

## **Unconscious 131**

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She turned to look at Adrian and forced an apologetic smile.

She hadn't intended to meet anyone from the BRD Group, especially Adrian, of all people.

The awful scene from that day was still vivid in her mind. Even though no one held her accountable for

it, she did tase their boss. She was still worried. If it hadn't been for Jasper, she would have gotten as

far away from these people as possible.

Ariana paused, looking at Adrian. She expected Adrian would at least be polite enough to break the ice

and ease the awkwardness, despite the conflict they had between' them.

However, to her surprise, Adrian barely glanced at her and strode off quickly as if she wasn't there at

all.

Hidden amid the crowd, Jasper breathed a sigh of relief when he saw this interaction. When the others

left, he approached Ariana and taunted her, "Well, well. It's obvious he wants nothing to do with you

now. I told you to keep a low profile. You know Adrian's stature. He was playing you. When he finally

got tired of you, he dumped you and got engaged to another woman. You should have been smarter.

You should have seen this coming.”

Ariana pretended she didn't hear him and remained silent, ignoring Jasper.

She did feel a little depressed. It seemed she was on the BRD Group's blacklist for tasing Holden. She was afraid that it might affect Sarah's career negatively-all because of her.

On the other side, Adrian had walked out of the studio as quickly as he could. Phew, that was close. He nearly reached out to steady Ariana when she fell, but fortunately, he managed to restrain himself.

His expression darkened when the ridiculous rumor about him and Ariana crossed his mind. He had no idea which idiot made it up.

For the past several days, Theodore had been in an irritable mood and had been picking on him.

If he didn't keep his distance from Ariana, he could end up losing his position. He'd better stay well away from her in the future, lest his boss got jealous and took it out on him again.

Josh followed closely behind Adrian. He observed Adrian's heavy expression and could only assume his conjecture had been correct.

Adrian wanted Sarah to be on the show. Josh didn't know the reason why, however, until he heard the rumors that were circulating.

The entertainment industry was complicated, and sometimes one had to get their hands dirty. It was a normal occurrence to discover someone had traded sexual favors to get what they wanted.

He had underestimated the manipulation of Sarah's agent, who managed to get Adrian into bed in a short time.

But judging from the brief exchange just now, it seemed the agent was out of Adrian's favor. Had

Adrian truly abandoned her?

Rumors were flying and becoming more and more outlandish. It was hard to tell what was true or not.

After considering it for a while, Josh decided he had to obtain more information before he came to a conclusion.

When they arrived at the meeting room, Josh decided to take action. He glanced at Adrian and asked tentatively, "Should we focus our attention on Sarah on the show?"

Ariana was Sarah's agent. If Adrian agreed to this suggestion, it would mean he did have feelings for Ariana.

Josh considered his question and was quite pleased that he thought of it.

Adrian paused and looked sideways at Josh who had a cunning look on his face. Adrian could see through him instantly.

He smiled wryly and replied, "There's no need. We don't play favorites."

Theodore had ordered him not to make any exceptions.

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Josh nodded thoughtfully. Adrian's answer confirmed to him that Ariana really was out of his favor.

He began to regret his actions. If he had known earlier, he wouldn't have offended Jasper for Ariana's sake. The Anderson family was one of the wealthiest and most affluent families in Eleymond. He didn't want to make an enemy out of Jasper.

Maybe he should do something to Sarah to make it up to Jasper. ©

At this malicious thought, Josh's cold eyes narrowed, and his mouth curved into a sinister smirk.

Since he was the director, he had a lot of say when it came to the show's editing and the end product

the audience would eventually see. He would be the one pulling the strings. ©

The show was being shot that evening, and it was an episode that featured all the members coming together for a gathering. Each guest would have at least three minutes to show off their special talents.

Since it was still a relatively newer program, the 33 contestants were still comparable in popularity, and the audience needed to get to know them.

Some of the stars had been moderately famous in the past few years, while others, like Sarah, had reached the pinnacle of fame only to eventually become washed up in their respective field.

Elva, for now, held the title of the most famous among the 33 contestants.

