale. "Blaine here bought me Yves Mont Blanc shoes for my birthday!"

"Huh? That doesn't seem so bad!" said Alex.

"Yeah! I'd totally kill for some of those!" said Britney.

"Yeah, it totally would've been if they weren't cheap knockoffs!"

"CHEAP KNOCKOFFS?!" the other girls shouted in unison. Blaine gulped while his fellow spies glowered at him with a mixture of anger, confusion, and disappointment.

"W-Wait a sec! It's not what you girls think! Y-You don't know how hard it is to find those shoes!" Blaine pleaded. "They were sold out everywhere, but I still wanted to get you something!"

"Hmph! Yeah, right! I bet Mandy put you up to it!" barked Clover.

"Mandy? What's she got to do with anything?! I'd already been broken up with her by then!"

"I guess that's all you're good at is breaking up with people!"

Blaine sighed. "C-Can't we talk about this some other time? More specifically, not in front of everyone like this?!!"
“Hmph! I'll leave you alone, but only if you promise me to get me an actual birthday present next time!”

“It's the thought that counts?” said Chris, attempting to help.

Though Blaine fully anticipated a further tongue-lashing from Clover, Chris' words made her relent.

“I...guess so,” she muttered. Pausing, she found herself reflecting her words and actions up to this point. “T-They were nice shoes while they lasted, and Mandy was totally jealous because she thought they were real...”

“So, are we cool?” Blaine anxiously asked. “Because it's gonna be hard working with you if I'm always looking over my shoulder thinking you're gonna stab me with a nail file or something.”

“He's got a point, Clover,” said a humored Sam. “Come on. Make up already!”

“Yeah! You two totally make the perfect couple!” said Alex.

“And even though he gave you fake shoes and dated Mandy, we all know he's really a nice guy!” added Britney. “Not to mention a good partner to have on missions!”

“Y-Yeah, but...!” Clover started.

“Oh, come on! It's was just a pair of shoes! Forgive him already!” yelled an agitated Chris. “I can’t believe we’re even having this discussion.”

“Alright, alright already! I'll forgive him!” Clover might've said that, but the others noted she still looked like she was ready to rip someone's head off. With that in mind, Blaine took a careful step away from her. “S-Sorry, Blaine. You're not mad at me, right?”

“Of course not! No way I could ever stay mad at you, Clover!”

Blaine's picture perfect smile and forgiving demeanor quickly melted the ice surrounding Clover's heart. Without warning, she ran at Blaine, who braced himself for pain. Instead, he found Clover embracing him tightly.

“Ha. I-I guess we really are cool then,” he stated as he let out a sigh of relief.

“Alright, now that we're done with the mushy stuff, can we get back to the task at hand?” asked Chris.

“Right. We still need to stop Scar,” said Sam. “Er...any new leads?”

“Besides him sending an army of killer robots after us? Nothing.”

“He's definitely still here though,” said Britney. “Why else would those robots be guarding the place otherwise?”

“Good point. Let's find him and take care of this once and for all!” proclaimed Sam.

“Er...while I'm glad to see you're ready to roll, I...don't think it's going to be that easy,” Blaine explained. The others wanted him to elaborate further, though he wasn't certain he could with a love-stricken Clover hanging on to him so dearly. “L-Like I was saying, that Scar guy and his androids didn't just strike here in California. They also hit up every other WOOHP base around the globe and captured all the operatives. Chances are, we're the only spies left who can fight back!”
“Seriously?! H-How could Scar do all that so quickly though?!” said Alex. “He'd totally have to have millions upon millions of Tabithas ready to go and kick butt!”

“That must be exactly how he did it. There's no other explanation.” Sam put her hand on her chin in deep thought. “Just how long has he been planning all this?”

“I think the better question is why is he doing all this?” said Chris. “He must have something big in mind if he's going this far to take down WOOHP.”

“Does figuring out that stuff really matter right now?! We gotta figure out how we're gonna stop him!” yelled Clover.

“You're absolutely right, Clover,” replied Sam. “We can sort through all the facts later!”

“How'd you two manage to get away by the way?” Chris asked Britney and Blaine. “You said everyone else got captured.”

Fortunately, Sam, Alex, and Clover managed to tell us what was happening before things got too crazy,” replied Britney.

Blaine, awkwardly rubbing the back of his head, added, “We wanted to stay and fight, but we figured getting out while we could was the best decision. If we stop Scar, we can go back to rescue the others later. They should be alright if we hurry.”

“Don't worry about it. You guys did what you had to,” Sam assured him.

Britney nodded. “The real problem is that we weren't able to grab too many gadgets while we made our escape. Like I told Chris here earlier, I used most of the ones I had on all the newly escaped criminals that got in our way.”

“Same here,” said Blaine.

“Guess we weren't the only ones being bothered by imbeciles today,” said Chris, shaking her head. Her eyes then abruptly widened when something hit her. “W-Wait a sec! You two said you don't have any gadgets, right? Then what the hell was that thing Blaine used to disable those Tabithas?!”

“Oh, you mean this?” Blaine reached into his pocket and pulled out an item that looked identical to the bomb from earlier. “Ah, I almost forgot! This baby right here is called a Sonic Jammer!”

“A Sonic Jammer? What's it do?” asked Clover.

“I'm so glad you asked! When activated, it unleashes a short burst of electromagnetic energy to damage the circuitry in those androids! I think you've seen first hand how devastating it can be!”

“That's totally awesome! Those Tabithas don't stand a chance if we have those!” said Alex.

“My thoughts exactly! I got a couple more on me, so we should plant these things wherever those androids are and cook 'em good!”

“You are so smart, Blaine!” said Clover. Her friends could almost see the hearts fluttering in her eyes.

“Er...t-thanks! All that was Britney's idea though.”

Clover turned to Britney, who smiled, and weakly said, “Uh...good job, I guess.”
Britney's smile turned upside down.

“I find it rather unfair dear Britney there is getting all the credit when the Sonic Jammer is my invention. I merely allowed you children to use it for the time being. Then again, perhaps I should be growing accustomed to people taking the credit for my hard work in light of the ongoing circumstances,” said man in a brown trenchcoat behind the others. Doctor Heisenberg smirked at the suspicious and hostile looks shot his way. Tipping his brown fedora, he added, “It's been far too long, ladies. I'm thrilled you all seemed so pleased to see me.”

Sam gasped. “Doctor Heisenberg?! What's he doing here?!”

“He must've escaped with all the other criminals!” said Alex.

Pointing at the good doctor, Clover declared, “Get 'em!”

The three wasted no time in heading for Heisenberg, who remained in place despite the danger. As they were about to take him down though, Britney and Blaine suddenly jumped in front of him.

“W-Wait a second, girls!” said Blaine.

“Yeah! It's not what you think!” added Britney.

“What do you mean 'it's not what we think?!' This guy's a total baddie!” proclaimed Alex.

“No doubt he came here to take revenge on us just like the other villains!” added Sam.

Heisenberg stepped forward, adjusting his glasses as he did so. “Girls, girls. Calm yourselves. I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I'm here for nothing of the sort. Revenge can come later. Besides, your manners are rather lacking considering I risked life and limb to come out here and assist you in your endeavors.”

“Huh? You're saying you actually came to...help us?” asked Clover.

“Why would you wanna do that? We totally got you locked up!” yelled Alex.

“Not to mention the fact I don't see what you have to gain by doing so,” said Sam.

“Hmph. Your suspicious nature hurts me, girls, although I don't blame you for acting that way. I have tried to end your lives on many occasions. As for my motive, it's quite simple. That man, Scar...his actions impede my own plans for world domination. He may have released myself and the rest of the criminals from WOOHP, yet we only serve as distractions so that he may further his own plan, whatever that may be. The second he succeeds, he'll cast us aside as he did with WOOHP. Therefore, I've decided to align with you all in spite of my better judgment. I believe the saying goes 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend.' With him out of the way, I'll be able to do as I please.”

“So, basically what you're saying is that you're still totally evil?” said Clover.

Heisenberg chuckled. “Indeed. For the time being however, consider me your most trustworthy ally.”

“Heisenberg chuckled. “Indeed. For the time being however, consider me your most trustworthy ally.”

“Yeah, I'm not buying it.” Sam crossed her arms and narrowed her eyelids. “Even if we decide to believe you and work together, you'll probably just double cross us the second we take care of Scar!”

“...A fair point. However, I care not if you all trust me. I simply ask that you work with me for the time being in order to take down a far greater evil. If you don't believe in me, believe in my Sonic...
Jammer. I created it specifically to get back at that bastard Scar for stealing the plans for my lovely Tabitha and then using her as he sees fit.”

Doubt still lingered in the air as Sam, Alex, and Clover glanced at one another apprehensively.

“Well, what are we gonna do with him?” asked Clover following a brief silence.

“I mean, he did totally save our bacon back there with those Tabithas,” said Alex. “If he was really here to get revenge, he would’ve just let us bite the bullet!”

Sam sighed. “While I don't like the idea of teaming up with a notorious criminal, I think our hands are tied here, girls. We really do need those Sonic Jammers of his if we have any hope of stopping Scar.”

“It's decided then,” said Heisenberg.

“Not so fast. While we're agreeing to work with you, we won't hesitate to take you down if you try something funny!”

“Hmph. Dear Blaine and Britney here already gave me that tired speech earlier. Worry not; I shall be on my best behavior. After all, we're allies now. Besides, I’m hopelessly outnumbered by you brats.”

“I can vouch for him, everyone. He helped me and Blaine escape when SOAP attacked our base,” explained Britney.

“And if it makes you girls feel better, I'll personally make sure to keep a close eye on him!” said Blaine.

These statements satisfied Sam, Alex, and Clover, albeit for the time being.

Heisenberg shifted his attention to Chris, who hadn't said a peep. “...Christine. We meet again it seems. You in particular I dreading having to see, but here we are. I didn't think it was possible for you to go this long without insulting me or my craft. I must admit, I’m rather impressed.”

Chris, snarling, chose not to respond to this.

“Ah, that's right. I've been told you're dealing with a rather nasty case of amnesia. It's likely you don’t even know who I am.”


“Really now? I'm pleased to hear this.”

“I specifically remember how just looking at you gets on my nerves!”

Heisenberg raised an eyebrow in irritation. “...Is that so?”

“It is. The others might be willing to trust you, but my heart says screw that. Do whatever you please, Heisenberg, but stay the hell out of my way or else.”

“Hmph. You may not have your memory, but you're the same as ever, Christine.”

Chris bit her bottom lip in disgust and told Sam, “Forget this old fool. We need to find Scar!”

“C-Calm down, Chris. We will,” said Sam. She couldn't help but notice Chris was trembling violently at the moment ready to strike anything that dared move. “We know he's around here, so I
promise you we'll find him.”

Chris forced herself to calm down, struggling to reply, “Y-Yeah. Of...course. S-Sorry. I'm not sure what just got into me.”

Maybe it was Heisenberg. Maybe it was the pain she was currently in. Perhaps it even had something to do with her frustration in being unable to get her hands on Scar. Whatever the cause of her abrupt anger, she knew she would have to keep it under control, lest Scar use it to his advantage and best her once more.

“...I gotta end this. I have to…”

She got to her feet, clutched at her aching ribs, and started to slink off. She didn't know where she was going; she simply felt sitting around would accomplish nothing. When her anguish became too much to bear, she collapsed to her knees. Britney was quick to check on her.

“Hey there! Take it easy! You're still seriously hurt, remember?”

“I-I'm fine.”

“But you aren't! Seriously, just…”

Chris suddenly pushed Britney off of her before rising again.

“I'm going to...settle this. I...have to settle this...” she mumbled. Soon enough, she disappeared into the distance.

“...What's her problem? Why is she so determined to go even though she's so hurt?” Britney asked herself. “Doesn’t she think we can handle this? Maybe she doesn’t trust us either.”

“It's not that. Chris thinks all this is her fault. Even if she can't remember clearly, she can't help but think all this is somehow her doing.” Sam placed her hand on Britney's shoulder. “That's why we can't let her go on alone like that! She needs our help more than ever! Let's go!”

“Yeah, let's! Britney and I heard some strange noises near the gym here, so we should investigate there first,” said Blaine.

“Sure thing! You lead the way, Blainey!” said Clover. From the way she blushed as she held onto him, it would've been hard to tell she was ever upset with him to begin with.

“Er...r-right! Follow me then, everyone!”

Everyone save Sam and Britney did just that.

“Just like old times, eh?” asked Britney. She playfully jabbed her elbow into Sam's shoulder.

“If only. There's a lot more at stake this time around...”

“Wait, don't tell me you're actually worried! We'll stop Scar and SOAP for sure! I mean...we kinda have to, right?”

“Of course. I admit though that I'm a little nervous this time around. We've never gone up against a villain like this before. Well, I guess there's no point in me worrying like this when we can still do something!”

“That's more like it! Come on! We've gotta catch up to the others!”
Little did Sam and her friends realize a riot was brewing in the hallowed gymnasium of Malibu University. The students and staff of the school no longer intended to be Scar's victims. Instead, they were rallying to mount arms against him and his army of androids. Amongst the sea of people, you could hear nothing but defiant screams and shouts, voices Scar himself remained hushed in the face of. Jerry Lewis, another captive of his, wasn't sure whether to take his former subordinate's still tongue as a sign of fear or confidence.

“S-Settle down there! Hey! No pushing! That is so rude!” said a Tabitha. She and her fellow machines were managing to keep the crowd at bay for the most part.

“Let us outta here!” someone in the mob voiced.

“Yeah! We want out!” added another. “You can't keep us here forever!”

“Move it already!” said a third.

“Just what do you intend to do about this, Scar?” asked Jerry. Pride echoed in his words; seeing he wasn't the only one tired of dealing with Scar's antics pleased him to no end. “I believe the people have spoken.”

“So it would seem,” Scar replied, breaking his silence. “Yet their words mean nothing to me.”

“Is that so? What is it you're planning to do with us? I believe it's already been stated, but you can't possibly hope to keep us as your prisoners for much longer.”

“And why is that? You talk as if something could possibly change your predicament.”

“Something can and it will. Help is on the way as we speak. The second it arrives, this charade will be over! If you had any sense, Scar, you'd surrender before then!”

“‘Help?’ How amusing. Perhaps you're just going senile in your old age. In that case, I believe it prudent to remind you that none of you will be receiving any assistance today. That is because anyone who could help is now unable to. The local authorities are tied up dealing with all those criminals I released from WOOHP. Not to mention...”

Cutting himself off, Scar chuckled upon comprehending the true meaning of Jerry's claim.

“Ah! You're expecting those three spies of yours to show up and save the day! Is that it? You're a bigger fool than I thought then! Haha!”

“And just what's so funny about that?”

“I just simply never pictured my former mentor placing his life in the hands of a few teenagers is all. Have you really become so desperate?”

“I suppose times have changed...”

“...Indeed they have.”

While the people present continued to communicate their frustrations, Dyson Glee solely wanted to find a way to freedom. He squeezed his way through the crowd, yet doing so wasn't so easy when no one seemed to want to clear a path.

“Excuse me! Sorry! C-Can I get through here?!” he bellowed in frustration. His patience quickly
diminished, and he simply began shoving people aside. “Thank you!”

“H-Hey! Watch the hair, pal! H-Hey! Hands off! These are designer clothes, and I totally don't want you putting your nasty fingers all over them!” Right on his tail was Mandy, who was having the same amount of luck navigating her way through the area auditorium. “Hey, Dyson! Wait for me!”

In her rush to follow, she didn't notice he hadn't gone anywhere. Because of this, her nose collided into his back, flooring her.

“Hey, watch it next time, loser!” she screeched. The color of her face matched the trail of blood leaking out of her nostrils. She would've gone off right then and there, yet she contained herself when she saw Dyson peering down at her in a peculiar way. “I-I mean...I-I meant to do that!”

“Right. Sure you did. You okay there, Mandy?”

She didn't get the chance to answer. That mostly had to do with Trent tumbling out of a crowd of people and straight into her without warning.

“That's...gonna leave a mark,” said Dyson, shaking his head.

The pounding in Trent's skull tripled when Mandy began shaking the living daylights out of him.

“What's the big idea, loser?!” she screeched. “And where were you just now?! I thought I told you not to leave my side!”

“Huh? B-But, Mandy, you guys were the ones that left me!” Trent retorted.

“I don't wanna hear it! And since when did it occur to you in that big, dumb head of yours that you could talk back to me?! You're just my intern!”

“But...!”

“Quiet, you! I'm not done talking yet!”

“When are you ever?” Dyson muttered out of earshot. He then cleared his throat and added, “Er...you shouldn't be so hard on him, Mandy! He's had a rough day!”

“'A rough day?' 'A ROUGH DAY?!'” Mandy feverishly repeated, making sure to crank the volume up past eleven. “If anyone's had a rough day around here, it's me! I missed a spa appointment because of this! And how come you're taking his side! That's so not fair!”

“M-Mandy, y-you're hurting me...” Trent murmured. She hadn't ceased shaking him yet.

“Seriously, Mandy! Relax! You're gonna kill the guy!”

“He's my intern! I can't do whatever I want with him! O-oooo-ooh, I am so mad right now! I swear I could just...!”

“WOULD YOU PLEASE JUST SHUT UP FOR ONE SECOND?!!!”

Like a passing breeze, the frenzied chatter and general chaos inside the gym vanished. Everyone directed themselves to Trent, leering at him like he were some sort of specter. He had to have been to say what he had to Mandy of all people. Doubt crept up on his features when he became aware of his actions. Meanwhile, Mandy's jaw was agape with shock. She wasn't sure whether to yell, cry, or do some bizarre combination of the two. Her quietness was enough to rouse Trent's courage.
“...Let me do the talking for once, Mandy. Believe it or not, I'm absolutely sick and tired of being screamed at every ten seconds because I added an extra lump of sugar in your coffee, or I didn't pick an outfit for you to wear that matched whatever mood you were in that day! You treat me like a piece of trash, but do I ever say anything? Do I ever complain? No! For whatever reason, I stick with you through thick or thin, despite your less than ideal personality and the fact everyone around me thinks I'm a complete idiot for doing so! Even when you've come up with some dumb plan to look better than everyone else that gets us into hot water, I've still been there! I don't even get paid for all this!”

Mandy, even more astonished, uttered, “H-Huh?! B-But...!”

“I'm not finished! The only reason I put up with your crap is because I honestly worry about you and get the feeling you'd be completely lost without me! I'm starting not to care anymore though! If you keep treating me so badly, I'm gonna quit for sure!”

Those watching waited with bated breath for whatever reply Mandy had cooking. Even without her opening her mouth to speak, it was clear she was livid, steaming like vegetables brewing in a pot. The mere sight of this made Trent brace himself for a tongue, and perhaps a physical, lashing.

“He's done it now,” said Dyson, shaking his head a second time. “I better duck for cover too.”

Mandy, unable to hold it in any longer, shouted, “Well...if that's how you felt, you should've just said so from the start, idiot!”

Trent blinked a couple of times. “...Huh?”

Flustered, Mandy replied in a much quieter voice, “Y-You heard me! The only reason Ibossed you around so much is so you wouldn't leave! It's...hard to find another intern at such short notice!”

“That makes no sense,” said Dyson. Again, he spoke soft enough that he wasn't heard.

“For your information, Trent, I'm totally aware how much I rely on you! Who else is gonna stand in line and wait for new shoes to come out when I don't feel like it?”

Trent muttered, “Er...r-right.”

“S-Shut it! What I'm...trying to say is...!” Mandy fidgeted in place, almost looking like she were in intense pain. Everyone else could tell she was attempting to apologize, yet they also knew the concept was quite foreign to her. “Er...well...jeez! This is like so annoying!”

“She really is gonna explode this time,” said Dyson as he preemptively plugged his ears.

“You...don't have to strain yourself, Mandy.” Trent grinned as he spoke, with the gesture having a calming effect on Mandy. “I...get what you're trying to say.”

“S-Shut up! You're lucky I didn't fire you on the spot after that!”

“Yes, Mandy.”

“Now, if you've got nothing better to do, find us a way outta this place!”

“Yes, Mandy,”

“And I'll...buy you a smoothie if we get outta here!”
“Yes, Mandy!”

Trent, now filled with vigor, got a move on, darting through the many onlookers to complete his task.

“...WHAT ARE YOU ALL STILL LOOKING AT?!” Mandy howled. The crowd instantly dispersed, going back to focusing their anger on Scar. They figured they had a better chance with him than her anyway.

“Wow. I'm...honestly impressed, Mandy.” Nodding and giving her a thumbs up, Dyson added, “Seriously! I didn't think you had that in you! I think I'm seeing you in a new light now!”

“Huh? What? Oh, forget about Trent! Now that he's gone, we have some alone time!”

As Mandy drooled all over Dyson, he sighed, thinking his new assessment of her was a bit premature.

