

Unconscious 1061

Chapter 1061

The official live-streaming channel was swamped once more as online fans poured in, nearly crashing the live streaming flow. The onlookers found themselves utterly amazed by the unexpected turn.

“Unbelievable! Tyler Brewer on live streaming, urging his fans to vote for Ariana’s team? Pinch me; | must’ve been in a half— dreaming state to connect those dots.”

“Spectacular it is, Sarah and Tyler on the same side!” “This agent is no ordinary player. Mark my words!”

“My goodness, who on earth is she, with a lineup Like Julio, Sarah, and now Tyler? Could she be connected to the moneyed elite?”

Speculation ran wild online about Ariana’s background, as her company had somehow gathered the support of a superstar diva and a renowned actor. Was she some kind of hidden puppeteer pulling the strings behind the scenes?

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As the votes for Ariana’s team surged relentlessly, edging closer to overtaking Rollingrock Media’s team and even hinting at surpassing them, panic washed over Rollingrock Media’s contestants. They anxiously implored Calvert, “Calvert, what’s our play here?”

Calvert frowned and gritted his teeth, pondering for a moment. Then, he got his phone and called the publicity department. “Do it! Throw the entire budget!” “But if we splurge now, what about the future promotions and marketing?”

Calvert clenched his teeth and retorted, “The future can wait! We’ve already sunk substantial funds into online voting, and if we pull the plug now, it’ll all be for naught. We can’t afford to quit. Allocate the budget, and I’ll manage the aftermath.”

Before long, Rollingrock Media’s vote tally began to surge, establishing a substantial lead and holding it steadfastly.

Calvert monitored their numbers, praying fervently for the online voting to conclude, hoping to preserve their pole position without further hitches.

Ariana's side also monitored the situation closely, watching as their vote count stabilized. Ariana wore a smile and rallied her six- person troupe, affirming, "Securing second place would be a win in itself.

It demonstrates the audience's recognition and appreciation for all of you."

However, beneath their optimism lay a hint of despondency; they knew that their live audience's votes were insufficient. To avoid elimination, they needed to surpass the average vote count by at least threefold.

Yet now, as data settled into a seemingly irreversible pattern and the online voting's end loomed, it looked like all hope was lost.

Just when it seemed like game over, an astonishing twist unfolded. Suddenly, Ariana's team's data skyrocketed, surging past the first-place team. Bewilderment swept through everyone as they wondered if other teams ' data had hit a voting snag.

The reality, however, was that the network operated smoothly, and other teams' votes were indeed increasing, but at a snail's pace compared to Ariana's team. They were pulling ahead and doing so at an astonishing pace, soaring past the average vote count by more than three times!

Amazement rippled through the onlookers, who wondered who could have made the last-second move. Discussions among live audience and online viewers ignited with fervor.

Even Ariana was taken aback, never expecting someone to step in to support her so dramatically.

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Amid this, Ariana overheard a staff member's hushed conversation.

"What's happening? A dozen more accounts suddenly started voting for their team, all from the same IP address. It must've cost them over ten million to maneuver this."

She asked, “May I know the location of that IP address, please?”

The staff member replied, “It traces back to somewhere in Eleymond, but I don’t have exact details.” Their puzzled gaze met Ariana’s.

“Aren't these your men?”

Ariana offered a sheepish smile, at a loss for words.

How could she possibly know what was happening? She was just as confounded as the rest. Angela’s Library

In Eleymond, aside from Sarah and Tyler, were there other magnates willing to generously invest in her cause? Something extraordinary was afoot.

Inside the conference room atop the BRD Group’s building, sitting at the end of the polished mahogany table, Holden tapped his fingers impatiently as he waited in silence.

His steely gaze swept across the two rows of men seated in front of him. These men were all impeccably dressed, wearing tailored suits and designer ties. Their hair was carefully slicked back. This was the typical look of elite professionals. Those who knew the cutthroat financial world knew these men who were renowned traders, the best manipulators in the industry.

At this moment, each of them had a sleek laptop computer open in front of them, the screen of which was filled with constantly changing data and numbers. In the corner of each screen was a small live stream window showing the glittering stage of the talent show competition.

