

Unconscious 261

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After satisfying her appetite and indulging in a comforting bath, Ariana felt much better. She still checked her phone periodically, though, hoping that a text or call would come. But the phone stayed silent, and as the night wore on, she started to feel drowsy.

Suddenly, her phone chimed with a new message. Ariana bolted up in bed. She lunged for it, eagerly checking the screen, only to feel a pang of disappointment when she saw the sender's name wasn't Theodore. It was Holden.

Confusion replaced her disappointment as she wondered why Holden had messaged her so late. They had not talked in days, ever since she celebrated his birthday. She couldn't help but feel a sense of intrigue as she stared at the message.

What could he want?

She clicked on the chat box, and her eyes scanned the short line of words. "Are you asleep?"

Ariana's heart raced as she gazed at the message from Holden.

She couldn't fathom why he would send her a message so late, only to ask if she was asleep. Was it a

coded message? Was there something more he wanted to say?

Normally, she would ignore messages like these and only reply the next day, but the feeling of isolation was too much for her to bear. She longed for someone to talk to, someone to fill the empty void in her heart.

So, Ariana decided to break her rule and reply.

She typed her reply to Holden. "No. What's wrong?"

Almost immediately, Holden's response popped up on the screen. "Do you have insomnia since you're still awake at this ungodly hour?"

The two exchanged words with ease, providing a sense of comfort to Ariana, who wasn't used to being alone. The ordinary conversation was like a balm to her wounded soul.

Ariana could glean from Holden's choice of words that he wasn't home.

As the clock struck midnight, Ariana asked casually, "Where are you?"

Holden replied quickly, "I'm savoring the riverside view by Mount Bridge."

Ariana's heart skipped a beat at the thought of Holden's proximity. She couldn't help but wonder if it was a mere coincidence that he was nearby.

Her mind was flooded with possibilities, and she couldn't stop fidgeting with her fingers.

The apartment Ariana recently rented was situated in the quiet suburbs, far from the bustling commercial center. The surrounding buildings were mostly residential, occupied by working-class people and office workers who rented apartments in the area.

Holden was not one to engage in meaningless activities, so there had to be a purpose behind his visit.

Was he here for business? If so, why would he bother messaging her at such a late hour?

The longer she dwelled on it, the more suspicious she became. Was Holden somehow keeping tabs on her? Did he know she had moved out of the Anderson family's mansion? A storm of thoughts thundered through her mind.

Suddenly, Holden's next message popped up, calming her worries. "I'm on the Ferris wheel. The view here is very beautiful."

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Ariana breathed a sigh of relief and chuckled to herself for getting carried away. She reminded herself that Holden was the CEO of the BRD Group, a busy man with little time to spare, especially for a married woman.

The biggest Ferris wheel in Eleymond stood tall beside Mount Bridge, just as Holden had said. The structure had only been completed last month, yet it had already made a name for itself as a renowned attraction in the city. From the top of the wheel, one could admire the breathtaking view of the entire river as it snaked its way through the landscape.

It was early spring, and the water was half-frozen, with floating ice chunks dotting the surface like confetti. The sight was nothing short of mesmerizing.

As Ariana hesitated to respond, Holden's impatience grew, and he probed, "Is everything alright? You seem upset."

His words pierced through the screen, evoking a storm of emotions in Ariana's heart. Her thoughts swirled like a hurricane, but eventually, she surrendered to her loneliness and confessed, "You caught me off guard. It's just that tonight, it hit me hard that I no longer have a home after my father's passing."

Holden's eyes welled up with a myriad of emotions, but he concealed them well, averting his gaze from the phone screen for a moment. He then typed, his fingers dancing over the keys, "Where's your husband? Why isn't he there with you?"

Ariana's lips curled up in self-deprecation as the word "husband" echoed in her mind. She didn't want to discuss this topic, so she sought to concoct an excuse to terminate their conversation.

