

Unconscious 631

Chapter: 631

Being subordinate to Donny, Nolan backed off, sensing Donny's growing annoyance.

He returned to his game, but his mind was uneasy.

It felt wrong to slack off when he was earning so much. Frustrated, he put his phone away, deciding to keep a closer watch. Just as he did, he saw a familiar car approaching. Surprised, he tried to wake Donny, but it was no use.

Donny was out cold, snoring loudly. With the car now approaching, Nolan had no choice but to step out and greet the incoming visitors.

Inside the car, Theodore looked intently at the barely-lit villa, a frown creeping onto his face. "When did they turn off the lights?" As the window lowered, his stern face was revealed, eyes never leaving the shadowy villa. Standing before him, Nolan was on edge. His voice shaking, he muttered, "About half an hour ago."

Seeing Theodore's face grow even more serious, he quickly added, "But I swear, I saw Mrs. Anderson go in myself. Since then, Donny and I have been here and we haven't seen her leave."

Nolan's words about Ariana eased Theodore's concern a bit, but he remained suspicious. Ariana wasn't usually one to sleep this early.

Theodore looked over at Horace and commanded, "Take a few people and inspect the area around the villa." After a beat, he thought of Ariana's angry expression and softened his tone. He said,

"Try not to cause noise, I don't want to disturb her."

Horace nodded, heading off, but returned shortly after with a troubled look on his face.

“Mr. Anderson, we've found the blueprint of this villa, and it shows a garage linked to the basement. We checked out the garage and the car that was parked there is gone.”

Theodore's face clouded over upon hearing this. Nolan felt a pit in his stomach, a sheen of cold sweat breaking out on his skin, his lips trembling but no words escaping. Theodore's gaze landed on the man still fast asleep in the car. Horace caught his look and immediately got the message. He led

a couple of others out of the vehicle, yanked Donny out, dumped him onto the ground, and socked him awake.

Donny's yell of surprise caused Nolan to freeze in place, fear anchoring him to the spot, his gaze averted to avoid Theodore's stern look.

“Horace, gather them up and find her. If you can't, you will end up the same way,” Theodore warned, his voice icy, his wrists working in slow circles.

On the high-speed lanes, a gleaming silver sports car was relentlessly shifting gears, overtaking one vehicle after another, leaving them all in the dust.

“Wow, Sarah, your driving skills are impressive!”

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When Ariana noticed that there was no trace of the stalkers behind them, she looked at the open road in front of them and was relieved. Sitting in the passenger seat, she had to hold down her wind-tousled hair as she gave Sarah a thumbs-up.

“What was that? Can't hear you over the wind!” Sarah hollered back, her voice distorted by the gusts of air. She was so thrilled that she stepped on the gas.

Ariana raised her voice, “You're amazing, Sarah!”

“Of course.” Upon hearing the compliment, Sarah couldn't help but burst into laughter. She sat up proudly with a smug look on her face.

At this moment, the streets were surprisingly quiet. The usual hustle and bustle had disappeared due to a recent fire that had destroyed nearby shops. The area was now empty, with only a few individuals walking by. Despite it being only ten o'clock, the area was eerily silent.

This lack of activity worked to their advantage, allowing them to reach the nearly devastated Blue Night Manor with remarkable speed.

Given that the elevator was out of order and using a wheelchair wasn't practical, Sarah fetched Ariana's crutches and helped her pass the barrier to enter the place.

Ariana carefully made her way up the scorched staircase to the familiar floor above.

The moonlight streaming through the damaged window painted an eerie glow on the charred remains of the chandelier in the middle of the hall. Memories and emotions washed over her.

She remembered everything from the moment Theodore rose from his wheelchair until he carried her out of the fire. It was only the thick smoke that had dulled her senses, making it impossible to keep her eyes open.

She remembered him rushing to her side, lifting the burning metal chandelier with his bare hands, disregarding his own safety. The scent and sound of his flesh burning was still fresh in her mind, as if imprinted on her heart.

At that moment, Ariana realized that the marriage she once treated as a game had become her prison, one she could no longer escape from.

Regardless of his flaws, his deceptions, and secrets, she found herself unable to resist falling for Theodore.

“Watch your step, it’s really dark in here,” Sarah murmured, clicking on the flashlight feature on her phone. The sudden beam of light jolted Ariana back to the present moment.

This was the place. She sidestepped the chandelier remains, scrutinizing the area meticulously. With her crutch providing support, she squatted, albeit with some difficulty, to inspect the ground inch by inch.

