

## Unconscious 1031

### Chapter 1031

“Adele just smiled at me! Do you think she’s warming up to me?”

Ariana, without looking up from her cooking, replied calmly, “Adele’s reactions might be delayed, but she’s not any Less perceptive or capable.”

Sonia’s excitement was undiminished. Leaning in conspiratorially, she whispered, “Have you noticed how much Adele and Melon resemble each other? Especially with those charming dimples when they smile!”

Sonia’s comment caught Ariana’s attention. The stir-fry sizzled as Ariana’s hand hovered mid-air for some seconds before resuming its motions.

“Isn't it interesting?” Ariana responded with a light tone.

“The first time | saw Adele’s dimples, | couldn’t help but notice their resemblance to Melon’s.”

“Absolutely,” Sonia chimed in from where she stood beside the stove.

Ariana resumed her cooking, deftly tossing the ingredients in the wok.

“| suppose many cute kids share similarities, especially when they’re young. It’s normal for them to resemble each other.” Sonia nodded and discreetly grabbed a slice of pepper from the cutting board.

“Oh, how are the preparations for that new show coming along?”

Ariana scoffed, maintaining her casual tone.

“Well, you're aware of the reputation of that production team, but | can deal with it.”

“That’s good,” Sonia said, leaning against the counter with a thoughtful expression.

“However, if you ever need any assistance, don’t hesitate to reach out. | don’t mind stepping in.” As Sonia reached for more food, Ariana playfully swatted her hand away.

“| won't take that from you.”

The two friends engaged in light conversation as Ariana wrapped up the cooking.

With Sonia on vacation and the kids growing quite fond of her, she insisted on spending the night to help take care of them.

“You go ahead. You have plenty of work to do. I'll make sure the kids have a great time!” Sonia playfully winked and added, “You can shower me with gratitude for my generous offer later.”

Ariana chuckled. She was fully aware that Sonia’s true intention was to have fun with the children, but she graciously accepted. “Sure, consider yourself greatly thanked in advance!”

After the meal, Ariana settled into her home office to tackle her work while Sonia engaged with the kids. She led them in imaginative games and goofy dances until Adele began to show signs of sleepiness.

Sonia checked the time and decided it was time for the children’s baths.

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Adele showed no resistance as Sonia bathed her, quietly following the bedtime routine.

As Sonia gently bathed her, she noticed a small red mark between Adele’s shoulder blades. She worried that their play might have caused an injury. She softly prodded the spot and asked, “Does this hurt?”

Adele, captivated by her rubber duck, didn’t reply. Sonia closely examined the mark and, finding no reaction, concluded it was likely a normal birthmark. Relieved, she left it alone and finished Adele’s bath.

After their baths, the two children eagerly joined the adults for playtime on the bed. The games were uncomplicated, but Ariana and Sonia played with great excitement, bringing joy to Melon and occasionally making Adele smile. She appeared pleased.

Following the bedtime stories and lullabies, Sonia tucked the drowsy children into bed. However, Ariana lay awake for a while, staring at the ceiling as troubling thoughts kept her from sleeping.

What link could Holden have to that online wealthy friend? Could they be the same person? She mulled over the clues but couldn't quite piece them together.

Restless in bed, Ariana was hit by a thought. The video platform she used might be able to trace IP addresses. Ariana instantly logged in to check the IP address of the account that had rewarded her.

As expected, the address was listed at the bottom of the homepage.

It was in Eleymond.

This discovery, along with recent events, led Ariana to believe that the online wealthy friend was indeed Holden. Still, she knew she needed to find a way to confirm it further.

Ariana set her phone aside, but her mind kept on racing. She couldn't understand why Holden's voice now resembled Theodore's, even though it was entirely different just five years ago.

Could he have secretly undergone vocal surgery? Ariana thought the idea was unlikely but couldn't come up with a more plausible explanation.