However, before she could respond, a new message sprung up, demanding her attention. "Can you see the sky above Mount Bridge from where you live?" Holden had inquired.

Ariana paused and mulled over his query for a moment, and then replied with a simple, "No."

She skeptically denied Holden's inquiry about the sky above Mount Bridge, but her curious nature got the best of her, and she strode to the window, flicking open the curtain with a flourish.

Simultaneously, Holden's video call invitation popped up on her screen, and she debated whether to accept.

After a moment's hesitation, she acquiesced, and the image on the screen displayed a pitch-black sky, but not for long.

Without warning, a dazzling firework exploded in the distance, illuminating the darkness with an array of colors. Ariana gasped in wonder, completely mesmerized by the spectacle.

Ariana's heart was brimming with the joy of the fireworks that burst above her head. She gazed at the

celestial display, mesmerized by the dancing lights.

The video call remained active. They didn't utter a word, yet the gentle sound of their breaths resonated through the call.

In this tranquil moment, Ariana no longer felt alone. Knowing that Holden was watching the same sky as her, sharing the same beautiful spectacle in different corners of the world, provided her with a comforting sense of connection.

It wasn't until the fireworks display was over that Ariana disconnected the call. She walked to the kitchen to fetch a glass of water. When she returned to her phone, she noticed that Holden had sent a voice call invitation.

As she answered, she was met with a low, husky voice that seemed to have been distorted by the distance.

"Are you feeling better now?" he inquired, concern lacing every word.

Ariana's heart swelled with warmth, and she couldn't help but respond in an equally gentle tone, "Much better. Thank you. The fireworks were beautiful." The memory of the mesmerizing display lingered in her mind, the vivid colors still dancing in her eyes.

Ariana couldn't recall the last time she had witnessed such a spectacle of fireworks.

Since her father's passing, she had lost touch with the beauty around her, and even her emotions had become a tangled mess.

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As the call continued, the other person chuckled and shared a personal sentiment.

"Whenever I'm feeling alone, I want to watch fireworks. My mother would always distract me with them as a child. It's a shame you couldn't experience it firsthand.

The sight is far more awe-inspiring than what any video can capture."

Ariana hesitated for a moment, and then spoke up in a voice that betrayed her unease. "I have a confession to make," she said, her eyes downcast. "I lied to you earlier."

"What's wrong?"

Ariana's lips felt dry as she summoned the courage to speak. "I can see Mount Bridge from where I live," she said, her tone apologetic. "I saw the fireworks up close and personal just now."

There was a brief hush on the other end of the line, and Ariana's heart raced in apprehension. Had her lie caused anger? Her anxiety rose as she waited for a response. Yet, she could hear only the soft

sound of Holden's breathing on the other end.

"Why are you not speaking?" she asked, sensing the growing gap between them because of her lie.

Finally, the man's voice came through, "I'm just contemplating."

"What are you thinking about?" Ariana inquired.

"(I'm thinking of ways to bridge the distance between us since you seem to be so wary of me," he replied.

As Holden spoke with a helpless tone mixed with a few sighs, Ariana felt the situation spiraling out of control.

The ambiguity and intimacy of their conversation made her want to escape, even though Holden didn't say anything explicitly wrong.

Feeling uncomfortable, Ariana grasped at an excuse and said, "It's late; maybe we should talk about this another day if you have something on your mind. I'm going to bed now."

And with that, she hung up the phone.

The man sitting alone on the Ferris wheel was lost in thoughts, and the sound of the beeping phone

jolted him out of his trance. Though he appeared helpless, his eyes betrayed the immense love he had for the woman on the other end of the line.

As for Ariana, she didn't give much thought to how Holden would perceive her actions. Dismissing it, she stuffed her phone beneath her pillow and shut her eyes, ready to surrender herself to slumber.

She had grown disinterested in the prospect of receiving calls or messages. The overwhelming rush of emotions brought on by the fireworks had quietened her restless mind, leaving her with a sense of peaceful emptiness.