However, all that met her gaze was charred dust, discarded trash, and the remnants of the fire. After a fruitless search, they chose to retrace their steps, heading towards the direction of the private room. Their vision was

limited by the small radius of light cast by their phone flashlights, the surrounding darkness looming ominously. Sarah nearly stumbled over the scattered debris multiple times.

“This is too risky. Ugh, it’s my fault for not remembering to bring a flashlight when we left,” Sarah expressed her frustration, grabbing Ariana to stop her after she nearly fell once more.

If she were to fall, it would be a minor issue. But Ariana was still recovering from injuries and was pregnant. Any mishap would not be a trivial matter.

After looking around, Sarah suggested, “The reception area on the first floor suffered the least damage, and there might be an emergency light there. Stay here while I go check.”

Ariana nodded in agreement. Sarah steadied herself against the wall with one hand while carrying her phone in the other as she made her way downwards.

Once the light was gone, Ariana’s surroundings plunged back into darkness.

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After a few moments, Ariana’s eyes began to adjust to the low light, and she could make out shapes under the pale moonlight.

She was about to reach for her own phone to use as a flashlight when she turned her head and spotted something small and shiny reflecting the moonlight near the private room where she and Theodore had dined.

Ariana was overjoyed and immediately hobbled closer on her crutches. She stumbled a few times on the way but did not stop.

When she finally arrived at the spot, she squatted down and took out her phone to use as a flashlight. She brushed off the debris on the floor and searched carefully for the pendant. After a while, she finally managed to uncover the pendant which was buried under a pile of dust.

Ariana's heart was brimming with excitement as she held the pendant in her slightly shaking hand. She checked several times to make sure it was indeed her pendant. She even turned it over to check the engraving on the back. Their names were still clearly visible and intact.

It wasn't until she saw the engraving on the back of the pendant that she was finally relieved after having inspected the pendant several times. She held the pendant tightly in her hand.

Suddenly, there was a sound of footsteps from the stairs.

Ariana felt it was probably Sarah, and she didn't turn around. She just held the pendant tightly against her chest and shouted happily, "Sarah, guess what! I found it. I didn't lose it."

Her voice was trembling with joy. She eventually calmed down a little, but was puzzled when Sarah didn't respond after a long time.

"Sarah?" Ariana called in confusion, but there was still no response. She however knew for sure that there was someone at the stairs.

Abad feeling suddenly rose in her heart. She fumbled for her cell phone on the floor and suddenly shone the light in the direction of the stairs.

Alas, her phone's flashlight wasn't strong enough for the light to reach too far. However, even with the dim light, she could still make out a silhouette at the staircase. Ariana's face changed abruptly. "You... you're not Sarah. Who are you?"

On the other end, firmly gripping the steering wheel of the black Maybach, Horace drove at high speed. He noticed that he was going over 100 miles an hour, but he didn't dare slow down. Nolan who sat nervously in the passenger seat, was reporting to him.

Nolan had checked all the cameras in the area the moment they entered the car, so he was sure they were headed in the right direction.

Sitting in the back seat, with a gloomy face, Theodore was silent. He looked out of the window at the scenery which was quickly passing by. A sense of familiarity arose in his heart, which made him frown slightly. "Are you sure she has gone to this direction?" Theodore looked at the Nolan suddenly.

Without even turning back, Nolan could feel the coldness of Theodore's gaze. His whole body stiffened and he replied, "Yes, the surveillance footage on the way shows that they were heading in this direction."

"This is the way to the manor," Horace said. From the rearview mirror in the car, he caught sight of Theodore's expression and immediately guessed what Theodore was thinking. So, he confirmed his thoughts.

After getting the confirmation from Horace, Theodore pursed his lips and said nothing.

Just thinking about the manor where the fire had occurred stirred up a feeling of unease in his heart. Moreover, when he thought of the injured Ariana at the scene of the fire, his fists tightened unconsciously.

Chapter: 634 What was she doing there?

Theodore had so many unanswered questions in his mind that filled him with doubt and anxiety. Suddenly, he ordered in a low voice, "Hurry up!"

Horace glanced at the dashboard, which showed a speed already well above the limits. However, he dared not argue and stepped on the gas pedal with all his might.

At this same moment, the car suddenly made a sharp turn, and it slid sideways. A screeching sound was heard and the wheels left a long mark on the road.