“What a touching display,” said Scar. “It's a shame I'll have to put a damper in it. It's about time I got things started.”

Jerry groaned some. “...And what is that supposed to mean?”

“Ha. What's the matter, old man? You seem...depressed. Just earlier, you were so keen to know what I was planning. Now, you're about to find out. I thought you'd be more lively.”

A Tabitha skipped her way over to Scar and handed him a radio and microphone. Saluting, she then went on her way.

“...Tell me now, Scar! What are you about to do?!?” Jerry demanded to know. Just seeing Scar tuning the radio made him extremely wary.

Scar simply answered, “...As I said before, you're about to see.”

He clicked his radio on, sending a blaring burst of interference across the room. The mass rioting in the gymnasium ceased what they were doing, eager to find out what was going on now.

“Greetings to those my lovely Tabithas have yet to capture outside the walls of this gymnasium,” began Scar. His voice, exuding confidence, reverberated throughout the campus of Malibu University courtesy of the intercom system. “My name is Scar. I am the leader of an organization known as Spies Organized Against Peace. I must admit that I am both hurt and somewhat puzzled by your absence considering the rest of the students and faculty of Malibu University are present and accounted for. Nevertheless, I do not consider the subject an issue. I believe it prudent to inform you my lovely androids recently secured the perimeter around the entire school. Even if you aren't here with myself and the others, you'll find it quite impossible to leave school grounds. What I am trying to say is that no matter what you do, there is no escape. Therefore, I would highly suggest you simply surrender yourselves to me post haste. While I have no desire to hurt anyone out there, I can't promise that my loyal Tabithas will be able to show the same restraint. They get quite giddy when they grow bored after all.”

Pausing for a moment, he added, “...And to the group of 'troublemakers' out there attempting to disrupt my plans, the same goes for you. Surrender now, and I'll be willing to show you some mercy. You must've realized by now resistance is futile.”

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“...Looks like he's onto us, everyone,” said Sam.

“It'd be stupid if he didn't know after all that commotion we caused literally the second we got here,” replied Chris. “But man, just listen to that idiot. He talks like he's already won.”

“Tell me about it. Looks like getting out of here won't be as simple as we thought,” said Britney.

“Worse come to worse, we'll use the Sonic Jammers to clear us a path outta here!” exclaimed Blaine. “Er...I just hope we have enough...”

“Don't worry. My invention won't fail us,” said Heisenberg, pushing his glasses closer to his nose. “Scar's overconfidence in his shallow redesign of my precious Tabitha will be his undoing.”

Sam rolled her eyes. “Like you're one to talk about overconfidence.”

“While all that is well and good, I've just got one question! Why in the world are we crawling around in this nasty, old ventilation shaft?!” cried Clover.

“Just try to deal with it, Clover! We’re almost there anyway!”

“Tsk! You owe me a new outfit, Sammy!”

The narrow and cramped space, perhaps responding to Clover’s complaints, creaked. Sneezing because of all the dust flying around in the air, she let out a shrill shriek upon sighting a small rodent zipping past everyone. Alex hastily covered her mouth, lest Clover give away their position.

“Groady...” a pale-faced Clover whispered.

“Haven't we already gone through this, Clover?” said Britney, replying to her prior question.

“I think she was too busy slobbering over Blaine to remember,” joked Chris.

“Hey! I was so not...slobbering over anyone!” Clover countered. “And I totally heard everything we talked about! Er...c-could we just run through it one more time though?”

The others let out a collective sigh.

“It wouldn't be smart to just stroll down the hallways of the school to get to Scar. Even with the Sonic Jammers, we're better off trying to sneak up on him. That's why we're using the old air shafts to reach him,” explained Sam. “The thing is, if we're going to surprise him, we have to be quiet, so no more yelling, Clover!”

Pouting, Clover merely nodded. She wasn't promising to contain herself if a rat or other filthy creature reared its ugly head however.

“H-Hey! Who just touched my butt?!” cried Alex in a booming voice. Immediately, she shot her hands over her mouth. “O-Oopsie...”

“Seriously?!” Sam whispered.

“This is no time to joke around, Alex!” barked Chris.

“But someone totally did just touch my butt!”

“Hey, it wasn't me!” Blaine was quick to say.
“It better not have been,” said Clover, squinting at him sharply.

This left the person that happened to be crawling behind Alex: Heisenberg.

“...What?” he asked. “...Are you actually saying I had something to do with this?”

“Well...” Sam started, not sounding even remotely partial.

“Why do I get the feeling something like this has happened before?” asked Chris.

Britney shook her head. “I'm gonna throw you back in prison if you keep this up!”

“Yeah, you pervert!” added Alex for good measure.

Heisenberg replied, “I-I may have bumped into you accidentally, but that's it! I am a man of honor! I would never...!”

“Yeah, yeah. We get it, pervert,” said Chris harshly. “Everyone just shut up and let's keep moving. In case you haven't noticed, I'm kinda in a hurry to get to Scar.”

“Trust me, Chris, we're fully aware,” said Sam tiredly.

An already irked Chris wished to punch Sam for that remark but managed to suppress her rage. A tiny bit anyway.

“Chris does have a point. We really don't have time for this,” said Britney.

“Let's keep going then. We don't wanna keep Scar waiting,” chirped Blaine.

The group persisted onward, although Alex needed to make something clear before she came along.

“I'm watching you!” she informed Heisenberg as she pointed at him menacingly. “You touch me again and I'm breaking your arms, got it?!”

The good doctor really wanted to defend himself, though he figured this would cause more trouble than it would solve. With that in mind, he just nodded and exhaled in exasperation.

As the party inched their way closer and closer to Scar, the man himself started to speak over the intercom once more.

“This is a message for the troublemakers I referenced previously. Because I expect you're on your way here to the gym even as I speak to do something 'heroic', allow me to fill you in on something rather interesting. I doubt you'll want to bother with little, old me after hearing this. Scattered throughout this campus are a number of very powerful bombs I had my Tabithas set up some time ago. Not only are they armed and ready to go 'kaboom', but I've also placed them on a timer so they'll all explode simultaneously. I'll leave it to your imaginations to determine what will happen in the aftermath. It's actually sort of humorous! I actually can't remember what I set the timer to! I do recall it being not a huge number, meaning those bombs will likely go off in...I'd say fifteen minutes. I suppose you'd better hurry then! Tata for now, troublemakers. Then again, I may never hear from you again...”

Heisenberg bumped into Alex's rear end when she and everyone in front of her screeched to a halt. Picking up his fallen glasses, he expected to be reprimanded by her again, yet she and the others were too busy soaking in the news they just heard.

“He...can't be serious!” cried Sam.
“We can't afford to take the chance that he's bluffing! If he isn't, we could be jeopardizing the lives of everyone here by ignoring him!” said Britney.

“Look, don't panic!” said Blaine. “If those bombs are out there, we just need to find them and disarm them before they explode! If we split up, we should be able to find them easy! He said we probably have like fifteen minutes! That should be plenty of time to save the day!”

“But we don't even know how many there are!” cried Alex.

“Not to mention where they are!” added Clover. “How will we even know when we've found them all?! What if totally disguises them as something else?!”

“Ugh! This is exactly how Scar wants us to react!” Chris clenched her fist tightly, threatening to draw blood with her nails. “I don't know what he's plotting by trying to blow up this school, but I say we...!”

Scar's voice interrupted her. “Oh, by the way, in case someone out there was again attempting to be 'heroic' by laying even a single finger on my precious bombs, I should inform you you'll just be wasting your time. You see, those explosives are rigged to go off instantly if they're even remotely tampered with. Do not fret however. If you truly want to stop the destruction of this fair university and likely the surrounding area, I invite you to come and see me here in the school's gymnasium. I'm actually holding a remote that can shut down all the bombs. Well, I've probably talked your ears off, troublemakers, so I believe I will let you go. Please, do be careful!”

The intercom cut off, leaving the school and those inside its vents bitterly quiet.


“He's messing with us,” said Sam, the sole one present who resembled anything close to the word ‘calm.’ “Why else would he tells us he has the detonator? It'd make far more sense for him to have us guessing and lose precious time trying to figure out how to stop the bombs.”

“Yeah. We'll likely be walking into a trap if we keep going toward the gym,” said Britney.

“But if we don't go...well...” Blaine's sentence trailed off as he gulped.

“So, what do you 'heroes' he mentioned plan to do? Scar just saved himself the trouble of finding you by making you come to him,” stated Heisenberg. “As much as that man gets on my nerves, I admit his tactics are sound.”

“Don't you think we know that?!” howled Chris. Her breathing intensified, and for a split second, she could see nothing but red. “Like hell I'm letting that bastard blow me to smithereens! Come on, everyone! Trap or not, we can't just sit here and wet our pants! Remember, everyone out there is absolutely depending on us! If we screw up, it's all over; Scar wins! Maybe it's just me, but I've no intention of letting that happen! Yeah, I'm in a lot of pain right now, but as long as I can still draw breath, I'm not giving up! I'm gonna keep on fighting! Since everything that's happening is partly my fault to begin with, it's only right I keep going on! If there really are bombs out there, we'll find a way to stop them and Scar!”

To say the others were taken aback by her bold statements would have been an understatement. Unable to say anything, the group descended into leering at one another.

“...You make it sound so easy.” Sam was oddly laughing, completely out-of-place in such a tense situation. “I'm totally sweating over here and trying to stay calm, all the while wondering if we can
really win this time around, and you're going around saying stuff like that, Chris.”

“Seriously. You're a total wacko,” chimed a shrugging Clover.

“Totally,” added Alex for emphasis.

Chris cheeks flushed with blood. “W-What's that supposed to mean?! I'm...I'm just saying!”

Sam nodded. “We know! And we're with you! I think that pep talk was just what we needed!”

“I'll say! I am so not taking metal shop again just because some baddie wants to blow up our school!” yelled Clover.

“Yeah, yeah! We get it! We gotta go stop the bad guy! Let's go then!” exclaimed Alex. Adrenaline pumped through her veins, and it was hard for her to sit still any longer. She wanted a piece of Scar in the worst way. “Those bombs aren't gonna stop themselves!”

“The gym shouldn't be too far from here. If we hurry, we should still be able to make it to Scar before disaster strikes!” said Britney, flashing a thumbs up.

“We will make it to Scar before then!” Blaine stated confidently.

It was Chris left nearly speechless now. “...Thanks, guys. No way I'd be able to do this without you!”

The air of dread and hesitation spawned by Scar's threats were gone, replaced by a sense of hope. Chris and company took that hope with them as they found the strength to move forward again.

“...I don't know whether they actually believe they can win because they must, or if all that was simply youthful arrogance. Well, regardless, I suppose I should continue tagging along. At the very least, things are about to get interesting,” said Heisenberg. He smiled in a rather underhanded manner and added, “Worse comes to worse, I can always retreat and wait for my chance to strike at Scar another time.”

The calmness inside that air shaft contrasted greatly with the utter chaos breaking out back inside the gymnasium. Though everyone there had been ready to take down Scar to ensure their own freedom, the sole thing on their mind's now was finding a way out of Malibu University before it blew. People started pushing and shoving one another to the floor in a desperate search for an exit. Observing these folks scurry like rats trapped in a maze was enough to incite deranged laughter out of Scar.

“And just where do they think they're going?” he asked. His Tabithas were effectively restraining everyone, making their efforts amusing as they were pointless to him.

“What exactly could you find funny about what's happening?!” asked Jerry, horrified.

“Humans never cease to amaze me is all. They were ready to work together to rise against me, yet the instant I mentioned something about bombs, they abandoned their kinship. Look at them now. They revert back to their primal instincts to ensure their individual safety. They're practically killing each other down there trying to escape.”

“...Disable those bombs, Scar! It's not too late! You don't have to do this!”

“Now why would I go through the trouble of setting them up just to do that?”
“Maybe because you'll end up blowing yourself to kingdom come as well as your victims!”

Scar turned to Jerry, smirked, and simply answered, “...You really think so?”

It didn't take long for Jerry to garner the meaning in this. “Of course! You have some sort of escape route ready, don't you?!”

“Something like that, yes.” Scar grabbed an object out of his pocket, displaying it for all to see. “If you truly want to stop me and save all the wretched people below us so badly, Jerry, I suggest you find some way to procure this device from my hand.”

Jerry got the message loud and clear. The second Scar finished talking, he swung his body over to him and attempted kicking the device from Scar's grasp. At the last second, Scar got moved aside, clearly startled by the attack.

“Hmph. I'm glad to see you still have some spunk left.”

Jerry, gritting his teeth, proclaimed, “I'm warning you, Scar! Hand me that detonator! You do realize nothing good could come from what you're about to do, right?!”

“Save the speeches, Jerry. I've long since given up caring about the boundaries between good and evil. Regardless of my methods, I will do what I must to ensure my goals. If humans get hurt in the process, so be it. I've no love for them anyway.”

“...Then I really do have nothing more to say to you.” Jerry, speaking in a saddened tone, felt as if his former pupil were truly gone now. “When I first scouted you for WOOHP, Scar, I knew you had potential, and while I thought you were rough around the edges personality wise, I generally considered you to be a good person. As much as it pains me to say this...I was clearly wrong.”

Scar's eyebrow twitched, and he furiously replied, “You knew nothing about me back then, Jerry, just like you know nothing about me now! You still are and always have been an old fool! WOOHP was weak because you ran it, and I have now destroyed it because of that very same weakness! The reason the world is so corrupt right now is because imbeciles like you are in charge! Well, no more! The world doesn't need men such as you, but individuals like me, someone's who willing to do whatever it takes to maintain order! What happens here today will be the start of that, the start of a new era for mankind!”

“Regardless of your convoluted logic, all you're really doing is slaughtering innocent people!”

“Haha! Is that so?! Then I'll quote what you said just a few moments ago and inform you we have nothing else to discuss! We'll obviously never see eye to eye on this matter. Fortunately, I still have the strength to enact my goals. You though will become a mere casualty of them.”

“...Your mindset is wrong, Scar. Maybe someday you'll realize that. Nathanial and Diane would likely have hoped so as well.”

Walking away from Jerry, Scar said in a low voice, “...Never repeat those names to me again.”

Left alone, Jerry muttered, “I get the feeling someone will remind you of them very soon, Scar.”

Dyson Glee couldn't help but gaze up at the scene between Jerry and Scar on the rafters above in spite of people pushing and shoving others him around. He couldn't decipher a sentence exchanged between them, but he knew there was bad blood brewing from the way they behaved.

“I don’t get it. What does that old guy have to do with Scar?”
“Er...hello, Dyson! In case you’ve forgotten, we’re totally about to die!” Mandy, trembling in fright, held on to Dyson as hard as she could to protect herself from those around her. “Do something!”

Dyson groaned at his fortunes and hastily used his body to shield Mandy’s for the time being. He got they just needed to find a way to escape this carnage, though he wasn't exactly sure how. Being unable to see over the flood of people wasn't helping either.

“You gotta be kidding me! We’ll be trampled over at this rate!”

“Where the heck is Trent?!” cried Mandy as she searched around for her intern. “I swear I can't count on him for anything!”

Not even seconds after she finished insulting him, Trent popped out from the crowd, holding his knees and gasping for air.

“I...think I found a way out!” he exclaimed through shallow breaths.

“I knew I could count on you!” Mandy informed him. She ran over to him and wrapped her arms around him, making him blush slightly. “You really are the best intern ever!”

“T-Thank you, Mandy.”

“You two can save that kind of stuff for later! Trent, take us to this place you’re talking about!” said Dyson.

Trent wanted to go as much as Dyson, so he nodded and took the lead while the three began pushing and shoving everyone out of their way. For a moment, Dyson was tempted to stop and inform the ensuing crowd of their newly found escape route, yet he held his tongue, figuring the large crowd would stand out in Scar's eyes. This however didn't mean he was ready to abandon Scar’s captives. He just decided three people had a better chance of getting out and then coming back with help without attracting attention.

“There!” Trent hollered when they reach an unguarded doorway. Dyson couldn't understand why this was the case until he viewed the army of Tabithas busy trying to contain the crowd. Because of this, they were paying no mind to the exit.

“Now what?!” asked Mandy after the three managed to slip outside into a hallway undetected.

“Keep running!” said Dyson. “There might be more of those robots waiting out here, so stay on guard! We just have to find a way out!”

“But aren't there more of those stupid things outside the school?! That's what that jerk from before said!”

“E-Even so, we'll find a way out! We have to!”

“W-Wait a minute, you two! I found something interesting while I was looking for a way out! Follow me!” said Trent, abruptly dashing down an adjacent corridor.

“Er...I-lead the way then,” said Dyson, scratching his head in confusion.

“He better know what he’s doing!” Mandy voiced.

The three managed to duck out of sight from a passing Tabitha that was humming a sweet melody ahead of diving into the empty lecture hall Trent pointed out. With haste, Dyson closed and locked
the door behind him.

“Okay. I don't think she saw us. We should be good here for the time being.”

Mandy, visibly bothered, took a seat and rested her head in the palms of her hands. “Oh yeah? Big deal! We're still stuck in this stupid place!”

“True, but this gives us the chance to think up a plan.”

Trent stepped forward, saying, “Um...t-this place isn't what I wanted to show you. The thing you need to see is at the front of the class.”

His claim left Dyson and Mandy baffled, yet they descended a staircase in the room with him anyway. A simple desk awaited them, an object that without a doubt wouldn't garner much interest from anyone.

“Wait, I remember this classroom!” said Dyson. “Didn't it belong to a professor by the name of Heisenberg? Yeah, I think he was a Quantum Physics teacher or something.”

“Wasn't that the crazy old guy that got fired?” asked Mandy. “They never said why though.”

“H-Hey, you three! Keep it down! Can't you see I'm hiding down here?” said someone from underneath the desk. A look of pure terror fell over the faces of Dyson, Mandy, and Trent while they screamed at the sight of Melody Smith, the resident nurse at Malibu University, sheepishly smiling back at them. “It’s nice to see other people though! I was beginning to think I was the last woman on campus in one piece!”

“Jeez. I nearly had a heart attack there!” Dyson clutched at his pounding chest. “W-What in the world are you doing down there, Nurse Melody?”

Before answering, Melody poked her head out to make sure the coast was clear. “…I realized what was going on before everyone else I guess. The second those strange girls started kidnapping people, I hid in my office until it got quiet and then ducked inside here. I've been attempting to call for help on my cell phone, but it isn't working.”

Dyson took Melody's pink phone and saw that it wasn't getting any service. This prompted him to take out his own and check it as well. He shook his head and wondered why hadn’t done so earlier.

“My phone's not working either. I can usually get pretty good reception here at school, so I'm guessing that Scar guy has something to do with this. This might sound like a stretch, but maybe he's jamming the signal so we can't call anyone.”

“That's just great.” Melody took back her phone and groaned. “Say, what are you kids doing here anyway? Don't you know how dangerous it is around here?! I may be a nurse, but if you all end up getting hurt, I don't think there'll be much I can do for you.”

“We...” Dyson paused and then stated, “…I actually have no clue what we're doing here. Trent said...”

“Trent! Why did you bring us here again?!” screeched Mandy.

He wasn't listening. Rather, he was fiddling with the vacant nameplate on the desk. Mandy, seconds away from chewing him out for this, held her tongue when the flooring below she and the others began to rock forcefully out of the blue.
“W-What the...?!”

“An earthquake?!?” asked Melody.

“I-I don't think so!” replied Dyson. Unable to keep a proper footing, he added, “What the heck is going on though?!”

The group didn't have to wait long to find out. When a circular section of the floor actually began to descend, they soon determined it was some sort of elevator.

“Well, this was certainly the last thing I expected to be in this school,” said Melody.

“Yeah. Let's just hope this isn't a one way trip,” muttered Dyson cautiously.

The four eventually reached the bottom, or at least what they assumed was the bottom. Awaiting them was an area large as it was mysterious. Strange machinery surrounded them for as far as the eye could see, yet Dyson noticed none of them had been used in a while judging from how dusty it all was.

“Man, this is giving me the creeps.” Melody wrapped her arms around herself and shivered. “Doesn't this place look like some evil villain's laboratory or something?”

“Considering everything that's happened today, I wouldn't be too surprised if that were true,” retorted Dyson. He then asked Trent, “Say, what is this place?”

“I couldn't tell you. I just happened to stumble upon here while I was looking for an exit. I figured you guys might want to check it out.”

“Okay! Can we so like go now?! I think I've seen enough of this freaky place for a lifetime!” yelled Mandy.

Before anyone could answer her, they all heard strange noises stemming from the distance. Mandy wasn't taking any chances, darting behind Dyson.

“W-What the heck was that?!?”

“I dunno, but since we're here, we might as well check it out, right?” said a grinning Dyson.

“I agree. I’m kinda curious,” added Trent.

“What?! Are you two crazy?! I say we get going while the going is good!” argued Mandy.

“My sentiments exactly,” stated Melody, gulping.