As soon as she lay down, sleep washed over her, carrying her into the land of dreams.

The following day dawned with Ariana in high spirits.

As she stepped out of her apartment, she came face to face with her landlady, whom she had only seen once before. The rotund, middle-aged woman was overseeing the relocation of furniture, barking orders at the workers in a voice that boomed like thunder.

Her curly hair was stylishly coiffed and she sported an emerald brooch around her neck that glittered in the sunlight. A closer look at her hands revealed a set of ten fingers, half of which bore sparkling golden rings that shone bright enough to blind a passerby. Her laughter was so robust that it could

have shaken the foundations of the building.

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The landlady beamed at Ariana, "Did you sleep well last night?"

"I did, thank you," replied Ariana with a smile as she locked her door.

Observing that the unit across the hall was nearly empty, Ariana inquired curiously, "Aren't you living in this apartment? Why are you moving out all of a sudden?"

The landlady's expression was elated as she explained excitedly, "Someone has taken a fancy to this apartment and rented it at ten times the price!"

"Ten times the price?" Ariana was taken aback. This individual was evidently wealthy beyond measure.

The property value in Eylemond was not cheap, let alone in this area, which was in proximity to a scenic attraction.

The landlady's grin grew wider as she exclaimed, "Yes, and he is a handsome young man. Aren't you single? Perhaps you can try to get to know him. Let me tell you, that man is gorgeous. It's a rarity to see such a fine specimen of a young man."

Ariana opened her mouth to say no, but the landlady kept on talking, her voice so loud and

overpowering that Ariana couldn't even hear herself think.

The landlady glanced at her watch and exclaimed, "He should be here any moment now."

Ariana was rendered speechless. The only sound that permeated the silence was the landlady's

excited tapping of her foot. As if on cue, the elevator came to an abrupt halt on their floor.

"That must be him. He's here!" With a wide grin spreading across her face, the landlady grabbed

Ariana's arm and pointed excitedly at the slowly opening elevator doors, as if a grand performance was

about to begin.

As the elevator doors opened, Ariana's heart leaped in anticipation.

With bated breath and heightened anticipation, Ariana eagerly awaited the man's arrival. The

landlady's claim of his stunning good looks made her heart flutter with excitement.

She hoped that he was indeed as handsome as the landlady had claimed, as she would have loved to

ask if he was interested in becoming a model or an actor. She was looking for some new talents,

anyway.

But as the elevator doors opened, the sight that greeted her was not what she expected. Instead of a

dashing young man, a group of uniformed workers emerged, each carrying a toolbox in hand.

Disappointed, Ariana let out a soft sigh.

The landlady was caught off guard by the sudden arrival of the workers, and quizzically inquired, "And who might you be?"

The foreman, with a professional air, showed her the commission certificate and responded with a sense of authority, "We are the team appointed to undertake the structural renovations of the apartment as per the 808 resident's request."

The apartment numbered 808 lay directly opposite Ariana's. The two places were like mirror images of each other, connected by a narrow hallway. The landlady snapped out of her daze and plastered a welcoming smile on her face, ushering the workers into the apartment.

"Just do as he said. When we signed the contract, we agreed that the right to use this apartment would be his," she instructed them.

Ariana's jaw hung open, and she battled to stifle her surprise. Had her new neighbor purchased the apartment? Or was he a man of such wealth that he could afford to throw a fortune into renovations

and rent?

Either way, it was none of her business, and she had work to get to. She resolved to bid the landlady goodbye and head out.

Alas, the landlady had other plans. She was adamant that Ariana stay for a blind date, much to the latter's annoyance.

The landlady's tone was fervent, almost like she was speaking about the only person who could save the world from doom. "Trust me, my dear, you cannot afford to miss out on him. He's handsome and wealthy. You probably won't find a better man than him in Eleymond," she urged Ariana.

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The words sent shivers down Ariana's spine. She couldn't help but be reminded of Theodore, a man with both looks and wealth, but a deplorable character to go with it.