When the car tured sharply just now, Theodore quickly grabbed the handle to stabilize his body. Nolan who was in the passenger seat didn't react in time and his head hit the windshield hard.

Theodore looked outside and saw a dozen black cars that had appeared from nowhere and surrounded them.

Dozen headlights cut through the night, hitting Nolan full in the face. With a shake of his head, he looked up to see a multitude of men in black pouring out of the cars around him, each one holding a black gun.

Guns!

Nolan found his voice stuck in his throat, terror rooting him to the spot. All he could do was stare, his eyes wide, his face drained of color, his legs trembling with fear.

"Boss, should I call in some help?" Horace's voice cut through the tension. Unlike Nolan, Horace stayed cool under pressure. His hand remained on the steering wheel, prepared for any sudden move. His calmness came from having faced such situations before.

Theodore just shook his head. "No."

He got out of the car, standing tall amidst the menacing crowd. Bathed in the glare of the headlights, his towering figure seemed even more menacing.

His gaze was cold, searching until it rested on one particular car. A dark look crossed his face. "Bold enough to cause trouble in Eleymond, but too chicken to face me?" Theodore's voice echoed, "Zayden."

His voice, calm yet firm, hung in the silence, which was soon broken by a chuckle from the black car, the sound joined by mocking laughter.

“Is that you, Theodore? Been a while, hasn't it?”

Zayden's voice carried an undertone of amusement. He got out of his car, dressed in a snazzy suit that spoke volumes about his audacious personality. His features were somewhat similar to Theodore's but his easy, playful smile set them apart. His vibe was distinctly different.

Theodore's handsome face could have given a bunch of movie stars a run for their money. But sadly, he wasn't one to smile much.

Zayden, hands in his pockets, casually approached Theodore. “Long time no see, Theodore. | was so tied up that | couldn't make it to your wedding. As your brother, that weighs on me. So, | thought I'd drop by Eleymond and pay a visit to the famed sister-in-law of mine.”

Asmirk played on his lips as he gave Theodore an up and down look.

“Look at you, finally out of that wheelchair. For a moment, | thought you were starting to enjoy the underdog life, planning on staying wheelchair-bound forever.”

His gaze shifted towards the car behind Theodore. “The Andersons are merely small-time players. Want revenge? Just give the Fredrick family the go-ahead, and the Andersons will vanish from Eleymond. Why go out of your way to make things difficult, Theodore?”

Chapter: 635 As he spoke, Zayden reached out to pat him on the shoulder, but Theodore sidestepped the gesture without hesitation. “Did you start that fire at the manor?” Theodore cut in, clearly uninterested in small talk.

“What? I'm innocent!” Zayden declared, hands thrown up in mock surrender, a chuckle escaping his lips. “You can't go around making false accusations against your brother like this. We both swore an oath before our grandfather, promising to avoid infighting. The one who breaks that vow loses his claim to the Fredrick inheritance. I'm not foolish enough to ruin my own future.”

“I've got no time for your antics, worthwhile to say, step aside.” Theodore retorted. “If you've got nothing He was keen to find Ariana as quickly as possible. Any interference from Zayden was a nuisance he could do without.

“Wow, short memory, huh?” Zayden shook his head, amusement in his smile, lowering his hands. He stepped closer to Theodore, whispering, “Didn’t | just mention? My visit to Eleymond was to meet my sister-in-law.”

Suddenly, a wave of unease crashed over Theodore. Realization struck him and anger surged, hot and fast. Before he knew it, his hands had latched onto Zayden’s collar, his forehead pulsating with veins.

“Don’t you dare touch her!” “Why shouldn’t I?” Zayden’s laugh held an edge of malice. His smile stayed, yet his eyes were devoid of amusement.

He lazily noted, “I did promise our grandfather to not harm our own people. But Ariana, she’s an Anderson. She has never even graced our home with her presence.

She’s not one of us.”

His smile broadened, taking pleasure in Theodore’s visible anger. “My boys tracked her down to the ruins. | chose a man to follow her. He’s got some steam to let off.

I’m sure he’ll entertain her well. Do you appreciate my gift?”

His laughter erupted again, only to be cut short when Theodore slammed him onto the car hood. Zayden started coughing violently from the shock.

With one hand pressing Zayden down, Theodore’s other hand surprisingly held a gun.

The bodyguards froze when they noticed, their own weapons already trained on Theodore.

