

Unconscious 671

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The shrill sound almost split Theodore's eardrums. Shivering, his hand instinctively sought his medicine in his clothing, but found nothing.

His hand shook, and instead of the cool bottle, he felt soft fingertips.

Suddenly, a dazzling light cut through the darkness, chasing away the deranged specter and yanking him from the frigid abyss into the sunshine.

The world turned bright in an instant. Warmth graced his lips, a familiar solace, a sunbeam guiding him back to the realm of the living. Theodore's gaze was filled with the figure standing before him, bathed in the light.

Only Ariana was in his world. She approached in the glow, descended to his side like an angel, held his face as if cradling a demon's, and offered her most sincere and pure kiss.

Ariana could feel Theodore's trembles slowly receding within her grasp. Gently, she loosened her hold on him.

She kept her hand tenderly placed on his face, lines of worry etching themselves across her forehead. She observed him closely, ensuring he had stopped biting himself before inquiring, "Theodore, what's going wrong with you?"

Her eyes, a deep pool of worry, stared intently at him. They glistened with the onset of tears, betraying her anxiety. Theodore met her gaze, still seeming lost, his eyes devoid of their usual spark. "What happened to me?" he mumbled, his confusion still evident.

Tears welled up in Ariana's eyes at the sight of him. As she gingerly wiped the blood from his mouth, her voice faltered. "You didn't react to me, no matter how hard | tried. Your face turned ghostly pale. You were biting yourself—"

As she traced the bite mark tenderly with her thumb, she confessed, “I feared you might harm your tongue, that’s why I did what I did.”

Only then did Theodore seem to regain some sense of reality. He observed Ariana, noticing the unmasked concern reflected in her watery eyes. He reached up to catch a fallen tear, a faint smile breaking through his pallor.

“Did you not worry I’d bite you too?” Now that Theodore seemed more himself, even attempting to jest, Ariana couldn’t help but feel a surge of anger accompanying

her lingering worry. She swatted him lightly, irritation seeping into her tone. “Why would you make light of this? What’s happening with you?”

His eyes dropped, his response nonchalant. “I skipped sleep and breakfast. Probably just low blood sugar, nothing serious.”

Her eyes bore into him, her silence almost accusatory. He misread it as anger. When he met her gaze, it was as if she was silently asking him, “Do you think I’m a fool?”

Aware she didn’t believe his explanation, he sighed, conscious of the worry lines that marred her face.

“I’m alright, really,” he assured her, a tender smile on his lips. His voice, although gentler, sounded exhausted. He mustered a weak laugh. “I just need to rest. I’ll be fine.”

Recognizing Theodore’s diversion, Ariana breathed out a soft sigh. “If you’re reluctant to discuss it—”

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She paused, her words hanging in the air as she grappled with the thought of bringing it up once more. Swiftly, she shifted the conversation. “If you don’t want to talk about her, I won’t press further.”

“No.”

The firm denial from Theodore took her by surprise. He drew her into a gentle embrace, gazing into her eyes. "I'll tell you, but I need some time to gather my thoughts. I promise to explain everything."

Outside the hospital room, Horace kept a vigilant eye on the situation unfolding within. A sudden flurry of activity from inside made him contemplate whether to intervene, but the noise died down as quickly as it had begun.

Exhaling a sigh of relief, Horace watched as Theodore emerged from the room, looking ashen.

Concerned, he moved towards him, taking in Theodore's disturbing pallor. "I need some rest. Keep watch here, and look after her," said Theodore, his tone nonchalant as he walked away. Horace, initially wanting to accompany him, stopped in his tracks.

At that moment, Ariana's voice echoed from the room. "Horace, could you please come in?" Left with no other option, Horace made his way into the room.

Ariana sat on the bed, her face serene. Her calm demeanor suggested that everything was under control. But then she turned to him with a serious question.

"Is there an issue with Theodore's health?" Caught off guard by her question, Horace was quick to respond. "No, boss is in good health." Unexpectedly, Ariana held up a medicine bottle, her gaze steady. "Then, what is this?" she asked.

Horace's eyes widened in sheer disbelief as he caught sight of the familiar medicine bottle clutched in Ariana's hand. How on earth did she stumble on it?