Despite her best efforts, the puzzle remained unsolved. With a deep sigh, she wondered if it was all just a series of coincidences. Then, the eerie apparition she had seen earlier that day returned to haunt her thoughts.

Was it real, or simply a creation of her imagination?

Shawn showed up in the afternoon to fetch Adele. Thanks to Ariana's pep talk, Adele went along without a fuss instead of clinging to her friend.

Adele and Melon exchanged their farewells, the latter a bit downhearted about watching his buddy leave. Off to the side, Ariana and Shawn chatted about setting up therapy sessions.

"Considering how Adele's feeling, I think once a week is plenty,"

Ariana said.

Shawn gave her a nod.

"You just tell me when, and I'll get everything sorted."

Once they'd hammered out the details, Shawn departed with Adele.

As they went on their way, Ariana dove straight back into plans for the upcoming talent show. Sonia chimed in with a playful tone, "Slow down! You're working too hard!"

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Ariana just smiled. "Well, my team's got some catching up to do." Sonia laughed, said, "I'll be keeping an eye out," and then went off to spend some time with Melon.

Over the next few days, Ariana kept a close eye on her team's rigorous practice sessions. Her straightforward approach had them on their toes, but things were going well, all in all.

In no time, the day of the show was upon them. There was a palpable excitement backstage as everyone prepped. A ton of cameras focused on the green room, broadcasting live to the talent show's website.

Audience numbers varied a lot between teams. Top dogs like Rollingrock Media racked up millions of views the moment they started streaming.

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With an impressive lineup and their heartthrob manager, Calvert Glyn, whom everyone hoped would step into the spotlight, they were the ones to watch.

While other groups couldn't match Rollingrock's fame, they had some talked-about or loved contestants that got people talking, and their numbers weren't half bad.

But for Ariana's stream? It was a different story. They barely had a few thousand viewers. The vibe on their end didn't match the excitement seen elsewhere.

While competing teams made the most of their camera time, Ariana's crew just sat there, eyes glued to their phones, not engaging with the viewers at all.

The comment section was buzzing.

"These folks seem like they've been thrown together last minute." "They're just screaming 'give me space.'"

"Do they even know their routines?"

"They're nowhere near as good as my favorite team."

"Seems like they've thrown in the towel."

"That's just plain rude."

Suddenly, two dashing guys with water bottles stepped into the frame, grabbing viewers' attention.

"Who are these lookers? Are they crew or contestants?"

“They should be on stage!”

But here’s the twist: these guys seemed pretty chummy with Ariana’s group. The live feed was soon full of curious faces, wondering who they were.

The two, obviously not used to the spotlight without their stage get -up, tried dodging the camera. They’d shy away or gaze at the floor, pretty much screaming awkwardness.

Seeing this, Ariana made her move. Just as the camera was swinging their way she snuck up and gave them a playful thwack. “Stand up straight.”

They snapped to attention, puffing out their chests and lifting their chins. However, the camera didn’t miss a beat, capturing this unscripted moment.

#### Chapter 1034

The live stream chat hummed with comments, expressions such as “LOL,” and “Help! My mind immediately revisited the memory of being caught by the teacher for sneaking a peek at my phone during self-study sessions.”

“It’s incredibly eerie, like a scene ripped from a horror film, hahaha,” someone wrote. “But they’re surprisingly obedient.” “Yeah, like those students who may not seem very smart but are incredibly hardworking.”

The live stream room became more lively than before, with some new fans of these two guys joining in, applauding them as good boys and offering reassuring words not to be afraid.

Nonetheless, lurking in the virtual audience were some astute viewers who couldn’t help but recognize the Chamberlain brothers as the enigmatic duo who had amused everyone during the auditions with their delightfully unorthodox, humorous, and dare we say, not-so- conventionally attractive performances. These viewers wasted no time in casting shadows of doubt.