Zayden could only whimper, his throat constricted around the gun barrel. The tableau held, nobody moved, nobody dared. Theodore’s eyes bore into Zayden’s. “Speak again, and Ill add another bullet hole to your body.”

At the same time, amidst the ruins of the fire, a group of men were hammering away at a door, trying to break it down. Inside, Ariana braced herself against the door, breath coming in labored gasps as she fought to keep the barrier shut.

Just five minutes earlier, she had sensed trouble. She had quickly dimmed her phone and hidden in the shadows. When a man approached, she sprang, using her crutch as an impromptu weapon.

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She hadn't expected the man to have a backup. The commotion had alerted two more men, who promptly rushed up from the floor below. Seeing she was outnumbered, Ariana chose to run away.

The men gave chase. Heart pounding, she pushed herself to outpace them, barely managing to slip into a small room before they could catch up to her.

Though cramped, the room offered her a respite. The door lock had miraculously survived the fire, giving her a temporary refuge.

A previous injury throbbed in her foot, a grim reminder of her narrow escape just moments before. As she remembered the close call, a shiver coursed down her spine and cold sweat dripped down her body.

"Open up, you bitch! We promise you a good time later!" The men outside bellowed obscenities while pounding on the door.

Ariana forced herself to take deep, calming breaths. She could feel her heart pounding against her ribcage and her legs turned to jelly.

Fumbling against the wall, she managed to push herself to a standing position. She switched on her phone light to survey her surroundings.

It appeared to be an electrical room, with a sturdy fire-resistant door. The men outside wouldn't be able to breach it quickly. She could remain hidden and wait for help.

Ariana shook off the initial shock, her mind racing to Sarah, who had gone to find a flashlight. But considering the men seemed focused on her, Sarah should be safe.

The continuous banging on the door and the angry curses of the men could be heard. "Blast it! Wasn't this place supposed to have burnt down? Why's the damn door so solid? Damn it!"

Ariana threw a glance at the fire door, praying that Sarah had escaped. At the same time, she fumbled to unlock her phone with shaking hands, intending to call for help.

Yet, as she opened the dialer app, she froze. A message flashed at the top of her screen.

No signal. No network coverage!

On the barred bridge, Theodore cast a cold, contemptuous gaze at Zayden, a glance that likened him to discarded waste. "Get your crew out of Blue Night Manor. Now!"

Zayden, struggling for words, bore a look of flaming rage. He appeared convinced that Theodore wouldn't dare lay a hand on him, and his face bore a disdainful smirk.

Theodore remained silent. With an unreadable look, he pulled the gun from Zayden's mouth and aimed for his leg, firing without a seconds hesitation.

"Fuck you!" A shriek pierced the air, followed by another bang. Theodore forced Zayden back onto the car hood, one hand pinning him down. The muzzle of the gun silenced his screams, plunging back into Zayden's mouth.

"[m losing my patience. I'll repeat myself! Make them go!" The atmosphere was so ominous, so menacing, that the rage seething in Theodore's voice teetered on the brink of control.

"Three." Theodore's sudden countdown jarred the air; simultaneously, his index finger played over the trigger.

Zayden was dumbfounded for a split second before hearing the next number. "Two."

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Oh no! This man was unhinged!

Fear finally crept into Zayden. He was certain this unpredictable man was capable of anything. "Back off!" Zayden mustered enough strength to utter the command to his team.

The burly bodyguards reluctantly holstered their guns, keeping a wary eye on Theodore. They retreated to their vehicles, moving the cars they had formed a barrier with, creating a path for their exit.

Black vehicles were stationed in a perimeter, their occupants, Zayden's men, ever watchful, keeping their eyes glued to Theodore's every gesture.

Eventually, Theodore let go of Zayden. He tossed his gun nonchalantly to Horace, who caught it smoothly. Without a beat, Horace had the gun pointed back at Zayden, never allowing a moment's laxity.

"Get your men to stand down," Theodore demanded coldly, cleaning his hands on a handkerchief. Disgust flickered in his furrowed brow. He cast a sideways glance at Zayden, then tossed the handkerchief on the ground. "If Ariana suffers even a scratch, you'll be in for a world of pain."

Freed from Theodore's grip, Zayden clutched at his leg, sliding down to the ground in agony. His face was a pallid mask of humiliation and pain, all previous haughtiness evaporated. He shot a furious glare at Theodore. "You've lost your damn mind! If you hurt me over some woman, you'll never touch the Fredrick fortune."