Ariana's calm facade shattered into a storm of frustration, her voice erupting in a crescendo aimed at Horace. "What kind of charade are you all playing?! Do you have the slightest idea of the terror I felt as I watched him suffer right in front of my very eyes? Can't you see that I care for him just as much?! But I'm in the dark, clueless about what's unfolding! I am his beloved wife, for heaven's sake! Yet, I find myself utterly helpless due to the veil of secrecy enveloping me! Isn't this situation utterly preposterous to you?! You've divulged nothing. Isn't that taking things a step too far?"

This unprecedented outburst from Ariana left Horace dumbfounded, his head drooping low as perspiration beaded on his forehead. He knew disclosing the truth was out of the question, yet he struggled to conjure a plausible explanation.

After an intense standoff, Horace finally mustered the courage to ask hesitantly, "Tell me... by any chance, you didn't let the boss take that medicine, did you?"

"No." Ariana drew in a deep breath, fighting to get back on her bearings.

The encounter with the medicine had occurred when Theodore fell gravely ill.

Witnessing his futile attempts to reach for the thing in his pocket, Ariana had instinctively stepped forward to help, inadvertently stumbling upon the secret bottle.

Her initial intent had been to aid Theodore in taking the medicine, but as she watched him biting his lip to the point of bleeding, she impetuously decided to kiss him instead.

To her astonishment, Theodore swiftly regained his senses. Consequently, she refrained from helping him take the medicine.

Chapter: 673 She watched Theodore recover consciousness and instinctively hid the medication, not knowing why.

Learning that Ariana had refrained from giving Theodore the medicine, Horace breathed a sigh of relief. He elucidated, "The boss indeed faces certain health challenges, but they are manageable as long as he refrains from taking that medicine."

Ariana regarded Horace skeptically, her gaze probing the mixed emotions etched on his face. As thoughts of Theodore's peculiar condition during his sickness swirled in her mind, an unpleasant suspicion took hold. Her countenance darkened, and she scrutinized Horace intently, testing his resolve. "Tell me, is your boss engaged in drug use, by chance?"

“No, no, absolutely not!” Horace hastened to defend Theodore, even raising three fingers as if taking a solemn oath. “While the boss may possess peculiar temperaments, he never indulges in any illegal substances. I can vouch for that.”

A wave of relief washed over Ariana as she let out a breath. She seized the moment to push Horace further, her tone unyielding, “Then, what precisely is this?”

Horace’s discomfort was palpable, and after a lengthy pause, he said slowly, “This is intricately linked to some of the boss’s past entanglements, private matters that are not mine to divulge. Despite my awareness, I don’t believe it is right to reveal them without his consent.”

Recognizing Horace’s reticence, Ariana knew that pushing him further would yield no additional information. She acknowledged that he was merely Theodore’s subordinate, burdened by loyalty and confidentiality.

Ariana relented, nodding with a heavy sigh, “Very well, I understand.”

A sense of relief flooded Horace, his inner turmoil subsiding momentarily. He had been uncertain how to navigate Ariana’s relentless inquiries, and now he felt a reprieve.

Casting a glance at the medicine bottle nestled in Ariana’s hand, Horace’s mind churned with contemplation. Finally, he spoke pensively. “Nevertheless, Mrs. Anderson, it is fortuitous that you have discovered this truth. I have endeavored to dissuade the boss, but he remains obstinate. Now that you are aware, I implore you to assist. Please keep a vigilant eye on the boss and prevent him from ever taking this medicine again.”

Ariana saw Horace’s certainty that Theodore was not meant to have this medicine and she surmised there must be undesirable effects.

“Do you know what this medicine tastes like?” she inquired, studying the unlabeled bottle. “Slightly acidic, with a bitter aftertaste,” Horace responded, remembering Theodore’s prior description.

Ariana emptied the contents of the bottle, replacing them with vitamins from the bedside table. She then handed the bottle back to Horace.

“Return this to him. Tell him it was found in the ward. And don’t say that I discovered the bottle,” she instructed. After a brief pause, she added, “If he finds out, say it was my doing. Otherwise, don’t mention it.”

“Okay, I’ll keep it a secret,” Horace promised, accepting the bottle. He admired her cunning plan and felt reassured by its plausibility. Given that Theodore always swallowed his pills without tasting them, he might not notice the change.

However, Horace’s gaze fell upon the pills scattered on the table, and he felt a tinge of worry. Instead of making assumptions, he turned to Ariana. “How should we dispose of these?”

Ariana contemplated the white pills, before wrapping them up and passing them to Horace. “Dispose of them properly.”