The men were intently focused on their computers, tapping keyboards incessantly. They were using their connections and tactics unique to them to influence the online voting. It was only when the talent show host announced the end of the votes that these traders finally relaxed, leaning back in their seats.

Seeing that the vote count for Ariana's team was well ahead of that of all the other teams, Holden closed his laptop with satisfaction.

A rare smile crossed his sharp features as he said to the men around the table, "Well done, gentlemen. Let's call it a day."

After that, Holden briskly strode out of the conference room. It was only then that the men finally dared to speak, albeit in low voices.

"What was all that about? Is Ariana's team some kind of cash cow?

Otherwise, why would Mr. Fredrick personally intervene and make us rig the votes halfway through the show?" one of the men wondered aloud.

"No idea. And he also invested a lot of money to support them," his colleague murmured.

"Maybe he did that for the company's interests. Our company sponsored that reality show after all," someone else suggested hesitantly.

But then, another man shook his head and retorted, "Even though we sponsored that show, does the boss really need to go to such lengths to manipulate results? Coming to think of it, it is a shame Ariana's team got eliminated."

The puzzled traders glanced around with furrowed brows, trying to understand what Holden was up to. "No matter how hard I think about it, I just can't figure out what Mr. Fredrick was thinking here," one man finally remarked.

The men discussed like that for a while, then they packed up their things and walked out of the conference room one after the other.

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They returned to their work.

Thanks to the massive artificially-boosted online votes in their favor, Ariana's team managed to make up for their low scores in other voting sessions and they could move on to the next round. On the glittering stage, the six members of the teams cheered jubilantly, waving to the audience in the studio.

Meanwhile, in Mistlyn, with furrowed brows, Sadie watched Ariana's team celebrating on TV. Her hand holding the remote shook as she was overcome with a burning rage. After a moment, she could no longer contain her fury and grabbed the remote control which she threw violently at the screen. The screen shattered and shards of glass flew through the air.

How could Ariana's team have won out? How was that possible? Sadie fumed, and her face was red with anger.

She couldn't understand why on earth Ariana was always so unfairly lucky. She had survived the car crash, and then the fire. Why couldn't that bitch, Ariana die and stop tormenting her? Why was that worthless wretch always favored by fate?

With her red eyes burning with anger, Sadie glared at the image of a smiling Ariana on the broken screen. She was so angry her chest heaved uncontrollably.

On the other side, once the show went off the air, Ariana and her euphoric team rushed backstage to pack up before heading out to celebrate their hard-earned victory.

Just as Ariana was about to exit the building, she realized that she had forgotten her bag somewhere in the studio. She told Sarah and the others to go forward while she rushed back to grab her bag.

Just when she stepped out of the elevator into the empty backstage area, Ariana saw a tall man in a corner. The man was speaking on his phone, and there was a hint of urgency in his tone.

She wouldn't have paid attention to the man if she didn't suddenly hear him exclaim, "Miss Pierre, please listen to me!"

Ariana froze and stopped in her tracks at once. Her interest was piqued and she listened intently as the man continued, "I know you're upset, but getting mad at me won't solve anything. You saw it yourself,

their audience vote count was by far the lowest. I did exactly what you said and I bribed everyone in the studio audience to vote against Ariana's team. But the online votes were totally different. How could I control the entire Internet? The results are already published. There's nothing I can do to change them now."

Hearing the man's words, it suddenly dawned on Ariana that Sadie must have been sabotaging her team this whole time behind the scenes. She should have known that Sadie would never pass up an opportunity to harm her.

As the tall man continued to converse with Sadie on the phone, it was evident that a heated argument was taking place. The tall man's patience wore thin as he curtly declared, "I've carried out your request. Now, it's your turn to settle the outstanding payment."

Sadie's response wasn't clear, but the tall man unleashed a torrent of curses. ANGELA'S LIBRARY

"Where's your integrity? Money shouldn't be a concern for you! You're angry? Is that a valid explanation to delay payment? Who could've anticipated that the online voting would turn things around!"

