

Unconscious 751

Chapter: 751 It was clear to her that Darian and Jasper were blind to this fact. Otherwise, they would have been suspicious of the body's identity and would not have flaunted their joy in front of her.

Furthermore, the timeline Darian had constructed of the event seemed faulty to her. He said the tragic accident happened two days ago, early in the morning. But Theodore was right next to her, sound asleep at that time.

It appeared that neither Darian nor Jasper knew about Theodore's secret trip to the town. A phrase, echoing in Ariana's mind like a cryptic mantra, was Theodore's consistent "wait a little Longer."

He spoke these words as if they were a promise of an approaching resolution. Had this been the end he had hinted at? Now, looking back, she realized these words were seeds of something bigger; Theodore was orchestrating a plan.

He had certainly staged his own death, but Ariana was left grappling with the question of why, still uncertain of the grand scheme he had plotted.

Ariana was in the dark about who was in on Theodore's secret plan and who was clueless; she didn't even know if she could trust Horace.

This uncertainty stoked a fire of anger within her.

Theodore's cavalier attitude, not caring whether or not she bought into his staged death, irked her. Even if she wanted to disassociate herself from his ploy, she was too entwined to do so. Theodore had left her in the lurch, clueless! Was he confident in her resilience, or did he doubt her ability to play along convincingly?

With a huff, Ariana pushed the bowl of chicken soup away and absent-mindedly massaged her belly.

The identities of Theodore's cohorts remained a mystery, and she couldn't afford to gamble with trust. She had to put on a mask of devastation and heartbreak.

Her gaze fell on the abandoned chicken soup; she felt a tinge of reluctance to waste it. But someone grieving couldn't be seen enjoying a hearty meal. If she had to play a part, she would have to go all in.

Awake of indignation and helplessness washed over Ariana as she thought of Theodore's audacity. His plan probably didn't account for their unplanned rendezvous in town.

She was now a wild card that could potentially expose his charade. Yet, he had plowed on with his plan, leaving her none the wiser.

Did he not worry that she might impulsively spill the beans upon realizing the truth? That she might proclaim to all that the body in the morgue wasn't his?

Did he trust her to keep her emotions in check, or did he trust her ability to feign despair?

Suddenly, the sound of approaching footsteps broke her train of thought. In an instant, Ariana painted herself into a picture of despair, lying down wordlessly, her gaze lost in the distance beyond the window.

Ariana realized she couldn't let her guard down, unsure if any of Theodore's foes were watching her under the radar. Whenever others were around, she had to put on a convincing act. A nurse walked in, gave Ariana a once-over, and then left the room.

Ariana exhaled in relief, although she stayed alert. The entire day passed in a haze of worry for Theodore, leaving Ariana tense and restless. It was hard to catch a wink of sleep, which only added to her frazzled appearance.

Ariana mulled over her next steps. The hospital was a busy place, and security was lacking. Perhaps discharging herself was the smarter move.

Just as she was toying with this idea, her phone began to ring. In her surprise, she answered it without thinking, only to be met with Donna's furious rant.

“Ariana Edwards! Where on earth have you disappeared to? It’s audacious of you to ditch work without even taking a leave of absence! Get back to the office immediately!”

Donna’s furious roar echoed through the phone, causing Ariana’s brows to slightly furrow, and she swiftly ended the call.

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As an agent, Ariana relished the freedom of flexible working hours, often venturing away from the office for extended periods on external assignments. Consequently, her daily presence at the office was unnecessary.

Donna had never dared to intervene before.

Clearly, Donna had learned about Theodore’s demise, and those under Jasper’s command believed the matter was settled, ready to openly suppress her, the bereaved widow.

However, it made little sense for Ariana, who had recently lost her husband, to hastily return to the company solely based on Donna’s command.

Nevertheless, Ariana anticipated that Donna wouldn't relinquish her grasp easily.

As expected, Donna promptly dialed again, bellowing on the other end, “You’ve got some nerve! Let me make it crystal clear: whatever flimsy excuses you have, I expect your physical presence in the office today! Otherwise, pack your belongings and make a hasty exit!”

Donna forcefully terminated the call, sparing Ariana the need to respond. Thus, Ariana rose from her sickbed, devoid of any makeup or tidiness, and made her way to the company, her face worn and pallid.