Theodore's frown deepened. He didn't even deign to glance Zayden's way as he uttered frostily, "Three."

Hearing the countdown commence again, a shudder ran through Zayden. He had just suffered a humiliating defeat, even when the odds were in his favor. Now, he was utterly defenseless against Theodore.

In fear of this lunatic truly ending his life, he rushed to retrieve his phone and dial his contact at the manor. "The number you have dialed is currently unavailable—"

The cool, robotic voice of a woman echoed from the phone. Zayden made numerous attempts but couldn't connect. It finally dawned on him that these people, seasoned in illicit activities, always rigged signal jammers near their operation sites.

As Zayden relayed this to Theodore, the latter's face contorted in fury. He drove his foot onto Zayden's wounded leg.

"Fuck off!" Lying on the ground, Zayden screamed, "I really can't reach them! But it's not too late. We haven't been at this for long, there's still time to stop them! If you keep torturing me, it'll be too late!"

Theodore's expression eased, and he lifted his foot. Simultaneously, he flashed Horace a signal with his eyes.

Getting the message, Horace hoisted the battered Zayden, dumping him into the car. Slamming the door shut, he hit the accelerator, the car roaring towards the manor.

In the Blue Night Manor, Ariana clutched her phone, attempting to get a signal. She experimented with different angles and heights, scouring every corner of the room, but to no avail.

Her heart sank, and a vague suspicion crept into her mind.

Even if the signal at the power room was poor, it seemed unlikely that she couldn't even make emergency calls. The men outside must have been hired by someone, perhaps equipped with a signal jamming device.

“Bitch, open the door quickly,” their voices penetrated the door, accompanied by crude and menacing words. “We can make you happy. Otherwise, when we come in, you won't be able to afford it!”

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Unfazed by their threats, Ariana dismissed their words. Few people frequented this area at this time of night, and even if she made more noise, no one would come to her aid.

It was wiser to conserve her energy.

Fortunately, the fire door was sturdy, and it was unlikely that they possessed the tools necessary to breach it. They wouldn't be able to break in for a while, ensuring a temporary respite of safety within the room.

Now, it became a test of patience.

In this moment of relative calm, Ariana regained her composure. She found a flat surface to sit on and contemplated the identities of the people orchestrating this assault.

Initially, she had assumed they were common thieves seeking money or intending to harm her. If they couldn't capture her, they might abandon their pursuit.

However, the situation appeared more complex than that.

Furrowing her brow, Ariana pondered.

Could Jasper and Brielle have sent them? But this assault didn't align with their previous behavior. If it wasn't them, who was behind it? Who was their target? The Anderson family or herself?

Regret flooded through Ariana as she suddenly wished she hadn't left Theodore's men behind. Their presence would have provided some sense of security.

Now, all she could do was hope that Theodore's men would locate her swiftly. Time was of the essence. A heavy sigh escaped Ariana's lips.

As for Sarah, she was uncertain if she had managed to escape or not. She could only hope that Sarah had sensed something was amiss and made her way to safety without being discovered.

After the impasse had persisted for some time, the individuals outside grew weary.

As the clamor subsided, Ariana cautiously approached the door, inch by inch, straining to hear their conversation.

"This woman is hiding inside. Let's just leave," one of them suggested.

"Leave? How could we explain this situation to Mr. Fredrick? We will meet our demise if we fail to fulfill the task assigned by Mr. Fredrick!"

Mr. Fredrick? Ariana's mind raced, swiftly searching for any connections to the Fredrick family. And only one person occupied her thoughts.

Holden?

Chapter: 639 Ariana was taken aback by her own musings, yet swiftly dismissed them.

No, it was impossible. Holden bore no animosity towards her, and they shared no grievances. He would never stoop to such actions.

Then who could it be? Could it be related to Holden in any way? The Fredrick family? Meanwhile, the voices outside showed no signs of abating, and one of them was still deliberating. "So, what should we do?"

After a brief silence, another voice chimed in, "Isn't there a certain bitch celebrity lying downstairs? She appears to be that famous superstar."

Laughter, filled with vulgarity, erupted from outside the door. "It's that renowned star. I believe I've come across her nude photos. She must be quite skilled. We didn't come here for nothing. We might as well enjoy ourselves."

Their words caused Ariana's heart to skip a beat. She promptly rose to her feet, her face drained of color and her entire body quivering from the cold.