Satisfied with this answer, Horace took the wrapped pills and left the room.

Once he was out of sight, Ariana exhaled in relief. Opening her fist, she revealed a single white pill.

She had kept one for herself when handing over the rest to Horace.

After studying the pill for a moment, she reached for her phone and dialed a number

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The call connected quickly.

“Dr. Chadwick, could you make a visit? I need your help to identify a pill.”. Days rolled on without a glimpse of Theodore.

Ariana wondered if he was avoiding her following the unsettling incident, or perhaps he was engrossed in probing the recent fire. Either way, for the ensuing days, only Horace and Judy were at her side.

In the wake of Theodore's unexpected episode, an unspoken consensus emerged among Ariana and the others to steer clear of that topic. Ariana didn't bring up any questions about Marley or Helen either.

Her focus, instead, was on her impending ankle surgery and recovery. She kept her mind from wandering and concentrated on her health.

Mitchel was in charge of the surgical plan. The procedure went remarkably well. It was so seamless that Ariana barely noticed when it was over.

It was a success, much to the delight of both Judy and Horace, and Ariana, too, could breathe a little easier.

Post-surgery, she anticipated seeing Theodore, but instead, she was greeted by Horace bearing flowers when she exited the operating room.

Ariana glanced at the floral arrangement next to her bed and let out a soft sigh, feeling a twinge of disappointment. She reminded herself that despite his penchant for secrets and playful taunts, Theodore was a man of his word. He had promised to explain everything to her, and now, all she could do was wait patiently.

Idly scrolling through her phone, a news alert caught Ariana's eye, causing her heart to lurch.

It seemed like she had stumbled upon some disheartening news, rather than receiving the explanation she'd been waiting for from Theodore.

While casually checking the latest buzz on celebrity happenings, Ariana's eyes landed on a bold headline emblazoned across the front page, "Tyler, the New Rising Star, Spotted in a Foul Mood On Set."

Accompanying the news was a photo of Tyler, a cloud of gloom etched on his face, standing in solitude. The caption under the picture insinuated that the newfound fame had inflated Tyler's ego, accusing him of ignoring the lead actor, not collaborating with the crew's promotional activities, and expressing displeasure at the event.

Ariana's brows knitted as she delved deeper into the news. Upon examining the selectively chosen screenshots, she noted that Tyler seemed less enthusiastic with Cole than with others, but his demeanor was normal otherwise.

Her intuition suggested that Tyler was a victim of malicious editing and manipulation.

During her absence over the past days, she had entrusted Tyler to the director, never anticipating such turmoil to ensue.

Without hesitation, she dialed Tyler. He quickly took the call and began to stammer his way around the issue, insisting that he was okay and that it was just the media blowing the situation out of proportion.

"Don't worry about it, just concentrate on getting better."

Tyler's words sounded slightly muffled, perhaps due to a poor connection, and Ariana cut him off.

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"you don't need to comfort me. I've seen the trending news. It's clear to me that someone's purposefully causing trouble." Ariana spoke with an unyielding tone.

Realizing he couldn't dodge the truth any longer, Tyler sighed, laying bare the situation with complete honesty. "It's Cole. He's been acting strangely. The event script initially didn't involve any interaction between us, but he deliberately approached me, using suggestive actions to stir up the fans' imaginations.

Off-camera, he goes out of his way to irritate me, babbling nonsense and instigating conflicts. | can't understand his motives, maybe it's his idea of a revenge plot. In any case, it's a hassle."

By the end of his revelation, Tyler's tone had grown noticeably agitated. Ariana paused for a moment before asking, "And what about Mr. Salazar? | had a discussion with him previously, didn't he intervene?"

Silence ensued from Tyler's end before he finally spoke, a note of resentment creeping into his voice. "Mr. Salazar has been endorsing promotional videos with suggestive scripts. It was too much for me, which is why I refused to participate on-camera."

Now, Ariana had the full picture. She had always believed Tyler to be compliant and agreeable with the crew. Of course he avoided on-camera interaction with Cole for a reason.

"I understand, don't worry. Leave it to me." After giving further instructions, Ariana ended the call and immediately dialed Francis' number. Francis picked up quickly. "Ah, Ariana, it's been quite a while. How have you been?"

Bypassing the pleasantries, Ariana cut to the chase. "Mr. Salazar, is this how you manage the actor I assign to you? I recall clearly stating that I don't want him involved in any scandals."