Dyson, unwilling to give in, answered, “Alright. How about me and Trent go on to do some investigating while you two stay here?”

When a chill ran down both Mandy's and Melody's spines at this proposition, they hastily came to the conclusion that they would much rather take their chances with the boys than be left alone to fend for themselves.

“Just stay close. You'll be fine,” Dyson guaranteed them.

Reluctantly, the two nodded and prayed this wouldn't be the last decision they ever made.

“Get down!” Dyson said in a panicked whisper after he and the others turned a corner.
“Huh?! Why?! What's...?!” started Mandy.

“Just get down!” said Trent. Not wanting to take any chances, he covered her mouth as he dragged her behind some boxes to hide.

“You see that?” asked a pointing Dyson.

The others weren't sure whether he was referring to Mandy's muffled complaining or the group of androids in front of them. The latter made Mandy panic even more, much to the dismay of her companions.

“C-Calm down! I don't think they saw us!” whispered Dyson.

“What are they doing here?” pondered Melody. She could see more in the background, some carrying boxes and others working on something she couldn't make out.

“Looks like they're building something,” said a squinting Trent. He didn't get to speculate what with bitter tears welling in his eyelids. Mandy had bit his fingers to free herself, and it was taking everything in his power not to scream out in pain.

“Hey, what's the big idea, Trent?! I swear I'll...!”

Dyson promptly slapped his hand over the very talkative mouth of Mandy. “Now's not a good time, Mandy! Do you want us to get caught? Seriously, just be quiet for ten seconds!”

Although bothered by his remarks, Mandy nodded. Dyson, against his better judgment, allowed her free use of her tongue again.

“I'm the one that said we should get outta here, but no-o-o-o! You and Trent just had to come and investigate!” she whined. The others were at least glad to see her speak in a quiet, sensible tone.

Ignoring her, Dyson focused his vision to get a better look at the thing the Tabithas were making.

“Hey, doesn't that thing look like some kind of missile?!”

“Yeah, you're right!” Melody exclaimed. “Looks like they're almost finished too!”

“You think that's one of the explosives Scar was talking about?” asked Trent.

“Can't be. At least, I don't think so. Scar spoke like the bombs he had were all ready to go. Looks like those robots are just putting the finishing touches on this one like Melody said,” replied Dyson.

“Shouldn't we do something about this?”

“Yes, let's get the heck outta here!” cried Mandy.

“I actually agree with you for once, but only on the condition we tell someone on the outside what's happening here,” said Dyson. Hearing this made Mandy want to cry. “Remember, that Scar guy mentioned something about ‘troublemakers.’ That must mean there's someone trying to come and save us all. The sooner they know about what Scar's building down here, the better.”

“In case you've forgotten, this school's about to explode! We should just be trying to get outta here!”

Dyson shook his head. “I wonder about that...”

“Eh? What do you mean?” said Trent.
Pointing to the missile, Dyson replied, “Don't you find it weird Scar would go to the trouble of putting that thing together just to have to it blown to pieces? I'm beginning to think Scar...”

His statement trailed off when he became aware of a shadow dancing over he and his friends. Slowly, they swung the opposite direction to spot a Tabitha smirking down at them.

“Hey, what are guys doing down here? We're running a top-secret operation! Mister Scar said no visitors are allowed!”

“RUN!” Dyson ordered. However, Tabitha landed a mighty punch into his gut amidst the confusion, knocking him out cold.

“Er...d-do something, Trent!” shouted Mandy, taking cover behind him.

“...Really?” he answered in a deadpan way.

“We are so screwed,” Melody muttered.

The four were unceremoniously dragged back to the gym and dumped in front of Scar. The air inside the room had grown lifeless in wake of the school's, and everyone within its walls, pending destruction. Dyson and his friends being recaptured didn't do much to change this.

“Hey! You're messing up my clothes, loser!” said Mandy while a Tabitha put her down.

“Even facing impending death, you don't know when to be quiet,” mumbled Trent.

“What was that?! I think so I have a right to fly off the handle like this.”

For once, Trent could hardly disagree. It was taking everything in his power not to shout to the heavens in despair.

“We've captured all the escapees, boss!” said a Tabitha, saluting to Scar as she reported in.

Scar chuckled. “Good work.” He then faced Dyson. “Did you really think I wouldn't notice a few rats had escaped my cage? Unfortunately for you lot, I can't simply give you a smack across the hand for your transgressions. My androids have informed me you four saw something you shouldn't have. I can't possibly allow you to live now.”

Melody, pale as a ghost, said, “C-Come again?!”

“What are you saying, Scar?!” asked Jerry, just as astounded.

“I didn't even wanna go down there!” proclaimed a sobbing Mandy. Hitting Trent, she added, “This is all your fault, loser!”

Trent again didn't bother arguing. He had no fight left in him.

“Get rid of them,” Scar ordered alongside a snap of his fingers. “And try not to make a mess, alright? We do still have plenty of guests here watching on.”

While the Tabithas closed in, Dyson bit his bottom lip and lowered his head, not yearning to admit that it was truly over after he and the others had fought so hard.

“W-Would you please cut that out, young lady?” said Scar, shielding his ears from Mandy's
unrelenting screaming. He then told of of the Tabitha’s, “T-Take care of her first!”

Her cries of despair soon ended up being the least of his worries. Out of the corner of his eye, Dyson spied an object roll past him until making a dead stop in front of the Tabithas. Before anyone could even react to it, the Sonic Jammer went off, destroying the androids behind a brilliant flash of light.

“What in the world?! What's...going on?!” asked Scar.

Another group of Tabithas swarmed on the scene to check on their fallen comrades, yet the second they did, two people from above landed right on top of them.

“Ouchies!” they all voiced.

“I wouldn't bother moving if I were you!” ordered Britney.

“Yeah! Unless you ladies want your circuits zapped too!” added Blaine.

The captive Tabithas began to whine and sob over their ill fortunes, inducing a sigh out of both Britney and Blaine. The two then looked up and became alarmed at seeing three more of the androids racing for them. Heading them off, Clover and Alex slammed their boots into the two to get rid of them.

“Hey, that wasn't very nice!” said the remaining Tabitha.

“Oh yeah? Well, neither is this!” shouted Sam, clocking Tabitha across the face. The helpless android was planted into a nearby wall, wowing just about everyone watching on.

“Girls!” shouted an elated Jerry.

“Jerry!” Sam, Alex, and Clover screamed back.

“Are you okay, Jer?!” asked Clover.

“More or less, although I'm pleased to see you three are mostly unharmed! I was beginning to get worried since I haven't been able to get in contact with you!”

“Hang in there, Jerry! We'll save you!” said Alex. “Well, I guess you're...already hanging in there, but whatever!”

“...If you can still joke like that, you really must be okay, Alex.”

“Come on, girls! Let's free Jerry while we have the chance!” said Sam. Clover and Alex were in agreement.

“No! Don't worry about me!” Jerry quickly snapped. “Go get Scar! He must be stopped!”

By this point, Scar's prisoners admittedly had no clue what was occurring anymore. An idea then entered their collective minds: were they being rescued at last? No one dare said it, not aloud at least. They instead held their breaths, waiting to see what would come of this.

“I've been expecting you all,” said Scar. He was content in spite of being in what most considered to be a tight spot. Smirking, he stared at each and every one of the WOOHP operatives glaring back at him. “...There are more of you than I presumed there would be however.”

“It's game over, Scar! Surrender!” said Sam, pointing to him.
“My, I didn't think I would grow tired of hearing that word so soon.” Scar, pacing the floor, seriously mulled Sam's declaration over ahead of replying, “No, I don't believe I will. Do you really think I'm intimidated by a bunch of children? Did you think you lot barging in here with those heroics would frighten me? How amusing. I can recall being that young and foolish. You feel unstoppable, as if you can do anything. Well, allow me to remind you young folks how the real world works.”

“Just what in the world is going on?” asked Dyson Glee. He hated being out of the loop like this. He recognized Sam, Alex, and Clover on the spot yet had no idea why the three of them were challenging Scar. “I thought they were just normal students here like me, but…”

“I knew it!” blared Mandy randomly. “I knew those stupid girls had something to do with this! Those losers are always making my life miserable!”

“Trust me, Mandy, the feeling is mutual,” replied Clover with a low growl. “This really isn't a good time though, so would you like pipe down until we're done here?!”

Scar abruptly began to clap, stating, “I commend you WOOHP agents for even making it this far. Jerry here wouldn't stop going on about your arrival, but I didn't give him nor you all enough credit by the looks of it. Still, I'm afraid all your efforts have been for naught.”

Sam and the others saw what he meant when yet another brigade of Tabithas encircled them.

“Just how many did SOAP build?!” questioned Alex.

“...All of efforts have been for nothing, you say? How foolish. I was going to lag behind, but I had to come and witness your stupidity in person. I'm afraid I have some bad news for you, Scar, if you believe you can win by throwing more and more of knockoffs of my beloved android at my allies,” claimed an unseen individual. Doctor Heisenberg stepped into the gymnasium just then. He tipped his fedora at Scar, adding, “This isn't over. Not by a long shot.”

“Well, well, well. Isn't this a surprise?” replied Scar, enthralled by this turn of events.

“Well, well, well. Isn't this a a surprise?” replied Scar, enthralled by this turn of events.

“Dad?!” declared all the Tabithas in outright shock.

“Dad?!” Dyson echoed. “Okay, now I really don't have a clue what's happening!”

“Yeah! This is getting interesting!” said Melody. “I mean, I've heard of large families, but this is kinda ridiculous!”

“Hey! Isn't that guy that Quantum Physics teacher we were talking about earlier?” whispered Trent.

“That's him for sure! I'd recognize that face anywhere! He used to sulk around the faculty lounge and drink up all the coffee! Say, what's he doing back here like this all of a sudden?”

Heisenberg said to the Tabithas, “While my stolen designs were implemented in your creation, I'm afraid I'm not your father. You all are the offspring of a man thinking far outside of his station.”

“How humorous. A two-bit criminal suddenly believes he can speak ill of me,” said Scar.

Juggling a Sonic Jammer up and down in his hand, Heisenberg thought long and hard on what to say to the man who took everything from him.

“You know, I was never considered the best inventor,” he began. “Most of my forays into robotics ended in utter failure. For whatever reason, Quantum Physics clicked with me more, and that was the career path my colleagues suggested I take despite my own reservations on the matter. All this was
the reason I felt so proud when I created my precious Tabitha. Finally, one of my creations had worked. After long hours of planning, design, and effort, things had gone my way. No one would be able to ignore my work now or so I assumed. Yes, perhaps I was a bit too hasty.”

Grabbing hold of the item in his grasp and squeezing it tightly, Heisenberg proceeded to glower at Scar with every ounce of hatred he could muster.

“I think it's clear to see why I was so upset when I heard someone else was my using creation as they saw fit. An inventor's creations are their pride, Scar. You will pay for trampling on mine without a care in the world.”

“Wow. I never realized he was so passionate about his work,” said Sam. “It'd be kind of inspiring if it weren't for him being a bad guy.”

“He still seems like a wacko to me,” said Clover dryly.

“Totally,” added Alex.

Scar again found himself clapping, yet everyone heard nothing but false praise resound within the noise. “I see your resolve is quite firm. Nevertheless, it seems it's also clouded your judgment. Fancy speeches alone aren't enough to conquer me. You were a fool for coming here, Heisenberg. While it is true you created Tabitha, I was the only one capable of using your invention to its fullest. Now then, I hope you prepared yourself because you're about to be destroyed by the very androids you coveted so greatly.”

“...Is that so?”

Having heard enough, Heisenberg casually tossed his Sonic Jammer at center of the room. The second it went off, it fried every single Tabitha inside the gym.

“Tsk! It's the same device from earlier,” said Scar. He certainly had nothing to be elated about now. Within seconds, his grand army had been crushed, leaving him all alone.

Heisenberg, adjusting his glasses, said, “Scar, it seems the one foolish for showing their face here today was you. Did you really think you could defeat me by using my own technology? Especially when all you did was copy it. I know every countermeasure and weakness on Tabitha. Coming up with a way to disable her as such was child's play. I'm honestly surprised you didn't think of installing any fail safes in her.”

“What was that...you...?!”

There wasn't much Scar could do to lash out at Heisenberg from high on his railing. The good doctor hardly worried him anyway considering he sensed a danger that didn't lie with Heisenberg and his technology. Whatever it was was behind him, and with haste, he faced it head on. Wide-eyed, he caught wind of a person who shouldn’t have been there, an individual he was certain he had erased from existence.

“Missed me?!” roared Christine, lunging at him with reckless abandon. “Because I sure as hell missed you, Scar!”

END
Something was amiss. Dread ran through every fiber of Scar's being, and he perceived the source of his discomfort directly behind him. Hesitantly, he faced the other way. Awaiting him was a girl he never expected to see again, one he cast aside once she no longer had any use to him. She was back now, and with a vengeance. So stunned was he by her presence that he barely managed to block a punch aimed right for his heart. The force from it got him off-balance, giving Chris ample time to snatch something right out of his grasp.

“Gah! My remote!” he howled. Indeed, the device that controlled the bombs he planted around Malibu University now belonged to the one person who would certainly make him pay dearly for his mistake. Acknowledging this as well, Chris slyly smiled as she tossed the remote up and down in her hand.

“Missing something?” she asked mockingly.

“Christine...” Scar spoke every syllable of her name bitterly, so much so that they stung his tongue. “You're certainly a sight for sore eyes. I'm pleased to see you're doing so well however. I was wondering where you got off to after our last encounter.”

When Chris didn't answer, he chuckled, recounting something of importance.

“That's right. I wiped your memory clean, didn't I? Do you even know who I am?”

“I...do. It's strange, but just looking at that face of yours is bringing back things.”

“...Is that so?”

Observing the scene above him, Dyson Glee held his mouth open in shock. “Is that...Chris?! Even she's apart of this?! Chris! Hey, Chris! What's going on?!?”

Being too busy dealing with Scar, Chris didn't hear him.

“Ugh! Not that girl!” said Mandy in disgust. “I bet she's the reason we're all being held here against our wills like this! I seriously can't stand her!”

“D-Don't be that way, Mandy,” Trent told her.

“That girl just can't keep out of trouble, can she?” said Melody, who found herself unable to stop grinning for whatever reason. “...Go get 'em, kid!”

Even with the remote for Scar's explosives in hand, Chris felt anxious around the man, like he could pop out and take it back from her whenever he felt like it.

“What's the matter, Christine? I'm the one that should be sweating,” he stated, picking up on her emotions. “Come now. I trained you to keep your cool during any situation.”
“Be quiet! And stop calling me that already! Drop the act! You're finished! Without this thing, there isn't anything you can do! Why don't you just surrender already?!”

“My, my.” Scar sighed, resting his head in his palm as if he were merely bored. “You certainly are fired up. I suppose you were always that way though. Yes. It was one of your more endearing traits.”

“D-Didn't I tell you to shut up?!”

“And we certainly can't forget that temper of yours. Perhaps you got that from your dear mother.”

Chris discovered it difficult to maintain her composure in her former boss’ presence. The more Scar moved his lips, the more her limbs quivered in rage.

“I was positive we'd never see one another again,” continued Scar. “To think you'd actually have the courage to face me here today after what happened previously, Christine.”

“Seriously, just...stop! Stop saying that name!”

“Maybe it's a good thing though. Perhaps you still have some of that ruthlessness and cunning in you I valued so highly. It made you the perfect spy, the perfect...”

“BE QUIET!” Chris screamed at the top of her lungs. Out of breath, she caught a glimpse at all the people below staring at her like she were insane. Even she had no explanation for her haphazard outburst. “...J-Just...stop...”

“That's good, Christine. Use that anger and hatred you have for me! That is your strength! That is what drove you to come this far, even without your memories!”

“Would you cut the crap?!” Chris, wanting to shield her ears from his words, settled on holding out his remote and dangling her thumb over the switch. “This is the button that disables the bombs, right?!”

“Indeed it is. So, you intend to destroy our ambitions just like that?”

“...Don't rope me in with you, you bastard! We might've done some awful things together, but I'm nothing like you!”

“You're free to lie to yourself as much as you'd like, Christine. Whatever alleviates that guilt of yours.”

“It's not a lie! I...I...!”

“You what, Christine? Come now. You know I speak nothing but the truth. You talk as if you were some mere accomplice, yet you went along with everything I asked of you and more. You never so much as voiced a single complaint. In fact, you enjoyed that carnage we created together, didn't you?”

“That isn't true! I never...!”

“You wanted to wipe out WOOHP and peace as much as I did. Yes, when you think about it, Christine, we're merely two side of the same coin. We...”

“Just...s-stop it already! STOP IT!”

Pushed over the deep end, Chris slammed her thumb down on the remote in the hopes it would not
only disable the bombs, but also Scar's venom-spewing lips. However, the only thing that seemed to come of her action was Scar laughing like a madman. The sounds of this echoed end-to-end in the otherwise quiet auditorium, leaving those present to watch him with widened, worried eyes.

“...What the hell is so funny?!” asked Chris after a while. “WHAT THE HELL IS SO FUNNY?!”

“...How fortunate for me,” he responded, getting the last of his chuckles out. “I apologize. I just never imagined things would go so smoothly.”

“What the hell are you talking about?!”

“I see. So, you never realized it? It seems you were so dead set on coming after me that you never once considered you and your friends were walking into a trap.”

“A...trap?”

“What in the world are you talking about, Scar?!” asked Jerry Lewis.

Rather than clarifying, Scar chose to show them. When he reached up to his face, every single person in the gymnasium gasped in unison as he yanked it right off. Hiding behind it were a cavalcade of electronics, wires, and even a small screen in the center.

“H-He was a robot?!” proclaimed Sam.

Alex wrapped her hands around her head and could only muster a, “Whoa...”

“W-Wait a sec! Was he always a robot, or is there another Scar running around?!” pondered Clover.

No one had to wait long for an explanation. The monitor on the robot's head clicked on, and another Scar, one sitting behind a desk and sipping tea, appeared.

“Ah! Hello, Christine! Hmm, I suppose it's hello again, isn't it?” he said cheerily. “How's was my robot double? The likeness was uncanny, wasn't it?”

“...What the hell is this?!?” inquired Chris through clenched teeth.

“Hmm? Ah, I suppose you and everyone else there are a bit puzzled, aren't you? It's exactly as I said. I created a robot duplicate of myself to...”

“Forget about that! If this...thing here really isn't you, where are you right now?!”

“Oh, I can assure you I'm close by. In fact, you could almost say I'm...right under your feet.”

“S-Stop screwing with me! What happened to those bombs?!”

“Bombs? You're telling me you haven't even figured that much out, Christine? I must admit, I'm a tad bit disappointed in you. I know you're brighter than this. Need a hint? ...Judging by that look, I figure I should just tell you. There never were any bombs. I simply came up with that little fib to ensnare you and your little friends within my web. I must say, things really did go better than I ever imagined.”

“You're still not making any sense! What are you talking about when you say you trapped us?! We already took care of all your androids! There's no one left to...!”

“I assure you, Christine, those Tabithas weren't the only thing waiting for you outside the walls of that gymnasium. Remember that device you apprehended from my robot double? There might not
have been any bombs, but you activating it certainly did *something*. I won't ruin the surprise and allow you to see just what.”

Chris really didn't like the sound of that.

“Answer me this, Scar,” started Heisenberg all of a sudden. Anger was etched into every wrinkle on his countenance. “Something about this whole thing doesn't make sense! Why didn't my Sonic Jammer work on your robotic duplicate?!”

Scar didn’t even trouble himself with looking at Heisenberg while he replied, “Are you speaking of that pathetic device you employed earlier? How amusing. Did you really think something like that would be able to destroy something I myself built? The only reason it worked on those Tabithas is because I let it. There was no doubt in my mind you and the rest of your acquaintances would come marching here fearlessly if you presumed you had an advantage. I knew of your little invention well ahead of time and installed a countermeasure into this unit.”

“I-Impossible! Scar, you...!”

“What was that you said about me thinking far outside my station? I think it's clear to see now which one of us was dreaming. You're a loser, Heisenberg, and you always will be. The only use you've ever been is inadvertently helping my plans with that android of yours. Of course, a man of your standing should be quite accustomed to failure. Am I right?”

Heisenberg pined to say something, anything. He balled his fist and found himself unable to find the words to defend his honor, not when Scar managed to make a fool out of him so easily. He lowered his hat across his face, not wanting anyone to bear witness to his shame.

“You done picking on him? Because your fight is with *me*!” hollered Chris.

“Yes, I really do enjoy that enthusiasm of yours. Unfortunately, I don't have time to play with you. I have a world to change for the better. Farewell, Christine. It was nice seeing you again,” Scar said with a friendly wave. “Perhaps I’ll fashion a mural in your honor after everything is all said and done as a reward for your efforts.”