Given Donna’s insistence, Ariana decided to return to the company and see the true intentions of those individuals. Reaching the office, Ariana unexpectedly bumped into Sarah at the entrance.

Caught off guard for a moment, Sarah appeared astonished to see Ariana at that hour. Approaching with concern, she inquired, "Why aren't you at the hospital? Are you feeling better? Why didn't you rest a while longer? If you were heading to the office, you could have at Least informed me, and | would have picked you up."

Even in Sarah's presence, Ariana had to feign excessive grief while attempting to maintain composure. It wasn't that she mistrusted Sarah; rather, she was uncertain if someone was monitoring her. Ariana forced a smile and replied, "What brought you here? Shouldn't you be putting your new album on record?"

Hearing Ariana's words, a fleeting stiffness crossed Sarah's expression, but she swiftly regained composure, and she avoided making direct eye contact. "It's nothing... | just happened to pass by and thought of visiting the office. No need to worry."

"Curious why she's here? Well, she hit a snag. Her new album has been canceled!" a smug voice interjected. Ariana glanced up to find Donna smirking down at her, triumphant, with Jasper in tow.

Ariana's annoyance instantly surged, and she questioned indignantly, "Who bestowed upon you the authority to do that? After all the preparations we made, you're claiming it's canceled? Why is that?"

Jasper snorted and casually tossed a document at Ariana.

The papers scattered all over the floor. Ariana clenched her teeth as she stooped down to collect them. Looking at them, she realized they were the meticulously prepared planning and budget sheets for Sarah's new album.

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"How did this exceed the budget?" Ariana made a face.

"Because | said so!" Jasper sneered, his tone dripping with indifference. Raising an eyebrow, he continued, "You always received special treatment when Theodore was around. But | call the shots around here now! !"

Special treatment? Ariana tightened her grip on the budget sheet, biting her lip.

Throughout her tenure at the company, she had never exploited her relationship with Theodore for personal gain. Jasper's unfounded accusations were nothing but bullying.

Suppressing her urge to engage in an argument with Jasper, she inquired, "Nevertheless, the company should still be capable of affording this amount, correct?"

"Of course. That sum of money means zilch to the company. However, our funds naturally have more pressing purposes than squandering them on this stupidity!"

Ariana was on the verge of snapping, but before she could retort, Sarah also couldn't hold herself back any longer and confronted Jasper, pointing at him and shouting, "Ariana's reports are impeccable! Stop spouting nonsense!"

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Jasper glanced at her and publicly declared, "Next, all of Sarah's bookings are null and void! As for when they'll be reinstated, Sarah, head home and await further notice!"

Ariana's fury ignited like a roaring inferno upon hearing those words. unleashing a tempest of anger within her. It was clear to her that Jasper's intentions were not merely to sideline Sarah but to settle personal scores in a brazen and public manner

"Sarah is at the peak of her career, and you dare to do this?" Ariana exclaimed, her voice seething with indignation. "What gives you the audacity?"

Jasper smirked, seemingly amused by Ariana's outburst. He met her gaze with a taunting expression and retorted, "My audacity? Well, as the acting CEO of SJ Entertainment, I hold the reins of authority. What rights do you think I possess?"

Ariana was taken aback. It was because of the rapid ascension of Jasper to the position of acting CEO. Her gaze shifted to Sarah, searching for a glimmer of resistance, but instead, she saw resignation in her eyes. Reluctantly, Sarah nodded and conceded, "It's an official announcement from the company."

Jasper's smugness only intensified as he gloated, "I've heard whispers that Tyler's film has completed filming, and negotiations for its release are underway with theaters."

Ariana's senses jolted awake with alarm on hearing this. Her eyes locked onto Jasper, and she demanded, "What are you plotting?"

A wicked grin played across Jasper's face as he replied, "Well, imagine the consequences if the Anderson Group were to announce its withdrawal of funding at this opportune moment!"

Rage surged through Ariana's veins, intensifying her desire to strike Jasper with her clenched fist.

"You are driven by pure vengeance, disregarding the company's interests! This self-destructive behavior will hurt not only others but also threatens to bring SJ Entertainment and the entire Anderson Group down!" Ariana seethed through gritted teeth, unable to contain her anger any longer.

