

Amanda Mador is pulling her suitcase behind her on the way up to the house while the driver pulls away behind her, the stars sparkling above in the rural European sky.

Adelaide Dresner is lip syncing to Rihanna in front of the television in the living room of her family's vacation home in their namesake Dresden, Germany.

Sarah Stewart is cheering half-heartedly as Adelaide attempts the motions made in the music video playing behind her, and thinking about what she's going to have for breakfast tomorrow.

Brie Baard is smiling along and takes the opportunity when she sees movement outside the window to stand up and make for the door, calling out over the music: "Mandy's here!"

Amanda sighs relief and throws her arms around Brie when she opens the door.

"You know y'all have a wicked wasp's nest up there?" Amanda says.

Brie shuts the door quickly behind her. "Are you allergic?"

"No clue. Never been stung," Amanda replies. "You?"

"No, but Della is. She said she'll rant and rave about it to her groundskeeper when he gets here tomorrow."

Amanda snorts and follows Brie down the front hall towards the sounds of early-00s pop music.

"Mandy!" Sarah hops up from the couch, and goes to hug the new arrival, leaving the last few seconds of Adelaide's performance without an audience.

"Man-da," Adelaide says, breathy with the mild physical exertion she's done, turning and smiling at them all.

"Deli." Amanda rolls her eyes.

Brie cringes, then shakes her head.

"Alright." Amanda wraps her arms around Brie's and Sarah's waists, and turns them towards the next door. "Lead me to the kitchen, the plane ride was hell."

Brie snickers as Adelaide leads them deeper into the old house.

When they reach the kitchen Adelaide pulls a bottle out of the refrigerator and squeals. "It's the end, ladies!" She pops the cork on what is clearly a champagne bottle. "We made it! Sarah and I are off to Princeton next year, Brie's studying abroad in China! We're living the dream, girls."

Amanda smiles as she takes a glass. "Finally taking a risk now that you've made it, Dell?"

"Drinking age is 18 in Europe," Adelaide smiles back, cheerily raising a glass.

Brie tries to meet Amanda's eyes, but her look remains pointed at Adelaide. She does catch Sarah looking at Amanda with a half-frown and a flicker of pity and glares daggers at her until she turns away.

"To our friendships," Adelaide says.

"To our futures," Amanda raises her glass too.

Brie and Sarah raise their glasses in unison, and they all drink.

"Ugh," Brie says, involuntarily.

"It does kind of burn," Amanda says dryly.

"You see? We weren't missing out on anything all these years," Adelaide says. She smiles with sparkling white teeth. "It's all paying off."

"Don't be a dick, Della," Brie says, glaring.

"She's not," Sarah says back before Adelaide can, "You're the one getting offended over nothing. Mandy isn't even upset. You're killing the mood."

All eyes turn to Amanda, who's leaning against the antique kitchen counter looking casual. She smiles.

"Love you, Brie," she says, "But I'm fine. I'm happy for y'all. And hey," she winks, "Miracles happen."

"You don't need a miracle, Mandy," Brie says softly, not loud enough for the other two to hear, "You talked about taking a gap year anyway, there's always next--"

"Alright, I did not fly you all to Germany so you could be buzzkills," Adelaide says, raising her glass again. "Are we going to party or what?"

Amanda steps up toward Adelaide without looking Brie in the eyes. "You're the host, Deli. Turn up the music."

Adelaide grins. Sarah cheers. Brie frowns.

Hours later when the girls have each had a whole two glasses of wine (and an additional spilled all over Adelaide's sweater, moving her to take it off-- the shirt underneath still smelled of sickly-sweet alcohol) and finished the semi-authentic German cuisine Adelaide had stored in the fridge for dinner, they move on to dessert: a series of little chocolate pies. Adelaide picks at hers, instead taking the opportunity to talk at length about her plans for the next year with her mouth full. Sarah particularly likes it, both the conversation and the pie, though as she continues to eat she starts to feel strange.