Without warning, the entire campus of Malibu University began to quake violently. Those inside the auditorium reacted by screaming and running about like headless chickens. “Seriously?! I'm too young and pretty to die!” cried Mandy.

“D-Don't worry, Mandy! I won't let anything happen to you!” said Trent.

Blushing, she answered, “S-Shut up! N-No one asked you to do that!”

Mandy, despite her claim, hunkered close to him.

“An earthquake?!” questioned Britney.

Blaine, hardly able to keep his balance, replied, “I doubt it! This is Scar's handiwork for sure!”

The rumbling ceased to be soon enough. Chris got to her feet and shook her head until she could see straight. The Scar duplicate was walking away from her, so she made haste to catch up, thinking it was her only lead to the real leader of SOAP. The second she got too close though, it halted in its tracks.

“You certainly are persistent. Still, you won't gain anything from attempting to track me down, Christine,” the Scar on the screen began. “Oh, by the way...I would take cover if I were you.”
The meaning of his warning only hit Chris when the Scar duplicate began to glow. Her legs then moved on their own, barreling her over to Jerry Lewis.

“Time to go, old man! Gah! He would use these chains on you!”

“Forget about me and just get out here, Christine!” Jerry told her. “There's no time left!”

“Just...shut up and let me save you!”

Miraculously, she managed to free him from his restraints in the nick of time. Jerry, nevertheless, wasn't able to enjoy his newfound freedom, not with Chris shoving him off the rafter they stood.

“W-What in the...?!”

“I suggest somebody catch him!” Chris shouted to those beneath her.

“Is she out of her mind?!” said Sam.

“I've wondered that very thing ever since we met,” mumbled Britney.

“We can debate her sanity later! Just catch him!” proclaimed Blaine.

“Ugh. I'm so gonna chip a nail,” muttered Clover.

“I got 'em! I got 'em!” said Alex.

All of them positioned themselves, and Jerry came tumbling into their arms, knocking them all over and for a loop.

“Jeez, Jer! You totally weigh a ton!” whined Clover.

Jerry didn't bother chewing her out. His heart trying to burst out of his chest from shock troubled him far more.

In the meantime, Chris remained in danger. She backed away from the approaching Scar android, aware every second she wasted drew her closer to death.

“Would you just back off already?! You're almost as persistent as the real Scar!”

Seeing no other alternative, she leaped over the railing, just as the android self destructed in a tremendous explosion. The force from it propelled her sailing body forward.

“Agh! Dammit! Don't tell me I'm gonna die like this?!”

She shut her eyes, yet when she didn't feel herself splatter against the floor, she opened them and held her at Dyson Glee holding her.

“Hey there,” he said with a hearty grin. “You're...heavier than you look.”

Blood rushed to every vein on Chris' face, and for some reason, she couldn't find the means to muster a reply.

“Uh...um...er...” she stammered instead, growing hotter by the second.

“Chris? You okay?”

“Huh? Er...um...y-yes? I'm...uh...huh...”
She promptly looked away and obscured her beet red features with her hands. Being alone with Dyson Glee was the one thing she feared more than anything in the world. Thankfully, she was spared from having to deal with it any longer when her friends rushed to her side.

“Chris! Are you alright?!” asked Sam.

“That was too close!” said Alex, biting her fingernails. “Don't scare us like that!”

“Yeah! We totally thought you were gonna be a pancake for a sec there!” cried Clover.

The three's fear became heightened once more when Chris merely stared back at them absentmindedly.

Clover tapped her finger on Chris' skull. “Uh...hello! Earth to Chris! Is anyone there?!”

“Are you certain you're alright, Christine?” It was Jerry Lewis wanting to know this time.

“Yeah, I'm...fine,” she groggily said. “In fact, I'm more than okay! That fall must have done me some good, because I can remember everything now!”

Everything was right. From her checkered past, her time working for SOAP, and the events leading up to this point, the haze clouding her mind faded. Whether this was a good thing or not, she wasn't sure.

“That's great, Chris!” exclaimed Sam. “It’s about time too!”

“You remember everything? Huh? W-What do you mean by that?” asked Dyson, utterly lost at this point.

Paying his question no mind, Chris marched over to Jerry. She then astonished everyone by grabbing him by his shirt and dragging him forward.

“You...” she started, sounding less than amused. “There's something I need to ask you.”

“I see,” replied Jerry. He didn't even try to resist.

“What are you doing, Chris?!” asked Sam.

“Yeah, calm down!” yelled Britney.

“Back off!” Chris screeched. “This is between me and him!”

The others reluctantly did as she asked though remained on guard in case things got out of hand like they feared.

“Answer me this, old man. Don't bother trying to lie either. Were you also responsible for what happened to my parents during that mission ten years ago? I know for sure now that Scar was behind most of it, but how do I know you didn’t give him a hand? Were you bitter about my parents trying to leave WOOHP? Did you try to rub them out? Better dead than not working for you, right?”

“Stop it already, Chris!” cried Sam. “You know Jerry didn’t have anything to do…!”

“I’m not asking you, Sam! Let the old timer speak for himself!”

“...No, Christine. I solemnly swear that I had no part in that unfortunate accident that befell Nathaniel and Diane. If I had known what Scar was planning, I would have stopped him no question. My only
regret is I never got the chance to. However, I can understand why you're upset with me. I was the one who sent your parents on that mission without even revealing the whole truth about it. Worse off, I left them alone with Scar in spite of my reservations. Whatever you want to do to me is fine. I won't try to fight back. Just get it over with so the rest of you can go after Scar and put an end to all this once and for all!” said Jerry calmly.

His terms suited Chris just fine. She cocked her fist back, and at the last second, Sam, Alex, and Clover jumped into the fray and readied to stop her by force if they had to. However, Chris lowered her arm just then and then bore all her teeth as she smiled.

“Man, I really figured it'd be easy. You know, I was envisioning you as a punching bag and everything, but I guess I really can't hit someone who looks so pathetic in the end,” she said to Jerry. “Alright, old man. I'll believe you. It might've taken me some time, but I can finally see the sincerity in your eyes. I'm er...sorry I've been trying to kill you all these years.”

She bowed rigidly, really trying to drive her apology home.

“Not a...problem.”

Jerry was amazed beyond belief. He could hardly fathom it was even Christine speaking to him. Sam and the others clapped in approval at Chris' decision, making her grumble.

“Alright, who are you people? And I mean really?” asked Dyson. He was speaking to Chris in particular, who turned the other way. “Clearly, you're wrapped up in something, something big. Chances are it has something to do with that Scar guy.”

“...Do yourself a favor, Dyson and just drop it. You...really wouldn't want to know who I really am...” said Chris somberly.

“I...see. Well, I'm not going to force you or your friends to say anything you don't want to. At the very least, let me help you guys! I'm tired of standing around and being a helpless victim! If that Scar guy really is up to something bad, I wanna be there to help take him down!”

“I'm sorry, but I'm afraid we can't do that. Even if we did take you along, you wouldn't last a second against Scar and his allies,” Jerry explained bluntly.

“Come on! I know I can't fight like you all can, but there's gotta be something I can do!”

Sam put her hand on his shoulder. “Sorry, Dyson. I know you really wanna help out, but Jerry's right. Just leave this to us. You've had a rough day as it is from the looks of it.”

“Yeah! We'll make sure to kick Scar's butt on your behalf as well as for everyone else here!” said Clover. She flashed him a thumbs up that cheered him up slightly.

“Someone should be here to keep an eye on all these people to make sure they don't do something crazy! Who better than the captain of the Mali-U Track Team?” suggested Alex.

Dyson took a good look at all the rough, worn-out faces in the crowd. Most seemed ready to fall apart at any second, and despite Scar being gone, no one was taking the chance to escape out of fear he would return.

“You're right,” Dyson replied, nodding. “Heh. I know when I'm beat. Fine. I'll stay here. Before you guys go off though to save the world, let me give you what I’m pretty sure is some valuable information about Scar.”
With everyone's curiosity peaked, they listened carefully as Dyson told them what he and the others witnessed when they ventured down to Heisenberg's lab.

“Hmph. So you're telling me Scar was even using my old laboratory as he pleased?” said Heisenberg, thoroughly disgusted. “Does that man have no honor?! He does nothing but leech off the accomplishments of others!”

“...Tell me about it,” mumbled Chris irritably.

“If Dyson is telling the truth, what does this mean?” pondered Sam.

“It means Scar has created a very dangerous weapon, and there's no telling what he plans to use it for,” answered Jerry. “Knowing him, it’s likely nothing good.”

Chris was noticeably bothered by Dyson's tale. “A giant missile...? Can't be...”

“What's the matter, Chris? You seem like you got something on your mind,” said Britney.

“No. It's...nothing. D-Don't mind me...”

Britney dropped the matter, remaining suspicious all the same.

“Do we even know where Scar is?” said Alex.

Sam nodded. “Remember when he said he was close by, under our feet even?”

“Huh? Don't you think he was just messing with us? You know how that jerk is!” said Clover.

“True, but think harder. What did Dyson just get through telling us?”

Dyson snapped his fingers. “Of course! He must've been inside that underground lab!”

“Looks like we have the same line of thinking then,” said Chris. “It's the most logical explanation. He would've easily been able to keep track of our movements being so close-by. He could also build that weapon of his in secret.”

“That would also explain why Scar was so keen on making sure no one saw what he was doing down there! That's why he was so eager to get rid of Dyson and the others! If they told anyone what they saw, that would put a huge damper in his plans!” stated Sam.

“Let's go then! If we know that much, we might be able to catch him before he tries to escape!” said Blaine.

“I just love a man of action!” said Clover, squealing over Blaine yet again.

“Er...thanks?”

“Spies, Blaine is correct! We really should be going! The fate of the world could be at stake!” exclaimed Jerry. “No, it is at stake! Scar won’t just stop with destroying WOOHP and causing havoc here!”

Determined to put an end to Scar’s evil machinations, the WOOHP agents plus Chris got a move on. Chris however paused when she noticed Heisenberg wasn't tagging along.

“Leave me be, Christine. Leave me to my thoughts,” he told her.
“What's your problem, old man? You aren't coming?” Chris put her hands on her hips and frowned. “I figured you'd be more gung ho than all of us to get revenge on Scar.”

“You would think so, yes. Nevertheless, I've come to the conclusion there's nothing more I can do. I cannot hope to fight that man and come out victorious.”

“Eh? What's gotten into you?! Stop being such a coward! Are you really going to let things end here?!”

“Hmph. I know when I'm beaten, Christine. No amount of pep talk is going to change my mind. I regrettably lack that youthful vigor you and your friends possess.”

Chris couldn't believe it. Here she was trying to cheer up a man who had tried to kill her on a number of occasions, and he hardly paid her any mind. She would've chewed him out good for this if she weren't more interested in him reaching into his pocket and pulling out a red Sonic Jammer.

“Take it,” he said as he practically shoved it toward her.

“What's it for? Won't these things be useless against Scar?”

“You'll find this one is a bit...different from the others. I can't say for sure if it will work or not, but I'm afraid it's all I can offer your cause at this point.”

“I see. What are you going to do now then?”

“I will remain here until the fighting is over. If you and your friends wish to take me back to jail, so be it. I no longer have any ambitions for world domination and the like. Seeing Scar's vileness in person has made me realize going down that path is a mistake.”

His eyes shot over to all the destroyed Tabithas in the background.

“You...okay?” Chris asked him.

“Yes. I...strangely feel the need to grieve for my creations all of a sudden. It's unusual indeed. I didn't build them. I had no part in their birth, yet I feel I must mourn their deaths nonetheless. Regardless of their origins, we have a special connection. Anyway, I believe you have a job to do, Christine. Don't let an old fool like me hold you up. Go.”

Chris shrugged. “You really are pitiful, old timer. Whatever. Thanks for the gift, I guess. Just...take it easy, alright? You scare me when you act this way, all normal.”

“Haha. Yes, I suppose I am behaving quite unlike myself. Here we are, bitter enemies, yet we're acting so cordial.”

“I guess the circumstances are just weird like that.”

“So they are.”

Hearing footsteps behind her, Chris swung around to see Dyson once more.

“Chris,” he called out to her.

“W-What do you want?” she inquired, not daring to lock eyes with him.

He took a deep breath before saying, “Er...I know you said I wouldn't want to know the 'real you', but I've been thinking about it and...I really would like to hear your story after you get back from this
whole saving the world thing.”

Blushing profusely, Chris awkwardly shuffled in place. “S-Suit yourself. Just...don't be mad when I tell you something you don't want to hear. Anyway, I...really need to get going.”

“Right. Of course. Just promise me you'll come back, alright? Even though I can't come along, I'll be with you in spirit!”

Chris said something that might have been a response, yet her words were nothing more than an inaudible rustle. Adding to her discomposure was Dyson abruptly embracing her as hard as he could. Her heart began to race, and she couldn't speak, feeling a lump in her throat.

“If it's alright with you, I'd really like to take you out when you get back,” Dyson whispered.

“Huh?! W-What?! Eh?!”

Chris, steaming like a kettle, shoved Dyson off of her and ran out of the gym like her life depended on it. This reaction wasn't exactly what Dyson expected.

“Heh. Maybe I came on a bit too strong there...”

#

Chris couldn't think straight. In fact, the only thing on her mind was Dyson, Dyson and his strong arms wrapped around her. Even as she dashed down a passageway to catch up to her friends, the moment remained stuck in her head like glue.

“There you are! What took you so long?” asked Sam.

“...Shut up,” was Chris' stern reply. “I don't wanna talk about it.”

“Uh...o-okay?”

“What's her problem?” wondered Clover.

“Yeah, she looks redder than usual,” added Alex.

Overhearing this, Chris leered back at the two and shrieked, “SHUT UP!!!”

They both gulped and dropped the subject for their own wellbeing. Chris, now left alone again, went back to her scrambled thoughts.

_Just what was Dyson trying to say back there?! W-Was he actually asking me out?! Like...on a date?! No, no, no! I-I'm not ready for something like that again! W-What if I say something stupid if we do go out?! That would be the **worst**! He'd totally think I was some sort of moron!_

“Um...is everything okay over there, Chris?” asked Britney. “You keep pulling at your hair, and you look like you just heard the world was about to end! Well, I guess it might if we don't do something, but...”


She quickly realized how stupid her own query was. She knew well enough where Heisenberg's secret laboratory was located, having been dragged there by the man himself. Sam, Alex, and Clover were aware of this also, so the strange glances they gave Chris weren't so strange to her after all.
“S-Shut up! Let's just keep going!” she barked.

“What in the world is that?” declared Jerry.

“Oh, just a regular afternoon for grumpy, old Chris,” joked Alex.

“And you wonder why I'm always in a bad mood,” growled Chris.

“No, I'm not talking about that!” Jerry clarified ahead of pointing at something. “I'm referring to that!”

It didn't take long for the others to spot the thing that had him so rattled. What could be best described as a blue energy net encompassed Malibu University. Everyone darted outside to get a closer inspection of it.

“What?! It's around the entire school! Where did it come from though?!” cried Sam. She then gasped in realization. “Ah! I get it now! This is what Scar meant when he said we'd have more than Tabitha to worry about if we tried to escape this place!”

“But what is that thing?!” asked Alex.

“It looks like some sort of electrified, energy barrier. Judging from its appearance, I wouldn't suggest getting anywhere close to it,” responded Jerry.

“An energy barrier? When the heck did Scar have time to set this up?!” said Britney.

“Uh...I think I might have an idea,” said Blaine. “You think those bombs Scar was trying so hard to scare us with has something to do with this?”

“Tsk! There were no bombs! Scar was just...!” Chris' sentence trailed off when something clicked in her mind. “No! That stupid remote...!”

Scar mentioned that while his claim of planting bombs was nothing more than a lie, he also stated Chris activating the device that was supposed to disable them did do something. What that something was remained a mystery to her until now.

“That bastard! That's the reason he made us go all the way to the gym! He was hoping we would be stupid enough to trap ourselves in this school!”

“Oh! I get it! That remote...that's what activated this energy net!” said Sam. “No wonder Scar didn't seem to mind it when you stole that thing from him, Chris! He wanted you to press it!”

“Clever. I'll give Scar that much. Something about this doesn't add up however. If that was really Scar's plan, he likely trapped himself in this school along with us,” said Jerry.

“Hmph. If he's still here, that is,” said Chris. “Come on! Let's check out that lab just to be sure!”

#

Chris and company entered Heisenberg's old classroom and then rode the secret elevator to his underground laboratory. After arriving inside of it, they scoured the area for anything of importance. They could tell from the general state of things that someone had been there recently. The lab was devoid of life and activity at the moment though.

“Dammit! He's gone!” Chris stated. “But how?! was How did he get out without any of us
She knew there was a chance he could still be there, waiting for the opportunity to strike at his unsuspecting foes. She highly doubted it however.

“No sign of that weapon Dyson was talking about either,” said Sam.

“Guess Scar must've taken it with him,” remarked Britney.

“But where? The way Dyson explained it, that missile was huge! No way he could haul it off easily!” stated Clover.

Alex added, “Well, maybe those Tabithas helped him out! You know how super strong they are!”

“Maybe. Let's search around some more. There might be a clue or something we missed,” said Blaine. “Man, this is the part I always hated about field work! I enjoy beating up baddies way more!”

The one area they hadn't checked yet was the wide open area around the corner. Chris knew of it because of her last visit to Heisenberg's lab. She opted to examine it on her lonesome, sneaking off while the others weren't paying attention.

“Just what do we have here?”

Skid marks, massive ones at that, stood in the middle of the floor. They led to a metal gate at the far end of the room, an exit big enough for a specific type of vehicle.

“Dammit! An airplane *was* here!” she exclaimed, perturbed. “That means...Scar...!”

The others caught up to her and came to the same conclusion she did soon after.

“You think that doorway still works?” asked Sam.

“Only one way to find out. Samantha, try to find a lever or switch to activate it,” answered Jerry.

She nodded and went on her way, stumbling upon the switch in question in due time. A flip of it caused the expansive door to open. Light from the outside world penetrated the lab.

“Looks like that energy net is here too,” said Blaine. “Even this exit is blocked off?!”

“Huh? That doesn't make any sense! How did Scar get out of here then?!” Britney exclaimed.

“I don't know, but he definitely escaped this way! He had to!” yelled Chris. “Remember that rumbling from earlier?!”

“Yeah! That sort of *did* feel like a plane taking off now that I think about it!” said Sam.

“And that would explain where Scar and that missile got off too!” chimed Clover.

“Eh? Where the heck did he get a plane from?! Dyson didn't say anything about that!” voiced Alex.

“It's likely he was hiding it somewhere until he was ready to depart from here,” replied Jerry. “However, what I'm more concerned about is the missile he has on board with him.”

“That piece of...! When I get my hands on him...!”

“Try to restrain yourself, Christine. I understand how you feel, but we need to think calmly from here
on out. A plane and a missile certainly can't be a good thing, especially when we're talking about them in the same breath as Scar. It's likely he plans to bomb something. He's tried a stunt like that ten years ago."

"Y-You mean with that incident with Chris' parents, right?! We need to track him down ASAP then!" declared Sam.

"Yeah, but how?! We don't have a plane! Even if we did, we still don't have a way past Scar's barrier!" said Britney. "We need to get that down before we do anything!"

"Look, the barrier outside has to be powered by *something*! If we really were the ones that turned it on, then we can turn it off! There has to be a way! We can worry about finding a ride out of here later!" cried Blaine.

"Chris, do you still have that remote?!" asked Sam.

Chris shook her head. "N-No. I misplaced while I was trying not to be blown to bits earlier. Why?"

"I was thinking we could've used it to turn off that energy net, but..."

"Oh, I see. If it switched it on, it probably would've shut it off too!" said Clover.

"Yeah, but it doesn't matter now. We'll have to go to Plan B!"

"That always works out well..." mumbled Alex sarcastically.

"Spies! Split up and turn over this place again! If there's a switch or device to deactivate that barrier, it won't hide from us! Move it!" Jerry ordered.

Everyone got the message loud and clear, setting off to begin their search. Chris, lagging behind, sensed her frustration mounting.

"...It's my fault my parents died ten years ago. They're gone because I was weak! Things should be different now though! I'm far stronger, but...dammit!"

Scar being allowed to scurry off like a filthy rat didn't seem to fair to her. Then again, nothing about her situation ever seemed fair to her.

#

Enjoying a leisurely fishing trip elsewhere was the President of the United States. For the first time in a long time, he got the opportunity to escape his work. He could think of no better way to spend his vacation time than living it up in the great outdoors.

"Ah! Smell that fresh air!" he joyously proclaimed. The wooden boat he sat in bobbed back and forth along the calm riverbed as he cast his fishing line into the clear waters. "Alright! I'm hoping for a big catch today!"

It was no secret between he and his peers that his fishing skills left a lot to be desired. Often heckled and laughed at, the grandest thing he could recall hauling in was a person's old gym shorts. As embarrassing as that was on its own, it also happened to come about while on a fishing trip with the Prime Minister of Great Britain of all individuals.

