

Unconscious 1071

Chapter 1071

"I want more!" She squirmed and protested in various ways.

It took a good thirty minutes, but finally, she drifted to sleep.

Rubbing his temples, Holden marveled at his own patience throughout the ordeal.

He took a moment to tidy up Ariana, wiping her brow and taking off her shoes, ensuring she slept comfortably. Angela's Library

With Ariana taken care of, his attention shifted to Melon, who sat on the bed, fighting off sleep with frequent yawns. Holden stroked the child's hair, murmuring, "It's bedtime for you too."

Sleepy-eyed Melon reached out, wanting a hug.

Holden, seeing the kid struggling to stay awake, felt a tug at his heartstrings. He gently scooped up Melon and located the children's room, setting him down softly.

But as Holden was about to exit, Melon's little hand latched onto his leg. Despite his fatigue, the child held up a storybook. "Mr. Mask, will you read me a story?"

Holden sighed deeply, rubbing his face, then nodded.

"Alright, let's hear a story," he agreed, settling beside Melon on the bed.

Even on the brink of sleep, a smile tugged at Melon's lips as he nestled closer to listen.

At one point, drowsy but still attentive, Melon murmured, "Your voice sounds just like my Daddy's."

That gentle observation made Holden smile softly.

It struck him that lately, he'd been in a role reminiscent of a father figure to Melon, trying to build trust and connection.

Yet, he wasn't about to unpack that with Melon right then. He was drawing breath to continue when Melon, with eyes half-closed, added, "You don't just sound like him, you know. You look Like him too."

That gave Holden a pause.

Melon had made a similar comment when they'd first met. Holden had brushed it off then, attributing it to a child's imagination. Hearing it again now, though, a mixture of curiosity and doubt bubbled up inside him.

He voiced his thoughts, asking, "Really? How much do I resemble your dad?"

Chapter 1072

Melon, pondering the question, replied, "Quite a bit. Do you want to see a photo?"

Melon slid off the bed and ducked underneath, pulling out a hidden iron box.

He carefully lifted the lid to unveil a variety of trinkets, each seeming to have its own story. Digging a little deeper, he pulled out a photo neatly wrapped for protection.

He said as he offered the picture to Holden, "Here. This is my Daddy."

Holden took the photo, eyes immediately drawn to the couple it featured: a man in a wheelchair and a woman, presumably Ariana, laughing behind him as she pushed.

The man's face was only partially visible, captured in a side profile.

But that profile, that hint of a smile, was oddly familiar.

With a puzzled look, Holden examined the photograph, the resemblance uncanny.

Could he actually look so much like Ariana's late husband?

His thoughts darted around, but he reasoned that many could share a similar side profile.
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Looking back to Melon, he inquired, "Do you have a full-faced photo of your dad?" Melon's little face fell a bit.

"Only this one. My godmother took it without telling my Mommy. I had to bug her loads before she gave it to me on the sly. Mommy doesn't know."

Holden wondered why Ariana hadn't shared pictures of Melon's dad with him. It seemed odd.

The kid was just as in the dark as him, although Melon was mature enough to suspect that his Mommy might have a good reason to hide it.

Melon's mood shifted quickly though, his eyes shining with optimism.

"It's alright. I'm sure Daddy will be back for my next birthday, and I can see him, not just in photos!"

Holden's heart twisted a bit. Melon's hope was palpable, and he found himself at a loss for words. Instead, he simply reached out, tousling Melon's hair affectionately.

"Hey," Melon said, holding up his pinkie.

Chapter 1073

"Let's keep the photo our secret. You can't tell Mommy, okay?"

Grinning, Holden pinkie-promised in agreement. When Melon was distracted, he discreetly took a quick snapshot of the photograph.

Morning dawned, and Ariana groaned awake, the weight of a massive headache pressing down.

She glanced around, recognizing her surroundings as home. Vague memories of last night's festivities flashed in her mind, but the night's conclusion was a blur, lost amidst the pain pounding in her head.

Ariana rose from the bed, her temples throbbing, and made her way to the bathroom. Upon catching her reflection, she froze. Her lips, slightly swollen, sported a small cut.

ANGELA'SLIBRARY Leaning closer to inspect the cut, she racked her brain for any recollection of the night's events that could explain the injury.

It frustrated her to know that on occasions when she drank excessively, her memory often failed her. This was one of the reasons she typically refrained from indulging in alcohol. However, last night's jubilation had overridden her caution, resulting in her current predicament.