The thought of meeting another good-looking man made Ariana anxious; she didn't think she could bear another painful experience.

"I must get to work now," Ariana said, desperately trying to back out of the situation. "Let's discuss this some other time, please."

Ariana wriggled her hand, breaking free from the landlady's grip. She rushed toward the stairs, panting as she ran down the steps.

This incident made her late for work, and as she stepped out of the elevator, she saw Betsy dashing out of the office with her phone in her hand. Betsy's face was a picture of worry, and Ariana could tell she was about to receive bad news. The anxious assistant grabbed Ariana's arm like a frightened animal seeking refuge.

"Ariana, you won't believe what's happened!" Betsy exclaimed.

Ariana's heart raced as she asked, "What's wrong?"

Betsy led Ariana to an empty corridor and whispered in her ear, "A social media account says Brielle is going to be the first female supporting role in Winslow's new movie!"

Ariana's eyes widened in surprise, but she quickly regained her composure. "Don't believe everything you read on the Internet," she said coolly.

Betsy protested, "It's all over social media! The details seem so real, and even the unofficial sources say it's true. This could be a disaster!"

Ariana remained calm and said reassuringly, "The movie hasn't been officially announced yet. Let's

wait for the official news.”

Betsy’s hair was in disarray as she nervously shared her thoughts on the matter. “I think it’s probably true. Brielle is going to act in Winslow’s new movie as the first female supporting role, and she’s going to become famous soon. Moreover, Mr. Jasper Anderson is hostile to you, so I’m afraid that he’ll trample on you in the future.”

Ariana was surprised that Betsy had picked up on her tense relationship with Jasper. She hadn’t shared much about it with Betsy, but Betsy seemed to have an intuition about these things.

Lost in thought, Betsy rubbed her chin and continued, “But not for sure. There are some Daniela fans online arguing that she’ll play the role, not Brielle. They even suggested that Brielle faked the news. The fans are quarreling over this on the Internet.”

Ariana couldn’t suppress her amusement and let out a soft chuckle. However, she quickly composed herself and feigned ignorance. “Betsy, in your opinion, who do you think would be better suited for the first supporting role, Daniela or Brielle?”

Betsy furrowed her brow and took a moment to ponder the question, analyzing it from every angle.

“Judging by their popularity, Daniela would be the better choice.

Besides, the role is said to be that of a seductive woman. Daniela is known for her sultry demeanor, making her a more fitting match for the part. In contrast, Brielle may be physically attractive, but she lacks depth and substance. She’s like a pretty shell without any inner beauty. If she were to land this role, she wouldn’t do it justice.”

Objectively, Daniela was better suited for the role, despite Brielle’s physical beauty.

“But our opinions are irrelevant,” Betsy sighed, her voice dropping to a melancholic tone. “The one who broke the news is a highly followed entertainment reporter, known as Tea Spiller Y, whose leaked information is often true.”

Initially, Betsy had been in denial, but the rumors about Brielle taking the first supporting role had spread like wildfire.

Betsy let out a heavy sigh and divulged, “Furthermore, the Internet sleuths discovered that Brielle had given Winslow’s social media account a like just three days ago. It’s a done deal.”

Upon hearing this, Ariana couldn’t help but suppress her laughter. Brielle had always been one to butter up to anyone who could benefit her career, even before official announcements were made.

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Ariana couldn't help but smirk, secretly happy that Brielle's eagerness would create an opening for her to capitalize on the situation.

Betsy's grip on Ariana's arm tightened as she marched her toward the office, her mind still racing with her earlier analysis. "Brielle might have the upper hand with her great resources, but she's brought this all on herself by crossing Coco Fans, Daniela's fiercely loyal followers," Betsy said, her tone tinged with concern. "These fans are notorious for their vicious cat-fights with any stars who pose a threat to Daniela's reign. I bet they'll dig up all of Brielle's dirty laundry and use it against her."