Jasper raised an eyebrow, his tone dripping with mockery. "Don't concern yourself with the company's development. Perhaps you should focus more on your own artists whenever you have any spare time."

Now that Theodore was out of the picture, Jasper's arrogance knew no bounds. He held no regard for anyone's worth.

He sneered at Ariana and continued his derision, "By the way, as per the company's plan, Tyler won't be participating in any movie promotions from now on! However, there are several lackluster roles in abysmal dramas still awaiting suitable candidates. Why not tell him to take those?"

Ariana was all too familiar with the roles Jasper referred to. She had perused the scripts long ago and had outright rejected them. They were the epitome of cliché storylines, inhabited by characters devoid of substance. Should Tyler accept such roles, his future would be engulfed in darkness!

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“Tyler will never accept such roles!” Ariana firmly stated, her confidence unyielding.

“And what good does his refusal do?” Jasper raised his head, regarding her with a piercing gaze.

“According to the contract he signed with the company, he is obligated to play whatever role we deem fit. What right does he have to decline?”

Jasper’s relentless provocations only fueled Ariana’s anger, causing her fist to tighten further.

To worsen matters, he was right. According to the contract, Tyler had no authority to refuse.

Hearing this, Sarah too succumbed to fury. She pointed an accusatory finger at Jasper and exclaimed with fervor, “Aren’t you afraid that we’ll terminate our contracts due to your actions?”

Jasper casually shrugged, a nonchalant demeanor adorning his face. “I couldn’t care less about that. After all, the company has no use for disobedient dogs. But if you wish to terminate the contract, be prepared to pay the ten-million-dollar penalty. Only then can you terminate it!”

Ten-million-dollar penalty was no trifling matter for anyone. Sarah’s face flushed with anger at Jasper’s shameless attitude. “You despicable creature!” Sarah was poised to continue her rebuke, but Ariana intervened.

Realizing that Jasper was explicitly targeting her and her artists, Ariana deduced that he must be seeking something from her.

Chapter: 754 “What do you want?” Ariana asked directly.

Seeing Ariana’s comprehension, Jasper’s smile widened, and he regarded her with a profound gaze. He waved his hand, dismissing Sarah and Donna, and uttered, “For now, you two can leave. I have a private discussion to engage in with my dear Ariana.”

Upon hearing Jasper address her as “dear”, a shudder of repulsion coursed through Ariana’s veins, leaving her overwhelmed by a nauseating disgust.

In the past, Jasper would inadvertently let slip his repugnant thoughts in Theodore’s presence, but now, believing Theodore to be dead, he shamelessly flaunted his desires, unabashed and unapologetic!

Donna, ever the obedient one, promptly prepared to exit the room as instructed. However, Sarah, driven by her unwavering concern, firmly clung to Ariana’s hand, her gaze filled with a mixture of worry and determination. “Ariana, I’m not going anywhere! That despicable man must be up to something as evil as his soul!”

Ariana comprehended Sarah’s apprehension, but she knew that their options were limited at the moment. Also, she had her own plans!

“No need to worry, everything will be fine. Trust me,” Ariana reassured Sarah, her touch gentle as she patted her hand. “Besides, we are still within the walls of the company. He wouldn’t dare cross the boundaries.”

With Ariana’s persuasive words echoing in her mind, Sarah reluctantly retreated from the room, her steps sluggish and laden with reluctance.

Initially, Sarah had intended to station herself near the doorway, ready to intervene if the need arose. However, Jasper exchanged a knowing glance with Donna.

Donna, catching the signal, addressed Sarah in a cold, detached tone, “Sarah, come with me. There’s something I need to discuss with you.”

Asserting her dominance, Donna firmly grasped Sarah’s arm and guided her away from the office. When the office was empty, Jasper wasted no time. He swiftly approached the door, ensuring it was firmly closed and securely locked.

Ariana, cool and collected, observed his every move, her senses heightened with caution as she kept her distance. With a sharp turn, Jasper’s eyes blazed with unrestrained aggression, fixing them on Ariana, his intent well too obvious.

Ariana, her discomfort mounting, felt compelled to confront him head-on. "So, what is it that you want?" she demanded, her voice steady and laced with an undercurrent of resolve.

"It's a simple matter," Jasper started, looking at her with eyes oozing greed. "With Theodore's demise, you find yourself without any support.