Despite her efforts, the night remained a blur. Ariana sighed, deciding it must have been some minor accident due to her intoxication, and continued with her morning routine. Once ready, she descended the stairs to find Melon seated at the dining table, enjoying his breakfast.

Catching her approach, he remarked with a hint of reproach, "You weren't very careful last night, Mommy. You got drunk, but luckily Mr. Mask brought you home."

Upon hearing Melon's words, Ariana's mind raced. Mr. Mask? Could it be Holden? She questioned Melon, needing clarity, "Do you mean the masked man we met during our cruise?"

Melon nodded affirmatively.

"Yes, Adele's father."

Ariana was in a state of disbelief.

The last she remembered, they were at a celebration party, and she couldn't recall crossing paths with Holden. Her fingers subconsciously brushed her swollen lips, and her thoughts whirled.

Had she done something uncharacteristic in Holden's presence? Was she too unrestrained in front of him?

Chapter 1074

Her musings were interrupted by the buzz of her phone.

Seeing two missed calls from Sarah's assistant, she promptly answered the third.

"Ariana, I hope you got home safely?" the assistant began.

"Yes, I'm here. Can you fill me in on last night? I can't remember much," Ariana responded, her voice tinged with anxiety.

The assistant recounted the evening's events, explaining how Ariana, in her drunken state, had willingly jumped into Holden's car. However, it was Holden who had generously offered to ensure she got home safely.

As the assistant described how Ariana had darted towards Holden's vehicle, her cheeks flushed with embarrassment. She was horrified by her actions, which she now saw in a different light.

Listening further, Ariana realized the magnitude of her actions from the night before.

The regret deepened, knowing she shouldn't have consumed so much alcohol.

Once the call ended, she turned to Melon, attempting a casual tone.

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“Can you tell me about last night after we got back?”

As Melon narrated the events, Ariana’s face went from pale to crimson.

Being drunk was one thing, but her antics in the house, especially in front of her child, was a new level of mortification. After detailing the previous night, Melon took a bite of his bread, looking displeased.

“This bread’s too hard.”

Ariana’s gaze landed on the peculiar-looking food. It reminded her of the bunny-shaped cupcakes Holden made for his daughter. “When did he leave?” she quickly asked.

Melon responded, “Just a bit ago. He mentioned he had work.”

Without a second thought, Ariana darted outside, only catching a fleeting glimpse of the departing car’s taillights.

A mixture of gratitude and curiosity welled up. She had hoped to express her thanks and get a good look at Holden. Yet, as she stood there, another face popped into her mind: Sadie.

Ariana reflected on the growing frequency of her interactions with Holden. Even if she did want to delve deeper into their uncanny resemblance, what purpose would it serve? After all, Holden was already engaged to someone else.

She might not have a high opinion of Sadie, but Ariana was principled enough to know she shouldn’t meddle in their relationship. Her introspection was interrupted by a familiar voice.

“Lost in thought out here?” Turning, she saw Mitchel, a gift box in hand.

“Just thinking. What brings you here? Please, come in,” Ariana welcomed. They made their way into the house.

Once inside, after a brief exchange with Melon, Mitchel presented the box.

"It's my grandfather's birthday banquet tomorrow. I thought you might like this gown for the occasion," he explained, revealing an exquisite dress.

Intrigued, Ariana decided to try it on right away.

The gown was a perfect fit, accentuating her natural beauty. Emerging from her room, Ariana found Mitchel momentarily speechless, clearly taken aback by her elegance.

His gaze lingered on her slightly swollen lips, prompting him to inquire, "Are you alright? Your lips look a bit injured." Caught off-guard, Ariana responded, "Oh, just a minor incident from yesterday." Not wanting to pry, Mitchel simply offered advice on treatments that could help her lips recover faster.

As they continued their conversation, Melon reappeared, clutching a foreign language picture book. Eagerly, he hopped onto Mitchel's lap, anticipating another reading lesson.

Mitchel, ever the patient teacher, began helping Melon decipher the words, with Ariana watching the touching scene from a distance. The bond between Mitchel and Melon had indeed deepened, something Ariana deeply appreciated. Her thoughts drifted to Mitchel's prominent background, as a heir to the esteemed medical dynasty in Eleymond.

Feeling it was the right moment, Ariana asked, "Mitchel, have you ever met or seen Holden Fredrick?"