After a few more heated exchanges, they ended the call.

The man grumbled to himself as he stowed away his phone. However, when he turned around, Ariana's sudden presence startled him.

Ariana maintained her composure and even smiled faintly.

Meanwhile, Sarah and the others patiently awaited Ariana in the car.

The six contestants behaved so well. They sat in silence without fiddling with their phones. Woodrow even had a small notebook in hand, jotting down his thoughts about the competition. In a short span, he had penned several hundred words.

After some time, Ariana finally appeared, accompanied by the tall man. All eyes turned in their direction, watching Ariana and the man engage in friendly conversation. Tom couldn't help but assume, "Seems like Ariana has gotten yet another admirer."

Jim glanced toward them, shook his head, and shared his reservations about this specific admirer.

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Franklin chuckled and offered a candid observation. "It's evident that this person isn't on the same level as Ariana."

Sarah also added with a playful grin, "Absolutely, not even in the same ballpark. Ariana's husband is exceptionally good-looking, a genuine rarity. I doubt there are many men who can hold a candle to him."

The six contestants were taken by surprise and quickly gathered around, their minds buzzing with questions. "Wait, Ariana is married?"

Sarah affirmed this with a nod.

"Yes. Their child is already five years old."

"Seriously? You're not joking, right?"

"It's hard to believe, considering Ariana doesn't give off the vibe of a married-with-kids person," remarked one of the contestants, igniting a discussion among them. Then, someone inquired, "But why have we never seen her husband picking her up?"

Upon hearing this question, Sarah's expression subtly changed. She chose not to pursue that line of discussion. She subtly redirected their attention as she saw Ariana coming, to spare her from potentially uncomfortable questions.

By the time Ariana entered the car, they had already moved on to other topics of conversation. Sarah casually asked, "Who was that man earlier?"

Ariana smiled and replied, "He's a member of the production team. We just had a brief chat." Sarah nodded and didn't ask more questions. The six contestants also fell silent, refraining from prying further.

Angela's Library

Once they reached their destination, they had a celebratory meal, accompanied by drinks. Ariana occasionally glanced at her phone, awaiting a message.

It arrived soon. "We've gathered and revealed the evidence." Ariana promptly responded, "Excellent work. The payment will be sent immediately."

"Thanks, Miss."

"No need for thanks. You've earned it," Ariana messaged back with a grin, then set her phone aside.

Suddenly, Tom, seated opposite Ariana, burst out, "Hey, check this out! Someone just brought something to light! They're claiming the audience vote for our team was manipulated!"

"What? Who did that?" Everyone scrambled for their phones. They discovered not only compelling proof but also the identity of the person orchestrating it all.

"Sadie?! Has she lost her senses? Why would she even do that?!"

The group observed in astonishment as the trending topic attracted a lot of attention online, entirely caught off guard by the shocking revelation that Sadie was the culprit behind it all.

The young contestants found themselves utterly perplexed, struggling to fathom why Sadie seemed to single them out persistently. Even if she had opted not to participate as a judge, they wondered why she would pay off the live audience to manipulate their votes.

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They were not alone in this. The curious onlookers online were equally taken aback.

While the presented evidence seemed solid, there were still those who harbored doubts, finding these allegations almost too incredible to believe. Understanding Sadie's motivations for such actions remained an enigma to them.

"I find it perplexing why Sadie would descend to personally sabotage Ariana's team," someone commented.

"Indeed," chimed in another, "Sadie is the fiancée of the CEO of the Fredrick Group. What could she possibly hope to achieve?" ninjanovel.com

"She's a renowned celebrity in her own right; surely, she wouldn't engage in such a reputation-damaging act, would she?"

Despite many struggling to grasp Sadie's motives, the evidence presented, including transaction records, call logs, and chat histories, all appeared undeniably authentic, serving as incontrovertible proof.

While shock gripped the rest, Ariana remained poised, savoring her meal with composure.

Her astonishment had begun when she overheard the tall man's phone call with Sadie. Swiftly, she had recruited him to her side and offered to purchase the evidence at a premium.