Ariana's lips curved up into a sly smile. This was just the kind of chaos she needed to really put Brielle in her place.

Betsy was completely engrossed in scouring the depths of the Internet for the latest developments, oblivious to the pangs of hunger in her stomach. It was Ariana who brought her lunch, as she couldn't stand the thought of Betsy starving herself.

Sarah was busy preparing for the charity performance she had signed up for, leaving only Betsy and Ariana at the office.

Betsy dug into her food with gusto, savoring each bite as if it were her last.

Ariana, on the other hand, wasn't feeling quite as hungry, but watching Betsy eat with such gusto seemed to stimulate her appetite, and she found herself eating more than she had originally intended.

While enjoying their lunch, Betsy couldn't resist the temptation to glance at her phone, and her eyes widened with surprise. "Brielle's fans are surrendering to the Coco Fans," she exclaimed.

Ariana, sensing an opportunity, put her fork down and leaned over to get a glimpse of Betsy's screen.

With a sly smile, she suggested, "Why not create a fake profile and ruffle some feathers? We could play both sides, exposing information to the netizens while sparking conflict between the fan groups."

Without hesitation, Betsy grabbed her spare phone and began to craft a convincing persona.

Her fingers danced over the screen as she entered the username Love Brielle Three Lifetimes. Typing with purpose, she provoked Brielle's fans, "Why are you cowering in fear, Brie Lovers? It's time to take a stand against the Coco Fans! Daniela may have the backing of powerful people, but our Brielle is no pushover either!"

The Brie Lovers were known to be fierce defenders of Brielle's reputation. And now, Love Brielle Three

Lifetimes had appeared on the scene—Betsy's alternate account with the purpose to cause chaos.

As expected, within just half an hour of Betsy's comment, over a hundred responses had poured in.

The excitement was palpable, and Betsy couldn't help but grin mischievously as she typed her reply.

"Don't be afraid, Brie Lovers. Let me assure you that Brielle's agent is Jasper Anderson. With such powerful connections, what could possibly go wrong?"

Jasper Anderson, the name alone was enough to instill a sense of awe and respect.

Known to many as the younger son of the Anderson family, he was a powerful figure in the entertainment industry.

Upon hearing his name, the netizens were quick to piece together the situation. It all made sense now:

Brielle had powerful backing, and that was how she had secured such a coveted role. The news of her casting as the first female supporting role in Winslow's movie was now all but confirmed, and it was all thanks to Jasper's vast resources and connections.

Brielle's fans, who had been feeling defeated and ready to back down, suddenly found themselves ignited with a newfound sense of hope.

Brielle's blood boiled as she read the online rumors about herself. She felt like her phone was mocking her as she slammed it on the floor. The baseless allegations had quickly spiraled out of control, turning into a vicious war between rival fan groups.

While it wasn't unusual for fans to bicker, Brielle knew that if this negativity spread, it could seriously tarnish her reputation.

The controversy around her former assistant's ordeal with the sulfuric acid had only just died down, and now she was being dragged back into the eye of the storm by Daniela's zealous supporters.

She had been planning on treating herself to a day of pampering, but now all she could feel was anger and frustration, unable to shake off the cloud of negativity that seemed to follow her everywhere.

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Brielle sprang out of bed with a scowl on her face, not even bothering to tend to her morning routine.

She was in a foul mood, agitated by the rumors swirling around her. "Have you been able to reach that Tea Spiller Y?" she demanded of her new assistant, Freda Sampson. "Tell them to delete that post immediately and clear my name. If they want money, we'll give it to them!"

Freda was visibly shaken and flustered. "I'm doing my best to contact the owner of that account, but we

haven't received any response to our messages or emails yet."

Brielle's fiery gaze bummed with fury as she snatched Freda's phone from her trembling hand. "Why haven't you reached Tea Spiller Y?" she barked. "Let me see what you're doing. You can't even handle this simple task, you imbecile!"

With a flick of her fingers, Brielle accessed the phone's screen and her eyes widened with disbelief.