"I assure you, I have no clue about these rumors. Everything's based on the standard script, but Tyler just refused to comply. Ariana, surely you can't expect Tyler to join a new movie and disregard the promotion of the existing one."

Hearing him deflect and blame her for Tyler's new movie deal, Ariana's irritation flared. Without hesitation, she countered, "Whether Tyler complies with the script or not, we both know the reality. Let's not forget, Mr. Salazar. Initially, Tyler's contract was as the fourth male lead. However, later he was promoted to second lead, with no increase in pay despite the additional responsibilities. He accepted the terms without any protest. And you label that as diva behavior?"

"Isn't all this for his benefit?" Francis responded with unwavering confidence, "I gave him opportunities. All these steps were taken to enhance his public image."

Implicitly suggesting that Ariana and Tyler were ungrateful, Francis banked on the fact that Tyler, having gained popularity through his film, wouldn't openly criticize the production team of his breakthrough work. As such, he began to play dirty.

Ariana's keen perception sliced through Francis' intentions like a hot knife through butter, leaving her simultaneously frustrated and amused. That sly old fox!

Suppressing her anger, she couldn't help but let out a sarcastic laugh before questioning Francis, "Well, well, Mr. Salazar, do tell me, what grand scheme have you concocted?"

Caught off guard by Ariana's tone, Francis interpreted it as a sign of surrender, causing his complacency to swell. "Ariana, I don't mean to complicate matters. I simply hope for Tyler's cooperation in engaging in more publicity endeavors. As we can't have a dual male lead finale for this drama, let's commence preparations for The Sky with Romance 2."

Ariana saw right through his ulterior motives. He wanted to tether himself to Tyler, extracting every ounce of his fame, like a vampire draining the life force from his prey.

"I refuse, and let me make it crystal clear; your desires will not come to fruition!"

Ariana's voice turned icy, as she continued, "Mr. Salazar, Tyler aspires to transform his image. He yearns to be recognized as a talented actor. It's one thing to seek attention during his early days by starring in modest productions, but I refuse to let him remain entangled in trashy idol dramas, squandering his popularity."

Francis bristled at Ariana's unabashed condemnation of his drama, labeled as a trashy idol drama without any sugarcoating. His irritation broke loose as he snapped, "Ariana, what the hell do you mean by that?" He felt like a punch to the gut, his work being discredited.

"Just as it sounds," Ariana retorted, her words dripping with frostiness. "Mr. Salazar, aren't you aware? Everyone else is striving for improvement, but what about you?"

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Are you genuinely planning to sustain your career on a bedrock of trite, melodramatic soap operas? Then, when you reflect on your career's twilight, realize that you have nothing to be proud of?"

Her words pierced Francis' heart like a dagger.

After all, he hadn't entered the film industry solely for monetary gains. He was born with a silver spoon, stepping into the entertainment realm not for dalliances with beautiful women but to chase his dream of directing.

Yet, as Ariana had pointed out, despite his lengthy tenure, he had produced a heap of low-rated mediocrity. The Sky with Romance currently stood as his most successful work, which explained his reluctance to let go.

The silence on the other end of the line fueled Ariana's confidence. Undeterred, she pressed on, "Moreover, Mr. Salazar, let's not forget our contractual agreement. Tyler has been squeezing in these additional promotional activities out of love for this drama. But with the plethora of script readings you expect him to partake in, shouldn't we reevaluate the pay? Considering Tyler's present market value..."

Francis froze, his mind racing to find a way to defuse the tension. Desperately attempting to lighten the mood, he interjected, "Ariana, we've known each other for quite some time. Let's not allow money to mar our relationship. If you are so averse to it, let's put it aside."

Ariana emitted a cold chuckle, her response laced with disdain. "Mr. Salazar, these matters are but trifles. As you mentioned, we wouldn't want to jeopardize our relationship. And who knows what else might be at risk next time."

After hanging up, Ariana swiftly conveyed a message to Betsy, instructing her to fabricate hard-working quotes about Tyler and share them online.

The goal was to depict Tyler as tirelessly dedicated to The Sky with Romance publicity campaign, actively participating in numerous demanding activities, and currently exhausted.

Subsequently, she had the official drama account repost the quotes. Her strategy bore fruit swiftly. Fans voiced their concern for Tyler, and even shippers shifted in Tyler's favor.