It would be wise for you to obediently return to my side." Ariana's brows knitted together, a surge of repugnance threatening to break through her carefully crafted facade.

"I suppose I can overlook the fact that you are married." Jasper feigned magnanimity as if he were making a grand sacrifice. "In the future, I will assume the role of the family's head. If you are willing, you could regain your position as the matriarch of the Anderson family, once again enjoying all the privileges that were once bestowed upon you."

Ariana, hearing his words, struggled to suppress her disdain, her gaze subtly shifting as she locked eyes with him. "But aren't you on the verge of marrying Brielle?"

Jasper's eyes flickered with a tinge of contempt when he heard that name, and he derisively scoffed, "Brielle? What significance does she hold? She is but an empty facade, utterly insignificant without me. She is far from deserving the title of my wife!"

Amusement danced in Ariana's eyes as she found herself genuinely intrigued by his ulterior motives. One moment, he sought to ruin her, and now he desired to possess her. If she were not privy to Jasper's true nature, she would suspect him of suffering from a split personality.

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Smiling mockingly, Ariana asked, "Weren't you fiercely protective of Brielle before?"

Failing to perceive the sarcasm in Ariana's words, Jasper, momentarily intoxicated by his own happiness, misconstrued her intentions as jealousy and coquetry. He hastened to respond, "You misunderstand.

Those previous actions were merely temporary strategies for promoting the movie. However, now that I am the acting CEO, my status has become exceedingly prestigious. A woman like Brielle is not worthy of me."

Proudly asserting his newfound position, Jasper glanced down at Ariana, then abruptly shifted the conversation. "In fact, considering your background as a fallen heiress and a widow, you, too, did not initially meet my standards. But I tend to be loyal and faithful. I cannot forget you, and your abilities are quite commendable, surpassing Brielle's. So I don't mind marrying you."

Chapter: 755 Ariana found herself suffocating in Jasper's presence, his very words turning her stomach. Suppressing her rising temper, she feigned a mix of emotion and doubt, saying softly, "What if Brielle stirs up trouble?"

Jasper's excitement grew at Ariana's coy demeanor. With a boastful grin, he said, "She can't dare! She owes me everything, and if I can give it, I certainly have the power to take it away! Brielle means nothing. She'll dance to my damn tune!"

As Ariana watched Jasper reveling in his self-satisfaction, she managed to resist the urge to roll her eyes. How could she have been so blind as to have been in love with such a man in the first place?

With caution, she asked Jasper, "If I agree, will you spare Sarah and Tyler?"

This should have been a trivial matter for Jasper, but somehow he hesitated and appeared uneasy. After a moment, he responded, "Sarah's album suspension and Tyler's movie funding withdrawal have already been confirmed."

"Why?" Ariana asked him.

"My dad called the shots," Jasper replied, embarrassment all over his face. Anticipating Ariana's potential rejection due to denying her request, he hastily clarified, "It's not just them; numerous other artists' endeavors have been put on hold."

He suspended all of them?! Why would he do that?

Suspicion consumed Ariana.

Could they be planning to make off with the company's money right after Theodore's death? If that were the case, why was Jasper so thrilled about being the acting CEO?

As Ariana maintained her silence, Jasper patted his chest, attempting to reassure her. "But you have nothing to worry about. As long as you obediently heed my words, your people will receive the best resources. and your career will soar. I could even grant you a stake in the company if you please me!"

Ariana had no interest in Jasper's empty promises. Casting a disdainful glance at him from the corner of her eye, she noticed his frail frame, an outward manifestation of excessive indulgence. Who knew how long he would last? Her concern lay more with Darian's recent actions.

He had halted so many projects, as if he required a significant infusion of funds in the short term. What was he planning?

As Ariana continued to ponder silently, Jasper's impatience grew at her lack of response. Closing the gap between them with a single step, he persisted anxiously, "Just say yes to me."

Taken aback, Ariana instinctively moved away, both eyes on Jasper, who seemed intent on making advances. Suppressing the urge to push him away, she attempted to extract more information.

Clearing her throat, Ariana innocently asked, "Have the company encountered any difficulties lately?"

"Sweetheart, what difficulties could possibly beset the company?"

Jasper's restraint dissolved as Ariana evaded him, his gaze fixated on her Like a wolf ready to pounce on its prey.