The notorious Tea Spiller Y had blocked all their related accounts, effectively severing all lines of communication.

"Go and sue this Tea Spiller Y! For slander!" Brielle's voice boomed like thunder, filled with a venomous rage that could ignite a wildfire.

However, Freda's timid voice trembled with fear as she spoke. "Brielle, I'm afraid it's difficult."

But instead of listening to her assistant's concerns, Brielle's fury only intensified.

She struck Freda's cheek hard, and her voice bellowed in a rage, "Are you teaching me how to do things?"

Freda recoiled in terror, shielding her face with trembling hands. "I dare not," she whimpered, like a

small animal cowering before a predator.

Brielle settled herself onto the sofa, snorting with frustration as she perused the never-ending stream of comments flooding the phone.

The public opinion warfare had escalated into an all-out battle, with new combatants joining the fray every minute. Fans of both Brielle and Daniela were hurling insults, while passersby watched the spectacle with glee. The situation was only exacerbated by the presence of trolls, gleefully stoking the flames of the conflict.

As she scrolled through the comments, Brielle's face twisted with anger. Daniela's fans were spitting venom at her, but what was truly infuriating was the stupid confidence of her own fans. They had said that Brielle didn't give a damn about the opportunity to play the first supporting role and that she had only agreed to act in the film because of her connection to Winslow.

Brielle was in a state of boiling rage, so infuriated that she felt like tearing her hair out. She tossed the phone aside and fanned herself with both hands as if trying to extinguish the flames of anger that were burning her up. "These idiots are doing nothing but causing trouble!" she exclaimed, her voice tinged with frustration and desperation.

Her gaze fell upon the cowering form of Freda, who was trembling in the corner.

Brielle rounded on her new assistant, her voice heavy with scorn and disdain, "What happened to my orders to calm down my fans and silence them? Have you succeeded in doing anything right? You're a total imbecile!"

Freda braced herself to explain, "Just as things were simmering down, a bunch of fans started acting up, claiming that you had some influential figure backing you and that you had nothing to fear."

Brielle pointed a finger at her own face, saying, "I have nothing to fear?"

The rage inside her boiled over, and she exploded into a fit of laughter. "If I were not afraid of anyone, would I be sitting here so helpless? Who the hell is spreading these lies?"

Freda swallowed nervously, barely daring to speak above a whisper. "Perhaps there are some fans who are deliberately stoking the flames."

Brielle sneered, her eyes burning with fury, "I've already suspected that someone is pulling the strings from behind the scenes. Whoever it is better watch their back, or they'll feel my wrath."

In a frigid voice, Brielle tightened her grip on the cup before violently hurling it to the floor, the shattered

pieces spraying water everywhere like a fountain of fury.

Fearing the wrath of her boss, Freda quickly sidestepped to avoid the splashing water. She had been on edge ever since becoming Brielle's assistant, enduring constant stress and hardship.

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"Perhaps we should post a clarification that you will be playing the second supporting role, not the most important supporting role?" Freda timidly suggested, hoping to appease Brielle's temper.

In a fit of rage, Brielle unleashed a torrent of scathing words. "How clueless can you be? The contract explicitly forbids any leak or disclosure before the official announcement. It doesn't matter if it's the netizens that spread the rumor.

Clarifying now would be a breach of contract!"

Freda trembled with fear, unable to muster a response, but she nodded in agreement.

"And to clarify would be tantamount to admitting that Daniela is superior to me, do you understand?"

Then they would all laugh at me, and I would be a laughing stock," Brielle snarled, her voice dripping with contempt.

Brielle inhaled deeply, endeavoring to quell the surge of emotions within her before inquiring, "Have

you made contact with Daniela's team? What have they conveyed?"

Freda displayed the message on her phone to Brielle, the contents of which were concerning Daniela's agent's uncooperative behavior. "They have been dodging us, claiming to be occupied, and have even told us to disregard the warfare between the fan groups. It appears that they have no intentions of making things right."