Damn it, they had Sarah in their grasp! She had assumed Sarah had managed to escape, but little did she expect that Sarah, too, had fallen into the clutches of these individuals!

Eavesdropping on the conversation outside, Ariana's heart began to race. She pressed herself against the door, trying to catch every word, praying that their intention to trick her into leaving was merely a ruse.

Outside, a man named Mike Campbell, tall and intimidating with a prominent scar on his forehead, was leading a group. In a gruff voice, he ordered the man beside him, "Jack, get that big celebrity from downstairs. I'll keep an eye on the girl here."

"Right away, boss." Jack Ortega nodded, and then quickly strode off.

After a short while, Ariana heard heavy footsteps outside the room, followed by a dull thud, as if a large object had been carelessly thrown to the floor.

Could it be Sarah? Ariana's heart thumped in her chest. She strained her ears for more. Mike's voice pierced the silence. "Wake her up!" he bellowed loudly.

A sharp, loud smack resounded through the hallway, making Ariana jump. Then she heard a familiar stifled groan.

It was unmistakably Sarah!

Ariana's body started shaking uncontrollably. Her body was gripped with terror, and she held her breath, trying to listen to the scene unfolding outside.

Upon regaining consciousness, Sarah found herself enveloped in darkness. As she moved, she realized her mouth was gagged with a piece of cloth and her hands were bound behind her.

A memory flashed — she was searching for a flashlight when she heard someone approaching. Mistaking the person for Ariana, she was about to chastise her when a sudden blow to the back of her head knocked her unconscious.

This realization sent waves of fear through Sarah, who began to whimper and squirm.

Observing her, Mike grabbed her hair and yanked her upwards. Sarah instinctively groaned and struggled against his grip.

Chapter: 640 "Set up the DV camera. Aim it at her," Mike commanded. With his physical advantage, he easily kept Sarah under control.

The original plan was to film the young woman trapped inside the room. However, since she refused to show herself, Mike decided to focus on Sarah instead.

Mike leered at Sarah, tracing a hand down her face. She was undeniably attractive, perhaps even more so than the bitch inside.

When the DV camera came into view, Sarah felt a chill sweep over her. She froze, overcome by a sense of being watched by countless eyes. The camera seemed to act like a noose, gradually tightening around her neck.

Mike reveled in her discomfort, taunting her with crude remarks. "Eager for some fun, aren't we? You've taken nude photos before, right? You must love the attention."

He made sure his words echoed loudly, hoping to reach the ears of the woman in the room. When he received no response, he moved closer to Sarah.

As his smoky breath approached, Sarah's survival instincts ignited. Despite her gag, she yelled as loud as she could, struggling against her restraints.

Mike continued saying lewd threats to provoke her and Ariana. Slowly, Sarah realized that despite his threats, Mike was more focused on the closed door rather than acting upon his words.

"If we can't enjoy the company of both, one is better than none. Come on, let's have some fun," Mike jeered, flashing a crude smirk. He signaled to Jack, indicating they should seize any opportunity to breach the door.

In this tense moment, Sarah realized the chilling truth — Ariana was just behind that door, and she was the primary target. As the noises from outside reached her ears, Ariana felt a surge of anger grip her. She trembled uncontrollably, her hands instinctively forming tight fists, with her fingernails digging into her palms.

The indignity of the situation was unbearable for anyone, let alone Sarah, who had already suffered public humiliation due to a previous scandal. The thought of reliving such an experience was simply unbearable to her.

Ariana's hand hovered over the doorknob several times, contemplating whether to intervene.

However, every time she pulled back, acknowledging that barging out would only play into the hands of the brutes outside. They were unlikely to spare Sarah, and in the end, neither of them would escape.

She needed to devise a foolproof plan. However, her strategizing was cut short by a sudden silence from outside.

Fear gripped her. Had Sarah taken drastic measures? "I'll come out if you let her go!" Ariana blurted out, her words echoing her desperation. She pounded on the door in frustration.

Mike, reading the worry in Ariana's voice, responded with a laugh, "Oh, you'll just walk out here if we let her go? Doubt it. Open the door yourself if you don't want your friend to suffer more!"

He shared a look with Jack, who promptly tore the tape off Sarah's mouth. "You better start convincing your friend if you don't want another scandal!"

With a fiery look in her eyes, Sarah locked her gaze with them and then shouted at the closed door, "Ignore them, Ariana! Don't

Her words were cut short as Jack silenced her with his hand. "You're supposed to beg!"