Gritting her teeth to quell the surge of revulsion, Ariana asked, "Then why suspend so many projects? Is the company undergoing a transformation? Or is there another scheme afoot?"

"That's because..." Jasper was about to respond but abruptly stopped midway, casting a cautious gaze at Ariana. "Why are you asking this?"

Are you trying to get some information from me?"

Ariana realized he had caught onto her plan, and now she would not get any information from him. Besides, she loathed him too much to be spending useless time with him.

She no longer concealed her disgust as she forcefully pushed him away and coldly stated, "Every minute and every second I spend with you makes me sick. Who told you that I would ever accept someone like you?"

Chapter: 756

Was it the designation of a CEO you obtained with your malice and disgusting conspiracies? Or was it your envy that you only dared to show after Theodore's demise?"

The color drained from his face as Jasper felt humiliated. With the stab at his ego, he glared fiercely at Ariana.

However, even under his condescending gaze, Ariana did not back down as she icily continued, "I was a fool for falling in Love with you. Hear me loud and clear, even if you were the last man on earth, I would never choose you."

As Jasper made a move to approach her, Ariana instinctively stepped back with her chin held high. "And by the way, weren't you the one who Looked down on Brielle? The truth is that both of you are like two peas in a pod. There can't be a more suiting match than a scumbag man Like you and a despicable woman like her. May you two spend a Lifetime together, never to be separated!"

With those biting words, Ariana made it clear that she wanted nothing more to do with him.

Rage was evident in his eyes as he seethed with anger. Being at the receiving end of disdain and heartbreaking rejection made fury burn in Jasper's heart.

Even after three years together, he felt he had never truly won her over. On the other hand, Theodore, who was with her only for a fleeting moment, her Love for him had already blossomed into something profound.

Driven by a mix of resentment and rage, Jasper couldn't think straight as he lunged forward and forcefully grabbed Ariana's arm.

He glared at her with intense rage. "How dare you utter such things about me! Who do you think you are? You're nothing but a mere widow!

You intentionally came to my office, feigning pity, to manipulate and seduce me, didn't you? I know petty women like you. You're just a desperate leech seeking a man's attention!"

Ariana shoved him aside as she broke herself free from his hold. It was evident that she had had enough of his antics. "Are you incapable of comprehending my words, or are you simply that despicable? And I am warning you, keep your filthy hands off me

"You good for nothing witch, how dare you act all high and mighty in front of me? What is it that Theodore has given you? It is I who can fulfill all your desires!" Jasper's words were barely out of his mouth when he attempted to lunge at her again.

Fueled by anger, Ariana acted swiftly, and without a second thought, she landed a powerful punch straight to his face.

Being a man, Jasper was evidently more strong in physique than Ariana, but his days of indulgence and hedonism had taken a toll on his body.

Ariana's punch sent him crashing to the floor. He let out a cry of agony. "How dare you hit me, you crazy wench!"

“You asked for it!” As she saw him squirming in pain, Ariana walked toward him and kicked him hard above his shin, which he would regret all his life.

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“I'm going to kill you! You crazy bitch!” An anguished scream reverberated throughout the room.

Curling up on the floor, Jasper howled in pain as he clutched onto his groin. The sight of his suffering was very satisfying for Ariana as she felt a sense of relief wash over her.

Ariana then spun on her heels to leave his office, but Jasper, lying on the floor, angrily shouted, “You’re suspended!”

“How amusing. What made you think that I care about this job?” She promptly removed her employee badge and threw it at his face. “With you and your father at the helm of the Anderson Group, this company is destined for ruin.”

Without sparing Jasper another glance, Ariana pushed the door open and walked away.

As Ariana stepped out of the office, she was met by a gathering of inquisitive spectators, their gaze intense with curiosity. As soon as they spotted her, they dispersed hastily, leaving only their fleeting stares and murmurs in their wake. What's happening? Did you notice Ariana's face? It seemed serious.”

“I heard some voices escalating. Could there be a rift between Ariana and Jasper?”

“Are they romantically involved again?”

Chapter: 757

Ariana shrugged off the evaluating glances and conjectures. Having given Jasper a deserving kick, she was in unexpectedly high spirits.

Yet, considering Theodore's recent passing, she couldn't allow her happiness to show blatantly. Hence, she maintained a calm demeanor, heading back to her desk to organize her possessions.