As a result, the show's crew kept lingering around her and buttering her up, even going as far as arranging her performance to be the last as a grand finale of the episode.

Sarah's performance was planned to be somewhere in the middle.

There was a brief interview session to warm up the episode before the competition began. Sarah waited nervously backstage.

It was almost time.

Ariana, on the other hand, was watching from behind the scenes.

Around her were agents and the people who worked on the program.

She was a new agent, so no one wanted to talk to the fresh blood, but it didn't bother her. She was happy to watch the screen and the program unfold quietly.

She was getting more and more anxious for Sarah. This debut was crucial for her. Her likability and impression on the audience depended on how this interview and her first performance went.

Soon it was Sarah's cue to go on stage. She was born with a good physique and was naturally photogenic, and despite being in her early thirties, she seemed to have aged like fine wine. She looked gorgeous in a long, graceful dress decorated with fluffy white feathers that seemed to float with her elegant movements.

The host grinned at her widely and asked how she felt on stage.

Sarah smiled beautifully at the camera, lifting her face confidently and answering the question.

However, suddenly, the host aimed a sharp question at her. "So, uh, you must be quite devastated about your divorce. Can you tell us about that?"

Sarah's smile froze. The deliberate question seemed to have hit a raw nerve.

Ariana gaped at the screen in shock, quickly springing to her feet. She hurried to Josh, who was watching the program pensively, and questioned him in frustration, "You changed the questions? Why?

We agreed to have no questions about her personal life!"

Josh impatiently pulled off his headset and gazed at her pointedly. "Sarah hasn't had any work in five years. Nothing interesting happened to her. What else could we ask about other than her personal life?"

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Ariana's hands curled into tight fists, and she nearly choked in anger. She opened her mouth to protest, but Josh impatiently dismissed her with a wave of his hand.

"Go away. You're disturbing the shooting. Why are you making such a fuss? It's just an interview. She's been in this show business, so she should know what it's like. There's no running away from questions about private life."

Ariana pressed her lips together tightly. She had to suppress her frustrations for now. She had no choice but to watch and hope.

Fortunately, Sarah was once a superstar and knew exactly how to react. When she was faced with the host's trap, she handled the problem with great aplomb. She smiled through it, and no one could find fault with her elegance.

Josh could not hide his frown—he seemed rather unhappy about it.

He raised his hand silently and gestured at the host from behind the camera.

The host caught sight of him and understood immediately. He quickly closed off the interview.

Ariana had caught this, too, and knew exactly what was going on.

But she had to withhold her fury. After all, the camera was still rolling, and there were many notable people around. If she caused a scene, it would only get Sarah into trouble.

Fortunately, it was a short interview. Ariana was confident in Sarah's performance coming up.

In the past five years, despite never working, Sarah didn't give up on music. Sarah chose an original song to perform on the program. It was a song that had never been heard by the public.

When Ariana heard it for the first time, she was amazed by it.

Sarah's song was enchanting and had an ethereal quality. Sarah was not lacking talent, just a stage to express it.

She was passionate. No matter how life treated her, she never lost her love for music. In the hearts of those who knew her, Sarah would remain the most shining star in the sky.

Ariana was convinced that, once the broadcast was released, those who had loved Sarah and her songs before would fall back in love with her.



The stage lights were ready. Ariana looked at the stage in anticipation. But abruptly, Josh turned to her

and said, "The backing track you submitted is damaged to a point we can't use.

Sarah needs to change her song."

Since only Sarah's accompaniment had been damaged, Ariana suspected someone might have

tampered with it.

But now wasn't the time to investigate. The accompaniment crisis had to be solved first.

Luckily, she had a backup on her laptop, but electronic equipment was not permitted on the filming site.

So she left her laptop in the lounge.

"What should we do, Ariana?" Betsy was pacing up and down anxiously. Sarah had to go on stage

soon. How could she perform with no accompaniment?

Thinking quickly, Ariana made a suggestion. "Go to the lounge, and get my laptop. There's a backup on

there. I'll talk to them."

"Okay," Betsy said and hurried out of the room.

