

Unconscious 1161

Chapter 1161

Torn with uncertainty, she made her way to her own room, craving its solace.

But once there, she felt no relief. An unsettling feeling gnawed at her. She needed to speak to Zayden.

After a few rings, Zayden's nonchalant voice came through the phone.

"yihat's up?"

In arush, Sadie said, "Holden's onto something. | need your help now more than ever. I'll do whatever it takes!" The following morning, Ariana and Melon made their way to the filming spot as planned.

Upon arriving, Ariana spotted Remy shooting her quick, anxious looks.

She figured he must be feeling a tad sheepish about the sneaky thing he had pulled. But Ariana shrugged it off, mingling with everyone and sticking to the plan set by the production crew.

Later that day, the crew had a surprise: The kids had to team up with a camera squad to drop by local folks' houses and gather supplies. The grown-ups, on the other hand, got paired up, their mission to unearth hidden treasures in the vast outdoors.

And when it came to teaming up, Ariana got Remy.

Ariana was unfazed. She brushed off the previous night's events, making sure she kept her space while tackling the tasks. However, she soon realized that Remy was really bad at completing the task.

Besides not having a clue himself, he was dead set on having Ariana follow his directionless wandering.

With the daylight fading and still no item in hand, they were in a pickle.

After floundering for what felt like forever, even Remy looked like he wanted to bury his head in the sand. He started off grumbling here and there, but soon enough, he buttoned up, tailing Ariana without a peep.

Though she kept her cool, Ariana's last nerve was close to snapping.

The thought of Melon waiting back home made her even more agitated, especially given that she wasn't Remy's biggest fan to start with.

But pointing fingers wasn't going to get them anywhere now. Bickering would only drag them down more.

Ariana knew she couldn't bank on Remy anymore.

She powered through, doing the work of two, completing more than half of the task. By the time she was done, her hair and clothes were a wild mess.

Chapter 1162

Yet, Ariana wasn't fussed about her appearance. She figured Melon had probably beaten her back, so she made a beeline for base camp.

ALL the grown-ups and kids had made their way back except for Ariana, Remy, and their little ones.

Upon returning, Ariana's eyes darted around, searching for Melon.

Considering how sharp Melon was, he shouldn't have been out this long.

Had something happened to him?

Still, with the camera crew shadowing them, what could have possibly gone sideways?

Ariana took a seat, trying to shake off the creeping feeling of unease.

Time ticked on. Thirty minutes felt like an eternity, and there was still no sign of them.

Worry gnawed at Ariana. She couldn't just sit there. Turning to one of the crew, she asked, "Any clue why they're not back?" "Just hang tight. I'll call the crew with Melon," the staff reassured her. But the call didn't go through.

Asinking feeling hit Ariana when the call didn't connect.

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Without missing a beat, she dialed Melon's smartwatch. Its familiar jingle filled the air, but she got no response. The rest of the adults caught the drift that something was off. They all headed out to hunt for the missing kids.

Tagging along, Ariana stumbled upon a crew member lying in a meadow, already passing out. To make matters worse, his camera was gone.

Ariana's heart sank, leaving her rooted to the spot in sheer disbelief. A wave of panic washed over her. "What's our next move? What do we do now?" she said.

The crew scrambled to soothe her nerves. Jayson, cutting the filming, rallied the team to hunt for the missing kids. They even scoured the security footage from the farmhouse, but all they got were snippets of the children stepping out.

Rodney, equally rattled, sent his people out on the search, too.

Seeing Ariana unraveling, the crew suggested she head back to the villa to have a rest.

Back at the villa, Ariana's mind was a whirlwind. Every worst-case scenario about Melon played on repeat.

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Judy, sensing her torment, stayed close, holding her hand.

But as the hours trudged on with no update, Ariana's patience was gone. Jumping to her feet, she declared, "I'm going out there."

Remy, sharing her anxiety, chimed in, "Count me in."

Night had fallen, casting eerie shadows across the farm. Nighttime strolls weren't recommended, but they snatched up a flashlight and pressed on.