"Della--?" Sarah starts to breathe fast and heavy. She launches to her feet then glares at her friend. "Are you kidding me?"

Adelaide's face goes sour. "What?"

"Were there--?!" Sarah chokes off, then shakes her head and bolts upstairs. The three others follow, bewildered.

They find Sarah with her own suitcase open, her clothes flung all over the bed, rifling through the pockets like she'll find a bomb.

"Sarah, what the hell?" Adelaide says.

"My--!" Sarah's voice sounds strangled. She slumps forward onto the bed, barely catching herself with her hands.

"Her epipen!" Amanda says, and rushes forward to resume the rifling Sarah has been forced to cease, Brie only steps behind.

Adelaide hangs back, her green eyes wide, her oval face pale.

"Help us!" Brie bites back at her, barely turning around.

Sarah slides down the bed, and Amanda's attention shifts to her. "Sarah? Sarah, can you speak-- do you know anywhere else it might be? Did you--"

Sarah's eyes roll back in her head.

Brie screams. Amanda starts patting Sarah down, like a miracle will happen and she will have just slipped it into her pocket when she arrived and, in the rush of adrenaline, forgot.

"What the hell is happening," Adelaide whispers.

Brie spins around and looks at her with wide, reddened eyes. "Oh my god. Oh my god!" She rises and stands protectively between Amanda and Adelaide. "What is wrong with you?"

"Me?" Adelaide steps back towards the door.

"Hazelnuts," Amanda says, almost under her breath, hands still at Sarah's pulse points. "You set this all up, you brought everything here. We've been friends since we were five and you didn't remember not to give her hazelnuts?"

"It-- it was-- I didn't make it, I ordered it! I didn't-- ugh! Phone! We need to call the hospital!"

Adelaide slips her cell phone out of her pocket and hits 911.

No answer.

A moment of panicked disbelief before-- "We're in Germany," Amanda says. "The emergency number is different in different countries. I think in Europe it's 999?" She plugs the number in. "Or maybe that's just England."

"You didn't look this stuff up before you brought us here?" Brie says, turning again to Adelaide. "It wasn't supposed to be-- how was I supposed to know the number is different overseas! That's stupid!" Tears are welling up in Adelaide's eyes now, her pale face blotching as reality slowly encroaches on her. "Stop looking at me like that!"

"You are either the biggest idiot or a psychopath," Brie says, "I don't know which one it is!"

"I don't even remember buying that thing! Okay! We have a lot of stuff here! What do you-- you don't think I meant for this to happen. Why on earth would I try to hurt Sarah? She's my best friend." The tears spill from Adelaide's eyes. "We have to get her help!"

"We might be beyond that," Amanda says, her fingers still pressing into Sarah's pulse points, a blank expression on her face.

Both of the other girls turn to look at her, and at Sarah. There is something wrong with her, something unnameable; as if life has a color to it, and the color fades when life has slipped away.

"We've gotta go get help." Brie takes the stairs two at a time and heads straight for the door.

"Brie, it's freezing outside!" Amanda says.

Brie looks at her wide-eyed. "I'll wear a jacket! Our friend is dying!"

Amanda bites her lip. "Again, I don't know if present te--"

"Shut up!" Adelaide shouts from behind them. "Shut up, shut up, shut up! Sarah!" She drops to her knees and takes Sarah by the shoulders, shaking her up and down. "This isn't funny! Wake up!"

Brie takes the stairs down two at a time then swings the door open with force.

"Don't go outside, Brie! It'd be hours trying to walk to town even if it was safe," Amanda calls down. "See if Della's parents have the number for a hospital written down somewhere! They must, right?"

After a moment's hesitation, Brie swings the door shut again.

Two black-and-yellow dots float in the crook before it's sealed, but she doesn't notice.

Brie safe for the moment, Amanda turns her full attention to Adelaide and manages to pry her from their rapidly cooling friend.

"Della," she starts, "Adelaide!"

"I didn't!" Adelaide sobs, shaking.

