

Unconscious 1091

Chapter 1091

She inquired, "Tom, can you explain exactly what happened?" She showed him the incriminating photo in which he was seen holding drugs.

Tom's reaction was immediate. He grew indignant and vehemently exclaimed, "I'm innocent. Someone rushed over and forced that stuff into my hand. I hadn't even had a chance to react when the police stormed in."

Hearing Tom's vehement denial, Ariana became more certain of her initial suspicion that this might be Carl's act of revenge. Maintaining her composure, she pressed for more details, "Please, Tom, tell me, why did you go to that bar tonight?"

Tom, however, appeared evasive, struggling to find the right words.

He avoided eye contact with Ariana, and his confidence seemed to waver.

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Determined to get to the bottom of things, she urged, "Tom, you must be honest with me. If you don't tell me the truth, I won't be able to help you."

After a few moments of hesitation, Tom let out a sigh and finally admitted, "I just wanted to make some extra money. A friend of mine recommended me to the bar, saying I could earn a decent amount by performing there."

Ariana pressed further, her voice unwavering, "Make money? Are you in urgent need of money right now?"

Tom's face contorted into an awkward smile, and he continued to avoid meeting Ariana's gaze. With a lowered head, he reluctantly confessed, "I have debts to repay, and the bank has been pressuring me."

“Debts? What kind of debts?” Ariana probed.

Tom shrugged and let out a forced chuckle as he reluctantly began to explain, “My father used to be a successful businessman in Eleymond, quite well-off you could say. But then he got swindled by someone, and his business investments went south. Unable to bear the financial strain, he took his own life.”

Tom recounted these events with an air of resignation. He hung his head low as he delved into the difficult circumstances he had faced.

“After my father’s death, the debts he owed to the bank still needed to be repaid, and those debts were transferred to me. So, for the past few years, I’ve been trying my hand at various endeavors, from underground music to bar singer. I used to perform regularly at a bar to chip away at the debts. Additionally, I have a younger sister currently in college who relies on me for financial support.”

Tom explained while gesturing helplessly. He then looked at Ariana, his gaze filled with a mix of vulnerability and sincerity.

“Originally, I thought I could make some extra money during this talent show, especially since it gained so much attention. I wanted to seize the opportunity and finally pay off the remaining debts.

However, during the competition, there was no substantial income to be earned. Even if I hadn’t been eliminated, the appearance fees were only a few hundred dollars. I would have had to wait until the show ended or my manager secured me some events to earn anything significant. But the bank’s relentless pressure and my sister’s tuition fees weighed heavily on me. She’s working part-time as well, but I didn’t want her to bear such a heavy burden. So, I made the decision to try and earn some extra income myself.”

Listening to Tom's heartfelt explanation, Ariana couldn't help but feel sympathy for the young man. He had faced so much hardship at a relatively tender age.

“You should have confided in me about these issues earlier,” Ariana sighed gently, her voice laced with compassion.

Tom offered a faint smile.

"It's my own situation, and I believed I could manage it on my own. Besides, I didn't want to trouble you."

Ariana accepted the responsibility, acknowledging her oversight. She then took immediate action and contacted her assistant while Tom stood by.

"I will have my assistant provide you with an advance on the performance fees for all of you. It may not be much, but it should help ease the immediate financial strain."

Tom found himself momentarily taken aback, his eyes widening in disbelief at Ariana's unwavering trust. A blend of surprise and genuine warmth washed over him as he finally found his voice.

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"Aren't you afraid I'll take the money and run?"

Ariana's composure remained unshaken as she calmly shook her head, her unwavering conviction evident. "No, I trust my judgment, and I don't believe I'll be wrong."

Following this exchange, Ariana turned her attention to Tom. Her query was gentle but loaded with purpose.

"Do you possess any photographs or videos from your performances at the bar? Such evidence could be instrumental in clearing your name."

Tom's expression shifted to one of dejection, and he hung his head, his voice carrying a hint of regret.

"I usually depart promptly after my performances. Sometimes, I need to rush to the next one, leaving me with no time to record anything. I'm not even certain if there were any audience members capturing videos."

Ariana, ever the source of encouragement, reassured him in earnest, "It's alright. Even without videos, we can explore alternative avenues. Solutions abound for every problem. Don't lose hope."

At that moment, a timid young girl seated nearby finally gathered the courage to speak. Her voice, barely above a whisper, broke the silence.

"|. [have photos and a complete video." The girl appeared shy, her demeanor marked by a prolonged silence before she summoned the resolve to continue.

Ariana was taken aback by this revelation, her gaze now fixed on the girl. The young girl's appearance was innocent and youthful, adorned in a school uniform dress. She gave the impression of a well-behaved student on the cusp of graduation.

Blushing and stammering, the girl admitted, "I. I'm actually a devoted fan of underground rock music."

She glanced briefly at Tom before quickly averting her gaze, clearing her throat before she continued, "I'm a fan of Tom. | happened to be at the bar for a friend's birthday party. Unexpectedly, | ended up sitting at the table next to the group involved with drugs, and the police arrested us all. They even confiscated my phone. I'll be able to check it once I'm released."

In the wake of her narrative, Ariana and Tom found a spark of hope, a glint in their eyes. ninjanovel.com "That's splendid. Your assistance is greatly valued," Ariana expressed with elation, nudging Tom gently.

Tom hadn't anticipated such an encounter with a fan, especially under these circumstances. A hint of embarrassment tinged his cheeks, his hand grazing his head in gratitude.

"Thank you." The girl's hands fluttered in a series of gestures, her blush deepening, as she professed, "You're welcome, you're welcome. I'm glad | could be of help, and | trust you wouldn't involve yourself in something like this."

It was evident that she struggled not to meet Tom's eyes, though her gaze seemed to betray her resolve, stealing glances in his direction.

After a while, the results of the drug test arrived. The officer handed them the report, stating, "The tests have returned negative. You're in the clear. Please proceed with the necessary formalities."

The outcome held no surprise for Ariana. Together, they attended to the requisite procedures, and as they departed, the young girl was there, paperwork completed, phone in hand, waiting for them.

She meticulously added Ariana's contact information to her phone and promptly dispatched the performance video and the snapshots she had captured during the show.

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Ariana, overflowing with gratitude for the young girl's assistance, swiftly uploaded both the drug test report and the video online, fervently proclaiming Tom's innocence. She emphasized that he had been fervently performing at the bar, completely detached from any drug usage.

Yet, the comment section metamorphosed into a den of trolls and cynics who refused to accept the clarifications. "He had the drugs in his possession. He might not have indulged this time, but who's to say he won't next?" "Yeah, that underground bar seems sketchy. Why would anyone perform there regularly?"

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"Even if he didn't partake, he must've been aware of the dealings, making him an accomplice."

"People like him have no business appearing in public. He should withdraw from the competition! Spare the audience the spectacle. He doesn't deserve it."

The comment section swelled with a chorus of calls for Tom to step back from the competition. Ariana discerned the clandestine orchestrations at play, an insidious hand intent on forcing Tom's withdrawal, a resolve to take matters to the brink.

This discovery kindled a fire within Ariana. She promptly instructed her assistant to enlist a legion of paid commentators. Soon, the online battleground blazed, with both the sides locked in a fervent fight.

Yet, the opposition held the upper hand, having disseminated incriminating photos of Tom at the underground bar. Many internet users who were swayed by their narrative joined in, calling for Tom's withdrawal.

Observing the tumultuous sea of public sentiment turning against him, Tom's spirit waned, and he confided with a heavy heart, "Perhaps | should gracefully step aside from the competition. | have no desire to drag others down with me."

"No," Ariana promptly interjected.

"You are not accountable for this.

Why should you give up and yield? We cannot yield now, for that would be handing them the victory they seek."

"But given the current situation, we are unable to vindicate ourselves clearly, and the live performance is a mere two days away," Tom sighed, his desolation palpable.

"Don't worry; we'll find another way," Ariana reassured him, her mind already churning with a potential solution. Suddenly, inspiration struck, and she inquired, "Do you recall if that bar is equipped with surveillance cameras?"

"Yes," Tom responded eagerly, a glimmer of hope illuminating his face.

"Yes, there are surveillance cameras in place. The person suddenly approached me and handed me the drugs. | was positioned in a spot that the surveillance cameras would undoubtedly capture."

"Let us return to the bar and attempt to access the surveillance footage." Ariana, always the proactive one, encouraged Tom to

take action.

However, considering the bar's affiliations with Rollingrock Media, there was no assurance that they had retained the crucial surveillance footage.

Ariana acknowledged this uncertainty but remained steadfast in her determination to explore this avenue. The two of them proceeded to the bar, now shuttered for scrutiny, its entrance securely locked. After a brief contemplation, Tom suggested, "There's a back entrance around the rear. We might gain entry there. Follow me."

Leading Ariana to the back of the establishment, Tom managed to unlock the back door. Inside, they were greeted by dim lighting as they navigated toward the first-floor surveillance room, only to encounter an obstinate Locked door.

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As they labored to coax the door ajar, Ariana was suddenly overcome by a gnawing sense of foreboding.

Just then, footsteps ominously approached from behind, and before Ariana and Tom could react, they were viciously struck on the back of their heads, plunging them into unconsciousness.

When they regained consciousness, they found themselves ensnared within the confines of a desolate warehouse, their hands and feet securely bound.

Ariana attempted to shift her hands, but the restraints held her captive. Drawing from her past ordeals with kidnapping, she remained composed. Scanning their surroundings, she spotted a towering man bearing a scar across his face, seated nearby, casually dining from a takeout box.

Ariana, with determination in her eyes, sat upright and wriggled her bound hands. She fixed her gaze on the man and calmly inquired, "Who ordered you to kidnap us?"

The man, his glare unwavering, replied menacingly between bites of his meal, "Behave yourselves. You'll be set free when the time is right."

Ariana, undaunted, pondered for a moment before asking, "By 'when the time is right,' do you mean in two days?" A derisive sneer crossed the man's face as he retorted, "You're quite the astute one, aren't you?"

Ariana couldn't help but chuckle sarcastically. She'd been through her fair share of kidnappings, and this situation didn't seem to be motivated by monetary gain or violence. It appeared the orchestrators wished to avoid escalating matters.

Cutting to the chase, she pressed on, "Was it Carl Manny who sent you? The little prince from the Rollingrock Media?" Their next performance was just two days away, and it seemed Carl resorted to kidnapping to force their withdrawal. The man chuckled coldly, confirming her suspicions.

Angela's Library

"You have sharp instincts. Indeed, it was Mr. Manny who sent me." With an air of superiority, he continued, "You, a woman striving in this industry with a small company and no influential connections, should have maintained a lower profile. Your current predicament is well-deserved."

"Aren't you afraid we'll report this to the authorities upon our release and expose the truth?" Ariana looked at him fearlessly.

"Report this to the authorities?" The man laughed coldly, his arrogance undisguised. He then gestured toward Tom, saying, "This kid has a sister in a music college, doesn't he? Oh, and you have a son, adorable and bright."

At the mention of her beloved Melon, Ariana's face darkened, and her anger boiled over. She snapped, "If you even think about touching my family, you'll live to regret it!"

Tom, equally incensed, chimed in, "What's Carl's issue? If he has a problem, he should confront me directly! Threatening our families merely exposes his cowardice!"

As Tom raged against their captor, the man's tone shifted, adopting a more negotiable approach.

"How about this? You voluntarily withdraw from the competition, and Mr. Manny can forgive and forget everything that transpired before."

“Ha! Impossible!”

Ariana couldn't help but chuckle in disbelief. After regaining her composure, she adopted a steely demeanor, issuing a warning as solid as a mountain: “Don’t you think for a second that I’m powerless or without influence, especially after coming this far. Let me make one thing crystal clear — if Carl even dares to cast a shadow over my family, he’ll find himself in the storm’s eye of his life!”

The man seemed to hit a temporary pause, his retort dripping with casual nonchalance.

“Our boss clawed his way up from the depths of the underworld. Whether your mission is noble or nefarious, when push comes to shove, it’s a toss-up as to who emerges victorious!”

As the man delivered his ominous ultimatum, Ariana decided to engage with him no more. At this juncture, maintaining an imposing presence was crucial, but conserving energy was equally vital.

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Time dragged on in the suffocating silence, with the man keeping them confined, neither assaulting them nor offering food or a drink.

In this eerie hush, seconds turned into minutes, and Tom’s restlessness grew, hanging over him like a storm cloud, threatening to burst at any moment.

He cast a glance at Ariana, who had maintained an unflinching composure throughout, and voiced his guilt in a hushed tone, “This whole mess is on me. It’s obvious they came after me, but I’ve dragged you into this, Ariana. Are you holding up okay?”

“I’m fine.” Kidnapping was something she’d been into before, and given their current captors, their attitude was relatively calm. She turned to reassure Tom, “Don’t blame yourself for this ordeal.

It’s a trap set for us. Carl anticipated we’d return to inspect the surveillance, and they deliberately left the back door open. Trust me; others will take notice of our absence and come looking for us.”

Meanwhile, Sonia had been frantically searching for Ariana. They had made plans to take young Melon to the children’s park that day.

Angela's Library

However, upon inquiring Ariana's assistant, Sonia learned that Ariana hadn't returned home since the previous night, and her calls had gone unanswered.

Initially, she presumed Ariana was preoccupied at the police station, dealing with Tom's predicament, making it inconvenient to respond to calls. Yet, after conferring with her assistant and other colleagues, it happened that no one had seen Ariana for a while!

Sonia sensed immediately that something was awry, vivid memories of the harrowing discovery of Ariana's condition after the car accident five years ago rushing back. Even now, the mere recollection of that incident sent shivers down her spine.

Swiftly, Sonia hastened to inspect the surveillance footage near the police station, and she confirmed that Ariana had left with Tom.

She promptly dialed Tom's number, but it went unanswered as well.

A sense of foreboding gripped Sonia, a sentiment she couldn't afford to ignore. Upon her visit to the police station to report the situation, she was met with the disheartening news that they couldn't initiate a case until twenty-four hours had elapsed.

Sonia couldn't endure such a delay, and she promptly rallied her friends for assistance while also apprising Mitchel of the unfolding crisis. She divulged the particulars to him and implored him to stay with Melon.

Receiving the distressing news, Mitchel wasted no time leveraging his connections to acquire information discreetly. However, from dawn to dusk, there was nothing.

Melon remained indoors, complying obediently. Although both Sonia and Mitchel strove to wear brave countenances in his presence, the child intuited that something was amiss.

He suppressed his emotions, refraining from uttering a word until the following morning when, as was his custom, he went to find Ariana and didn't find her. Unable to restrain his emotions any longer, he burst into tears.

"Mommy, wh-where's Mommy? Is something terrible going to happen to her?" Melon sobbed, his breath hitching with distress. Mitchel promptly scooped him up, offering solace.

"No, nothing will.

Your Mommy will return, I promise. Be a good lad, give Uncle a promise with your pinky, and Mommy will come back." Mitchel tenderly ruffled the child's hair, extending his little finger.

As Melon dabbed his tears away, he extended his tiny hand to link pinkies with Mitchel's. Nonetheless, fear and anxiety lingered heavily in his heart, his tears continuing to flow.

Sonia, accompanied by Sarah and others, left no stone unturned, exhausting all available resources. They scoured through the night, yet their efforts yielded no results.

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Anxiety etched deep lines across their faces; after all, finding an individual amidst the sprawling metropolis was akin to searching for a needle in a haystack.

Melon's cries only added to their sense of urgency. They couldn't afford to rest, leaving Mitchel behind to provide solace while they rushed out once more in pursuit of answers.

Melon dried his tears and returned to his room after a while.

He sat there, straining to keep the tears at bay. He took a little mobile phone from his small cabinet and phoned a number he became acquainted with these days.

During a meeting, Holden was surprised to get a call from Melon. He raised his hand, signaling for a break, and went into a nearby room to take the call.

On the phone, Melon's voice trembled as he cried out for his father.

Holden was concerned as he suspected that something might have upset the child.

"What's the matter, Melon? Is someone bothering you?"

Through tears, Melon managed to say, "Daddy, Mommy.. Mommy is not back yet."

Holden's concern deepened, but he remained calm and asked, "Don't worry, talk to Daddy. What happened?"

"Mommy hasn't been home since the day before yesterday, and she didn't return yesterday or today. My godmother and the others are out searching for her, Daddy. Will Mommy be okay? Am I going to lose her?"

Melon's emotions overwhelmed him, and he began to cry.

Upon hearing about Ariana's disappearance, Holden's heart raced with anxiety. He tried to comfort the boy, "Mommy will come back, sweetheart. Stay home and try not to worry."

Holden reassured Melon and signaled for the meeting to end. He called Shawn over and assured Melon that things would be fine. At the same time, he quickly wrote a note, instructing Shawn to investigate the situation immediately.

Just then, another man's voice reached Melon through the phone, and the call abruptly ended. Angela's Library Holden immediately remembered the man he saw with Ariana at the mall the other day.

His presence at Ariana's house, coupled with his close ties to Melon, sent an unsettling shiver down Holden's spine. Nevertheless, the primary objective was that they had to find Ariana.

Sensing the urgency in his boss's demeanor, Shawn activated the discreet search network of the Fredrick family. It didn't take long for them to uncover a lead.

"Mr. Fredrick, the most recent location we have is near an underground bar," Shawn reported as he placed surveillance photos on Holden's desk. He also shared details about Tom's recent involvement in a drug scandal.

"This underground bar has connections to Rollingrock Media. Our investigation strongly indicates a kidnapping, and Carl appears to be the mastermind behind it all. He orchestrated the abduction of Miss Edwards and Tom. Our latest information points to a location near this warehouse." As he spoke, Shawn marked the warehouse's position on a digital map for Holden to see.

"Send me where it is located," Holden demanded, ready to take his leave. But Shawn caught up to him and expressed his concern.

"Mr. Fredrick, do you intend to go there?" "Absolutely." Holden responded with a cold tone and grabbed his car keys so he could be on his way.

Shawn blocked Holden's path and cautioned, "Mr. Fredrick, it might not be wise for you to personally get involved. This situation doesn't directly concern us, and your intervention could draw unwanted attention. Also, we should put Miss Pierre's situation into consideration."

Holden paused for a moment.

He took a moment to compose himself and let go of the door handle.

Shawn had a valid point. No matter what, he shouldn't personally interfere in this issue. Acting on impulse and losing control over a woman wasn't the right course of action for him.

Inside the warehouse, Ariana and Tom relied on the faint light to keep track of time. The man who had taken them gave them no food, and their strength waned.

He had been closely watching them, and it appeared that his next move was approaching. After checking their restraints, he momentarily left to get himself some food.

Ariana knew they couldn't allow this chance to go to waste. She signaled to Tom to pick up a sharp shard of debris from the floor, and they commenced cutting each other's bindings.

Fortunately, the warehouse's floor was covered in gravel, and after some strenuous effort, they successfully freed themselves from the ropes. But they had a single exit — a metal door which was firmly locked.

Ariana looked around the room and pointed to the only window in it. It was barred with welded bars. With Tom's assistance, she climbed up and began to hit the window with a stone. Ultimately, they managed to break the glass.

Filled with a sense of relief, they readied themselves for their escape. However, just as they were about to climb out, the metal door swung open. The man who had been watching them had returned.

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The man was shocked and muttered a curse when he spotted them attempting to flee.

He let go of his grip on what he held and rushed toward them. Tom swiftly took a defensive stance, while Ariana prepared herself, assessing their chances against the approaching man.

Suddenly, the man signaled and yelled, "Do something! They're trying to escape!" In the blink of an eye, five burly, intimidating men burst into the room.

"Ah, damn it," Tom couldn't help but swear. They hadn't expected there to be others guarding outside. Seeing only the tall, muscular man going in and out had led them to assume he was the only guard.

Ariana was equally taken aback by their appearance. They had no means of escape now. Even if they managed to make it out of the window, they wouldn't outrun them. It seemed their only option was to confront this situation head-on.

"Do you know how to fight?" Ariana asked.

"I've picked up some basic karate moves. I'll do everything I can to protect you," Tom responded, not keeping his eyes off their adversaries.

"It's all right, no need to worry about me. I've also had some training," Ariana assured him. Back when she lived in Melcorn, she had taken self-defense classes while caring for Melon.

"You think you can take us on? Ignorant clowns!" the tall man said. He then began to swing his fists and charge towards them.

Tom and Ariana swiftly evaded his attack. Immediately, the other five men joined the brawl. Multiple scuffles erupted simultaneously.

Tom's strikes were intense, while Ariana skillfully aimed for weak spots with her self-defense techniques. Their assailants momentarily grappled to assert dominance, growing increasingly frustrated.

Angela's Library

Eventually, desperation drove them to draw their knives.

Tom, overcome by anger, couldn't help but protest, "This is a fight, not a killing spree! Using knives is unsportsmanlike." The group's leader responded with a mocking smirk, "This isn't a contest, and there are no rules."

With that, he brandished his knife and charged at them.

Ariana and Tom, weary and hungry, found themselves in a tough spot when their attackers brandished knives. They tried to dodge the blades, facing overwhelming odds.

Suddenly, as Tom's attention shifted, someone snuck up behind him and hit him on the head with a wooden stick.

Tom's vision blurred instantly, and his ears rang loudly. He could barely make meaning of Ariana's words.

Ariana managed to fend off the person in front of her and, from the corner of her eye, spotted someone with a knife approaching Tom from behind. She shouted in alarm and rushed to shove Tom out of harm's way.

The sharp blade of the knife sliced into Ariana's arm, leaving a deep gash that started bleeding seriously. She suppressed a cry of pain, her legs giving way, and she sank to the floor on her knees.

Tom spun around, his blurred vision gradually clearing. He saw Ariana's arm bleeding, which ignited a surge of anger within him.

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Disregarding his own dizziness, he charged at the attackers and knocked two of them down.

Driven by fury and paying no heed to techniques, Tom fought with a relentless intensity, keeping the assailants at bay. Meanwhile, Ariana, clutching her wounded arm, managed to rise to her feet.

Tom's wild and uncontrolled assault momentarily left the attackers powerless. They had planned to wait for his energy to wane, but the sudden wail of police sirens from outside caught them off guard.

"The cops are on their way!" someone yelled, and the group of thugs cursed in frustration. They had chosen this remote location as a safe hideout, far from any service area. They didn't expect the police to arrive so quickly.

Fearing capture, they exchanged anxious glances, swiftly dispersed, and fled the scene.

As their attackers fled, Ariana and Tom finally breathed a sigh of relief. Exhausted, they both sank to the floor, leaning against each other for support.

Just then, footsteps approached from outside. Ariana raised her head and saw a tall figure outlined against the backlight. ninjanovel.com

It was Mitchel.

Mitchel arrived at the scene in a hurry, immediately spotting Ariana.

Concerned, he rushed over to check on both of them.

Upon seeing blood flowing from Ariana's arm, his usually calm demeanor became clouded with emotion. While he was typically reserved, the tension in his forehead suggested the agitation he felt inside.

Without uttering a word, Mitchel carefully lifted Ariana, who was bleeding heavily from her arm. Ariana was startled and protested, "Wait, it's just my arm that's hurt. My legs are okay. I can walk."

Mitchel cast a brief look at her and then eased his hold, allowing her to stand.

The moment Ariana set foot on the floor, she made an effort to rise, but her legs faltered, compelling her to kneel. Her physical strength had dwindled due to the long ordeal and lack of food.

Despite repeated attempts, she couldn't manage to stand.

She felt embarrassed, managing only a faint smile as she gazed at Mitchel.

"I suppose I was mistaken."

Mitchel let out a sigh and bent down to lift her again. "You guys managed to locate this place?" Ariana inquired with curiosity.

Earlier, she had questioned the burly man, and he had informed her that this spot was very remote and out of the range of any communication services. He had said that even the police would have had a hard time finding it. But, they had arrived so quickly.

Mitchel responded, "An hour ago, an anonymous person sent the location to Sonia's phone. That was how we located this place."

"An anonymous person?" Ariana was somewhat taken aback, wondering who had the ability to pinpoint such a secluded area.

For a brief moment, Holden crossed her mind. But why would he be assisting her?

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Before she could ponder it any further, Mitchel was already carrying her out of the warehouse, and the police walked in to investigate and gather evidence. They also helped Tom out of the place.

For their safety, Sonia and the others chose to stay home to protect Melon, leaving only Mitchel to come with the police. Meanwhile, a black car was parked in a small grove close to the river across the warehouse.

Sitting in the front seat, Shawn saw Mitchel carrying Ariana and turned to talk to the person in the back seat.

"They've successfully rescued Miss Edwards, and she looks fine."

In the back seat, Holden said nothing, his eyes fixed on the man carrying Ariana in the distance. He continued to watch until they all got into a car.

Though Holden appeared calm and composed on the surface, he felt an underlying feeling of longing and sadness. Seeing this side of Holden for the first time, Shawn couldn't help but sigh quietly.

Holden heeded his advice and refrained from personally assisting Ariana. But he remained deeply concerned and came discreetly.

It looked like Holden himself hadn't fully grasped the extent of his care for Ariana. His care for her now exceeded his care for Sadie.

ANGELA'S LIBRARY

After a long pause, Holden finally averted his gaze and said, "Deal with the issue with Rollingrock Media." Shawn snapped out of his thoughts and nodded.

"Okay."

"Excellent, we should get moving."

The same day Ariana and Tom were rescued, the kidnapping case became the hottest topic on the internet.

Police soon issued a statement confirming that the strong evidence they had against the mastermind of the kidnapping led to Mr. Manny, who had been arrested.

At the same time, the police also addressed the previous case of drug consumption in the bar. They released some details of their investigation along with photos from the scene that showed someone forcibly placing drugs in Tom's hands. Subsequently, the PR team of the show issued some more clarifications, emphasizing that Tom had been framed.

These new revelations sparked intense discussions online.

"Since the police say it's a setup, then Tom should be innocent, right?" someone commented.

"Apparently, we have been cursing an innocent man this whole time."

What happened to those influencers and critics who were blasting Tom recently? Why are they so silent now that these new pieces of information have been released?"

"Ariana and Tom were kidnapped. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand that they have been framed because they offended someone!"

"Who is this Mr. Manny, by the way? Could he be the one that's been around in the show?"

"I think it's very likely. Remember how he got disqualified because of his false accusations of Ariana?"

Chapter 1100

Some astute internet users had managed to dig up old photos of Carl on social media. In these photos, he was at the bar which was now shut. There were even photos of him with the bar owner and they appeared to be on good terms.

“It looks like it’s really him. The person he’s talking to in the photos seems to be the owner of the bar. I’ve seen him a few times.” “The bar owner? But why does it seem like the bar owner is very polite to him?”

While the comments on the internet were becoming more and more intense, the talent show’s production team issued another statement, this time regarding Rollingrock Media’s withdrawal from the competition.

This news fueled discussions online and more netizens joined the discussion.

“Although the official statement does not explicitly give a name, there is no doubt that the mastermind behind the kidnapping is indeed Carl.”

ninjanovel.com “Oh my! This is so terrifying. To think he had the nerve to order a kidnapping..” “Where did he get the gall to do such a thing? What kind of background or power does he have that makes him so brazen?”

Suddenly, someone in the know joined the conversation and commented, “What other background could he have? He’s the son of CEO of Rollingrock Media. He joined the show just for fun. This is inside information, guaranteed to be true.”

This comment quickly rose to the top of the comments section, intensifying discussions among netizens. “No wonder Carl is so bold!” “It’s too bad for his team members. Obviously, they were just playing along with him!”

“Why feel pity for his teammates? He probably took people he is close to to be part of his team. Birds of the same feather flock together, they say. They definitely have the same character.”

“That’s right. People of the same kind associate with each other. Carl's teammates must be no different from him.”

Online discussions were becoming more and more lively. However, Ariana did not have time to pay attention to these discussions. She knew Melon must be very worried about her. So, after dressing her arm wound and getting herself some snacks to replenish her energy, she hurried home.

When Melon saw his Mommy return, the little boy burst into tears and rushed into Ariana’s arms.

“Mommy, are you okay?” Melon asked with teary eyes.

The noise outside drew Sonia’s attention and she hurried out of the kitchen. Upon seeing Ariana, she asked with concern, “Are you okay?”

How's the wound?”

“It's just a minor injury. I’m fine,” Ariana replied lightly. She then explained the whole situation to Sonia.

After listening patiently to Ariana, Sonia couldn’t hold back her anger any longer. She roared, “Carl Manny! What a bastard! He'll go to jail for what he has done. Serves him right!”

Ariana suddenly looked up at Sonia and remarked curiously, “By the way, | heard from Mitchel that it was an anonymous person who sent the address. Can | take a look at the number?”

“Sure, here it is,” Sonia took out her phone and handed it to Ariana at once.