Then Ariana turned to Josh. "Can you postpone Sarah's part by ten minutes? You can let the singers

after her perform first,” she asked.

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Josh looked back at her, and adjusted his glasses somewhat angrily. “Why didn’t you confirm the accompaniment in advance?

It’s coming up to her part soon, and you have a problem now?

This is so unprofessional! Everyone gets one chance. No one here has time to wait for you.”

Ariana lowered her head in embarrassment at being scolded like this. It didn’t feel fair. Before this, she had confirmed it several times. She hadn’t foreseen anything going wrong.

“Is Sarah that important? I hear she wants to change the order of appearance?” Jasper walked over just then, a gloating smile on his face. Humiliating Ariana was all he ever wanted.

“We won’t wait for you. Either you change the song or you give up and I will have the next singer go up on stage.” Josh delivered this ultimatum impatiently.

Just as he finished speaking, the countdown for the next singer was announced through the intercom.

This made Ariana feel even more jittery.

The only songs Sarah could sing now were the ones the organizer had bought the copyrights for. The

choices were limited, and none of them would make Sarah stand out. Besides, Sarah hadn't practiced any of them in advance, so it would be difficult for her to put on a good performance.

Now it was obvious Josh was on Jasper's side. Maybe they had tampered with the accompaniment.

There was no audience this time, so it would have been easy for them to do it.

Ariana couldn't do anything about it now. She was forced to make a choice. She made the bold decision to get Sarah to sing a cappella.

As she had this idea, she gestured for Sarah to come over.

In front of the others, Ariana said, "There's something wrong with the accompaniment, so we're doing a cappella."

Sarah's eyes widened. "Why a cappella all of a sudden? It's going to be very difficult to make this song a cappella and it has a wide sound range. I might ruin it."

Ariana was aware of how hard it was, but she knew they had to take a gamble. She held Sarah's hand and spoke earnestly.

"You have to go on stage soon. There's no other way. Don't be scared. This is your work, and the last step toward your bright future. You just have to do your best. Believe in yourself, and don't hesitate."

Seeing how much trust Ariana had for her, Sarah nodded.

Then the intercom sounded again, calling Sarah onto the stage.

“Have you decided to let Sarah sing a cappella?” Josh asked.

“Yes,” Ariana replied coldly. She watched Sarah, and felt herself become nervous.

Josh glanced at Jasper, wanting to know what he thought.

Jasper didn’t say anything, but his face darkened. If Sarah performed well, she would be a big talking point.

“Just let her do it. She’ll just end up embarrassing herself.”

Elva, who had been watching from the side, suddenly spoke. Her arms were crossed and her eyes were full of contempt.

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She had heard Sarah’s demo and was confident that Sarah wouldn’t do well if she sang a cappella.

Anyone who knew music would know that it was a difficult song, and Sarah had composed it herself. If she did well, there was no doubt she would become famous again.

So, Elva had asked Jasper to destroy the accompaniment.

Now, Sarah's agent had allowed her to sing this song a cappella.

These people didn't know music, But Sarah was also crazy for saying yes.

Elva looked at Sarah disdainfully. She was looking forward to watching her ruin her music career.

Patting Josh on the shoulder, Elva said in a low voice, "Please record the whole thing. This will go viral,

I'm sure."

Then Sarah started singing.

The melody instantly filled the studio. Each accurate note jolted Elva.

She watched the woman on the stage with gritted teeth. How could Sarah be this good?

Everyone fell silent, taking in the music.

Hearing Sarah's performance, Ariana was pleasantly surprised.

The original rhythm of the song was powerful, and it would immediately transport the audience. Now,

without the accompaniment, Sarah altered her singing technique. Her voice sounded simply ethereal.

As the crescendo struck, the lights along the stage all lit up.

Sarah was glowing, basking in the love for her own music.

Sarah Flynn the superstar was back.

Ariana grinned. Sarah had made it, and her powerful singing was enough to convince everyone of her talent.

It was like a phoenix rising from the ashes.