Chapter 1075

Mitchel's eyes widened, a flicker of surprise dancing across his face in response to Ariana's unexpected question. He paused thoughtfully, striving to regain his composure before offering a cautious response.

"Why the sudden curiosity?" he inquired.

Ariana replied with a nonchalant shrug, her tone lighthearted.

“Oh, I happened to catch something in the news. Apparently, he’s never shown his face before, so it piqued my interest.” Mitchel remained silent for a brief moment, then gently shook his head.

“I haven't seen him either.”

“This Holden sure is mysterious,” Ariana replied, her laughter too bright as she swiftly changed the subject.

Their conversation flowed casually, meandering around the upcoming banquet, seemingly no different from their usual exchanges.

However, an underlying unease gnawed at Mitchel’s thoughts. Ariana wouldn’t inquire about Holden without a purpose. His instincts whispered that she must have already crossed paths with Holden in some way.

Meanwhile, instead of heading to his company, Holden navigated his luxury car downtown, following the address Shawn had uncovered while tracing the origin of the bridal gown parcel.

He came to a halt on a sleepy, tree-lined street, where old stone row houses overlooked the glittering river. It was a quaint corner of the original city, in stark contrast to the gleaming high-rises looming in the distance.

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Following the address, Holden easily spotted the shabby storefront, its faded lettering labeling it a tailor shop. Dust coated the windows, and the paint on the door was peeling.

As Holden stood scrutinizing the exterior, the door of the adjacent snack shop tinkled open. An older woman emerged, laden with bags, her eyes widening as she spotted him.

Bustling over, she appeared surprised but greeted him warmly, “My word, you've returned! It's been four or five years since your last visit here, right?”

Taken aback, Holden couldn't recall ever being there but smoothly composed himself.

"You're right; it has been quite a while. Has anything major happened around here over the past few years?"

"Not that I can think of," the woman replied with a gentle shake of her head.

Holden inquired, "Did I once visit here a lot in the past?"

"You'd appear on those appointed days. Don't you recall? You used to come here annually for Lilyana to craft your clothes. The last time was for a wedding gown. Oh, that gown was breathtaking — I caught a glimpse after she finished it."

Upon hearing this, Holden felt an unsettling unease. With caution, he posed another question, "When I came to order the dress, did I bring anyone with me?"

The woman paused, perplexed by the oddity of his query, as he should know if he came alone or not.

Upon scrutinizing Holden once more, she confirmed that he remained the same courteous young man as before. With an apologetic shake of her head, she gracefully replied, "I'm afraid I don't recall."

Holden, choosing not to press further, simply inquired, "Do you happen to know when the tailor shop opens?"

The woman sighed with regret.

Chapter 1076

"You should have come some time earlier, dear. Lilyana succumbed to illness last month. Her children aren't skilled tailors themselves, so I doubt they'll be reopening the shop."

Upon hearing this, Holden experienced an unexpected pang of sorrow.

Just then, he noticed a man hurriedly approaching down the street.

“What a coincidence — that’s her son now. You can ask him anything else you need,” the woman kindly offered. Holden paused appreciatively outside the tailor shop, anticipating the meeting with the shop owner.

“Hello, I’ve recently acquired a wedding dress with your shop’s address on it,” Holden initiated.

The shop owner, an older gentleman, immediately made the connection.

“Ah, you must be Mr. Holden Fredrick. Kindly step inside.”

As they entered, Holden took in the modest surroundings of the shop.

ANGELA’S LIBRARY

While a few items had been packed away, the layout seemed familiar.

He was overcome by an uncanny feeling of déjà vu. He instinctively felt that just behind a particular rack, there should be a dressing table.

And just as he surmised, the dressing table was right there. He recalled a mirror that used to be at this very spot. However, upon closer inspection, there was only a blank wall.

The man, noticing Holden’s puzzled look, explained, “We relocated the mirror just yesterday. There’s another one in the adjoining room.”

Holden stood deep in thought, fixating on the wall where the mirror once hung. The shop owner broke the silence.

“My mother, before her passing, gave me the task of returning this wedding gown. She held it dear, waiting for the rightful owner for five long years.”

“Why didn’t anyone claim it?” Holden inquired.

The man appeared taken aback.

“Wasn't it you who specially commissioned this dress for the one you love?”

Holden hesitated, then shared the painful truth about the memory loss he’d suffered five years prior. The shop owner’s eyes reflected understanding, his face shaded with a hint of sorrow.