“They are nothing more than attention-seekers and clowns.” “Indeed, good looks won’t get you far. My idol is the real deal, brimming with talent. What can these two possibly offer?” “Notice how they avoid eye contact with the camera? They’re headed for an early exit, mark my words,” predicted another.

Soon, the moment arrived for them to grace the stage. The livestream seamlessly transitioned to the main stage, where the host invited a representative from each team to draw lots.

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Ariana asked one of the members to step up to the plate, and much to everyone's amusement, they drew the first slot. The live chat section practically erupted with a barrage of comments.

"The second team to perform hits the jackpot. Regardless of their performance, someone better will follow."

"Why is the show serving up laughter so early?"

"Lol, I'm beginning to enjoy it."

Not only was the live chat abuzz with amusement, but even the other competing teams in the audience couldn't conceal their smirks, though they attempted to play it cool for the camera.

Behind the scenes, off-camera, the other managers wore expressions ranging from thinly veiled amusement to subtle sympathy as they observed Ariana's predicament.

Jacob, the show's musical director, couldn't help but exude an air of dismissiveness. In his mind, Ariana couldn't possibly find a more competent vocal coach than him.

Moreover, rumors circulated in the live chat that Ariana's group had a lackluster rehearsal the previous afternoon, struggling to find their groove and maintain synchronized dance moves.

"Let's see what kind of comedy show this is about to become," someone commented.

"Really? The critics' corner must be soon relishing this new fodder!"

At this point, the live audience seemed to come to a consensus that this performance would serve as new material for a comedy sketch.

The performance commenced, and the stage plunged into absolute darkness.

From the depths of that obscurity, a piano melody emerged, a soothing and restorative tune that felt like a gentle beacon in the void. In just a few rhythmic notes, it managed to absorb all the audience.

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Then, with a swift camera cut, the lights illuminated a dignified elderly man, instantly recognized by some viewers.

Someone in the virtual crowd immediately identified the elderly gentleman, and the comment section erupted with astonishment. “It's Julio Cugat! My goodness! It's Julio!”

“Itis him! Christ! Julio Cugat!!!”

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“The live audience must be making a fortune!”

“A live performance by Julio! A chance | may never get!”

The live chat not only lit up but also left many managers in the audience stunned, and the contestants themselves were equally amazed, rising to their feet.

Those within the music industry were equally euphoric. How had the production team managed to secure Julio Cugat? Even Jacob, the musical director, dropped his music sheets in astonishment and excitedly stood up.

That was his idol!



As the musical director, disbelief had a hold on him; Julio's arrival had escaped his awareness.

Jacob, swept up in a whirlwind of excitement, grasped the stage manager and inquired, "Why was there no prior announcement of Mr. Cugat's presence?"

The stage manager, equally bewildered, joined in Jacob's sense of mystification.

Julio had remained concealed during yesterday's rehearsal, and all they knew was that Ariana had extended a personal invitation to a special guest — Julio remained a well-guarded secret.

What followed next was even more astonishing: the performance delivered by Ariana's team.

It bore no resemblance to the online rumors. Though the contestants appeared unfamiliar with each other earlier backstage, their onstage collaboration flowed with seamless grace.

With Julio's accompaniment, an aura of enchantment and healing enveloped the entire stage. Combined with rap-style narrations, the performance transformed into a mesmerizing visual and auditory spectacle.

Initially anticipated as mere entertainment, the performance left everyone in a state of awe. It transcended expectations; it was

nothing short of a grand premiere.

The live stream became a frenzy of effusive compliments, tips, and creatively styled comments, all extolling its brilliance. Some viewers were so moved that they shed tears in reverential awe. The comments overflowed with expressions of admiration and wonder.

The act wrapped up, leaving the audience in a state of awe. It was now time for the feedback portion where the well-respected judges would share their thoughts on the contestants' performances. To add a little drama, the producers had roped in a surprise celebrity judge, keeping everyone on the edge of their seats.