And while Remy looked every bit the tough guy, the inky darkness left him a bit on edge. As they made their way, Ariana couldn't help but notice him skittish, practically morphing into a jittery mess.

Ariana rolled her eyes. It now made sense why her power had been messed with the day before. It seemed darkness was Remy's true Achilles' heel.

With a stony face, Ariana forged ahead, her thoughts spinning, piecing together possible leads on Melon's whereabouts. Navigating the farm was a cakewalk, and getting lost wasn't in the cards. The crew had even mapped out a trail to the village.

Whoever pulled this stunt and whisked Melon and Remy's kid away under their noses probably knew the farm like the back of their hand.

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Rodney's connections opened doors for Ariana. She dove into the farm's dusty records and found that of the thirty households around, only ten had year-round residents.

The rest were mostly vacation homes for young lovebirds. Ariana and Remy decided to knock on the doors of those ten, crossing them off their list one by one. Their journey led them to the last house, which looked like it had seen better days. There, they met an old man.

The old man froze when he spotted them. His eyes widened, and his feet were ready to bolt. Without missing a beat, Ariana stopped him, blocking his way. "Have you seen these kids?" she demanded.

"K-kids? Who looks for kids this late?" the old man stuttered, eyes darting towards his house behind him.

Catching the old man's nervous glance, Ariana nodded at Remy to stand guard. She took a deep breath and went into the house.

Inside, she found Melon and the other kid tied up, with tape muffling their cries.

The sight of Ariana was like a lifeline for Melon. Tears welled up in his eyes, and his muffled cries grew louder. "Remy!" Ariana called out, voice filled with urgency. "They're here!"

In no time, Remy was by her side, a big smile breaking through his worry.

As he began to free his son, a loud slam echoed. The door was suddenly shut tight.

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Upon the resounding slam of the door, Ariana swiftly pivoted to discover two imposing men wielding knives, their malevolent glares squarely fixed upon her.

The elderly man, on the other hand, stood meekly beside them, cowering as if he were trembling with fear, his neck shrunk as he dared not look at them.

Remy, his fury unbridled, positioned himself protectively in front of Ariana. He hurled at the elderly man and the two sinister human traffickers.

“You wretched scoundrels! Kidnappers of your ilk deserve the most severe retribution! Abducting innocent children-how shameless can you be?”

Desperate to explain himself, the elderly man raised his trembling hands and stammered, “It wasn’t me! I had no choice! My grandson is also in their clutches. I had no choice!”

A derisive sneer crossed one of the traffickers’ faces as he taunted, “We’ve had our sights set on this little one for quite some time.

We’ve bided our time for the perfect opportunity.” Ever since the day the production crew had arrived at the farm, this nefarious gang had been watching them, plotting. Amidst the celebrity artists’ offspring, Melon had caught their attention first.

He was the most endearing and captivating among the children, and they knew he could fetch a handsome price, securing a carefree retirement for themselves.

“Shameless! Aren’t you afraid of retribution?” Remy’s voice thundered as he held his ground, safeguarding Ariana and the two children.

Seizing the moment, Ariana discreetly slid her phone into her pocket, her fingers tracing the screen’s surface by memory, accessing her contacts and dialing a number.

Fortunately, her phone’s fingerprint recognition was swift, and the call button was conveniently on the home screen. At this juncture, she had to take a gamble, hoping the call would connect.

On the other end, Holden quickly picked up the call.

He was just about to speak when Ariana posed her inquiry, “Do you possess the audacity to abduct someone like this? Aren’t you fearful of facing the full might of the law?”

“The law?” One of the traffickers scoffed, “If we were afraid of the police, we wouldn’t be in this line of work.”

Holden's smile, which had just begun to form, froze in place.

His brow furrowed as he listened intently to the commotion on the other end of the line.

Chapter 1165

The unfamiliar male voice seemed distant from Ariana, and her own voice carried an angry, tense tone. The sound of Melon crying added to the distressing atmosphere.

Then, the unfamiliar male voice on the other end burst into hearty laughter.

"You think you can escape just because you've arrived here?"