Most of the staff were stunned by Sarah's performance. It took a cough from Ariana for the cameraman next to her to come to his senses and go back to shooting videos.

Ariana breathed a sigh of relief, and turned to see Jasper looking at her with a gloomy expression.

She snorted at him, and turned back around. That scumbag wanted to see Sarah humiliate herself and he wouldn't get what he wanted.

Ariana returned to her seat, picked up Sarah's coat, and went to the edge of the stage, ready to congratulate her when she stepped down.

Suddenly, Ariana noticed a tall, thin man standing by the stairs. He was looking at Sarah with a sense of desperation.

Reminded of the crazy stalkers she had heard about on the news, she glanced at him several more times.

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He seemed to work here. He was tall, and although he was wearing a mask, she could tell he was very handsome.

There seemed to be nothing wrong with his appearance, but for all she knew he could be a psychopath. So Ariana kept a watchful eye on the man.

He didn't look away until the song was just about to end.

He turned and when he saw Ariana was looking at him, he lowered his head and hurried away.

Ariana had a strange feeling about him, but since he had left she didn't worry too much. She made a mental note to get a bodyguard for Sarah.

Sarah's performance was over, and after a moment of silence, the staff erupted into applause.

Ariana joined in, cheering that Sarah was the best.

Then, she turned and gave Jasper a defiant look.

His face darkened and he turned to Elva. "This is all your fault! You helped them!" he snapped. "If you had insisted on making Sarah change her song like I told you, this wouldn't have happened!"

Elva didn't dare to argue with him.

Just then, Betsy came in, crying. “Ariana, someone must have tampered with your laptop. I can’t even turn it on.”

Without thinking, Ariana knew who was responsible. “It’s all right now. Did you hear all that applause? It was for Sarah,” she said, putting her arm around Betsy.

Betsy looked stunned, and tears were still rolling down her face.

When Sarah stepped off the stage, Ariana helped her into her coat and gave her a big hug. “I told you that you could do it. I’m really proud of you. I’m your biggest fan.”

“Thank you, Ariana. Thanks for believing in me,” Sarah said, tears welling in her eyes.

“Let’s get back to the lounge, and I’ll tell you what happened.”

“Okay.”

The two left together. As she passed Elva, Sarah gave her a triumphant smile, which really pissed Elva off.

After Sarah’s performance, the following artists who went up after her weren’t as outstanding or refreshing.



But fortunately, some of the other guests were actresses before they were singers, so it was understandable that they weren't as talented at singing.

Ariana sat in the lounge, chatting with Sarah and Betsy as they watched the other artists' performances via the monitor.

The show went on. Finally, Elva made her entrance on stage for her performance as the last contestant.

Ariana perked up and began to watch more seriously.

To be honest, Elva's singing was not too bad. One could tell by the way she kept her tone consistent and her mannerisms controlled that she had practiced this song. It was a song she had to perform many times because it was the song that made her famous .

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However, not everyone was enthused by it. The performance was good, but it wasn't as surprising or heartfelt as Sarah's.

And maybe it was because her mood was affected by Sarah's performance that, midway through the song, Elva forgot the lyrics.

This was extremely unprofessional for a seasoned singer who had performed at dozens of concerts.

“She’s doomed. Forgetting the lyrics while you’re singing is a rookie mistake,” said Sarah

disapprovingly.

Ariana couldn’t agree more. To help her out, Josh stopped Elva during her song and gave her another

chance.

“This is so unfair. I can’t stand it anymore. I’m leaving.”

Ariana was so enraged that she abruptly stood up to pack her things and prepared to leave with Betsy.

Sarah, on the other hand, could not leave. She had to stay in the dormitory with the other stars as

arranged by the producers.

The producers wanted to film them living together and stitch it together in the editing of the first

episode.

The variety show was being broadcasted while it was being produced, The first episode would be

released in two weeks, but the producers would edit a few promo videos and release them first. The

first one should be released by the upcoming Friday.

Ariana didn’t ask Sarah to see them off. She offered some encouraging words to her, and then she and

Betsy took a taxi back to the hotel.