Luckily, the man's sole motivation was financial gain, and Sadie's reluctance to settle the payment had left him frustrated. Ariana generously accepted his terms, and he assured her that everything would proceed smoothly upon receiving payment.

However, his remarkable efficiency hinted at a hidden card he had kept during his dealings with Sadie. Nonetheless, Ariana remained bewildered by the vehement opposition she faced from Sadie.

Initially, she had sensed Sadie's animosity through intuition, anticipating some degree of hostility, but never expecting such extreme measures.

The burning question lingered: Why? Could it be because of Holden?

Yet, since her return to the country, Ariana hadn't even crossed paths with Holden, and there existed no genuine animosity between them. There seemed to be no solid reason for Sadie to target her so relentlessly.

With these thoughts in mind, Ariana couldn't help but recall the sudden surge in their vote count during the online voting earlier that day.

Could Holden be behind this?

Ariana couldn't say for certain. She felt that Holden didn't have a compelling reason to assist her, but she couldn't pinpoint who else might be involved. She decided to shake her head, dismissing the idea for now.

Across town, Holden had just concluded some business matters and was en route to his residence when Shawn approached him.

"Mr. Fredrick, there's a situation involving Miss Pierre. Would you like to take a Look?"

Shawn extended his phone towards Holden, the screen ablaze with the incriminating article concerning Sadie.

"Somebody has exposed Miss Pierre for manipulating the audience voting, specifically targeting Miss Edwards's team. I've already verified it, and it's indeed Miss Pierre's doing."

Holden fell silent for a moment, then pushed the phone away with a trace of annoyance. His brow furrowed as he finally spoke, "Go and manage public opinion."

"Understood. To what extent should we control it?" Shawn inquired professionally.

"Don't permit it to blossom into a full-blown scandal," Holden replied, his tone steady and even.

After all, Sadie was his publicly acknowledged fiancée, and even though he harbored no genuine feelings for her, his conscience compelled him to take action. However, his personal feelings also dictated that he couldn't offer her unwavering support. Thus, he instructed Shawn to just quell the situation.

In that moment, Shawn added, "By the way, I've located the address you asked me to investigate. It's right here in Eleymond, tucked away in a remote corner not marked on any map. It's a modest tailor shop in a quiet town, run by the son of an elderly lady who's been in business for over four decades. However, their livelihood doesn't depend on the shop; it's only occasionally open."

Shawn handed over a handwritten address, and Holden accepted it, his gaze contemplative. At that moment, Holden's phone rang.

He glanced at the screen and saw that it was Sadie.

A subtle furrow formed on his brow before he picked up the call.

Immediately the call connected, Sadie's voice quivered from the other end.

"Have you seen the news going around the internet?"

Before Holden could utter a word, she broke down in tears. Her voice trembled as she hurriedly explained, "Don't believe any of it. It's all fabricated. Someone is intentionally framing me. | haven't committed any wrongdoing.."

"That's enough," Holden interjected sternly.

"| have no interest in verifying these allegations. However, you must confront your own truth."

ANGELA'S LIBRARY

With that, he abruptly ended the call.

Afterward, Holden felt a twinge of unease.

He was very aware that the way he felt about Ariana was different, and that he had no emotional connection to Sadie.

In fact, he had no recollection of Sadie from his past. Nevertheless, out of respect for his family's expectations and his obligations to Adele, he couldn't just dismiss Sadie's predicament.

During a moment of introspection, Holden grappled with strange emotions, and it left him feeling kind of degraded. As the pride of his family, he had never felt such feelings.

"Mr. Fredrick." Shawn's voice broke the spell of Holden's thoughts.

Holden refocused and remarked, "You can head back now. | require some time alone."

Without further questions, Shawn left, leaving Holden with a steaming cup of coffee. Holden lingered in his office for a while, contemplating. He eventually opted to leave alone in another car.

Meanwhile, Ariana and her friends had reveled late into the night, having more alcohol than they should have. Among the group, the only one still sober was Sarah's assistant.

The assistant had coordinated their departures and had even arranged for a car to pick up Ariana.

However, because Ariana was drunk, the assistant had concerns about her safety during the journey home. Consequently, she made the decision to personally accompany Ariana.