"Deli," Amanda says slowly. "Don't you have one?"

"What?" Adelaide looks up at her, her green eyes struck through with red veins.

"You're allergic to bees," Amanda says, still slowly, like she would to a child. "Don't you have an epipen?"

"That's for *bees*, yes!" Adelaide shouts.

Amanda closes her eyes. "You were the valedictorian."

"What are you talking about?"

"It's all the same medicine, Della," she says, looking at her again. "Do you have it on you?"

Adelaide stares at her, her mouth opening and closing multiple times.

"It's-- it's in my room," she says. "And the kitchen. And the dining room. I have three."

Amanda opens her mouth to speak but before she has a chance, Adelaide pushes to her feet and rushes past her towards her own bedroom.

"Here!" Adelaide raises the orange-yellow tube above her head and then bolts back into Sarah's room before Amanda can take a step either way.

She plunges the medicine into Sarah's thigh, just like the package directions state. The epinephrine floods into Sarah's bloodstream, moving the stalled pathways for the first time in minutes.

Hunched over Sarah's body with rapt anticipation, Adelaide doesn't notice the little black-and-yellow spot land on the stained patch of her shirt. Minutes pass, and the spot remains, and Sarah does not move.

"It's a little late," Amanda says simply.

Adelaide swings her head toward her. "Why didn't you remember sooner?!" She flails her arms out and shouts at the top of her lungs.

The yellowjacket, startled, deploys its stinger.

Adelaide shrieks.

"I did," Amanda says.

"Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god! Mandy, you have to get down to the kitchen. It's--!"

Amanda shoves a small, plastic tube against Adelaide's arm. She blinks at her. The pressure that was closing her throat dissolves.

"What-- What did you say?" Adelaide says. She can breathe fine.

"I knew the second I tasted that thing it had hazelnuts in it. I knew exactly where Sarah was going and to do what the second she left the kitchen, and I found *that* basically as soon as I started looking in her suitcase. She must have been too frantic, or maybe the pain was messing with her vision or something? I don't know how this works."

Adelaide stares at the plastic tube sticking out of her arm. She can barely feel it.

"You..."

Amanda shrugs. "You had every opportunity to stop it. You had three of those things in the house, for the love of god, Deli."

"This is not my fault! It's yours! You're gonna go to prison, you freak!" Adelaide shouts, taking a step back away from her.

Amanda makes a face. "I don't know." She tilts her head. "It's like Brie said, isn't it? You lured us out here."

"I *invited* you!"

"To gloat about your Ivy league placement for a whole weekend," Amanda says.

"You're jealous of me. You've always been since we were kids!"

"You've been cheating your way to the top since we were kids! You can afford fancy private tutors, and you don't have to spend a single second of your time working for your own living. Any time there's a challenge you don't have the chance to pay your way out of, I come out on top. Your whole success story is nothing. And yet you get *everything*." Amanda looks up at the ceiling then back down at Adelaide. "I never liked you, since we were kids. And you know, I don't think you ever liked me either. Our whole relationship is built on fighting over who's better, who's smarter, and we got our own respective real friends wrapped up in this dumb little friend group."

The tears spill down Adelaide's face. "You killed Sarah!"

"You bought the dessert," Amanda says flatly, "I didn't plant it in your house. You really forgot your best friend had a life-threatening nut allergy?"

Adelaide steps further back.



"You killed her as much as I did. You come here how often, and you don't even have the emergency line number memorized? It's 112, by the way." Amanda shakes her head. "I didn't plan any of this. I saw the pic, I knew what was going to happen, and I just didn't do anything."

"You're going to hell," Adélaide whispers, frantic, manic, "You're going to jail and once you die in jail you're going to hell! Brie! Get up here!"

"Again, I don't think so," Amanda says. "I mean-- on the one point I can't comment, who's to say. But we're in *your* house. And Sarah's epipen was just used to stop *your* anaphylaxis. Doesn't that look like you stole from her bag, so that she couldn't use it? You 'remembered' the ones you had in the house, and 'tried' to use it once it was already too late? There's one more witness here, and whose side do you think she's taking, Adelaide?"