The rumors of Tyler's diva-like behavior dissipated, enabling Ariana to breathe a sigh of relief. However, as the situation settled down, an unsettling feeling gnawed at her.

Ever since Francis discovered her relationship with Theodore, he had scaled back on causing trouble. Yet, now he seemed intent on putting Tyler in a difficult position, seemingly disregarding her entirely. What was going on?

“Why on earth are you still preoccupied with work at this ungodly hour? | simply can’t comprehend it.” Sonia’s voice drifted in from the entrance of the room. It was then Ariana lifted her gaze, noticing Sonia’s arrival, armed with a basket of fruit.

“Hey! You need to stop looking at that. A patient needs ample rest.” Striding towards her, Sonia swiped Ariana’s phone and placed it aside, preventing her from further distractions. “| overheard you arguing with someone at the door earlier. You must remember, you’re a patient now. And what’s paramount for a patient is maintaining a positive mindset. Here, have an apple.”

While Sonia busied herself with peeling an apple, Ariana managed a slight smile, but she couldn’t shake off a nagging worry. Spotting her expression, Sonia had an idea of what Ariana was contemplating and sighed. She placed the peeled apple in Ariana’s hand. “Spill it, what’s troubling you?”

Ariana then confided in Sonia about the recent events and her uncertainties. After pouring out her concerns, she sighed, “I’m truly at a loss. Do you have any updates on your end?”

After digesting Ariana’s story, Sonia’s brows knitted together. “Now that you’ve brought it up, there is something.”

In her line of profession, few rumors or insider scoops escaped her, and she had indeed come across numerous whispers in the past few days.

“Francis and SJ Entertainment are quite close-knit, and it seems he’s been cozying up to Jasper lately.”

Once again, it was Jasper. Ariana managed to keep her surprise under wraps, thinking that she should have given him a good slap when she had the chance.

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However, she was already privy to the alliance between Francis, Cole, and Donna, so their connection with Jasper didn't startle her, it merely annoyed her.

"By the way, Jasper has been bustling around, preparing for Brielle's new film lately.

Mr. Benton is slated to direct it, with Brielle taking up the lead role." Sonia continued, her eyes rolling in contempt as she sneered, "I heard that Mr. Benton was initially reluctant to participate, but Jasper pulled out all the stops and resorted to underhanded tactics. Even Francis lent his support, and eventually, under their combined pressure, Mr. Benton gave in."

Ariana, well-acquainted with Jasper's personality, was not taken aback by this revelation.

Sonia's tone dripped with disdain before her expression shifted to one of seriousness. "Oh, and I managed to get some contacts within their crew to discreetly obtain a part of the script for me. It's something you'll definitely want to see."

As she said this, she pulled out her phone to locate the file. "When I read through it, it felt oddly familiar. The content bears an uncanny resemblance to that award-winning short film you worked on, down to the character outlines."

Ariana's heart clenched as she absorbed Sonia's words, a sense of impending doom creeping over her. "Here, take a look." Sonia presented the file to Ariana. With one glance, Ariana felt her heart plummet.

Although Sonia hadn't laid eyes on the "The Missing Body" script, she could sense similarities. But to Ariana, who was deeply familiar with the script, the parallels were glaring—it was blatant plagiarism.

The central storyline and character dynamics mirrored "The Missing Body," with the only major modification being the "first love" role Brielle was set to play.

In "The Missing Body," this character had a limited presence, but in Edgar's film, the romantic subplot and melodramatic elements were amplified, rendering the character's screen time even more extensive than the male lead's.

Upon finishing the script, Ariana let out a sardonic laugh. “They truly stop at nothing to redefine the depths of their shamelessness.”

She recalled that during the film festival, Brielle was set to star in a different genre, but evidently, Brielle and Jasper opted to plagiarize their hit short film due to its acclaim.

Seeing Ariana’s reaction, Sonia deduced the situation at hand, “In addition, it seems Brielle’s team commenced filming earlier and has been rushing the production. I’ve heard they’re basically nearing completion at this point.”

Undoubtedly, Brielle and her team’s haste was intended to ensure that their film would be released before Jayson’s.

Given the identical genres and themes, the first film to be released would certainly attract a larger audience, making any subsequent similar films seem repetitive despite script adjustments.

Additionally, given Jasper’s propensity for manipulations, it wouldn’t be surprising if he decided to accuse them of plagiarism. What was more maddening was that Jasper’s strategy seemed perilously close to succeeding.