The host brought Julio to the limelight with a warm greeting. "It's a privilege to have you here, Mr. Cugat. What brought you to our stage?" Julio responded with a charming smile and a confident demeanor.

"When fate knocks, you answer. Ariana's not just any talent; she's an old friend. Supporting her team was the least I could do. Whispers flew around the room. Most were taken aback. Who would have guessed that the head of this lesser-known company had ties with the renowned Julio?"

Chapter 1036

The cameras swung to Ariana, seated gracefully among the crowd. Even with minimal makeup, she had a glow about her that put the more flamboyant efforts of others to shame.

The comments on the live feed were full of admiration.

"Based on looks alone, she's got my vote!"

"A boss who outshines the stars? Legendary."

"She's friends with Julio? Talk about impressive."

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"Don't just go by appearances. Ariana's proving herself."

"Didn't see that coming from her team. What a turnaround!"

The grapevine was abuzz, trying to piece together Ariana's story and whether her so-called underdogs might be the dark horses. After a few words lauding Ariana and her crew, the host shifted gears to the much-anticipated feedback round.

As for the celebrity judges? They were kept in the shadows, waiting for their moment to weigh in.

The four judges were seasoned pros. They acknowledged the esteemed Julio before diving into their feedback.

They all seemed to be on the same page: the team had blown them away.

Melding hip-hop with a musical was a bold move, but boy, did they nail it. Both sound and visuals were spot on.

The rookies were given impressive scores, ranging from 7 to 9.

Then, in a grand reveal, the lights shone on the surprise fifth judge. And there she was, the dazzling Sadie.

Both contestants and viewers were taken aback. They'd banked on seeing a seasoned industry bigwig, not this fresh face. The comments on the livestream were buzzing.

"Wait, isn't she Sadie Pierre engaged to the CEO of the Fredrick Group? Why's she here?"

"I was hoping for some industry giant, not just arm candy."

"A year in and she's judging? Seriously questioning her qualifications here." "Is this for real?"

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"Heard she's had a ton of work done on her face." "She's just riding on her boyfriend's coattails."

Seeing Sadie in the judge's seat, Ariana felt a knot in her stomach.

Chapter 1037

This wasn't a good sign.

Sadie had this gentle air about her, gracing everyone with a warm smile. But when her eyes met Ariana's, there was a coldness there.

It felt like she wouldn't mind seeing Ariana taken down a peg or two. Initially, Sadie couldn't care less about joining this variety show.

Such stints felt like a snooze-fest to her and didn't seem like a good fame booster. To her, those who made appearances on such shows were in a different league altogether.

But her agent had other ideas, dubbing it the "show of the moment."

So, she reluctantly agreed.

What she hadn't anticipated was finding out Ariana would be there too.

Seeing her name on the participant list, handed over by her assistant, felt almost like Ariana was playing into her hands. Achuckle escaped her.

First, she was restless. But knowing Ariana was in the mix, things started looking up. Sadie figured Ariana must've hit a rough patch lately. Maybe life hadn't been kind, or perhaps she was just trying to reclaim some lost spotlight.

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With these thoughts, a smirk slowly formed on Sadie's face. If Ariana thought this was a safe space, she was in for a surprise. Eyeing the group on stage, Sadie spoke with a soft touch.

“You all did a fantastic job, pulling this off in such a short span.”

The performers looked thrilled. But before they could even catch their breath, Sadie switched gears.

“That said, there’s room for improvement..”

She then began picking on every little detail. Franklin and Woodrow, the twins, bore the brunt of her critique. She rattled off a list of what seemed like made-up issues about their performance.

The twins, already on shaky ground, looked shattered. Their posture said it all: slouched, avoiding the camera, visibly uncomfortable.

They nodded in quiet agreement to Sadie’s comments, looking like they’d had the wind taken out of their sails.