"Today's going to be different!" he said to himself. He sure hoped so anyway.

"Good luck, sir," said a Secret Service agent on the opposite side of the boat. He frequently
accompanied the President on these sorts of misadventures, but it was this particular assignment he absolutely loathed. It was a total bore, but he was at least grateful it let him catch up on some much needed sleep. With that in mind, he slipped on a pair of sunglasses and said, “I'll be over here if you need me, sir.”

The President nodded. Suddenly, he felt a tug against his fishing line.

“W-Wait a minute! I got something!” he shouted, fired up. He promised to catch whatever he had this time without fail. “Whoa nelly! It must be a big one from the way it's fighting back! Oh, wait until everyone sees this!”

Expecting a mighty trout or even a majestic bass, the President was naturally dismayed when all he managed to reel in was a brown boot covered in seaweed.

“It was a good effort, sir,” his bodyguard said while trying not to snicker. “Er...I'm sure you'll catch something a bit more...appetizing next time out.”

The President merely frowned.

The Secret Service agent, placing his finger up to a headset in his ear, began receiving a message directly from the White House. As he listened to it, his expression became grim, and the color of his features changed to a sickly pale.

“What's wrong?” the President inquired.

The agent composed himself enough to respond, “W-We're getting reports there's a...situation occurring around the globe at the moment, something that requires your immediate attention. Mister President.”

“...W-What do you mean?”

“There's a...call on your private video feed, sir,” the agent continued. “It's not an official communication. Someone's hacked the line.”

The President wavered in taking a computer tablet from the agent and switching it on. Though he did know who he was about to speak to, he got the feeling they couldn't be anyone with good intentions if they went so far as to hack into his personal line like this.

“Good afternoon, Mister President,” said the leader of SOAP, Scar. He waved good afternoon and crossed his legs as he sat down in a revolving chair. “How is your fishing trip going? I hope you've caught a big one. Anyway, it's a pleasure to make your acquaintance. Isn't technology fascinating nowadays? We can speak face to face like this without me even needing to be in the same room as you!”

“Who are you?! How did you access this channel?!”

“Oh, how rude of me. My name is Scar, Mister President. I am the head of a group by the name of Spies Organized Against Peace.”

The President flinched. “Y-Yes, I've heard of it before. ...Now I'm really interested in knowing what this call is about.”

“I'm flattered you know the name. Very soon, everyone else in the world will too. That's what I'm hoping for anyway.”
“What exactly are you referring to? I'm sure you must have wanted to speak with me for a reason other than casual chatter.”

“Of course. Of course. You must be a very busy man, Mister President. I'm certain you just want me to get straight to the point. You’re likely aware of the fact by now, but even as we speak, chaos is spreading throughout the world.”

“And this is your doing, correct?”

Scar smirked devilishly. “You catch on quick. Mister President. I suppose that's why you're the leader of the free world. Listen closely though since this is the important part. Within a mere matter of hours, SOAP should have the entire globe under its control. My loyal operatives are making sure of that in spite of the world’s armies making a pitiful, defensive stand.”

“You can't be serious! Do you really think that's likely?!” The President snapped. “I don't know what you're up to, but we'll fight this! Nations around the world will fight this! Your plans are bound to fail! Don't forget about WOOHP as well! They'll stop you for sure!”

“...You think so?” Scar sat forward and rested his chin atop his hands. “Mister President, the World Organization of Human Protection is no more. I've made quite sure of that. If you were expecting them to aid you in this crisis, I'm afraid I must inform you and the rest of the world are on you're on your own.”

Sufficiently alarmed, the President had a difficult time digesting this development. If WOOHP really was no more, it meant Scar and SOAP as a whole were a legitimate threat.

“Just in case anyone else is interested in stopping me, I have a deterrent.” Scar sat back again, pleased by the pallid expression on the President's face. It was precisely what he had been hoping for. “This is the real reason I am disturbing your fishing trip, Mister President.”

The President replied, “...And what do you mean by that?”

“I am currently on board a plane that is traveling above the skies of the northeastern United States. Accompanying me on this vessel is a nuclear warhead that I plan to unleash on the the capital. Your home is also there, correct? Of course, I'm incredibly willing to stay my attack if further efforts to resist my global takeover are halted. You have the power to make your country and others around the world cease and desist, Mister President. I suggest you use that power post haste.”

“...Y-You're bluffing! You have to be!”

Scar eyed a bead of sweat roll down the President's scalp. “Perhaps I am. Think about this carefully though. If I'm not, you risk the destruction of thousands, if not millions, of people. Do you really want that sort of blood on your hands? I merely need another hour to commit this act, Mister President. Your time is running short. Please, make a decision.”

The President didn't want to admit it, but his hand were tied. He couldn't risk innocent lives ignoring the threats of a madman. Still, he felt simply waving the white flag wasn't an option either.

“What is it you want exactly, Scar?! You must have a reason for doing this!”

“You are correct again, Mister President. My objective is rather simple actually.” Pausing, Scar nodded at his own talk. “I wish to cleanse this world of peace.”

“...Come again?”
“You heard me. I find peacefulness...utterly abhorrent. Peace stagnates the progress of man and makes our kind weak. If history has proven anything, it's that we humans are at our best during times of turmoil and strife. Look at how easily I was able to rid myself of WOOHP! Look at how easy it has been for my armies to assault the nations of the world one by one! The reason for this is because all of you were weak, weak because of peace! Well, I say no more. Under my rule, there will be no peace. There will be constant wars, constant struggles. I'll do whatever I must to ensure mankind treks down a brighter path. If I must sacrifice some lives in the process, so be it.”

“Y-You're insane!” The President was no longer nervous. No, rage replaced the fear in his heart, rage at a man who's reasoning he couldn't fathom. He didn't dare try to comprehend it. “I'm not standing by and allowing you to get away with this! Nuclear warhead or not, myself and the rest of this proud nation are going to stand against you!”

“Hmph. I care not if you or anyone else understands my ambitions. If you're truly intent on stopping me though, we have nothing else to discuss. I believe I have your answer on whether you're willing to surrender or not. Now then, if you'll excuse me, I have nuclear missile to unleash on your 'proud' country. At my current pace, I should make it to the capital in an hour. Tata, Mister President. Hmm, I suppose no one will be calling you that after SOAP is in control of the world!”

“W-Wait just one moment, Scar!”

The President was too late. Scar's cackling image vanished from the screen, and the President angrily tossed the tablet into the water. With sixty minutes and counting left on the clock, he still had time to stop SOAP and their machinations. Despite this, a part of him questioned if it was already too late.

“Mister President...?” said the Secret Service agent.

“...Find that plane!” the President announced. “I don't care what you have to do, but I want that madman and his plane blown out of the sky before they can cause any harm!”

“Of course, sir! We'll scramble some jets immediately!”

“Good. Good. We'll show this Scar he can't just do as he pleases, nuke or not!”

The President's thinking then shifted to Jerry Lewis and WOOHP.

This is the wrong time for them to be missing in action! Jerry, where are you?!

#

“This is getting us nowhere!” said Chris. She punched an adjacent wall, hankering to pound her skull into it next. “We've checked everywhere, but we still can't find anything!”

The others broke off their search for a way to shut down the barrier around Malibu University while Chris continue to vent her disappointment.

“Scar's probably laughing at us right now because he knows there's not a damn thing we can do to stop him!”

“C-Calm down, Chris!” said Sam. “It's okay!”

“It is not okay! How the hell could you say any of this is okay?! I've got a right to get as upset as I want! Don't you get it?! We're powerless like this! We can't do anything!”

“T-That isn't true!” said Clover, trying to douse the fire that was Chris' ire. “We can't give up! We
just have to find another way to shut down that barrier!"

“Yeah! This isn't the time for us to freak out!” added Alex.

“Shut up! Just shut the hell up, both of you!” Chris' outburst made Clover and Alex speechless. “You don't have any right to get on my case like this! None of you do! You guys can't possibly understand how I'm feeling right now! You can't possibly understand Scar like I do! Do you all still want me to calm down after he blows half of the country off the face of the Earth?!”

“That's enough, Christine! You're acting childish!” Jerry shouted.

One of Chris' eyelids jerked. “What was that?!”

“You heard me, young lady! All of us are well aware of what will happen if we don't stop Scar! You whining about it like a child isn't going to change anything however! Have you stopped for a moment and realized this is exactly how he wants you to act?!”

“He's right! You gotta keep a cool head!” said Blaine.

Tired of hearing all of this, Chris screamed at the top of her lungs, not caring if she threw out her voice in the process. It resounded throughout the massive laboratory and beyond.

“This...isn't fair!” Tears streamed down her face, whereas the strength from her legs faded. She collapsed to her knees and started to pound the floor in anger with her fists. “I can't take this anymore! I don't know what to do! I'm sick of this, sick of everything! This isn't fair at all! We're the good guys, right?! W-Why are losing then?!”

No one was sure what to do, glancing at one another for a solution. Whatever the case, they couldn't let this go on, but no one moved, content to watch Chris bawl her eyes out.

Then, Britney suddenly charged forward, stopping in front of Chris without speaking. Leering up at her, Chris' eyes enlarged when Britney slapped her across the face.

“Oh my...” said Jerry. It was obvious the others were just as stunned as him from the way their jaws hung open.

“W-What the hell was that for?!” Chris, holding her scarlet cheek, demanded to know.

With an iron-like demeanor, Britney replied, “Get a hold of yourself! Jerry's right, and you know it! Panicking like this isn't going to save anyone! Maybe you do have a right to complain! After all, Scar's taken much more from you than he has any of us, but that's no excuse to completely lose it like this! You were the one earlier that promised you wouldn't give up no matter how bleak things seemed! You were the one earlier who said you would keep fighting as long as you drew breath! What happened to all that?! What is just talk, a bunch of hot air?! You're stronger than this, Chris! I've only known you for a little while, but I can tell that much! You can't let a jerk like Scar beat you without him even throwing a single punch! Get up! We've got a mission to accomplish, and we can't do it without you!”

Silence came in the wake of Britney's tirade. Whether her words got through to Chris or not, no one could tell. The only thing Chris really did in response was wipe her face clean and sniffle.

“Shut up...” she then stated. Everyone else held their breaths. “Tsk. Where do you get off talking me like you're my mother? I...suppose you had a point with all that though. There's no way I can just give up here! You're just lucky I don't punch you in the mouth for slapping me.”
“Heh. You needed a bit of tough love!” said a winking Britney.

Her remark actually made Chris laugh.

“Wow, that just totally gave me a chill!” said Alex. “I forgot Chris could do that!”

Chris got to her feet and told Britney, “Thank you. I really did need that.”

Britney’s and the other’s reassuring grins were a stark reminder for Chris on what she was so perilously fighting for.

This isn't the time for me to be shriveling into a ball like a helpless child! That little girl from ten years is gone now! This time, things are different! I have to protect everyone!

“Glad you're feeling better, Chris,” said Sam.

“Yeah! You're totally no fun when you're all weepy like that!” Clover joked.

“We need our grumpy old Chris if we're gonna kick Scar's butt!” added Alex.

Chris' entire face glowed a radiant red. “W-Whatever! Y-You girls are too much...”

“Hey, she's actually blushing!” said Britney playfully. “Aw!”

“Whoa! Looks like she isn't as mean as he looks!” added Blaine for good measure.

Having enough of her feathers being ruffled, Chris yelled, “K-Knock it off already! Can we just get back to finding a way to shut down that barrier?!”

Her so-called friends got the rest of their giggles outs ahead of nodding. Seeing the lot of them had plenty of energy left pleased Jerry, although he wished they would use it on something more constructive.

“It's clear Scar has hidden the power source for that energy net very well. We need to put our heads together if we want any hope of finding it,” he said.

“If it's not down here, it's likely somewhere else on campus,” said Chris. “Probably somewhere we’d never expect.”

The news made Clover moan. “It'll take us forever to find it then! Mali-U is huge!”

“She's right. It's likely Scar will finish whatever he's doing before we find anything,” said Sam.

“Ugh! This totally sucks!” cried Alex. As she pouted and took a step back, she tripped on something. “Huh?! What the...?!”

Everyone cringed as crashed on the ground, but more importantly, they noticed an object of interest where she sat.

“A trap door!” exclaimed Sam.

“Hey, what kinda jerk would just leave one of those lying around?!” asked Alex, rubbing her aching behind.

Chris slapped herself on the head. “How in the hell did we miss something like that?”
Jerry took the liberty of opening the newfound entryway, revealing a staircase that led into total
darkness. Faint buzzing could be heard from the bottom.

“Man, it’s pretty dark, huh? We might end up breaking our necks trying to go down there!” chimed Blaine. His words did little to ease the nervousness that was spreading among his comrades, and they glowered at him. “Er...I'm sure we'll be fine though if we wanna investigate!”

Britney laughed halfheartedly. “Um...it really is creepy-looking down there, isn't it? Sam, uh...why don't you check it out first?!”

Sam almost bit her tongue. “H-Huh?! W-Why me?! Clover, you do it!”

“Excuse me?! I'm so not going down there alone! Alex, y-you're pretty brave!”

“M-Me?!” Alex moved her arms about frenziedly. “N-No way! There could be ghosts or something down there! Make Chris do it!”

All eyes shifted to Chris. She murmured something about their incompetence as she made her way over to the staircase. Sensing no danger, her foot touched the first step and her other the second. She made it halfway down, with everything going well until she heard a loud creek at the bottom. She froze and let out a yelp that was uncharacteristic of her.

“M-Maybe we should all go down as a group...” she suggested in a trembling voice.

“T-That sounds like a good idea,” said Jerry. A drop of sweat ran down the back of his head. It made little sense to him that six, highly trained spies were apparently afraid of the dark.

#

Chris and company made sure to huddle close together while they progressed down the stairway. Reaching the bottom, a faint, blue light awaited them, its glow letting them see two feet in front of them. It also gave them a glimpse at strange machinery in the back of the room, the source of the illumination.

“Bingo!” said Chris. Exhilaration coated her declaration. “That's gotta be it!”

“If that's the case, let's find the off switch!” said Sam.

“I'll go check for one!”

Alex raced off, yet when she neared the machine, she ran into something unseen. Electricity was sent coursing through her, and subsequently, her smoking body tipped over.

“Alex!” screamed the others, hurrying toward her blackened form.

“Ugh...I-I don't wanna ride that ride anymore, Mommy...” she uttered.

“What the hell just happened?!” asked a bewildered Chris.

Britney poked her finger out and hastily shot it back when it was zapped by the same force that nearly fried Alex to a crisp. “Looks like there's some sort of barrier right here! It might be the same kind as the one outside!”

“That's not good if it's true! We're back at square one then!” said Blaine.

“Although this does prove we're in the right place,” said Jerry. “It's clear Scar doesn't want anyone
touching his precious equipment.”

“Someone coulda told me that before...” muttered a frowning Alex.

Sam stroked her chin. “So, we have to find a way to destroy this machine without coming in contact with that barrier. Any ideas?”

One came to Chris immediately. She retrieved the Sonic Jammer Heisenberg gave her earlier. She then made her way to the barrier, activating the device and placing it down carefully.

“Alright, Heisenberg, this better work. Otherwise, I'm coming back to kick your ass.”

Her comrades weren't sure what she was up to, nor did they get a chance to ask. The Sonic Jammer started to beep, making Chris stare at it funnily, before it then exploded.

“What the...?!”

The intensity of the blast threw her and the others back while also raining down debris. Things settled down eventually, and coughing could be heard from the dissipating smoke.

“Son on a...!” Chris pushed a slab of concrete off of her and crawled her way out of some rubble. “W-What the hell was that all about?! Heisenberg...!”

Though the good doctor did mention that particular Sonic Jammer was different from the others, he neglected to tell her it also had the capacity to blow its user to bits. A snarling Chris made a vow to definitely pay Heisenberg a visit for this.

“Alright, next time you wanna try a stunt like that, Chris, warn us!” cried Clover.

“What, me being electrocuted wasn't enough for you?!” yelled Alex.

Sam, wiping herself off, said, “Well, us nearly dying aside, that certainly did the trick...”

Everyone surveyed the damage. The machinery had been without a doubt decimated.

“Yeah! We did it!” Britney was elated by this development, despite the blood trickling down her forehead. “Does that mean that energy net outside is history?”

“Only one way to find out!” said Blaine.

“A little help here, Spies?” Try as he might, Jerry couldn't remove a pile of heavy rocks that rested on top of him. Fortunately, the others came to his aid. “My word, that was something! Is everyone alright?”

Britney wrapped a bandage around cranium. “Everything's fine over here!”

Chris hacked up some smoke. “No complaints here either.”

“Then let's check upstairs to see if that barrier really is out of our hair,” said Jerry.

They confirmed Scar's energy net was no more upon their return to the main portion of the laboratory. However, that wasn't the only interesting thing they stumbled on.

“That...wasn't here when we first left, right?” asked Chris, staring blankly at the bright, pink jet
sitting in the middle of the room.

“I think we'd all remember seeing something like that!” shouted Sam.

“Especially when it's so tacky!” said Clover.

“You know anything about this, Jerry?” asked Alex.

He stuttered at first, then retorting, “T-This is a surprise to me as well, girls! All the planes I had at my disposal were destroyed by Scar!”

Britney gagged. “Whatever the case, that plane certainly is gaudy!”

“Gaudy is it? You shouldn't speak so poorly of the chariot that's going to get you and your friends out of here, my lovely!”

Chris froze on the spot. “T-That voice...”

“Yeah, I recognize it too,” said Clover with a sigh. “Kyla Sacks!”

As if being introduced on a talk show, Kyla popped out from behind the plane, waving and blowing kisses at those present.

“Well, she certainly knows how to make an entrance,” chimed Sam.

“How are we doing today, my lovelies?” Kyla said, clearly in a good mood.

“Hey, what are you doing here?!” asked Alex.

“Hmm? Did I not just explain how I'm here to get you all out of this awful place? Ugh! Heisenberg never mentioned how dreadful the interior was! It looks like a dungeon in here!”

“That isn't what she's asking!” shouted an agitated Chris. “You say you're here to help us, but why in the world would you want to do that?! I highly doubt you're doing this out of the kindness of your heart, lady!”

Kyla inhaled dramatically. “I'm honestly hurt by your words! Sure, we've had our differences in the past, not to mention you guys threw me in a dirty, old jail cell! Plus, you ruined my plans to get revenge on all those horrible, beautiful girls at the Miss Mali-U pageant! Not to mention...!”

“You're seriously not helping your case!” said Britney.

“Er...b-but I'm willing to put all that aside for the time being in order to save the day! Besides, that Heisenberg practically begged me to do this! I really can't stand dealing with pushy, old men like that, so here I am!”

“It appears we have our ride, Spies!” said Jerry with a smile.

“Finally! Someone who isn't complaining about my generosity!”

“It's more that I really don't want to be see in such an ugly plane,” Chris murmured.

Kyla clapped her hands. “Let's go! Let's go! We don't want to be late for our date with destiny, do we? Besides, it took me all day just to get into this stupid school because of that barrier! We really should get a move on if we want to catch Scar!”
“At least she seems excited about all this,” said Sam.

“You think this is a trap?” asked Alex.

“It's so gotta be!” added Clover. “Remember what she did to my face?! That proves she's totally evil!”

Kyla's temperament soured. “You know, I can hear you brats!”

“We don't have much of a choice if we wanna follow Scar. I say we trust her,” said Britney.

“I shouldn't even let you on after you completely disrespected my fabulous plane earlier, you whiny brat!”

“...You're right, Clover. She is totally evil!”

“A-Alright, alright! Enough already! Let's just go!” Blaine pleaded.

Clover and Britney shot Kyla a rather nasty glance prior to boarding her plane with the others.

Miffed by this, she then perceived one passenger who hadn't gotten on yet.

“What's the problem?” she asked Chris, who crossed her arms rebelliously. “Still don't trust me? Or perhaps you have a fear of flying?”

“Something like that. The last time I was on a plane...things didn't end so well.”

“Is that so? I never imagined someone like you would be afraid of such a thing!”

“We all have our demons to deal with. ...I still need to ask you something, Kyla.”

Kyla smirked. “You still want to know why I'm helping you all, right?”

“...I don't get it. What's in it for you? I don't care what Heisenberg told you; there's no way his words alone were enough to spur you into assisting your enemies. Maybe you think WOOHP will release you if you do your part in saving the world?”

“My, you can be rather nasty when you want to be! It's a shame. You have such a pretty face that it always breaks my heart to see you frowning so much.”

On cue, Chris scowled even harder, inducing a sigh out of Kyla.

“If you really want to know why I'm helping you out like this on spur of the moment, it's because I'm not an idiot. I might be what you consider a bad apple, but even I realize how awful things will be if Scar gets his way. I guess Heisenberg must have come to the same conclusion.”