After returning to the hotel, Betsy suggested they have dinner in a nearby popular restaurant. Since

Ariana wasn't busy with anything, she agreed to join her.

They went to the restaurant and ordered food. As they ate, Ariana recounted everything that had

occurred during Betsy's performance.

Betsy listened in such awe that she forgot to eat and enthusiastically asked Ariana for details. "Sarah

sang so well!

She'll gain so many followers after that song! She might become famous again!"

Ariana lowered her knife and fork and sighed. "I do believe in her, but I'm worried Josh will deliberately

give her a hard time. You saw the crisis about the accompaniment and the laptop. We got Lucky this

time."

Betsy cupped her face with palms, a frown on her face as she began to worry, too. "What should we

do? It won't be easy for

Sarah to get another chance."

“Right now, we can only wait and see what happens next.” Ariana stroked Betsy’s hair assuredly and smiled. “Don’t worry about it. Let’s eat.”

“Okay!” Betsy beamed brightly, picked up her tableware, and began to eat her dinner.

Right then, Ariana’s phone loudly vibrated twice on the table.

The screen turned on, showing an incoming message. Ariana looked at who sent it and narrowed her eyes. Unexpectedly, it was from Mr. H.

The confrontation from that night was still vivid in her mind.

Although she knocked out that freak with a taser, he still left her in the darkness.

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Now that they loathed each other and had become enemies, it was best for them to stay away from each other forever.

“I forgot to blacklist him...”

Ariana muttered to herself. She clicked on the message to see what it was. She immediately thought of deleting it and saw it was a colorful emoji of a cute dancing kitten.

She frowned in disgust. Holden was even more of a freak than she thought. She couldn’t figure out

what he was trying to do at all.

Without sparing it another thought, she blacklisted him. ©

In the Anderson family's residence in Eleymond, Theodore sat facing the window, staring at the phone in his hand for some time. He reached out and picked up another phone from the table, and made a call.

Adrian's voice came through the phone. Judging from the sound in the background, he seemed to be in a bar. ©

Theodore frowned but didn't address it. He got straight to the point. "What does it mean when there's a red exclamation mark next to the message you send someone?" ©

After some hesitation, Adrian replied, and sounded surprised, "Haven't you ever been blocked before?"

Before Theodore could answer, Adrian continued, "I guess that makes sense. Who would dare to block you! Wait... Has your wife blocked you?" ©

Theodore stayed silent. He didn't know how to tell Adrian, and he didn't want to even if he did know how.

"Damn it! Really? Has Ariana seriously blocked you?" Adrian's voice raised, and he seemed excited.

“What did you do to get yourself blocked? Did you really send her an emoji?”

Hearing no denial from Theodore, Adrian laughed even louder.

“Did you really do what I said? Theodore, you are so cute”

Disgusted by his words, Theodore sneered and said slowly, “I heard that we’re in need of workers in the western area. You should go over there and help out tomorrow.”

With that, he hung up the phone.

Feeling more irritated now, he took a sip of coffee. He started dialing Ariana’s number but stopped himself after typing two digits.

She should be the one to come to him.

Theodore checked the time. It was nine pm. She should be in the hotel by now. Normally, while a wife was away on a long trip, she should call and let her husband know her schedule.

He decided to wait.

\*

In a hotel in Ivebridge, Ariana lay on the bed, texting Josh asking to see the promo video before it was

released.

But he didn't reply.

She wasn't sure if he just hadn't seen the message or if he wasn't replying on purpose.

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Irritated, she told Betsy about it, who reassured her, "The first show has just been recorded. They're probably still editing it. He will reply tomorrow."

This eased Ariana's mind just enough to try and get to sleep.

She lay back and closed her eyes.

But as soon as she did, the image of Theodore's face popped into her mind.

This had happened for the past few nights.

She looked at her phone, but there was still no message. It was hard not to feel a little disappointed.

It felt like he didn't care at all about her leaving.

But, she supposed, it made sense. They were just nominal husband and wife after all.

She replaced her phone on the bedside table, and pulled the quilt over her head, willing herself to fall asleep.