Ariana held her lips in a tight line, her hands forming rigid fists.

Tyler had only joined the team a week ago. No matter how much overtime he put in, catching up to them was an unrealistic expectation.

After a moment of contemplation, Sonia voiced her suggestion with gritted teeth.

“Why don’t we report their blatant plagiarism?”

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Their desperation was evident. Both Ariana and Sonia realized that if Jasper was audacious enough to implement such a tactic, he must have prepared fallback plans.

Having started her career as an online writer, Sonia was well-versed in the challenges of maintaining copyrights for written works, not to mention scripts, which provide even more room for alterations.

She had completely lost faith in Jasper's integrity.

Furthermore, Jasper's project had been registered before theirs. If they ended up in a dispute, the odds might be stacked against them.

Realizing this, Sonia calmed down, and the room was shrouded in silence for a while.

"So, what's the plan now? Are we just going to bear this silently?" Sonia was not ready to wave the white flag. She was not about to let Jasper and his team have their way.

Seeing Ariana lost in thought, she prompted again, "Should we inform Jayson and Tyler about this? At least they'll be forewarned."

Ariana pondered for a moment before shaking her head. "Let's not inform them just yet. Without a tangible solution, sharing this information would only increase their stress. Plus, they're in the midst of filming. We shouldn't risk affecting their performances."

"Could we potentially expedite our timeline? Find some ways to ensure simultaneous release?" Sonia proposed without missing a beat.

Ariana mentally reviewed their current progress. Even if they were to commence non-stop work from this point, the best they could hope for would be a simultaneous release.

After weighing the circumstances, Ariana deemed it unnecessary. She countered, "No need. Jayson has ambitious expectations for this project, and it holds unique significance for him. Moreover, this is Tyler's cinematic debut, and his acting abilities still require refinement. We can't afford to rush them."

Every move that Jayson or Tyler made now demanded careful consideration. Their hard-earned reputations had to be safeguarded. It would be a significant setback if they were to speed up their timeline under pressure from Jasper and his team.

Sonia heaved a deep sigh, comprehending Ariana's rationale, and felt obligated to relent despite her frustration.

"Don't worry, we'll find a way out," Ariana reassured Sonia. She herself wasn't entirely convinced, but she had to inspire faith that true gold would endure the fiercest flames.

Besides, Brielle's team had transformed the script into a melodramatic cliché that had grown obsolete years ago, showcasing minimal originality, hence the reception from the audience remained uncertain.

In a bid to premiere before them, Brielle was hastening the process, inevitably resulting in rushed production. Given Brielle's disposition, she was unlikely to commit to extensive overtime, leading to frequent reliance on stand-ins and increased likelihood of errors.

In this industry, what held more value—short-term victories or quality? Ariana was confident that both the market and the audience would ultimately answer the question.

After half a month of peaceful recuperation in the hospital, Ariana had regained her strength and was prepared to be discharged.

Sarah, accompanied by a hospital staff member, arrived to fetch her. As soon as Sarah entered and before any extensive conversation could ensue, Horace also appeared.

At the sight of Horace, Ariana's eyes sparkled briefly. She swiftly looked behind him, hoping to find Theodore, but her expectations were dashed.

Theodore was not there.

Seeing Ariana's hopeful gaze fade, Horace sighed inwardly. If Theodore persisted in this avoidance, he might risk losing her to another.

Chapter: 679 Ariana cast her gaze downward, her hand instinctively resting on her abdomen. Although she had repeatedly counselled herself to be patient, her patience was beginning to fray.

Their ongoing separation only intensified her yearning for him. Despite reminding herself to remain patient and calm, the thought of Theodore would sporadically invade her mind.

She ached for his presence and missed him with every passing second.

Moreover, the unborn children within her were awaiting her decision. Time wouldn't stand still for anyone, and she wished to make this decision in conjunction with the children's father.

"Madam, now that you're feeling better, how about returning to Mr. Anderson's residence? I've made all your favorite dishes, and it'll be easier to care for you there," Judy suggested. She was overjoyed at Ariana's recovery, but also concerned that Ariana might choose not to return to Theodore's house, opting to stay elsewhere instead. She feared their continued separation might cause a rift between the young couple.

The mention of Theodore's residence ignited a spark in Ariana's eyes. She grabbed Judy's arm, eagerly asking, "Has Theodore been staying there recently?"