“Regarding the intricacies of the wedding dress design, only my mother truly knew. Yet, she left behind your contact details before passing. It included a name, a disconnected phone number, and an apartment address. We attempted delivering the dress to that address, but it was sent back, unclaimed. It was only after finding one of your business cards in my mother’s possessions that | made the connection to you being the CEO of the BRD Group. So, | forwarded it to your company’s official address.”

Holden, intrigued, questioned, “Could you share the address of the apartment?”

Chapter 1077

“Of course,” the man replied, scribbling it down and passing the note to Holden. Suddenly, a memory sparked in the owner’s eyes.

“There’s something else. I’ve seen the bride meant for the dress. A photograph of her was among my mother’s belongings. She was a sight to behold.”

Holden’s interest peaked.

“Can | view that album?”

The shop owner hesitated.

"The album's location is a mystery after we organized my mother's things. But I can check at home."

The glint of hope waning slightly in Holden's eyes, he swiftly unlocked his phone, pulling up images of Sadie. "Is this the woman?"

The shop owner observed the photos intently and with certainty responded, "No, it isn't her."

Upon seeing the photos of Sadie, the middle-aged man noted, "She's undoubtedly attractive, but the girl I recall had a softer demeanor."

Their facial structures aren't identical. The young woman from years ago had smoother, more fluid lines in her face, giving her an incredibly approachable appearance."

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As the shop owner relayed this description, Holden's mind involuntarily drifted to Ariana. He imagined her, radiant in a wedding dress, mirroring the figure he had visualized upon receiving the dress earlier. The thought felt like an impossible dream.

"Mr. Fredrick?" The middle-aged man's voice broke through Holden's reverie. He chuckled, dismissing his whimsical musings. Such serendipities seemed improbable. Moreover, Ariana had already shared that she had lost her husband.

She was a young widow, dedicated to her child, with seemingly no past connection to him.

The shop owner, sensing Holden's internal musings, added, "I may not be the best with words, but I promise to search for those photos at home and notify you if I find them."

"I'd be grateful for that. Thank you," Holden expressed, sharing his contact details before leaving the shop. As he exited, Holden contemplated checking out the apartment the shop owner had mentioned.

However, his phone buzzed with an incoming call from Shawn.

“Mr. Fredrick, there’s a crucial meeting slated for this afternoon, requiring your presence.” Pausing, Holden responded, “Set it up.” Upon ending the call, he exhaled deeply and directed his steps towards Eleymond.

In another part of town, Ariana and her team were celebrating the successful airing of their program’s second episode. They were now transitioning to focus on rigorous training for the next episode.

The format didn’t necessitate all participants to perform at once.

They used a lottery system to select performers for the initial rounds. The Chamberlain brothers and Tom were chosen for the kickoff.

Chapter 1078

After planning their segment, they delved into intensive practice sessions. Their collective harmony had grown, streamlining their progress.

Consequently, Ariana found herself with some free time, which serendipitously allowed her to accompany Mitchel to his grandfather’s birthday celebration.

Still, a dilemma lingered: Who would care for Melon during the event?

Despite reaching out to numerous friends, no one was available, and the thought of leaving Melon alone was out of the question for Ariana.

Suddenly, Mitchel’s car pulled up, catching Ariana off guard with its unexpected timing. “You’re here early! I’m still trying to figure out arrangements for Melon.”

Mitchel, brushing Melon’s hair with his fingers, offered a reassuring smile.

“It’s okay. He can come with us.”

Before Ariana could process his suggestion, Melon had already wrapped his arms around Mitchel's leg, gazing up at her with eager anticipation.

Seeing Melon's hopeful look, Ariana relented. "Okay, we'll bring you along." Together, the trio made their way to the Chadwick family estate.

The Chadwick name was synonymous with prestige. Their sprawling mansion, bathed in a warm glow, was alive with a festive ambiance.

The banquet hall was a beehive of activity, with a constellation of the city's elite present to honor Mitchel's grandfather.

Rodney, leaning on Catalina for support, made his entrance from the upper level. Immediately, a swarm of well-wishers encircled them, extending their regards and best wishes.

With grace, Catalina acknowledged each gesture. However, her eyes constantly darted around, searching. In a low voice tinged with concern, she remarked to Rodney, "Mitchel's tardiness is starting to become a habit. How can he be late for his own grandfather's birthday?"

As her words lingered in the air, a familiar voice echoed from behind.