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Sadie then shifted her critique to the music. Assuming an expert’s demeanor, she stated, “Even though it blended hip-hop elements, the male backing vocals seemed too sharp at the high notes. It didn’t add to the music’s beauty, but rather disrupted the ambiance.”

Tom, who provided the male vocals, immediately looked agitated. His face had already clouded over when Sadie criticized the twins earlier.

Known for his straightforward nature and short fuse, Tom shot back, “No beauty? Enlighten us then about what musical beauty truly is!”

The livestream chat was suddenly buzzing.

“He’s so bold! Love his spirit.”

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“Why’s she the arbiter of musical beauty? The experts had no complaints. Her criticism seems baseless!”  
“Finally, some drama!”

Sadie’s face betrayed a hint of irritation.

“Your voice isn’t meant for this stage. It made the performance seem crass,” she snapped.

Tom, visibly angered, countered, “How many songs have you put out?”

I’ve been in the rock scene for over ten years, and no one’s ever accused me of lacking musical beauty.”

She retorted with faux sweetness, “Rock, you say? How’s that relevant to a stage performance like this? Or maybe the song was intended to sound that way.”

Tom scoffed, “So, you’re suggesting Mr. Cugat didn’t arrange it well?”

Caught off guard, Sadie had no reply.

The host, sensing the mounting tension, swiftly intervened, prompting Sadie to provide her score.

With a smirk, Sadie gave them a mere two points.

A collective gasp echoed.

She coolly explained, “Think of this as motivation. A high score might make you complacent. I’m doing you a favor.”

The audacity of her rationale stunned the audience. Given that the show's rules didn't exclude the extremes, Sadie's score significantly impacted the group's average.

Disheartenment and anger marred the performers' expressions. They had put in five days of dedicated rehearsals, only to be casually dismissed.

Tom's frustration was palpable. He couldn't take it any longer.

Scoffing, he made a hasty exit from the stage, indifferent to the ongoing broadcast.

Even the show's production team didn't anticipate that the first episode would be so awkward.

The comments under the live broadcast created a buzz. The general consensus was that while the team's performance in the show was surprisingly brilliant, the controversy that followed had turned it into a social media explosion.

The controversy led to heated debates in the comment sections amongst the netizens. As a result, the show's popularity soared and it quickly exceeded 100 million viewership, with so many people watching the livestream the pressure became more and more intense.

One by one, the remaining teams quickly completed their performance. Overall, Ariana's team wasn't bad, but the two points Sadie gave them put them in a bad spot. When the final rankings were announced, no one was surprised that Ariana's team placed Last.

The other teams all received decent scores from unbiased judges.

## Chapter 1039

However, Sadie deliberately lowered Ariana's team's score while still scoring the other teams fairly.

Despite Ariana's team getting relatively high scores from the other judges, the two points Sadie gave them kept them from catching up to the other teams.

The morale of Ariana's six rookies was at rock bottom, and Ariana also felt outraged inside. Of course, she clearly knew that Sadie was intentionally targeting her.

Ariana was pretty happy with her team's performance. She had witnessed the hard work each of them put in over the past few days.

Unfortunately, Sadie's little vendetta relegated them to last place.

They needed a high score in the following round to climb up some ranks, or they would be eliminated.

Ariana felt discouraged deep down. However, she maintained a calm demeanor as she returned backstage.

Backstage, she saw five people gathered around a dejected Tom. What could they possibly be talking about?

When Ariana got closer, she saw that Tom had his face in his hands and looked quite pitiful.

"Tom." Ariana called him with concern. Tom looked up. His eyes were red and there were traces left by tears on his cheeks.

Who could have imagined that the coolest guy on the stage, who seemed so arrogant and full of himself, would break down in tears when he was backstage?

When her initial confusion had passed, Ariana tried to comfort him. "Don't be upset. You all did very well, and it's not over yet."

Tom fiercely wiped his eyes and said with gritted teeth, "I'm really angry! What gives that woman the right to judge us? She clearly doesn't understand anything!"