With the assistant's support, Ariana stumbled outside, trying to push her away while slurring, "I'm alright, you don't have to.."

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But before Ariana could complete her sentence, she dropped to her knees at the side of the road, lost control, and vomited uncontrollably. The assistant hurried to help her, but Ariana vigorously shrugged her off and insisted, "I'm not drunk. | can take care of myself! | see the car!"

The assistant had yet to receive the driver's call and looked around in puzzlement for the car. However, before she could react, Ariana had already sprinted towards a parked black car nearby.

The assistant's eyes widened. It was an exclusive luxury car, definitely not the standard taxi they had booked. Any damage to this vehicle would be catastrophic.

Desperately, the assistant chased after Ariana, yelling, "Hold on! ninjanovel.com It's not that one! Stop!"

But the alcohol-empowered Ariana raced ahead, and the assistant couldn't catch up. She watched in dismay as Ariana leaped into the car.

The car's door was unlocked, and Ariana forcefully shut it with a loud bang. She slouched in the seat, gestured to the driver, and shouted, "Drive!"

The driver, previously absorbed in admiring the river view, gradually turned to see who had entered the car. Turns out it was Holden.

Holden had initially sought solace by the riverside, hoping to clear his mind, but little did he anticipate that an inebriated Ariana would unintentionally stumble into his car.

Seeing Ariana's intoxicated state, a flicker of irritation sparked within Holden.

It was too late for someone to indulge in excessive revelry, and her recklessness in climbing into a stranger's vehicle sent his blood pressure soaring. What if the wheel of fate had spun differently, and she had encountered a potential menace instead of him?

The more he thought about it, the more his frustration festered. He contemplated rousing her from her alcohol-induced slumber, but when his fingers brushed her, they remained unintentionally gentle. A sigh escaped him as he whispered her name softly multiple times.

In response, Ariana swatted his hand away, her brow furrowing in annoyance as she muttered, "Quit bugging me! And be quiet!" Her grumbling continued, an incoherent stream of consciousness as she

fumbled for a more comfortable position. Watching her peculiar state, Holden found himself between irritation and bemusement.

Just then, a series of taps resounded on the car's window. Holden rolled down the window to see Sarah's assistant, her face apologetic.

"Apologies for this unforeseen intrusion. My friend just had too much to drink and inadvertently found herself in your vehicle. I'll escort her away from here."

Silently, Holden locked the car's door locks and then explained, "It's quite all right. I happen to be a friend of Ariana's, and I can ensure her safe return home."

The assistant became suspicious. Although the man surprisingly knew Ariana's name, it wasn't enough to dismiss her vigilance.

However, Holden, determined to ease her concerns, retrieved his phone and displayed their call logs and chat history, providing evidence of their friendship.

"We are friends, and I am familiar with her son, young Melon. I recently bought Melon a figurine," Holden patiently explained.

Having recently visited Ariana's place due to her association with Sarah, the assistant remembered the figurine, a gift from an affluent acquaintance of Ariana's.

It appeared that the man was most likely that friend, and their association seemed amicable. Her reservations began to wane.

Chapter 1068

Although a trace of uncertainty lingered, the assistant relented. "Very well, she's had quite a lot. Be cautious as you take her home."

She left with a few pleasantries, leaving Holden to heave a sigh of relief as he regarded the slumbering Ariana in the passenger seat.

Bending over, he secured her seatbelt, only to realize he had forgotten to get her home address from the assistant, who had already left.

He had no choice but to wake Ariana and ask her.

“Wake up, where’s your home address? I’m unfamiliar with it.” Holden nudged her gently. Ariana stirred and mumbled, “Beyond the mountains, by the sea. No, the Flower Fairy’s castle..” Angela’s Library

Her words were a perplexing Labyrinth, devoid of coherent direction.

Holden sighed, sending a message to Shawn inquiring about Ariana’s address.

Shawn, taken aback by the message, pondered if his boss was experiencing a change of heart. He had a soft spot for Ariana and thought she was better than Sadie.

The problem was that Sadie was Adele’s mother.

Shawn texted him the location, and Holden drove her all the way to her villa.

Parking the car, he moved to assist Ariana in unbuckling her seatbelt.

Ariana grasped his hand at that moment, her eyes wide and unblinking as they locked onto his. “Are you... You're awake?” he stammered. Ariana’s lips curled into a mysterious smile, and she remained silent, inviting him closer.

Holden, unsure of her intentions, leaned in as she beckoned. Little did he anticipate her next move as she raised her head and planted an unexpected kiss on his Lips!

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Holden paused, his thoughts scattering from the surprising warmth of her kiss. Her breath on his skin made him lose his bearings for a second.

She teased his lower lip with her tongue, and a chill ran through him.

Holden's heart raced, and as he steadied himself on the seat, his grip tightened. He looked at her, clearly taken aback by her brave move.

Ariana, seeing Holden's non-reaction, showed a hint of irritation. ninjanovel.com

She playfully nipped his lip, then pulled back a bit. She tilted her head, a silent question in her eyes. Why hadn't he reacted to her bold approach?

Before Holden could think of his next move, Ariana wrapped an arm around his neck, aiming for another kiss. But he stopped her with a hand on her shoulder. His voice, deep with a touch of ire, broke the silence.

"Do you even recognize me? Is this how you'd treat anyone?"

She brushed his hand aside, her vision blurry. After a little burp, she laughed, her words slightly slurred.

"Sure | know. You're my one and only."

Holden didn't know how to react. Even if she was just spouting tipsy gibberish, he felt an overwhelming surge of emotion. Seizing the moment, Ariana yanked him by the collar and planted another kiss.

Carried away by the fervor of her embrace, Holden's fingers dug into the seat, fighting the urge to give in. But soon, he couldn't hold back. The balance shifted, and he became more involved in their intense interaction.

In the car's tight quarters, their passionate kiss grew more heated.

While Holden's actions were fervent, Ariana matched his intensity.

Her hands roamed over him, unbuttoning his shirt, tracing his solid torso, and finally tugging at his belt.

Holden pulled Ariana close, almost as if he could envelope her waist in just one grasp. Her dress inched up, showing a hint of her pale leg below.

Feeling his restraint wane, Holden halted just when it felt like he might let go, halting Ariana's wandering hand with his own. In her tipsy state, Ariana couldn't fight back.

Taking a moment, Holden exhaled, gathering himself. He gently wiped her lips and straightened out her dress and hair.

He gazed at Ariana, a whirl of thoughts in his head.

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Holden couldn't shake the impact she was having on him. Despite being clear-headed, her unintentional allure was hard to ignore. Her actions and even her words stirred him deeply. This was so unlike how he felt with Sadie. With Sadie, he was always level-headed, but with Ariana, he felt off balance.

Remembering how Ariana had held him, calling him her true love, a thrill went through Holden. His heart pounded and he wrestled to keep it steady.

Even as he tried to center himself, his heart gave in.

He sighed, a mix of frustration and acceptance, swung open the car door, and decided it was best to take her home. ninjanovel.com

Exiting the car, he missed Ariana's faint whisper, saying, "Theodore, stay." Soon enough, she was swept into a deep sleep. Holden got out of the car and cradled Ariana, making his way to the villa's front door.

He rang the bell. It was Melon who answered. The child had been waiting, worried since Ariana hadn't returned. Seeing Holden holding Ariana in that state, alarm flashed in his eyes.

"Mommy, what's wrong with you?" he exclaimed, voice shaky.

Holden was quick to soothe him.

“She’s fine. Just had a bit too much to drink.”

As he carried Ariana inside, it took Melon a moment to compose himself from the sudden wave of emotions. “Where should I take her?” Holden asked.

“Upstairs. I’ll show you,” Melon replied, leading the way with quick, little steps.

In the bedroom, as Holden was setting Ariana on the bed, she suddenly sat upright, waving an arm. “More drinks! Let’s keep the party going!”

Gently, Holden eased her back down.

“You’ve had plenty tonight. We’ll see about tomorrow.”

But Ariana wasn’t so easily convinced.