For the past two weeks, she had consciously refrained from inquiring about him. As a result, she had no idea how he was doing.

This was the first time she had voiced her concerns in days. Regrettably, Judy could only shake her head, displaying a troubled expression. Ariana froze for a moment before shifting her gaze towards Horace.

Horace met Ariana's probing gaze but could only reciprocate with a bitter smile and reveal, "We haven't seen the boss in half a month. Even I'm unsure of his whereabouts."

The fact that even Horace was clueless about Theodore's location was startling. Could something have transpired with Theodore?

Ariana's heart jolted. The worry etched into her face was visible. She couldn't help but ask, "Did anyone check the suburban manor?"

"We did, but the boss wasn't there," Horace responded. Ariana's distressed expression suggested she was on the verge of tears. He swiftly reassured her, "Don't worry, Madam. The boss should be alright. He's been managing company business remotely every day."

Horace's words left Ariana's feelings in turmoil, akin to a roller coaster ride.

She took a deep breath to regain her composure. So, for the past two weeks, even though Theodore's whereabouts remained unknown, he had been fulfilling his professional obligations as usual?

Accold, bitter laugh escaped Ariana, causing Horace to cringe internally. Horace knew that if Theodore didn't show up soon, he might be on the fast track to divorce. He might indeed lose his wife. Finally, under the concerned gazes of Judy and Horace, Ariana turned to Sarah.

"May I stay with you?"

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"Of course, my home is always open to you," Sarah responded with a smile, her heart harboring contempt for Theodore. She then departed with Ariana to her residence.

An hour later, Ariana found herself standing stiffly at the entrance of Sarah's flat, scrutinizing the house number repeatedly. This was, indeed, Sarah's home.

But the neat and orderly residence she had left behind had morphed into a complete mess. Items were strewn haphazardly, the couch was buried under a heap of dirty clothes, and discarded music scores littered the floor.

Unfazed by the disarray, Sarah navigated through the clutter, clearing a spot on the couch. "What are you waiting for? Come in and have a seat. You shouldn't remain standing for extended periods given your recent recovery."

Only then did Ariana step inside. She gaped at the drastically altered room and blurted out, "Hasn't Aziel been coming over to help you tidy up recently?"

After Ariana finished speaking and entered the room, she couldn't help but notice a peculiar change in Sarah's appearance. Her complexion turned as pale as a ghost, and dark circles hung like shadows beneath her eyes. The mere mention of Aziel seemed to freeze her expression in time.

Ariana's intuition instantly alerted her to something amiss, and she swiftly seized Sarah's arm, demanding, "What happened?"

"Nothing, it's just... It's like that." Sarah evaded the question, her response a jumble of words that failed to offer any clarity. Clearly, she was withholding something crucial.

Could it be that Aziel hurt Sarah?

The very thought sent alarm bells ringing within Ariana's mind, compelling her to hold Sarah's gaze and persist until she got the truth.

Unable to withstand Ariana's relentless curiosity, Sarah finally let slip, "Aziel and I have broken up!"

As the words came forth, Sarah slumped onto the couch, her demeanor one of utter dejection. Gone was the carefree, happy-go-lucky Sarah of yore.

Ariana, still perplexed, regarded her with a furrowed brow. "Why did you end things? When we last met, all seemed well. How did the tides turn so abruptly?"

"Well... It's how breakups go," Sarah stammered, her voice growing faint and indistinct as if shrouded in mist.

“Did he do something that hurt you?” Ariana said, her brows wrinkled in suspicion.

“No!” Sarah spoke up for Aziel right away before realizing her tone was a little too anxious. Then, she lowered her voice and feigned weakness as she replied, “Aziel has been really good to me.”

“Then how did you end here? Did you initiate the breakup? What did Aziel think of it? Would he honestly agree given that he loves you so much?”

Ariana’s barrage of questions left Sarah struggling to keep up. Sarah clutched a pillow on the couch, her expression sullen, as she attempted a nonchalant tone. “I suppose I initiated it. Since last eve, when I broached the topic of parting ways, Aziel has remained silent.”

Ariana’s suspicion deepened, and she leaned in closer to Sarah. “And how did you propose this breakup?” “A mere text.” Sarah sat up to make room for Ariana.

Ariana, assuming a grave countenance, extended her hand. “Can I see it?”