“...I see. I suppose I'm just going to have to believe you for the time being. Thank you.”

Kyla's cleaned out her ears. “Wow. Never thought I'd hear that coming from you!”

“I've got one more question for you before we go.”

“And you're so talkative today! You know, you aren't as bratty as I thought!”

Chris sulked. “...I'm going to hit you if you keep this up.”

Not hearing this, Kyla went on with, “Lemme guess...you wanna ask where I got this awesome
plane from, don't you? Don't worry! I didn't steal it or anything! Being an ex-supermodel has its perks! I bought this baby with cold, hard cash!"

“Actually, I was just curious why you decided to paint it such a hideous color.”

Again, Kyla's attitude worsened. “...Just get inside already.”

Everyone strapped themselves in for what would most certainly be a bumpy ride. Kyla helmed the controls and initiated the lengthy sequence of getting the plane up and running.

“Alright, you guys! Buckle up tight! If you have any food or drinks, please refrain from spilling them because I just got new leather for the seats, and I don't want any of you kids ruining it!”

“Hey! Where are the peanuts?!” said Blaine.

“And the in-flight movie?!?” added Britney.

“This is the worst flight ever!” chimed Clover.

“...I see you brats have jokes,” growled Kyla as she listened to them chortle like kids in a candy store. “...Am I seriously leaving the fate of the world in the hands of a bunch of teenagers?”

“Please proceed, Miss Sacks. Time is of the essence,” Jerry reminded her.

“That's what I'm trying to do, but these brats...!”

“While I sympathize with you, we really have to find Scar! You must hurry!”

“Jeez! Okay! I heard you the first time! Are all old guys pushy like this?!”

Chris sealed the entrance behind her and took the co-pilot's seat.

“...Just what do you think you're doing?” asked Kyla, furrowing her eyelids.

“Exactly what you think,” Chris answered. “I don't trust you flying this thing by yourself.”

“Is that so? I'll have you know you're in perfectly good hands!”

“...Do you even know how to fly a plane?”

“I-I got it here okay, didn't I?!”

Her claim did nothing to make Chris feel at ease.

“Do you have any idea where Scar is right now, Miss Sacks?” asked Jerry.

“Not a clue. Guess we could just fly around the area and see if we can spot him.”

“That'll take up too much time!” said Sam.

“Well, do you have a better idea?!”

“...I know where Scar is,” said Chris without delay. “He's...likely heading toward Washington D.C. If we move quickly enough, we should be able to catch up to him.”
“...How come you sound so sure about that?” Sam inquired with an air of skepticism.

“...It's not important. Let's just go.”

“What do you mean?! Is there something you're not telling us, Chris?!”

“I said let's just drop it! You wanna stop Scar or not?!”

Sam turned to Kyla, declaring, “Turn off the plane! We aren't leaving until Chris tells us the truth!”

“Seriously?!” Kyla sensed a headache coming on. “This thing is such a pain to get going though...”

An intense stare down between Sam and Chris followed, and both looked moments away from swooping on the other.

“Chris, if there's something you're neglecting to tell us...” started Jerry.

“I already told you idiots that I have nothing to say!”

At this point, no one was buying anything that came out of her mouth. Chris, picking up on her their hostility, rolled her eyes.

“...Christine, it's going to be very difficult for us to trust in you if you persist on being dishonest like this. Anything you keep to yourself merely helps Scar further his goals.”

Her stubbornness aside, Chris acknowledged the validity in Jerry's speech. That's why she decided, against her better judgment, to reveal to the truth to her comrades.

“...Fine. Whatever. You guys win. This has been eating at me anyway, so here goes! I know where Scar is going because everything that's happened thus far, we planned together. Yes, we've been plotting on how best SOAP could take over the world for as long as I can remember. The situation at Malibu University and the Tabithas seem like a new addition to the plan, but otherwise, everything Scar has done is the same as what we eventually decided on. We thought that if we took out the capital using a nuclear warhead, it would show the world how much of a threat SOAP was. It would deter anyone else from trying to fight against us out of fear we would strike at them next.

That's...about everything. There's a chance Scar might've changed things up or added something else to the plan, but if he did, I wouldn't know. Honest.”

Her tale generated quietude within the plane, a reaction she foresaw. It was precisely the reason she wanted to remain hushed on the matter. She could solely imagine what everyone wanted to do to her now.

“...I guess it makes sense now!” Clover said thereafter. “That's totally why you've been so crazy about trying to stop Scar!”

“How come you didn't just tell us this before?” asked Alex.

“Like I said, it's been eating at me anyway, so here goes! I know where Scar is going because everything that's happened thus far, we planned together. Yes, we've been plotting on how best SOAP could take over the world for as long as I can remember. The situation at Malibu University and the Tabithas seem like a new addition to the plan, but otherwise, everything Scar has done is the same as what we eventually decided on. We thought that if we took out the capital using a nuclear warhead, it would show the world how much of a threat SOAP was. It would deter anyone else from trying to fight against us out of fear we would strike at them next.

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“How come you didn't just tell us this before?” asked Alex.

“Like I said, it's been eating at me, but...I already felt guilty over all the damage Scar has caused. I didn't want to add more fuel to the fire by making you guys suspect me of still working for him. Besides, I didn't notice what he was up to until it was too late. After hearing about that missile and him escaping in an airplane though, it then hit me. ...I'm beginning to think the reason Scar erased my memories was so I wouldn't be able to tell anyone about all this.”

“I...see,” said Sam with a nod.
“There it is then. Happy?”

“Very much so, yes,” said Jerry.

The cheery manner in which he spoke threw Chris for a loop. “W-What? W-Why? The only reason I even know all this is because I worked for SOAP! Don’t you care that I did horrible things?! Aren’t you bothered the reason Scar was able to get this far is because of me?! And would you stop smiling like that already?!”

“While there may be some truth in your words, it’s also because of your jaded past that we have a realistic chance at stopping Scar. That man was overconfident when he told you of his plans and left you alive. Thanks to this, we have the opportunity to use his hubris against him. You may have been misled all these years, but accepting your mistakes and owning up to them, Christine, takes real courage. Your parents would be proud of you trying to make things right, so you shouldn’t despair either.”

Chris, becoming a bit misty-eyed, quickly looked the other way. “W-What in the world are you going on about, old man? Tch. You must be getting senile or something.”

“Hey, are you crying over there?” asked Kyla.

“S-Shut up! Start the plane already! We have a maniac to stop, remember?!”

“Heh! Now you're talking!”

The pink plane’s engine roared to life. As it did so, Chris made a solemn promise to close the book between she and Scar once and for all

*I'm taking that bastard down, even if it's the last thing I do!*

#

“This is everything I could have dreamed of and more. Yes, I must admit that I’ve outdone myself.”

A nuclear warhead of unmeasurable destruction sat in a pitch black room alongside its creator. Scar stroked it proudly, practically itching to unleash it upon the world. Having yet to reach his destination however, fate dictated he wait a bit longer.

“The years of gathering resources and biding my time have proved fruitful. Soon, I will be able to steer the human race back toward its natural course.”

“How come you always talk to yourself like that, boss?”

Scar, miffed at being interrupted, shifted to the Tabitha standing in the doorway. “...A mere machine couldn't possibly hope to understand me or my ambitions.”

“Ha! I can barely even understand a thing you're saying half the time!”

Shaking his head, Scar walked past her and had a seat at the front of his plane. The view from the large window, a blue and cloud-filled sky, was breathtaking. He intended to enjoy it to the fullest, hence the reason he whipped out some champagne and a glass.

“Oh! Oh! Could I have some?! Pretty please!” Tabitha said, bouncing around.

“...You do realize you're an android, correct?”
“Huh? What's that got to do with anything?”

“...Strange. I don't recall creating you and your fellow siblings with such...questionable intelligence. It must be a bug left over from Heisenberg's design.” Scar didn't dwell on the matter and poured himself some liquor. “Have there been any problems with SOAP's global take over?”

“Nope! Everything's a-OK! Most of the armies around the world are only putting up lame resistance to your attacks now!” Tabitha happily said. She then pumped her fist, adding, “We are so kicking butt out there!”

Scar took a swig of his drink. “That is music to my ears.”

“Say, how are you drinking that with that metal mouth of yours?”

“...Why is it you ask so many questions?”

“Hey! You can't answer my question with a question!”

“...Right.” Scar opted to change the subject. “I'm quite shocked at how helpless the nations of the world are in trying to resist me. Perhaps they relied on WOOHP more than they realized. This is exactly the weakness I'm attempting to correct. We must bring the hammer down now. It is SOAP's time to reign supreme. We will build a better world, a stronger world. I've waited long and hard for this day, but finally, it's here.”

“Huh? You say something? I think I had to reboot there for a sec!” said Tabitha.

Scar bitterly polished off his drink. “...Why am I even wasting my breath on the likes of you?”

Just then, red lights began to flash throughout the jet, followed closely by the blaring of an alarm.

“Thank God...” said an exasperated Scar, glad to have something to distract him from Tabitha. “Hmm. What could that be though?”

“Ah! Ah! Oh God, what's happening?!” said Tabitha, thoroughly freaked out.

“Looks like we have guests. Interesting.”

Scar confirmed this by checking the radar. Outside, a platoon of United States Air Force jets raced to catch up to him. Despite there being more of them than he could count on his fingers, Scar smiled.

“It seems the President isn't willing to comply with my demands after all. A pity.”

“Whoa! What are you gonna do, boss?!” asked Tabitha.

“Simple. We exterminate some vermin.”

“Oh! Gotcha! Want me to go out there and beat 'em silly?!”

“No need. Just sit back and watch me go to work.”

The jets started to shoot at his aircraft, yet their bullets bounced right off a blue barrier.

“You're seriously underestimating me if you think something like that would work,” said Scar confidently. “How about this?”

With the press of a button, Scar launched a missile whose speed caught a number of the fighter jets
off guard, destroying them. The rest managed to veer aside in time to regroup.

“Yeah! Fireworks!” exclaimed Tabitha, her eyes lighting up.

“There's plenty more where that came from,” Scar assured her. He touched another switch on the plane's dashboard, this time unleashing an innumerable amount of smaller missiles upon his foes. Though they tried evasive actions, the projectiles finished off the rest of the US fighters in seconds. In the wake of their eradication, Scar furnished himself another drink to celebrate. “That was a waste of ammunition.”

“Wow! That was awesome, boss!” yelled Tabitha. “You got 'em good!”

Scar readily agreed. “I trust that display of power will be enough to dissuade the President from trying another stunt like that.”

“Cool! Can I have some champagne now?! Pretty please!”

“...I'm tempted to just give you some in the hopes you'll be short circuited.”

In spite of him expecting no further disruptions, the alert signaling a nearby object went off again.

“Just one plane?” he said, staring at the radar.

“Huh? Are those guys back for more or something?” asked Tabitha. “They sure are persistent!”

“...Something tells me that isn't the case.”

His intuition ended up being spot on when Kyla Sacks' pink luxury liner came up behind his own airplane.

“T-There!” said Chris excitedly while pointing. “There's Scar! Come on! Punch it! We can't let him get away!”

“Okay! Okay! I get the message! You don't have to scream my ear off!” complained Kyla.

“Looks like you were right predicting where Scar would be, Chris!” said Sam, flashing a grin.

“Since we found him, let's hurry before it's too late!” said Clover.

Alex added, “We can't screw up now after going through all that crap back at Mali-U!”

“Agreed! Come on, lady! Move this hunk of junk!” cried Chris.

“Would you chatterboxes just shut up already?!” Kyla howled. “I already said I get it! I'm going as fast as I can! This isn't a fighter jet though! None of you brats are even chipping in on gas money, so I don't wanna hear anymore about me going slow!”

Everyone screamed when Scar proceeded to fire at them.

“D-Dodge! DODGE!!!” shouted Britney.

“I'm aware! Leave it to me!” replied Kyla. “Ugh! The premiums on this thing are going to skyrocket!”

Her plane jerked around the sky, avoiding the bullets racing at it somehow.
“Hmph. It appears they're quite good,” said Scar. “Can this handle this though?”

“Oh, you've got to be kidding me!” said Kyla in response to the hundreds of missiles flying straight toward her craft. “Everyone better have their seat belts on!”

“Doesn't this thing have any weapons?!” asked Chris.

“Are you serious?! I told you, this isn't a fighter jet! I got this thing so I could take peaceful voyages on my time off, not to hunt down homicidal maniacs!”

“Dammit! Just dodge those missiles then! We can't die here!”

“T-There's no way I can avoid so many of them!”

“Uh...g-gimme a sec!” Chris channeled her thoughts. “Okay! Don't worry about dodging them all! Just get closer!”

“Closer?! Are you crazy?! That plane is armed to the teeth!”

“I don't care! I have to get on it, so get me close enough to it!”

“Tsk! That's easy for you to say! Your expensive plane isn't the one about to take a pounding!”

“Please, just do as Chris says!” said Sam. “We don't have time to debate!”

“Agh! Fine! You brats owe me one though!” Kyla breathed deeply and steered her machine straight into the heart of danger. “Come on, girl! Hang in there!”

“The plane's a girl?”

“Not now, Alex!” said Clover.

As expected, Scar's missiles began colliding with Kyla's plane, puncturing holes everywhere. Thick, black smoke emitted from them, yet miraculously, the plane held up, closing the distance between it and Scar.

“Aw man! We're really cutting it close now!” said Blaine.

“This is so stupid!” mumbled a sweating Kyla. “I think one of those things hit the engine! If you're going to do something, you better do it soon because I can't stay in the air!”

“That's fine,” replied Chris. She headed for the door, saying, “You did well, Kyla Sacks. You weren't as useless as I figured you'd be.”

“W-Where in the world do you think you're going?! And what do you mean 'useless'?!”

“I told you, I need to get on that plane! Thanks for the ride!”

The instant Chris jarred the plane's entryway wide-open, torrential air swept past her. Ignoring it, she jumped out.

“Y-You crazy idiot! Haven't you ever heard of depressurization?!” cried Kyla.

Chris free-fell ahead of landing right on top of Scar's vessel. She almost lost her grip, but employed her fingernails to latch onto the metallic surface. Fighting against strong winds to maintain her balance, she crawled her way toward a hatch, twisting its lever open. She then leaped inside the
opening, fully aware there was no going back now.

“That was close,” she said, catching her breath. Her heart was racing, and it wasn’t solely the cause of her prior stunt. “Thank goodness I’m a spy. Then again, even with my training, I should never try something stupid like that again.”

Three more people entered the confined space, startling her.

“That was close,” she said, catching her breath. Her heart was racing, and it wasn’t solely the cause of her prior stunt. “Thank goodness I’m a spy. Then again, even with my training, I should never try something stupid like that again.”

“Huh? Where did you guys come from?” she said to Sam, Alex, and Clover.

“Ugh! That wind totally ruined my hair!” screamed Clover as she tried to fix it.

“Tell me about it,” muttered Alex, doing the same.

“Next time you do something like that, Chris...you know what? Scratch that! Never do something like that again! You nearly gave us all heart attacks!” said Sam.

“Heh. I was actually just thinking the same thing. By the way, you girls still haven’t explained what you’re doing here.”

“We couldn’t let you do this alone, Chris!” exclaimed Clover.

“Yeah! We got this far together, so let’s finish this together!” said Alex.

Chris smiled. “I see. Well, suit yourselves then. What happened to the others though?”

“Kyla should be making an emergency landing in the ocean right about now,” explained Sam. “The others just didn’t have time to jump out like we all did, so I guess it’s just going to be the four of us from here on out!”

Chris nodded, feeling that deep down inside, she preferred it this way.

“Say, where are we right now?” asked Alex.

“I dunno, but can we go pretty soon? I can barely move my arm in here!” said Clover.

“Agh!” said Chris, hitting her head on the ceiling. “Yeah, I hear you.”

“This might be the service area of the plane. Assuming Scar is at the head of this thing, we should get out of here and make our way there!” said Sam. Her friends had no complaints with her plan of action.

Chris exhaled deeply. “I guess this really is it then. Either we stop Scar, or he stops us.”

“N-No pressure though!” Alex nervously retorted.

“Some gadgets would be really nice right now!” said Clover wearily. She then gulped when her friends glared at her. “I-I get that we don’t have any! I was just thinking out loud! Jeez! I totally never said I didn’t mind doing things the old-fashioned way!”

“Well, let’s not stand around talking about doing something. Let’s go!” said Chris.

“Yeah! Alright, girls! It’s spy time!” proclaimed Sam.

“...Must you say that every time?”
Blushing, Sam answered, “Well...yeah! It's kinda my thing!”

Chris shrugged. “...Spy time it is then.”

The four hyped themselves up, yet it came to an abrupt halt when the flooring underneath them began to creak.

“That...can't be good,” said Alex.

“Don't say that! I'm sure it's...uh...nothing!” said Sam timidly.

“Couldn't you at least sound a little more convincing?” said Chris.

The metallic floor squeaked again and then broke apart thanks to the weight pressed against it. Shrieking, the four spies tumbled until crashing onto the hallway below.

“A-Are we alive?” asked an unmoving Clover.

“I don't know. It hurts everywhere, so I must be at least,” Chris responded.

Sam, rubbing her skull, stood. “C-Come on, girls! We can't throw in the towel already!”

“Uh...even if there's a bunch of those freaky Tabithas everywhere?” asked Alex.

“Huh? What are you...?”

Sam gagged on her own spit when she caught wind of what her friend spoke of. Scar's killer androids filled both ends of the corridor.

“Dammit! We don't have time for this!” whispered Chris.

“I know, I know, but they aren't just going to stand aside for us!” said Sam.

“We gotta take 'em down then!” Alex declared.

“Haven't I broken enough nails fighting these things?!” cried Clover.

The four readied to brawl but became puzzled when the Tabithas failed to move a muscle.

“...Okay then,” said Chris. “What's going on?”

Sam carefully walked over to one and knocked on its forehead. “No response. It's like they're not activated or something!”

“Works for me! Let's just get outta here while we have the chance!” said Clover.

“Yeah! These things creep me out anyway!” said a shivering Alex.

The four proceeded to tiptoe their way past the inactive androids.

“And just where do you think you troublemakers are going?” said a voice over an intercom just then.

“Huh?! W-Who was that?! A-A ghost?!” Alex said, hiding behind Chris.

Sam frowned. “Doubt it. I think this person is very much alive!”

“Don't tell me it's...!” Clover began.
“Scar...!” snarled Chris. “Where are you?! Come out and show your face, you coward!”

“I believe I'll have to decline your offer, Christine. It would be rude of me though if I didn't have someone there to welcome you.”

“Yeah, I don't like the sound of that at all...” said Sam.

Sensing trouble, the four gradually turned the other way. While they did, the slumbering Tabithas came to life one by one.

Chris shouted, “Dammit! Saw that one coming!”

“This is the wrong time for you to be prophetic, Chris!” replied Sam.

The girls backed into one another, grimacing at the sheer number of enemies coming at them. The giggling Tabithas didn't get the chance to attack them though. A weird energy cage materialized around Chris and the others just then.

“What the...?! T-This is the same kind of barrier that was around Mali-U!” said Chris.

“Which means we can't even touch it!” added Sam. “Ugh! This isn't good!”

“Tell me about it! How in the world did we get caught so fast?!” asked Clover.

“This has gotta be like a new record for us,” Alex stated dryly.

“This isn't the time for jokes, Alex. We need to do something!” Sam barked.

Chris smacked her lips as purple smoke spewed up from vents on the flooring. “...We might be too late, ladies.”

“...Oh, this looks bad,” murmured Sam.

“You and your bad feelings, Sammy!” yelled Clover. “I swear, you're as bad as Chris!”

“H-Huh? S-Speaking of bad feelings, I'm...feeling a little dizzy all of a sudden...” stuttered Alex, fluttering around.

Chris, doing the same, replied, “Y-Yeah. I think this is...sleeping...gas...”

Unable to stand any longer, Clover fell over. “T-Totally...not...cool...”

The effects of the gas knocked the four out straightway while the Tabithas swarmed over to their still bodies.

#

“Huh? What's...going on? Where...is this?”

Chris could think of no better way to describe her surroundings other than to call it an expansive void of nothingness. Other than the color white, she was its sole inhabitant. Naturally confused, she wandered around in search of another person or at the very least, something to tell her where she was.

“How did I even get here? I...don't understand.”
The sides of her head began to throb with anguish. She recoiled, being able to tell it was more than a simple migraine. There was something of the utmost importance she was moments ago doing, yet whatever it pertained to was lost on her now. Her only goal now was escaping from wherever she was presently.

“Wait, who...?”

She had to squint, but she was positive another person stood in the distance, someone who wasn't there mere seconds ago. When she called out to them, she got no response. This forced her to cautiously make her way over to them. Mere inches away, she tapped on their shoulder. The individual, startled, promptly did an about-face in response.

“Huh?! D-Don't scare me like that, Chris! You always did like sneaking up on me!”