This man can be sold for scams, and the woman can be sold for prostitution."

"Why sell her right away when we can have some fun first?" Another man chimed in, his voice dripping with depravity. Remy, his eyes narrowed with vigilance, cursed vehemently.

"You damn animals, don't even think about it."

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Holden sensed that something was terribly wrong.

He swiftly muted his end of the call, his anxiety growing as he strained to eavesdrop on the developments. Ariana's gaze flickered toward her phone.

While she couldn't see the person who had answered, she knew the call had been picked up.

She maintained her composure and locked eyes with the traffickers, beginning, "How much money do you want? We can negotiate."

The traffickers sneered in response. "How can we be sure that you won't double-cross us after getting the money? We don't do business with strangers."

"We can discuss other terms," Ariana calmly replied.

Then, she skillfully stalled for time and attempted to extract more information from them. Meanwhile, she subtly hinted at her location without arousing suspicion. Upon hearing the crucial details, Holden could no longer remain idle.

He leaped into his car and raced to rescue her.

Chapter 1166

The human traffickers confronting Ariana had caught on to her ploy at this point.

Their faces darkened when they realized she was stalling for time, and they cursed at her in ire, "Bitch! Don't think you can get out of this. No one is coming to save you."

Ariana tried to reason with them, but they cursed her out again and refused to compromise in any further conversation with her, advancing toward her swiftly to take away her and Remy's phones.

Seeing them approach, Ariana exchanged a glance with Remy.

They seized the moment and rushed to the traffickers, catching them off guard and engaging in a fierce struggle.

The elderly man jumped back from the commotion, panic flitting across his expression as he contemplated making a run for it. But Ariana caught his intentions and snapped at him in frustration, "If you want your grandson back, help us!"

The old man hesitated for a moment but subsequently circled the scuffle to rescue the children.

He hurriedly began untying the rope binding them, but one of the traffickers spotted what he was doing and moved to put a stop to it.

These traffickers were ruthless desperados, disregarding of the fear of death and vindictive to the core.

One of them brandished a knife and menacingly loomed toward the old man, who had released the children and scrambled away in terror.

Fearing the old man would slip away and call for help, the trafficker gave chase to him.

Seeing the knife, the children's cries turned into screams of terror, filling the turmoil in the air.

Remy reacted instantly and bolted forward to shield them while Ariana was still caught up in grappling with the other trafficker. Breathing heavily, she shouted to Remy, "Take the children and go!"

"No! | can't just leave. What about you?" Remy cradled the two sobbing children protectively in his arms, his face pale.

He was reluctant to leave because he worried that if he left, Ariana would have to fight off the trafficker alone.

Ariana, unflinching in the face of danger, did her utmost to block the trafficker's path from the children, swerving away whenever he swung at her.

With a shriek, she urged Remy again, "I said take the children and go! Get help! You have better stamina than me and can take care of the two kids. I'll be fine. | have a plan."

Every second counted in this perilous situation, and Remy knew that.

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So, he swallowed his objections, picked up the children, cast one last backward glance, and made his escape. However, on the cusp of losing his captives, the trafficker was spurred to action, his eyes blazing in fury.

With a growl, he brutally shoved Ariana out of the way.

Ariana stumbled slightly, and he took the opportunity to thrust his knife into her shoulder.

Then, he kicked her aside before sprinting after Remy and the children.

Pain instantly seared through Ariana's shoulder, but she gritted her teeth and endured it, paying no heed to the warm blossom of blood seeping from the wound.

She whirled toward the trafficker, staunch in holding his attention and diverting him from reaching Remy and the children.

Her efforts weren't in vain as the trafficker spotted her intervening again and lost sight of the children.

He closed in on Ariana.

This prompted panic to rise in Ariana's chest, and she immediately turned tail and ran, the trafficker giving chase not far behind. Ariana's heartbeat was loud in her ears, her feet pounding against the hard concrete as she ran for her life.

She ran for as long as she could, eventually finding refuge in an abandoned courtyard.

Her head was spinning, her vision blurred.

Her entire body felt as though it were about to give out at any second.