At this time, the other members hurried to comfort him.



“Maybe Sadie won't be a judge during the next round. Let's aim for a high score in the next round, okay? Besides, there's still the online voting which could help us.”

“That's right! That Sadie deliberately sank our score. It wasn't your fault.”

Thanks to his teammates' comforting words, Tom finally calmed down.

Just then, there were two knocks at the door. Ariana glanced over and saw it was Jacob.

With her brows furrowed, she walked over to the man and asked, “What's the matter?”

“I just came to see how things are going,” Jacob replied. While speaking, he kept peering around, as if looking for someone.

Ariana understood what was on Jacob's mind and she directly said, “Julio has left already.”

Hearing this, Jacob laughed awkwardly. He didn't leave immediately but stayed there for a chit chat. “I'm really sorry about last time. I spoke without thinking. Don't take it to heart, please,” Jacob said sheepishly. “It's nothing. I understand your choice,” Ariana replied perfunctorily.

After a short pause, Jacob continued, “You know Mr. Cugat rarely visits Eleymond. He's a veteran legend in the industry. The show's production team should really offer him some hospitality to make his stay here more enjoyable.”

It was obvious from Jacob's words that he wanted to see Julio. Ariana didn't want to be in conflict with the production team, so she agreed to talk to Julio and saw Jacob off.

Soon, the premiere episode of the show was viral and news about Ariana's team occupied five spots in the trends. The first trending ranking was titled, “A nervous breakdown?” This article referred to the arrogant boy's breakdown backstage.

Chapter 1040

The show's production team had filmed Tom sobbing backstage and they quickly posted the video clip online. This video quickly had millions of views.

Initially, online comments lambasted Tom for his perceived arrogance.

The fact that he was almost eliminated at the auditions meant that Internet users now saw him not only as someone arrogant, but above all self-righteous and proud after having achieved a certain success.

However, after seeing the raw video of him crying, most of the comments shifted from lambasting to sympathy. Netizens flooded the comment section in droves, commiserating with Tom and comforting him.

Tom was already known as handsome, but seeing him burst into tears backstage had revealed a more vulnerable side of him. Internet users were struck by this contrast between his confident personality on stage and his emotional moment off camera. Very quickly, there were compilations posted showing him on stage and behind the scenes. These edited videos went viral and attracted a wave of new fans.

Online comments about the show grew more impassioned.

"That judge, Sadie, it's clear she knows nothing about good music." "Just because she's rich doesn't mean she can judge talent!"

"Why is such a talentless woman even on the judging panel?"

"Who the hell does she think she is to undermine a legend like Julio"

"It is obvious she deliberately gave Ariana's team low scores to sabotage their chances of moving to the next stage of the competition.

That's so shameful!"

Netizens had a good opinion of Ariana's team, and the comments showed no signs of slowing down. Ariana's team was now the most talked-about group on the show.

On the other side, Ariana set her phone aside, still apprehensive about her team's next performance.

She could feel Sadie's thinly veiled hostility directed specifically at her. This bad score was clearly intended to harm her. Ariana suspected that Sadie would find an excuse to stay on as judge unless her team was eliminated.

As Holden Frederick's fiancée, Sadie had a lot of influence. The show producers wouldn't dare to offend her or reject her demands.

Ariana's team's only hope was to get enough votes in the online voting to make up for Sadie's skewed score. Otherwise, it was almost guaranteed that they would be eliminated.

The thought alone made Ariana so anxious her stomach churned.

Meanwhile, her phone wouldn't stop vibrating as the group chat with her friends was flooded with messages. Sarah was furious and didn't hide her frustration.

"That tone-deaf dimwit wouldn't know good music if it was played right in front of her plastic face!"

"Is she deranged? Who allowed this talentless hack to judge others?"

Does she think we're all idiots?"

"No skills, no credentials, just a shrill harpy spewing garbage."