“That's funny. Sam said the same thing earlier when I...w-wait! M-Mother?!”

Chris was now the one astonished. The woman beaming before her was without a doubt her mother, yet this fact made little sense. Her mother was dead. Nevertheless, she just knew her eyes weren't deceiving her.

“Why are you looking at me like that, Chris? Do I have a zit on my face or something?!” Diane asked. She panicked, touching her face in search of a blemish. “Y-You think I’d be old enough not to get those anymore.”

“A zit?’ N-No...t-that's not it...”

“Ah! I bet you're amazed to see me, aren't you? Heh. I guess that's not too surprising!”

Diane fashioned a 'V' using her fingers, and Chris mutely gazed at her.

S-She has to be Mother! No one else would act like such an idiot at her age...

“...You're thinking poorly of your dear mother, aren't you?! I can tell, young lady!”

Chris covered her mouth. “N-No, ma'am! I-I apologize! B-But, can you tell me what you're doing here?! Where am I?! I...don't understand!"

“Well...uh...hmm. It's kind of hard to explain! I didn't come alone though!”

Chris understood the significance of her claim when someone else put their hand on her shoulder. None other than her father, Nathanial, smiled down on her. Although there were thousands of things she wanted to say to him, nothing left her open mouth.

“You hanging in there alright, kiddo?” said Nathanial. He roughly rubbed her head, ruining her hair. He would often tease her like this back in the day as well. It got on her nerves back then, but now, she didn't even think to complain. “Man, you've gotten tall! You still can't hold a candle to your old man though! Huh! That's weird! You're so quiet now too! Back in the day, we couldn't get you to shut up even if we tried!”

“F-Father?”

“Hmm? You want to know if it's really me, right? Well, just take a good look! There isn't another man more handsome in the world, right?!”

As Nathanial laughed, the doubt in Chris' mind and heart vanished. Without any doubt, the two with
her were her beloved parents. A storm of feelings overwhelmed her, and losing her effort to fight them back, tears began to roll down her face.

“Well, she still does that it seems,” joked Diane. “I'm glad though our daughter has grown up to be a fine woman.”

“Yeah, she's a real looker alright! Just like her mother here!” said Nathanial light-heartedly. “I bet all the boys chase after her!”

“I...still don't understand!” Chris loudly said. “What is this?! H-How could you two possibly be here?! Am I hallucinating?! Am I dead?! I-I must be!”

“Don't worry about the details, Chris. We just wanted to come and tell you not to give up! We're both cheering for you to take down Scar!”

“Scar...?” repeated Chris slowly. Her eyes then lit up. “T-That's right! Scar! I have to stop him! I have to get back to that plane! Sam and the others, they...!”

“Easy there!” said Nathanial, pulling her back. “You've still got plenty of time to save the day, kiddo!”

“Just promise us you'll be careful, alright? Scar...he...well...” Diane's sentence went off course.

“I know,” Chris stated. “I...know. I know better than anyone. I'll be careful. Mother. Father. I'm...sorry.”

“Hmm? Why are you apologizing?”

“Yeah! You've got nothing to be sorry for!” added Nathanial.

“H-Huh?! But...I let Scar trick me all these years! After what he did to you two, I...!”

Diane pressed her finger against Chris' lips. “That's enough! What's done is done!”

“That's right! You can't dwell on the past, Chris! It won't change anything!”

“B-But Father, I...!”

“No buts! Do you really think you can stop Scar with all that regret weighing you down?! It doesn't matter what he did to us! All that matters now is putting an end to his plans before somebody else gets hurt! Do you think you're up for it, kiddo?”

Chris mulled the matter over. “...Y-Yes, but...I apologize.”

“Huh? Didn't we just tell you to stop saying that?!” said Diane.

“No, it's...about something else. You see, I've been kicking myself in the face ever since I learned the truth about what happened to you two. Deep down inside, I blamed myself for your deaths. I regretted not being strong enough at the time to prevent them. The two of you are right though. Beating myself up isn't going to solve a damn thing! I promise you, I will stop Scar! I will end things once and for all!”

“She's a good listener now too!” said Diane, surprised. “You really have grown up, haven't you, Chris?”

Scarlet-faced, Chris replied, “I-I suppose so...”
“Looks like we’re just about out of time,” said Nathanial.

“Huh? W-What are you talking about?” asked Chris. She then gasped as her mother and father started to fade away.

“Already huh? It’s a shame, but I’m just grateful we got to meet our little girl again!” said Diane tearfully.

“Yeah! It looks like she doesn’t need us as much as we figured!” said Nathanial with another mighty chuckle. “She’s really all grown up now!”

“W-Where are you two going?! W-Wait! You can’t go again! Wait a moment!” cried Chris. She tried grabbing them, but her hand merely passed through.

“Heh. Sorry, kiddo! We’d stay if we could, but...” Nathanial shook his head. “Don’t fret over us anymore! Just try to hang in there, alright?”

“That’s right! You can do it, Chris! You’re our little girl! Heh, I guess you aren’t so little anymore! No matter what happens, never give up!” added Diane.

“I-I...won’t let you two down!” Chris shouted. “I’ll make you proud!”

“Like we were ever worried about something like that!” said a winking Nathanial. “You’re our kid! Our blood runs through your veins! Because of that, we have the utmost faith in you!”

“Don’t worry though, Chris! Even if we’re not here with you anymore, we’ll always be watching over you!” said Diane. “You’re a good girl, okay! Don’t worry about stuff so much! You have your whole life ahead of you after all this!”

“A-Alright, Mother. Father. I understand...”

Chris wiped her face clean as her parents waved her a final goodbye.

Gradually opening her heavy eyelids, Chris came to her senses.

“H-Huh?! What the...?! Where am I now?!”

Glowing chains bound her arms and legs. On further inspection, she noted them tied behind a tall, metal post. Sam, Alex, and Clover were nearby and in the same predicament.

“This is...the front of Scar’s plane!” she muttered. She guessed the roar of the airplane’s engine was what stirred her from her sleep. “...I get it. The place with my parents...that was just a dream. Logically speaking, that makes sense. Still, it felt so real...”

“You’re finally awake, Christine.”

Chris, gasping, had to hastily get herself together at hearing the all too familiar voice of Scar. The man in question smirked underneath his mask while he stepped over to her.

D-Dammit! I can’t defend myself like this! I’m screwed if he...!

“You did always have a tendency to sleep in. This whole thing is quite nostalgic,” Scar continued. Though bracing for the worst, Chris calmed some when Scar simply circled around her. “What’s the matter, Christine? Afraid I’m going to bite? Don’t worry. I have no plans to hurt you, not yet anyway.
I suppose you always had a sort of...cautious air about you whenever I was around, even before you knew the truth.”

“Can you blame me?! Even just looking at you right now is making my skin crawl, bastard!”

“...I'm honestly shocked to hear such language from you, Christine. Especially after I've treated you like a loving parent all these years...”

“Get real, you freak!” Chris roared. “My real parents are gone! In case you've forgotten, that's all thanks to you! You really must be going insane if you're seriously putting yourself on their level!”

“Hmph. You're correct on that point. I have long since surpassed Nathanial and Diane. There's a reason I'm standing here before you, unlike them.”

“Tsk! I'm going to...!”

The image of her parents momentarily blinked into her mind, and she recalled their words of always being with her.

That's right. He's doing this on purpose. He's trying to get me rattled up so I don't think straight. He might know me well, but I'm not letting him get his way this time!

“Is something the matter, Christine?”

“...No.” Chris' worked her frown into a smirk. “Nothing at all. I was just thinking of the expression you'll make once I take you down and end all this.”

“...I don't recall you having a sense of humor like that. I suppose you've changed some after all, Christine.”

“Do me a favor and stop calling me that, alright?”

“And what would you prefer me to call you then?”

“...The girl who's going to deflate that swollen head of yours!”

Scar wasn't so laid-back anymore. “...Yes, that sense of humor of yours is definitely new. I can't say I like it very much.”

Their ongoing conversation roused Sam, Clover, and Alex out of their slumber.

“Man, that was a good nap!” said Alex, yawning voraciously.

“I'm...uh...glad you enjoyed it, Alex, but I'm thinking it may have come at the wrong time!” said Sam, taking instant heed of their predicament.

Clover, fighting against her bindings, declared, “Hey, let us go, you creep! What gives?!”

“You're wasting your energy trying to break those restraints, WOOHP spy,” said Scar. “They're made of...”

“You don't have to bother explaining,” said Chris. “He's right though. I've seen him use these chains before. We're not getting free with brute force alone.”

“What are we gonna do then?!” cried Alex.
“Instead of uselessly struggling any further, the four of you should just sit back and enjoy the view.” Scar gestured toward the front window and fashioned himself another drink. “It’s quite lovely, isn’t it?”

“Q-Quit messing around! What do you intend to do with us?!” asked Sam.

“...I need to commend you four for getting this far. I never imagined you would even be able to escape Malibu University. As a reward, I'll allow you girls to be first hand witnesses to my rise to power.”

“Ugh! You really are a psycho!” Clover asserted. “You can't just go around blowing up whole cities!”

“I can...and I will. In case you've forgotten, there's no one left to oppose me. None of you need to worry though. I'll dispose of you bothersome flies as soon as I'm finished wiping Washington D.C. off the map.”

Alongside a confident snicker, he went back to drinking, leaving the four behind him in a state of dread.

“This is really, really bad, girls! We have to do something and fast!” whispered Sam.

“I know, I know! Just...let me think for a second!” retorted Chris.

“Well, whatever it is, you better think fast!” said Alex.

“T-That's it!” Chris quietly proclaimed.

“W-Whoa. I didn't think she'd come up with something that fast!”

“Girls! I need you to keep him talking for a minute! I don't care what you say, just make sure he isn't paying any attention to me!”

“Huh? What for?” asked Clover.

“I don't know either, but we'll have to go with whatever she's planning for now! We don't have any more time to waste!” said Sam. As Alex and Clover agreed, she faced Scar. “S-Say, Scar! What are you planning to do after you destroy the capital?! Even if you manage to succeed, I doubt you'll scare as many people as you think you will! The world will still fight back against you and SOAP!”

“Yeah! The only reason you’re even winning in the first place is because you caught everyone off guard!” said Clover. “The second they get a chance to regroup, you are so going down!”

“You do realize someone's just gonna nuke you back eventually if you decide to go crazy with the nuclear warheads, right?!” asked Alex. “You're just causing chaos for no reason!”

“'Chaos?' Is that what you think this is? Ladies, my actions are solely for the betterment of mankind. The reason for the advancement of the human race thus far is because it has followed its primal instincts. War. Strife. Constant struggles. Adversity. Discrimination. And most importantly, hatred. It is because of these thing we are now the dominant species on this planet. It is because we fight amongst one another and weed out the weak that we reign supreme. That is Darwinism at its finest. Unfortunately, the world at large has mostly gotten away from that. It's become weak and feeble. Progress has stagnated as such. Most of the issue stems from the efforts of Jerry Lewis and WOOHP. They've been rounding up criminals left and right, indiscriminately locking away those the world needs most! That foolish man and his organization...they've been a major thorn in my side for a very
long time. Everything's different now. Yes, WOOHP is no more. From the ashes of it will come a
better world, one painstakingly created by yours truly. I'm surprised I haven't received more praise
for my self-sacrificing efforts. Rather, the majority of fools out there choose to fight against me. They
choose to fight against destiny. It's rather pathetic, don't you think? Then again, I believe you girls
would know first hand how simpleminded it is."

“...Y-You really believe all that, don't you?!” said Sam in total disbelief. Although she wasn't aware,
her forehead was drenched in a cold perspiration, a by-product of beholding Scar's madness. “Y-You
seriously believe you're doing the right thing here, Scar!”

“He really is a psycho if he thinks people are gonna thank him for blowing up half the country!”
Clover hollered.

“Uh...c-can't we just turn this plane around and talk about this? I mean, there's totally still time for
you to stop all this!” pleaded Alex.

Hearing this prompted Scar to explode into a tirade of laughter. The scene, while disturbing, came as
no surprise to his prisoners. It just made them wonder why they were even attempting to reason with
such a lunatic.

“You just had to get him started, Alex...” said a groaning Clover.

“Ah, I remember being so naive when I was around your age, ladies,” said Scar, gaining control of
himself. “Did you think you would simpy waltz in here and ask me to stop, then I'd do it? That's just
the kind of foolishness Jerry Lewis instills into the minds of his agents. Trying to play the hero is a
complete waste of time. I learned that the hard way during my employment at WOOHP years ago.
There's little point in putting your life on the line for others when your efforts aren't even recognized
in the end. Even if you four managed to stop me, no one out there would ever know. You would
remain nameless and faceless in the eyes of the masses. That's why I don't understand why you all
persist on making fools of yourselves by trying to oppose me.”

“...Pardon my language in advance, but...what the hell are you talking about?!” Sam seriously
wondered. Scar wasn't the only one astounded by her speech, with her friends all gasping in unison.
“Y-You think that's the reason we're spies?! You think that's the reason we work for WOOHP?!
You think that's the reason we came here today to try to put an end to your crazy plans?! You really
are nuts then, completely out of your mind even! We don't do any of this for the recognition! We do
this to protect innocent people from villains like you!”

“Yeah! While it is nice to hear Jerry tell us we did a good job after a mission, we so don't care if we
don't end end up on a magazine cover or on the news for our good deeds!” said Clover. “That's
'cause we know that if we fail, lots of people are gonna pay the price!”

“If all you care about is being patted on the back and not actually helping anyone, it's no wonder
Jerry kicked your butt outta WOOHP!” added Alex finally.

Chris glanced up from her work to see nothing but bitterness plastered on Scar's features. He would
oftentimes appear this way back in the day whenever they discussed WOOHP. All the talk of praise
and recognition confirmed Chris' belief that Scar, despite what most would think, greatly worried
what others thought of him.

Everything this man does, he does for a reaction. The fact Jerry Lewis never gave him the praise he
thought he earned is stilling eating at him. I never imagined him to be so childish, but...

“Hmph. I find that entire mentality laughable!” said Scar harshly. “That's the same nonsense
Nathanial and Diane would go on endlessly about! Do you see now why this world must change?! I must stamp out foolishness such as that for the sake of mankind! We have no future with weaklings like you in charge of things!"

“Dammit! Just...shut the hell up already!” Chris suddenly shouted. “You talk as if you're some kind of god! No one asked for your help, and no one's going to grieve after we take you down!”

She lunged at Scar in the wake of her declaration, nearly slicing him in two with her long dagger. He sidestepped it at the last instance, yet he was more concerned with something else.

“How did you break free from your restraints?! You...!”

“I guess Jerry was right when he said there were some advantages to working with a creep like you. Scar, I've seen you use those little chains about a hundred times. I forgot what idiotic name you gave them, but I've had to use them myself on a couple missions for SOAP. Therefore, I know exactly how to escape from them if need be. I also know you have a habit of not doing body searches. I'm guessing that's the reason I still have my knife. You used to have me do them on all our prisoners in your stead. Guess old habits die hard, eh?”

“...I see. It seems you knew more about me than I thought. That's right, Christine. You've always been my one error, the one hitch in the plan. Rather than erasing your memory, I should have erased your entire existence from this world. No, I should have taken care of you when I found you in that field of flames ten years ago. I was too soft. I took pity on you. Allow me to correct that mistake right now!”

He went on the offensive this time. Chris tried avoiding his blows, yet her body felt sluggish. She noticed it earlier, but didn't think anything of it.

That...sleeping gas! It must not have left my system yet entirely...!

“What's the matter, Christine? I taught you better than this!” Scar voiced as he slugged her on the chin. However, she managed to slash him on the arm while tumbling backward. He watched crimson blood drip from the shallow wound, becoming incensed the more it pooled on the floor. “...That's Nathanial's dagger, isn't it? I see. That's how you cut yourself free. How humorous. It seems your wretched parents are getting in my way, even beyond the grave.”

“Uh...did anyone else notice she forgot to cut us free too?!” said a squirming Sam.

“Yeah, what's the big idea, Chris?!” complained Clover.

“Seriously! My arms and legs are really starting to chafe!” said Alex, her eyes stained with tears.

“Just give me a sec over here! Let me take care of him first!” said Chris.

“You're going to take care of me, Christine?” Scar, grabbing a towel, wiped his arm clean. “I believe you've forgotten who you're dealing with here. So what you managed to free yourself? You still can't beat me. Do you remember the last time you decided to foolishly challenge me? Recall that I know all of your moves because I'm the one that taught them to you. You can't...”

“Quiet!” Chris said at the top of her lungs. “I've had enough of you! So what you know all my moves?!! I'm still going to find a way to stop you! I promised my parents that much!”

“Your parents? Is that so? If you truly care for them so much, perhaps it's time I finally sent you to them, Christine!”
When he casually tapped a button on the control panel behind him, Tabitha after Tabitha poured out of the front door, the ceiling, and basically every other opening in sight. Giggling, they horded close to a dumbfounded Chris.

“Oh, you've got to be kidding me! Can't you have the decency to fight me fairly, Scar?!!”

“Haha! 'Fairly?' Have you already forgotten the most important element of espionage, Christine? There is no such thing as fair play!”

“This is bad, girls!” said Sam. “They're going to tear her apart at this rate!”

“I am so tired of those stupid robots!” said Alex. “How many did Scar build anyway?!”

“Come on, Chris! Kick their butts! Don't let 'em get you!” exclaimed Clover.

Chris, holding her dagger close to her, appreciated the kind words, but felt she would need more than encouragement to get through this.

*Let's see. In terms of the number of enemies, there's about...uh...on second thought, I'd rather not count.*

She began leaping around, dodging attacks and also slashing at anything that so much as moved. Limbs went flying everywhere, and a Tabitha's head even rolled across the ground.

“Hey, that was totally rude, you know!” it uttered.

Chris soon found herself out of breath, but unfortunately, not out of enemies. Her efforts solely proved to slightly thin the number of androids after her.

“Tsk! This is impossible! There's gotta be some other way to get rid of them!”

“What's the matter, Christine? I thought you had more stamina than this!” said Scar.

Drowning his taunts out, she went back on the defensive, unsure of how long she could keep up the effort.

“Well, this totally stinks!” said Alex, wry-faced. “Chris is gonna get killed and we can't do anything about it!”

“Don't you think I know that?!” So desperate was she to escape that Clover started biting at her restraints. “Ugh! Just what are these stupid things made of?!!”

“Hey, where did all those Tabithas come from?” Sam pondered.

“Eh? Who even cares about that?! Maybe Scar turned them on or something!!”

“...'Turned them on?'” Clover statement caused a light to switch on in Sam's head. “T-That's it! You're a genius, Clover!”

Clover grinned. “Heh. I so already knew that, but it's nice to hear anyway!”

“Chris! Listen! There's something important I have to tell you!”

“A little busy here!” Chris replied, pushing a pair of Tabithas back.

“No, you seriously have to listen! Remember those Tabithas from earlier and how we thought they
were shut down?! Well, I'm think it's because they were! If they really have to be activated, then you should be able to turn them off just as easily! Hit that button Scar did a minute ago!"

Chris spotted what Sam referred to. “I see! Thanks!”

She leaped her way over all the Tabithas, getting mere inches away from the switch enough to slam her fist down on it. Scar formed a brick wall between the two at the last second before kicking her a good distance back.

“My apologizes, Christine, but I can't allow you to shut off my precious machines so easily. I must again praise you and your friends. You all figured out my little secret effortlessly. You see, these androids, as handy as they are, tend to run out of power very rapidly, a flaw in Heisenberg's original designs that I haven't had a chance to correct. Therefore, it's far easier for me to shut them down until I need them to conserve their energy reserves. It also helps that they can't talk when they're not activated.”

“Maybe you should bring some spare batteries the next time you go out!” Chris declared as she broke her fall. She then tossed her dagger at Scar, yet it whizzed past him harmlessly.

“And maybe you should work on your aim.”

“Hmph. Who said I was aiming for you?”

Punctured right through the activation button for Scar's mechanical menaces was Chris' knife. In response, the Tabithas all powered down and dropped dead where they stood.

“Thank goodness,” said a very relieved Chris. “Hearing that annoying voice of theirs was seriously beginning to piss me off.”

Scar, on the other hand, wasn't as enthralled. “...You are seriously beginning to try my patience, Christine!”

“Heh. What's the matter? Upset you can't hide behind your robots anymore?”

“You think you've won just because of that? How foolish! I will not be backed into a corner so easily!” Scar hovered his finger above a different button, heightening Chris' guard. “Allow me to remind you who's in control here! Do you see your friends there behind you? With the mere press of a button, I can send them plummeting from this airplane! It doesn't take much imagination to figure out what will happen after that!”

Trying to remain calm, Chris answered, “Y-Yeah right! You're full of crap!”

“Oh, I assure you my threat is the real thing. The metal posts those three are tied to are rigged to drop straight out of this plane if I press this button. Do you get it now? I suggest you give it up already with this whole hero thing unless you wish to say goodbye to your companions.”

Chris, leering back at her friends, froze up. She wasn't sure what to do.

“D-Don't worry about us, Chris! Just stop Scar!” said Sam.

“Yeah! E-Even though I'm afraid of heights and...uh...dying, you can't back down!” said Alex.

“What are you waiting for?! Take him down already!” added Clover.

Chewing the subject over carefully, Chris ascertained the logical choice would be to heed their
advice. Sacrificing thousands of lives for just three would be quite foolish. Nevertheless, she continued to waver.

W-What am I thinking?! They're right! I have to finish this! If I don't...! But, I can't...I-I mean...there's no way I can...!

“So, what will it be, Christine?” Scar asked, snapping her out of her deep thinking.

“...F-Fine. I...surrender,” she said in almost a whisper. “D-Don't hurt them...”

“NO!!” Sam, Alex, and Clover cried.

“What the heck is she doing?!” asked Clover, horrified.

“S-She's that worried about us?” said a genuinely surprised Alex.

“C-Chris...” was the only thing Sam could get out.

“That's a good girl,” said Scar. “You've grown soft though. The Christine of the past would have made the alternate decision in a heartbeat.”

Biting her bottom lip, Chris replied, “...That's exactly why I'm glad I've changed! I didn't have friends before! I didn't have anyone I really cared about! It's different now! It's different when there are people you're willing to lay your life on the line for! T-That's why I'm asking you not to lay a finger on them! If you have to hurt someone, hurt me!”

“...To think I'd hear such foolish words coming from you. It really gets on my nerves.”

Scar struck Chris upside the mouth with the back of his hand, flooring her. Despite her friends screaming for her to stand and fight, she remained where she was, rubbing her reddened face. She understood she couldn't dare make a move without endangering their lives.

S-Sorry, girls. I...just can't. I can't risk losing you...

Scar crouched down to her, saying, “Having friends has weakened you, Christine. Can't you see that? You don't remotely resemble the ruthless and efficient spy that worked for me all these years.”

“...Go to hell! I...!” Chris' lost her train of thought when she spotted something of significant interest outside.

“What's the matter, Christine? Cat got your tongue? Or have you finally realized trying to oppose me is pointless?”

Her calm expression made him dubious this was the case.

“...Perhaps you have a point, Scar,” she said informally. “Perhaps I am making the wrong decision here.”

“...Is that so?” he retorted, his voice painted with skepticism.

“That's right. That's why you might as well go ahead and press that button. Go on.”

“...What is this? You were so eager to save your friends moments before.”

“Yeah, what is she doing?!” blurted Sam.
“Uh...hello! What are you saying, Chris?!” Clover honestly wished to know. “I mean, I know we were just saying that's what should happen, but that so doesn't mean we want you to off us while sounding like you don't care!”

“D-Don't tell me she's gone back to being totally evil again...?” mumbled Alex.

Moving her sights their way, Chris gazed in a manner suggesting they needed to simply have faith in her for the time being.

“A-Alright, Chris. I don't know what you have up your sleeve this time, but...we'll trust you. You've more than earned it,” said Sam.

“I just hope we don't end up as pancakes on the ground!” groaned Clover.

“Well, this is quite the development.” It was one Scar was clearly pleased with as he stood. “Still, your abrupt change in demeanor leaves me troubled.”

“What's the matter? You're going to destroy them, right? Go right on ahead. That is, assuming your threat earlier wasn't all talk!”

“...Provocation won't work on me, Christine. I...”

“Stop screwing around around already! If you won't press it, I will! Those girls over there have been getting on my nerves, so you getting rid of them would be doing both you and me a favor!”

“I see.” Scar's grin grew wider and more sadistic while Chris spoke. “Now that's the spy I know. You've finally come to your senses by the looks of it.”

“That's right. You were correct. Trying to play the hero is a total waste of time.”

Satisfied by her cold-hearted response, Scar granted her wish by hitting the button that would seal her friend’s doom. Their shrill cries echoed as the poles they were tied to quickly fell down holes that spawned in the floor. The sight of this made Chris flinch, unbeknown to Scar.

“Good riddance,” he said, chuckling. “Those girls were major thorns in my side. I couldn't have gotten rid of them without you, Christine.”

“Glad to help. Like I said, them being out of the picture is good for me as well. You see, I won't have to worry about them being harmed because of me now.”

“Hmm? Are you feeling alright, Christine? Do you even notice what you're saying? Those friends of yours are finished. The fall will end their lives for sure.”

“You sure about that? Look carefully,” said Chris, pointing a finger toward the window behind him. Scar did exactly that, his eyeballs nearly popping out of their sockets at what he saw. A pink plane in the distance steadily rose to meet his own vessel.

"Impossible! That plane from before? But how?!”

#

“T-That Chris brat is more trouble than she's worth!” grumbled ex-supermodel Kyla Sacks. Her ire stemmed from Chris delivering her three surprise packages in the form of Sam, Alex, and Clover. “Why does she insist on making things difficult for me?!”
“At least she didn't tell a crazy guy to drop you out of a freaking plane!” Sam stated. Her hair mirrored her composure in that both were a complete mess thanks in no small part to the fall. “I don't know who's crazier: her or Scar!”

“I think my life totally flashed before my eyes!” a traumatized Clover said.

"Um...are you okay, Alex?” Britney asked her friend as she untied her. Alex didn't respond, being far too preoccupied hyperventilating. "Uh...I'll just leave you alone for the time being!"

Blaine whistled, leering up at newly created holes in the roof of Kyla's plane. “That was really something! Chris must've come up with her plan the second she saw us!”

“Ngh! All she did was damage my precious jet some more!” Kyla bellowed. “She could at least help me pay for all the repairs after this! I mean, we just barely got the engines working again!”

“I'm just glad we made it back in time,” said Jerry. “Are you girls okay?”

Sam, now free thanks to her boss, stretched her aching arms. “Yeah, thanks to Chris. We gotta go back though! We need to help her!”

“That dirty liar! She totally ditched us!” said Clover, fuming in anger.

“Y-Yeah, but she did it to save us!” replied Alex. Feeling something creep up her throat, she then shot her hand over her mouth. “Ugh! I-I think I'm gonna throw up! Could we never do something like that again?!”

“We didn't ask to be saved, Alex! We said we would stop Scar together, so Chris can't get rid of us that easily! We can't let her fight alone!” shouted Sam. Inspiration ignited inside the others, with Sam's firm resolve being the catalyst.

“Okay, sounds good! Let's all go this time!” Britney said.

“Yeah! No way Scar can stop all of us!” added a confidently beaming Blane.

“He's not gonna know what hit him!” chimed Clover.

“Sounds like a plan!” said Jerry. He then added, “Miss Sacks, get us closer to Scar's plane!”

“Yeah, as much as I'd like to do that, we have a problem!” Frustration blanketed every inch of Kyla's expression while she fought a losing battle with the controls. “The main engine is acting up again! I can't get us higher! I can barely even move this thing! We need to get out of here before we either crash, or Scar tries shooting us down!”

“Huh?! But we can't just leave Chris behind!” said Sam.

“Yeah! At least let the three of us out of here!” said Clover.

“We'll go back and help her ourselves!” added Alex.

“Is anyone even listening to me?!” Kyla drove her cranium into her radar. “I can't go back there, even if I wanted to, which I don't by the way! Unless you people want to die right here and now, we're getting out of here! That brat up there is just gonna have to look after herself for the time being!”

“...That's exactly what I'm worried about,” Sam woefully whispered.
“...They're gone already...” said Scar. He observed the pink plane vanish as suddenly as it arrived, trembling in anger all the while. “No matter. I'll hunt them down soon enough. Still, I'm rather impressed, Christine. All that was a facade to get me to release your friends unharmed. Haha. I can hardly believe you.”

Chris smirked defiantly, glad to see her plan succeed without a hitch.

“If you were truly smart though...” continued Scar. “...you would have forgotten about them and escaped on your own. You'll have to deal with me alone now.”


“...Just listen to yourself. You know, that overconfidence of yours is dangerous.”

“Tsk! Like you're one to talk!”

“...We'll soon be at the capital. Once there, I'll be able to unleash my nuclear missile on the unsuspecting population. If you intend to stop me, I suggest you do it soon, Christine.”

Chris felt he needn't say more. She tried assaulting him from the rear, but he predicted her movements enough to dodge and then retaliate with a kick to her gut. Blood spewed from her mouth, and the strength in her lower body dissipated. Dropping to her knees, she lacked the power necessary to stop Scar from driving his leg into her side. The blow sent her skidding across the ground. Afterward, pure, unadulterated pain shot through her entire being. It made her legitimately wonder if every single bone in her body was broken.

“So, that's all you can manage to handle, Christine? Yes, that seems about right. You never could best me in hand-to-hand combat. You would tell me to go easy on you during our sparring even,” said Scar.

Chris thought it bizarre he chose now to recount the past. “Y-You...!”

An opportunistic Scar grabbed Chris’ dagger out of the plane's dashboard. Then, like a serpent slithering in on its prey, he neared his former operative. Still reeling from his previous attack, Chris could do nothing to protect herself. Scar drove his foot into her chest, inducing another cry of anguish out of his victim. With light glinting off the blade, he followed this up by pointing her sharp knife dangerously close to her throat.

“This is it, Christine,” he said. “This is where your life ends. Don't you find it ironic you'll die thanks to something that belonged to your father? Do you remember when I gave this to you? It was your tenth birthday. You kept begging me for something, so I settled on an old keepsake from your father that I happened to have in my possession. I never imagined you would attempt to turn it on me.”

Chris, glaring intently, remained tight-lipped. Scar presumed this a sign of her admitting defeat until he stared into her shaking eyes. Something about them rattled him to the core, causing him to falter. She was silently daring him to make a move.

“S-Stop it!” he said in a heightened tone. “Stop it with those eyes of yours!!”

When she refused, his exasperation threatened to boil over. “Those eyes! Those eyes...! They're...just like Diane's, the woman who dared scar my face! Turn those accursed eyes away from me, Christine! If you do not, I'll dispose of you like I did her!”
His warning only served to make her glower even harder. Scar couldn't take it any longer. He thrust the knife with every ounce of hatred he possessed. At the last moment, Chris rolled aside and sprang to her feet. A fight for control of the dagger broke out after she pounced on him. Neither could gain a solid advantage, instead crashing straight into the plane's control panel. Sparks of electricity, alongside black smoke, rose out of the damaged mechanism at the same time an alarm sounded.


Scar used the distraction to push her off of him ahead of scrambling over to the controls. He frantically hit buttons and pushed levers to no avail.

“Dammit! I've lost complete control!” he cried. “We'll crash at this rate!”

Chris, picking up her misplaced dagger, made Scar jump when she tapped it against a wall.

“Hahaha! This is great! Serves you right, you bastard! And we were almost to the capital too! Too bad, Scar! You lose!"

A crazed look warped Scar's features. “Y-You...! All of this is your fault! How could you do this to me?! I took you in when you had nowhere else to go or anyone to turn to! I was the one who fed you and put clothes on your back when no one else could! I was the one that gave your life purpose by training you to be a spy for SOAP! After everything I've done for you, you dare repay me for my good deeds in this manner?!”

“Y-You son of a...! The only reason I was in that situation to begin with was because of you! You killed my parents! You tricked me all these years and let me believe WOOHP was responsible for that just so you could use me to further your deranged goals! Consider all of this karma for all the injustices you've served me these past ten years! You're finished, Scar!”

The plane, unable to stay afloat, began a nosedive toward the Earth. It would only be a matter of time before impact, something its two remaining occupants took heed of.

“...I'm finished you say? Even if I can't hit Washington D.C., this plane still has an explosive aboard, Christine! We're over a densely populated area! What do you think will happen once this vessel finally crashes?! In the end, you and your little friends will have saved no one, girl! Hahaha! That's right! Your efforts will have done nothing but ensure you die along with thousands of others!”

Chris, seeing the truth in his otherwise demented rant, shoved him aside to get to the dashboard. The main controls were indeed shot, but she concluded she could still do enough to prevent Scar's grisly prediction from happening.

“It's pointless, Christine! You're wasting your time! Do you really think you can stop this plane from crashing?!”

“No, but if it must crash, I'd rather it crash somewhere it won't hurt anyone! The Atlantic Ocean is nearby! If I can just divert the plane there...!”

“Wait a moment! You...actually intend to ditch this thing in the ocean, don't you?!”

Hard at work, Chris gave him no response.

“Hahaha! You really are foolish, aren't you, girl?! Just like those idiotic parents of yours! You realize you'll perish along with this plane, correct?! There isn't enough time for you to escape and accomplish your mission! I thought I informed you playing the hero isn't worth it!”
“I don't consider myself a damn hero or whatever! It doesn't matter to me if no one ever knows what
I did! All I care about is making sure you hurt as few people as possible! Now then, if you aren't
going to do anything productive, stay outta my way!”

Scar stumbled backward, becoming even more mad. “T-This...this is just like ten years ago! Here I
am, watching another simpleton throw their life away for the sake of others! I've had more than
enough of this sort of nonsense!”

The color red, the shade of his intense fury, clouded Scar's vision as he charged at Chris in order to
destroy her once and for all. Literally sensing his hatred crawling on the back of her neck, Chris
swung around in a timely manner, avoiding his attack.

“I thought I told you to stop screwing around!” she hollered, nearly breaking his jaw with a right
hook. She then unloaded a number of blows into him, treating him like a punching bag, ahead of
ending her flurry with a stiff roundhouse kick. Battered and bloody, Scar crumpled over just seconds
before Chris jumped on top of him. His eyelids enlarged when she then aimed her father's dagger at
his neck. "Well, well, well! Isn't this familiar?! Looks like our roles have been reversed this time
around, Scar!"

“Indeed they have,” he piercingly replied. “It seems you've finally bested me. C-Congratulations...”

“I don't need to hear that from you!”

“Hmph. What are you going to do now, Christine? Kill me? Cut me down like some helpless
animal? Do it then. Do it and get it over with!”

Chris intended to, but her arm wouldn't stop trembling for some reason. In the meantime, Scar's jet
continued to plummet further and further.

“Why are you hesitating, Christine? Perhaps you're the one who can do nothing more than talk big.
You can't do it, can you? Of course you can't. It's because you're weak, just like your parents were!
They couldn't kill me either! Neither could Jerry Lewis! All of you are exactly the same!”

“Just...shut up already! I'll...I...I'm going to...!”

“No, you won't. You won't do a damn thing! If you can't even kill the man who ended the lives of
your parents, what can you do, Christine?! Save the world?! Ha! What a joke!”

“SHUT UP!!! I'LL SHUT YOU UP ONCE AND FOR ALL!!!!”

Scar observed her miss him on purpose, she instead stabbing the space beside him. Moments of total
silence followed.

“...You're not even worth it.” Chris picked herself up and focused those eyes he reviled so much on
him. “Move again, and I really will kill you!”

She trekked back over to the plane's control panel, noting time fought against her.

“...You're not even worth it.” Chris picked herself up and focused those eyes he reviled so much on
him. “Move again, and I really will kill you!”

She trekked back over to the plane's control panel, noting time fought against her.

Of course, the one thing I didn't learn during my time with SOAP was how to crash a plane
effectively. Wait, why in the world would they teach me something like that in the first place?! Well,
looks like I'm just gonna have to make this work somehow!

Her confident musing didn't reflect her true feelings. The slightest hint of doubt crept up on her, and
although she knew how to operate a plane well enough, all her knowledge on the subject gradually
went out the window as her unease increased.
D-Dammit! Can I really do this?! If I screw up...! I really wish I knew what my parents would do in this situation!

Taking a deep breath, she made herself relax.

It's not a matter if I can! I have to! If I don't...!

Her intuition abruptly kicked in, and she tried moving aside from some unseen attack. She was too late though. Her assailant managed to slice her across her left shoulder and down.

“...O-Of course. You...” she stammered. As she watched her own blood drip from her father's dagger, a puddle of it from her injury grew underneath her. “You sure are persistent. Don't you know I can't stand boys like that?”

“Hmph. Is that so? That's unfortunate, Christine. I intend to do far more than break your heart! You should have finished me off when you had the chance!” howled Scar.

“Ha! It doesn't matter! We're both going to die at this rate!”

“I hate to burst your bubble, but I have no plans of perishing here with you! With WOOHP now out of the picture, I'm free to do as I please! Failing here today means nothing! I can regroup within a mere matter of days and be on the attack once more!”

“Y-You won't get that far! N-Not if...I have anything to say about it!”

“Perhaps you should worry about yourself. After all, you'll be gone from this world soon enough!”

Chris, wobbling all over the place, garnered he was onto something.

Ugh! I-I'm losing...too much blood! If this keeps up, I really will be in trouble!

“Now then, what's say you and I bury this decade long grudge of ours!” she heard Scar declare. Her vision doubled, but she could still faintly make him out heading toward her.

“Sounds good to me! That's exactly why I came here today!” she replied, backing away. She could hardly stand, let alone fight. She craved for some distance so she could plan her next course of action. “You know, I really can't stand you, Scar!”

“Haha! I'm pleased to hear that, Christine! The feeling is quite mutual, you know! You and your damnable family have caused me more than enough suffering! How do you think I felt all these years having to put up with you, having to resist the urge to end your life simply because you resemble your mother?! Ridding myself of you will snuff out the last reminder of my worthless past! My soul will know peace at last, Christine!”

“D-Dammit, you really have lost your mind, haven't you?!”

Even in the face of her desperate plight, Chris desired to fight on until the bitter end. Though she guessed she might have looked like a fool, she held her shaking arms up anyway to defend herself. Everything around her spun because of her dizziness, but she readied for battle anyway.

"T-That's right! Get...over here!" she shouted at Scar. "Let's go down together, Scar!"

"Yes, even now, I can't get enough of that fire burning inside you!" he exclaimed back.

She continued to waver like a flag in the wind until finally, she couldn't ignore what her body said
any longer. Gravity swept her off her feet, and incidentally, she hit a random button on the plane's control panel on her way down.

“It appears you weren't able to become a hero in the end!” Scar taunted as he prepared to deliver the finishing blow. “This is goodbye, Christine!”

Chris, wide-eyed, held her breath when Scar ceased moving. Her knife, so close that she could smell the blood and steel, nearly pierced her right between the eyes. However, Scar never got the chance to drive it that extra inch forward. A crevice opened up directly beneath him all of a sudden, and in an instant, he was gone. Being barely conscious at this point, Chris would have assumed his disappearance a delusion on her part if it weren't for her hearing his fading, bloodcurdling scream

“...H-He...fell...” she said tonelessly. She blinked rapidly, adding, “He fell straight down...”

The reality of what transpired hit her only after she allowed herself to sit in total silence for a minute or two. Subsequently, for reasons even beyond her, she cried and laughed, both simultaneously and uncontrollably.

"T-That's it then! He's...he's gone! He's gone! Hahahaha! I never thought things would end like that!"

She couldn't stop herself, giggling so hard that she got stitches in her already stinging sides. If it wasn't for the alarm in the room growing louder and scaring the daylight out of her, she wasn't sure she would have ever gotten a hold of herself.

“O-Okay, Christine. You still have a job to do.” She forced herself to stand, dismissing the fact her legs felt like gelatin. “I can't see straight anymore. Ugh. I really am going to die, aren't I? Tsk. I always imagined that if I did go out, it would be on some kind of mission for SOAP. ...It seems like just yesterday I was working for Scar and going on about my business without a care in the world. I never imagined things could change so quickly. I...don't regret what's happened though. I'm...glad I got a chance to meet Sam, Alex, and Clover. I'm glad I got a chance to live a normal life for short time too, even if everything and everyone at Malibu University did drive me insane. If I didn't, I would've never known so many good people out there exist. It's because of them that I can do this without any regrets! With that in mind...!"

Using what little strength she had left, she jerked back hard on a lever. The plane responded by pointing upward, giving her enough time to steer it away from civilization and toward clear, blue waters. Once over the Atlantic, her weakened body could take no more. She slouched down against a wall and closed her weary eyelids.

“...T-There we go. Heh. Somehow I've...d-done it. Besides a bunch of fish, maybe an unlucky fisherman, and myself of course, Scar's nuke shouldn't hurt anyone. That's...good, isn't it? I'm sure that old fool Jerry Lewis would say so. He...owes me big time for this. Sam, Alex, and...Clover do too. They...better buy me whatever I want from The Groove after this! Heh.”

She could sense Scar's jet once more barreling downward.

“...Who am I kidding? ...I'm finished. Whatever. I guess none of that stuff matters anymore. At least I'm going down in a blaze of glory. Mother. Father. W-Wait for me. I'll be with you soon enough...”

Her slowly head drooped. Before she realized it, she passed out. As her silver hair fell down and shrouded her features, a satisfied smile could clearly be made out on her face.
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