Exhausted and overwhelmed, she leaned against a derelict wall and slowly sank to the ground, gasping for breath.

With one hand clutching her wounded shoulder, she trembled all over, trepidation making her palms clammy, and she silently prayed she had escaped to safety.

Moving on adrenaline, Ariana attempted to retrieve her phone from her pocket. But it took her a while because her hands were slicked with blood and shaking violently. But then, she discovered her phone was turned off, likely due to the lack of charge from her earlier excursion.

With a defeated sigh, she could do nothing but huddle against the cracking wall and wait for rescue. She could feel her strength wane, and her consciousness began to fade, her body gradually turning cold.

Ariana had the dreadful inkling creep into her mind that she might not make it out alive. Her only wish was that Remy made it out with Melon safe and sound. If this was truly the last time she could have seen him, she hoped there would be someone to take care of Melon.

Minutes dragged on like years as Ariana lay there, unaware of how much time had passed. Darkness grasped at the edges of her vision as she lost feeling in her cold limbs.

Amid her weakened stupor, she suddenly felt a pair of warm hands lifting her. Ariana responded instinctively, faintly turning her head and trying to make out who it was in her blurred vision. She caught the faint outline of a man that seemed to resemble Theodore.

Her heart skipped a beat. And in that fleeting moment, her eyes welled with tears as she whispered, "Theodore, have you finally come to rescue me?"

Chapter 1168

Holden found himself momentarily taken aback, realizing that in her delirium, Ariana had mistaken him for her deceased husband.

However, Ariana had lost consciousness by this point, her body covered in blood. A deep crimson hue filled Holden's eyes, and in that instant, he experienced an unprecedented fear. He hadn't even noticed that his own hands were trembling.

"Ariana? Ariana!" Holden's voice, tinged with both fear and distress, pierced the air. In a swift motion, Holden cradled Ariana, rushing her into the waiting car, heading towards the hospital at breakneck speed.

Upon their arrival at Mercy Hospital, Holden, still gripped by panic, dashed inside. Holding Ariana close, he called desperately, "Doctor!"

Doctor!”

Medical personnel swiftly rallied, their faces blanching at the sight of Ariana, a tapestry of red. They took her to the emergency room immediately.

Holden stood rooted in place, his hands stained with Ariana’s blood, his entire frame quivering, the chasm of fear unlike any he had ever known before.

It was at this moment that he understood the depth of his feelings for Ariana.

The passage of time became a nebulous concept as he waited outside the emergency room, the minutes slipping through his grasp. It wasn’t until the doctor emerged that he snapped back to the present.

“The patient is not in critical condition. No vital organs were harmed. Are you her husband? You should pay closer attention to her usual...”

The doctor’s words brought a wash of relief to Holden. He hesitated momentarily before accepting the role, a silent acknowledgment of their connection. He absorbed the doctor’s instructions with unwavering focus, diligently noting them on his phone.

Once the doctor departed, Ariana was transferred to a ward, her consciousness yet to return. Holden gazed at her, his mind dwelling on the words she had uttered just before succumbing to unconsciousness. Did she love her late husband so profoundly? Five years had passed, yet she still couldn’t forget him.

After an indeterminate amount of time, Ariana slowly regained consciousness.

The instant her eyes fluttered open, Ariana discovered a cluster of individuals gathered beside her bedside.

As Ariana woke up, Judy released an audible sigh of relief and exclaimed, "Thank the heavens. You've finally awakened!"

Rodney also exhaled a sigh of relief and stated, "It's fortunate you've awakened. If you hadn't, Mitchell would have had to prepare for another surgery."

The remaining members present joined in with warm smiles.

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Sonia chimed in playfully, "Dr. Chadwick was quite on edge. Upon hearing about your condition, he rushed over, still clad in his lab coat. Those hospital interns were so daunted to see him that they maintained impeccable posture throughout."

The presence of Ariana's awakened form instantly brightened the atmosphere.

Following a round of jests, Rodney shifted the conversation to more serious matters.