Brielle's features contorted in fury and she gnashed her teeth. "That wretched woman!"

Daniela was indifferent to the fans' arguments about who would play the most important female supporting role in Winslow's film. Because when the movie's official cast list was announced, Brielle would be the one who would become the butt of the joke.

Freda, noticing Brielle's boiling anger, swiftly retreated her phone to avoid a potential outburst that would lead to its destruction.

Brielle flung herself onto the couch, her eyes shut tight, and her hand propping her head up. Her body shook with unbridled fury as she struggled to quell her emotions.

The rage consumed her, rendering her incapable of calming down.

Freda hesitated for a moment, nervously biting her lip before asking, “Brielle, are you feeling alright?”

Brielle shot Freda a sharp glance and barked, “Do I look alright to you? Why are you just standing there? Get me a damn glass of water!” Her voice was laced with anger and impatience.

“Right away,” Freda hurriedly fetched a glass of water for Brielle and handed it to her, careful not to spill a drop.

As Brielle drank the water, her body gradually relaxed, and the tension in the room began to dissipate.

Taking a deep breath, she set the glass down on the coffee table and leaned back on the couch.

As Brielle tried to compose herself, Freda spoke up with a note of concern in her voice. “Brielle, do you think it’s possible that Tea Spiller Y intentionally misled us with that post? Their information has always been reliable in the past, but this time, it was so sudden and inaccurate. It seems like they might be trying to cause trouble for us.”

Brielle’s eyes widened as a realization hit her. It was all starting to make sense now.

She had only shared the information about her role with one person—Ariana.

The thought of it made Brielle seethe with anger, her jaw clenching and teeth grinding together.

“she’s really done it this time,” Brielle muttered to herself, her fists tightening at her sides. Ariana’s

cunning tactics were no longer a secret to Brielle, but this was a new low even for her.

Meanwhile, at the SJ Entertainment building, Ariana was heading down to meet with Donna after finishing her work.

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Donna exited the meeting room and found Ariana hovering at her office's entrance.

Donna couldn't help but mockingly remark, "Well, well, well, look who decided to grace me with her presence."

Ariana's discomfort was palpable, but she refrained from retorting. She knew better than to pick a fight with her superior.

Ariana smiled and explained, "Sarah is attending the closed rehearsal for the charity performance, so I have some free time to take care of the new artists."

Donna's response was curt. Without even making eye contact, she opened the door to her office and walked in. "There is a rule that each agent can have two or three artists. However, you missed your chance. The most recent batch of new artists has already been assigned."

Ariana's mind raced as she wondered what her next move would be. She had been anticipating

Donna's reluctance to cooperate.

To her surprise, Donna handed her a document. "This is the list of the remaining new talents," Donna said, a faint smile playing on her lips. "You can choose by yourself."

Ariana's eyes widened in surprise as she scanned through the list of remaining artists.

As expected, there were hardly any good options available for her to choose from.

'The few that she had her eye on were already snatched up by other agents.

It seemed that the remaining artists were the ones who had been passed over by other agents due to their lackluster talent.

It was no wonder Donna had offered her the chance to choose so freely. Ariana let out a frustrated sigh, wondering if she would ever find a decent artist to represent.

As she continued to flip through the documents, her eyes caught something at the bottom of the list. A name that stood out from the others. It was an exception to the mediocre bunch that filled the rest of the page. Curious, she leaned in closer to examine the details.

Rate the book using the stars!

The practice room of SJ Entertainment was buzzing with activity, and a handsome young man stood at the center of attention. A swarm of people surrounded him, showering him with compliments and fawning over him like he was the center of the universe.

“Take a sip of water, Cole. You must be exhausted after all that practice,” one person said.

“you have such an incredible voice, Cole. I heard the company is planning to help you release an album. You’re so lucky!” exclaimed another adoringly.

“Hey, back off! Give Cole some space to breathe,” someone else yelled, as they jostled to get a closer look.

“Cole, have you been working out lately? Your muscles are looking so toned,” said another person, eyes sparkling with admiration.

The young man, Cole Dixon, wore a black outfit that complemented his slender and stylish figure.

Holes in his loosely-fitted trousers added an edgy flair to his ensemble. A black metal necklace hung around his neck, and his curly hair flowed down to his jawline. Beneath his messy bangs lay a pair of green eyes that exuded a sense of mystery, like a character from a dark fairy tale.

Every trainee in the room knew that Cole was Donna’s nephew and a new signee of the company who

was highly valued and supported.

Despite his obvious talent, Cole had not made his debut yet. And the reason for his delayed entry into the company remained a mystery to everyone

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A red-haired young man in punk attire giggled as he approached Cole, eager to introduce himself.

“Nice to meet you, Cole. I’ve been honing my craft for two and a half years. Your dancing is impressive, to say the least,” he said with a grin. He even broke into a little jig to show off his own moves, hoping for Cole’s feedback.

The room erupted with noise as a few other extroverted individuals joined in, creating a lively and boisterous atmosphere.

Cole’s smile faded as he observed the group of people around him. They were nothing but a bunch of ignorant fools! Though Cole feigned interest, he held a low opinion of these trainees who only sought his favor to secure their own chance to debut.

Cole had a keen sense of the hypocrisy among his peers. But instead of calling them out, he relished in their flattery.

Suddenly, the practice room doors flew open and a man barged in, his eyes wild with excitement.

“Have you heard the news? Sarah’s agent is coming to select a trainee! I heard her name is Ariana something. If one of us is chosen, we’ll be given a debut plan!”

The news about the debut quota sparked a flicker of hope in the trainees’ eyes. A chance to escape the dreaded fate of termination after three years of futile practice!

But then, an observant trainee picked up on the crucial words of the earlier announcement and voiced out what everyone was thinking. “There is only one quota, which must be Cole’s. He is exceptional, and he...”

He didn’t need to finish his sentence. Everyone knew that Cole had the upper hand, being Donna’s nephew. His place in the debut was all but guaranteed.

A moment of eerie silence descended upon the room, filled with envy and disappointment, as the trainees grappled with the reality of their situation. Yet, they forced themselves to put up a facade of happiness and congratulated Cole, while secretly cursing their luck.

“Cole, you have finally achieved what you’ve been working for so tirelessly, and with great fervor, may I

add,” one of the trainees exclaimed, beaming with pride and admiration.

Another chimed in, “Your unparalleled talent, passion, and hard work will take you to the pinnacle of success, Cole. You will undoubtedly become a star in your own right.”

“Cole, you’re destined for greatness,” another complimented Cole.

As the trainees continued to praise and congratulate him, Cole’s patience wore thin.

He snapped, “I won’t stoop so low as to rely on a rookie agent’s ‘quota’.

“But Cole,” one of the trainees interjected. “This agent has a quota that the others don’t. If you can make your debut with her, then go for it.”

“Besides, switching agents in the future is always an option,” another added.

“Judging by the fact that this fledgling agent has the ability to bring Sarah back into the limelight, it’s clear that she possesses exceptional skills.”

A wry grin appeared on Cole’s lips as he held back his true thoughts. He had no interest in this agent named Ariana or her abilities to catapult him to stardom. After all, he was placed in the company by his aunt Donna, who wanted him to keep an eye on this rookie agent.

For Cole, it was merely a task that needed to be completed, and gaining fame was the least of his

concerns.

As the group was discussing the new agent and the debut opportunity, their teacher for the body shaping lesson sauntered into the room.

Physique lessons were a weekly affair, and the topics covered were mundane at best. Despite their lack of enthusiasm, everyone in the room tried to participate to the best of their abilities. After all, they had to be cooperative if they wanted to get a chance to debut.

That was, except for Cole. He simply sat hunched in a corner, a hat pulled low over his eyes, while completely ignoring the teacher's droning.