Adelaide's wide green eyes gloss over with disbelief. "No," she says. "No!"

Amanda sighs. "I don't know, Deli. It doesn't look good for you."

Adelaide shakes her head rapidly, staring into Amanda's ambivalent face, and lunges at her.

In the split second before they collide, Amanda steps out of the way, and Adelaide has all at once thrown her weight into hurling herself down the stairs. Before she cracks her head on the marble floor below, she has time to see Brie looking ghostly with shock, standing just below where they'd been speaking up above.

Amanda descends the steps quickly, stopping and staring at Adelaide's body.

"What did you do?"

She turns on heel and gives her full attention to Brie, her face drawing in panicked disbelief.

"I know, I know it's messed up, this whole thing is messed up. She just came charging at me, I swear I just jumped out of the way, I didn't touch her, but she has Sarah's epipen-- see it? It fell off her when she was falling, it's right there on the stairs." Amanda picks it up, then drops it.

“Oh, no, oh no, oh no, oh no, I touched it. You’ll tell the police I just touched it to show it to you, right?”

Brie stares at her. “She took Sarah’s epipen?”

Amanda nods her head, anxiety smudged with despair in her eyes. “This was all some kind of sick game to her. To gloat to us about her perfect life and then end all of ours one by one. She tried to push me. It would have looked like I fell. I’m sure she would have had something cooked up for you-- maybe she wanted you to go outside and freeze on the road for help. We both know you would do it if you knew it was the only way to get help for everyone. Once I fell she would have begged you to go, I’m sure of it.”

Brie’s face remains blank. Amanda steps toward her. “You believe me, don’t you? Brie?”

The cavity of Brie’s chest feels sticky and hollow. “You knew I would always believe you,” Brie says.

Amanda throws her arms around her. Brie goes stiff. Amanda buries her face in Brie’s neck and cries. “You’re my best friend. You always were.”

She was. She is.

Brie doesn’t cry at all, but she does end up returning Amanda’s embrace. The two of them lower to the ground, exhaustion overtaking them now that the adrenaline is fading.

“Okay,” Amanda says, pulling away, wiping her eyes with the heel of her hand. “All we have to do is wait. A car will be coming tomorrow with the house staff. We just have to hold out until then. Together.”

They sit face to face, each of them on their knees. Amanda looks at her, eyes red-rimmed and imploring. “She... I mean, she lured us out here and everything. It’s a classic setup.”

Brie snorts. She shakes her head and looks away without smiling, and she spots a little bead of black and yellow, crawling up Amanda's side.

"Okay, okay. Too macabre." Amanda just rolled her eyes, Brie knows, even though she isn't looking at her face. Another beat passes in silence and Amanda sighs, her exhale a little shaky.

"I'm sorry," she says, "I'm sorry I left you to search the house alone, I know that's an awful thing to do when someone is dead and you must have been scared. I know I messed up, this whole thing's so messed up, but we're the ones who got through it and that's better, isn't it? I love you. Please look at me." Brie's eyes rise to meet Amanda's. Amanda smiles, her eyes still crinkled with nervous concern. "Della's gone. You and I are going to stay together and wait for help. No one's going to hurt you, I promise."

Her voice soft and bereft of emotion, Brie says, "I believe that."

Slowly, Amanda nods. "Okay," she says again, her smile growing, her eyes relaxing a bit. She takes Brie's hand and squeezes it.

Brie's eyes laze back down to Amanda's side. She squeezes Amanda's hand back, her eyes finally starting to burn. Brie feels weightless, unmoored, as if Amanda's hand is the one thing tethering her to sanity and without it she might float away from her body forever. The yellowjacket disappears up Amanda's back beneath her curtain of dark hair.

Brie looks back up at her face and repeats, face blank: "All we have to do is wait."