Soon enough, Marge hurried over, her features registering surprise as she noticed Ariana packing up. She couldn't suppress her astonishment and blurted, "Ariana, are you really quitting?"

Ariana confirmed Marge's shock with a nod.

Unable to make sense of the situation, a worried Marge inquired, "The company just announced your suspension on charges of using your power for personal gain. This... This can't be accurate, can it?"

With a cynical laugh, Ariana replied, "It's all baseless."

While Ariana systematically arranged the paperwork on her desk, she couldn't ignore Marge's anxious demeanor. Finally, she felt compelled to issue a warning to Marge. "Yes, I am leaving the company. But once I am gone, you must stay vigilant here. The Anderson Group is a reputable firm, but it's not your only alternative. Look elsewhere if necessary."

Theodore wouldn't have executed such a detailed plan for Darian and Jasper to simply bask in a transient victory. There had to be a larger plot in action.

Given Jasper and Darian's strange conduct, the Anderson Group was likely involved in this scheme.

Theodore's recent behavior indicated a significant gamble, implying he might be planning to topple the entire Anderson Group. However, Ariana couldn't outright reveal these insights to Marge.

Instead, she had to subtly convey her concerns, unsure if Marge would pick up on the indirect warnings.

Upon hearing of Ariana's departure, Marge fell quiet, assisting Ariana in her packing. As they neared the end, Marge finally voiced her thoughts, her tone tinged with wistfulness, "We may not be colleagues anymore, but let's not lose touch. Don't let your departure sever our connection."

Observing Ariana's pale face and signs of fatigue, Marge couldn't help a surge of empathy. She offered sincere counsel, "Keep your chin up and don't lose faith. Life still holds much beauty. If you ever need my assistance, reach out."

Marge's genuine concern moved Ariana, inciting a flicker of guilt, as her desolation was merely a pretense. Yet, she couldn't reveal the truth presently, so she simply concurred with a nod. "I will. Don't fret. I won't forget you."

Reluctantly, Marge said her goodbyes.

Just as they were on the verge of leaving, a commotion broke out nearby. Ariana looked up to see a group of people cheerfully advancing in their direction.

"Why is it them? We should make haste," Marge muttered, her brows furrowing. This group had been a constant thorn in Ariana's side since she joined the company.

Marge tried to pull Ariana away, but the group obstructed their path.

"I thought you were so capable, but it turns out you're just relying on connections," sneered the group, blocking Ariana's path. Unfazed, Ariana chose to ignore their taunts and tried to leave, but the persistent crowd didn't give way.

One of them continued to mock her, "No wonder you were able to drive away Lyla before. You were taking advantage of your position to bully others."

"It's not just bullying. You have a husband, yet you are still trying to seduce your own sister's fiancé. Shame on you!" another chimed in.

"Done? Then get out of the way." Ariana replied coldly, not wanting to engage in their senseless banter.

Seeing her determination, they arrogantly mocked her further, "Not only did you try to seduce him before, but now that your husband has just passed away, you can't wait to pursue Jasper."

Chapter: 758

"If you do care about Jasper, why don't you go see him yourself?" The thought of Jasper now probably clutching his own manhood made Ariana burst into laughter.

"What the hell are you talking about?!" The person grew agitated and retorted, "Now you're doomed, don't even think about dragging me down with you."

"Get away." Ariana sneered, her demeanor becoming fierce. Despite a lack of proper rest the previous night, she exuded an air of defiance.

Feeling her intensity, the group instinctively stepped back.

Ariana knew they had approached her to cause trouble, simply because they saw Jasper and Donna gaining power while she was helpless and alone. They all came to scold her, using the opportunity to show their loyalty to Jasper.

She had no desire to waste any more time on them. Holding onto her belongings, she walked away without a second glance.

As she moved, someone muttered beside her, "What terrible luck! Perhaps Mr. Theodore Anderson met his demise because of this woman. Thankfully, they had no children; otherwise, they would have perished alongside him."

The words struck Ariana, halting her in her tracks. She turned around, her gaze fixed upon the source of the malicious comment. "Repeat that," she demanded.

The individual, filled with smug satisfaction, repeated his accusation, "I told you, it was you who brought about the demise of Mr. