

Cassidy

Cassidy's life takes an unexpected turn in the chapter as she and her mother, Marigold, settle into their familiar camping routine after the rainstorm, creating a sense of comfort at their home on wheels, Sadie. However, the arrival of a man from the neighboring RV shatters the peace they had carefully cultivated. Cassidy quickly dubs him "Dick Weasel," partly due to his brash demeanor, but also because his intrusion into their secluded world sparks feelings of irritation and unease within her. Marigold, however, seems to find him intriguing, laughing at his flirtatious comments about onions and becoming surprisingly engaged in his presence, which deeply confuses Cassidy. This newfound attention from Marigold toward this stranger makes Cassidy feel disconnected from her mother and brings to the surface a sense of jealousy and frustration, as if their quiet, intimate world is no longer a safe space for her.

The tension between Cassidy and her mother continues to escalate as she watches Marigold interact with the man, noticing how her mother seems to blossom under his attention. Cassidy's irritation grows as she becomes more aware of how different this new version of her mother is—carefree, flirtatious, and animated in a way that she has never seen before. The sight of Marigold handing the man a knife only heightens her concerns, signaling that their once stable and protective environment may no longer be secure. Cassidy retreats into Sadie, trying to process her feelings of being pushed aside and forgotten as her mother moves further away from her emotionally. The emotional toll of witnessing this shift in their dynamic weighs heavily on Cassidy, who is struggling with the growing distance between herself and her mother, and the intrusion of this stranger into their lives.

The new man, who Cassidy now begrudgingly accepts as a part of their reality, continues to deepen the growing divide between her and her mother. Despite his

playful charm and unexpected culinary skills, which impress Marigold, Cassidy cannot shake the discomfort she feels. The evening dinner, which should have been a bonding experience, only highlights her exclusion, as Marigold and the man exchange jokes and share a moment of closeness that Cassidy finds herself entirely disconnected from. Her feelings of jealousy and abandonment escalate when she realizes that her mother and the man have left the campsite together, further deepening her sense of alienation. With these feelings of betrayal and rejection swelling within her, Cassidy storms off into the woods, determined to find her mother but only becoming more lost in the process. She is overcome with fear, confusion, and the haunting realization that she no longer has the same place in her mother's life.

As the day gives way to night, Cassidy's emotional breakdown reaches its peak as exhaustion takes over and she collapses in the woods. The intensity of the emotions that have been building throughout the day—the sense of abandonment, the jealousy, the confusion—culminate in her physical collapse. Eventually, rescue efforts, led by Dave and others, manage to find Cassidy, but her mother's attempt to comfort her feels empty and hollow. The chapter closes on a bittersweet note, where Cassidy finally comes face-to-face with the painful reality that the bond she shared with her mother has shifted in ways she cannot easily understand. The arrival of the man from the neighboring RV has irrevocably changed the dynamics of their relationship, leaving Cassidy to confront a future where she may no longer hold the same place in her mother's world. The chapter paints a vivid picture of the complexities of family, the fragile nature of connections, and the emotional turmoil that can arise when we least expect it.