From then until Friday there was not a peep from Josh. He didn't even answer the phone.

Ariana had a feeling something bad was going to happen. She was worried Jasper and Josh were going to play another trick.

She was in low spirits for the whole day. Busy checking the official account of the variety show on social media, she had no appetite. But then she thought of her baby, and forced herself to eat half a sandwich.

Betsy, noticing Ariana was anxious and uneasy, had been trying to cheer her up by sharing funny videos with her.

"Ariana, check the video I sent you." Betsy waved her phone toward Ariana and grinned.

Lying on the sofa, Ariana tapped on the video, and smiled.

It was a compilation of embarrassing celebrity moments. In it, there was an interview with Brielle where she said she had never been to a bar.

"Who edited it? They're so talented," Ariana asked with a smile.

Betsy tapped her nose with an awkward smile. "I did. When I was in college, I loved watching these kind of videos, so I figured I could make them myself."



Ariana's eyebrows raised. She clicked onto Betsy's profile page and found there were thousands of likes on each video she made.

"This is amazing, Betsy. You're so talented."

Betsy blushed and looked away.

Just then, a notification came through. The promo video was out.

Ariana clicked on it straight away, and her face instantly turned dull.

In the 3Q-minute-long promo video, Sarah was portrayed as vain and stupid.

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Ariana felt so indignant that her heart ached. Although Elva provoked Sarah but got ignored, it looked as if Sarah was the one giving Elva the cold shoulder when Elva was trying to be nice after the session was edited.

The most aggravating part was the interview. Sarah was asked about her opinion of the other artists' performances. Ariana was watching by the side when Sarah answered the questions earnestly. Sarah even mentioned the highlights of each artist and said she was looking forward to cooperating with the other artists soon.

Unfortunately, that whole interview portion was edited out, and the questions Sarah answered were different. The edited version made it seem as if Sarah didn't bother about the other artists' works and was only keen to watch her own performance.

The editor was obviously portraying Sarah as an arrogant and vain diva.

Naturally, all the netizens were attacking Sarah in the comments.

"What's with her attitude? Who does she think she is?"

"The peak of her career is already over, but she is still putting on airs. If she really is so talented, why isn't she releasing new songs?"

"Where is she even getting the courage to be vain? She's already in her 3s, but she's pretending to be an innocent young girl."

"She's just using every means to attract people's attention and regain her popularity."

"She's so pretentious. I hereby declare Sarah as my most hated female star."

"How dare she look down on Elva? Who does she think she is?"

All the comments about Sarah were negative. The promo video had been released less than 1

minutes ago, and there were already hundreds of thousands of comments. It would be trending if the comments continued.

“Someone is obviously paying people to criticize Sarah!” Betsy snapped as she rolled her sleeves, preparing to defend Sarah against her haters online.

“It’s useless. We can’t fight them with just the two of us,” Ariana sighed and stopped Betsy.

However, Betsy was unwilling to let the matter slide easily and began refuting as many negative comments as she could.

“Should we get some online trolls of our own as well?” Betsy muttered as she pouted dejectedly.

Ariana shook her head and replied disappointedly, “It’s no use. Someone’s behind it. You can tell from the crisis of the accompaniment that someone in the crew hates us.”

She held back telling Betsy who that person was. She didn’t want many people to know about her feud with Jasper.

“Besides, we don’t have the money to hire online trolls to help, and we are disadvantaged by the nasty editing. If we stir things up, it would only make the netizens hate Sarah more,” Ariana analyzed calmly, her eyes looking at a distance as if deep in thought.

She then browsed through her phone and chanced upon the funny video Betsy sent her, and her eyes lit up. She exclaimed excitedly, "Betsy, you can edit videos, right? It's time to put your skills to good use!"

She pointed out some scenes in the promo video and started explaining, "You can start by editing these scenes..."

"Got it!" Betsy nodded eagerly as she listened to Ariana's plan.

"When can you finish editing? We need it as soon as possible. We have to hurry before the negative comments get out of hand,"

Ariana asked as she looked at Betsy expectantly.