"Mother."

Catalina's gaze shifted to her son, whom she hadn't set eyes on in months. By his side stood an elegantly beautiful woman. Initially, Catalina felt a surge of relief, thinking her son might have finally decided to settle down.

But upon closer inspection, recognition dawned.

The woman was none other than the very patient who had crossed paths with Mitchel five years earlier during his medical practice.

A torrent of mixed emotions coursed through Catalina.

Chapter 1079

She was no stranger to the tumultuous past between Ariana and the Anderson Lineage. Though she had remained silent about it all these years, deep inside, she had wished that Mitchel would distance himself from Ariana.

However, she didn't let her personal sentiments overshadow her etiquette. "Mrs. Chadwick, it's a pleasure," Ariana greeted warmly.

Catalina managed a subdued smile, her tone noticeably cool.

"Hello."

It was then that Melon piped up, "Hello, Mrs. Chadwick."

His voice was endearingly sweet, and he even complimented Catalina on her elegant dress, his words dripping with genuine admiration.

It wasn't until this moment that Catalina noticed the young boy by Ariana's side. His charming aura immediately endeared him to her.

Angela's Library

The longing to embrace a grandchild of her own intensified at the sight of Melon. But she held back, choosing to remain poised. She nodded in acknowledgment to Melon and refocused on Mitchel.

Feeling the undercurrents of the impending family dialogue, Ariana discreetly excused herself, claiming she'd take Melon for a walk, and drifted away.

With Ariana gone, Catalina's countenance turned more stern.

"What's this all about? Are you looking to be a stepfather now?"

Mitchel, unfazed, replied, "Isn't Melon a delight?"

Exasperated yet voiceless, Catalina retorted, "Delightful or not, that doesn't answer my question."

Mitchel sighed.

"I merely invited her because an event like this necessitated a female companion. Don't read too much into it." Catalina scoffed.

"You think I'm naive? I know why you've frequented Melcorn so often these past years. It's due to.."

But before she could press further, Mitchel interjected. "The cake-cutting is about to start. We should head over."

Mitchel's diversion tactic worked, and the tension eased. Catalina gracefully redirected her focus, moving toward the bustling center of the banquet.

Amid the sea of attendees, Ariana found a quiet corner with Melon, savoring the delicacies presented. Mitchel soon gravitated to them.

However, before any substantial conversation could ensue, family duties beckoned him.

Chapter 1080

This interruption recurred, but Ariana took it in stride.

"It's alright," she assured him, "Attend to your family. We're fine here."

With a brief nod and an apologetic look, Mitchel dashed off.

Melon, in the meantime, sat engrossed in the grandeur around him.

When he tried to place his juice back on the table, a slight miscalculation resulted in it cascading over Ariana's skirt. "I'm so sorry, Mommy!" Melon's eyes widened in alarm.

"It's alright, darling," Ariana consoled, patting her wet skirt.

"Stay here and behave while I clean up, okay? No wandering off."

Promising to stay put, Melon watched his mother make her way to the restroom.

As Ariana exited, refreshed, she wandered close to the terrace. And there, in a fleeting moment, a familiar silhouette caught her attention.

As Ariana caught sight of the recognizable silhouette, her astonishment bubbled forth. ninjanovel.com
"Judy?" she breathed out.

Judy, recognizing the voice, spun around. A wave of astonishment washed over her features, quickly replaced by tears of emotion.

Without a second thought, she rushed to Ariana, wrapping her in a heartfelt embrace.

It had been half a decade since their last meeting, and Judy's heart had ached for Ariana throughout. Fate, however, had kept their paths separate until this serendipitous moment.

Ariana, equally moved, struggled to hold back her own tears.

"How did you come to be with the Chadwicks?" she inquired.

Drying her tears, Judy replied, "After the Anderson mansion was sold, we, the staff, were all let go. But fortune smiled on me when a friend introduced me to the Chadwicks. I've been serving as their housekeeper since then. Life's been kind. How about you? How have you been after.. after everything?"

Judy hesitated before touching upon the delicate subject of Theodore.

"Five years is a long time, Ariana. Haven't you considered moving on?"

A shadow of sorrow clouded Ariana's features.

"No," she whispered.

Holding back her own tears, Judy softly said, "I miss him too. But we need to live for the present. Life still has so much to offer."

Sensing Judy's intention to offer her solace, Ariana steered the conversation to lighter topics.