"The two human traffickers have been apprehended, and both children are now safe and having a rest." Relieved, Ariana inquired about her rescuer.

"Who saved me?"

Rodney shook his head and replied, "I'm uncertain. The hospital staff reported that a man brought you here and then departed. Likely someone from the farm."

Ariana came to realize that the figure she had glimpsed before slipping into unconsciousness had been nothing more than a hallucination. A wry smile touched her lips; the depth of her yearning had taken its toll.

After a brief exchange, the group departed, leaving Ariana in solitude within her hospital bed. Exhaustion enveloped her, and she soon drifted into slumber. The room descended into silence.

At that moment, the hospital room's door eased open, and Holden quietly entered. He took his place by Ariana's bedside, watching over her in silence.

Outside the hospital room, a sudden stir of activity beckoned Holden to investigate. Stepping into the corridor, he confronted a disconcerting figure—a man with a face with wounds, accompanied by a young boy.

Upon laying eyes on Holden, Remy hesitated, wondering if Holden might be one of Ariana's acquaintances. Extending a tentative introduction, he said, "Hi, I'm Remy. I came to inquire about Ariana and express my heartfelt gratitude. Without her, my child might not have been saved."

"She's resting and still asleep. You can come back later," replied Holden, subtly signaling his reluctance to permit them entry for the time being.

"Alright," Remy glanced at Holden and nodded, choosing to leave with his son.

Initially intending to resume his vigil over Ariana within the hospital room, Holden's plans abruptly shifted when he received a photo on his phone. It was a meticulously restored image sent by the technical department, the same one Sadie had given him.

"They had to perform extensive edits, so this is the best restoration possible," read the accompanying message from the technical department.

Holden opened the photo.

As he studied the photo, he realized that the person in the image wasn't Sadie. Even the hair color appeared different.

Holden scrutinized the picture with growing intensity, experiencing an eerie familiarity as if he had encountered this silhouette before.

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With that notion in mind, Ariana's image suddenly flashed in his thoughts.

Whether it was a product of his own mind or not, Holden couldn't shake the notion that the person in the photo seemed to bear an uncanny resemblance to Ariana the longer he gazed upon it.

Yet, it raised a perplexing question-five years ago, Ariana had been married, deeply in love with her husband. How could this person possibly be her?

At this moment, Holden's mind brimmed with an ever-deepening well of questions. One truth was incontrovertible: Sadie had indeed deceived him. Five years ago, the person he had fallen in love with was not Sadie but an enigma yet to be unraveled.

The big question was: who could it be? Why had Aldus never broached this subject? Did anyone else know about it? What role had Sadie played in the events five years ago? And how, perplexingly, had she come to have a child with him?

These queries swirled through Holden's thoughts, forming an intricate puzzle he was resolute in solving.

It had taken until now for him to realize that his life had been ensconced in an impenetrable haze. Seated in the corridor, he looked at the photo, his contemplation repeatedly returning to Ariana.

His feelings for her weren't a concoction of whimsy; he couldn't comprehend why she held such sway over him or why she elicited such unique emotions.

Then, the memory of the blank information of Ariana's husband, Theodore, resurfaced—a perplexing void. How could that be blank? Had someone purposefully tampered with it?

After careful deliberation, Holden contacted his men, issuing a command, "Look into the dark web. I require information on two individuals: Theodore Anderson and Sadie Pierre."

Meanwhile, within the opulent confines of a villa complex, a spirited soirée was in full swing by the swimming pool, the echoes of music and laughter permeating the night. Zayden took center stage, his arms wrapped around a captivating beauty, both suspended in the pool's embrace.

His phone interrupted the revelry, a resonant voice emanating from the other end.

“Mr. Fredrick, it appears Holden is taking decisive action, utilizing the dark web to delve into past matters. How shall we proceed?”

With a raised eyebrow, Zayden sat on his inflatable float and casually pushed the beautiful woman nestled in his arms into the pool.

“As we discussed earlier, let’s stir that water up a bit,” he said with a complicated expression.

Afterward, he hung up the call.

Looking at the woman in the pool, Zayden stroked her head gently.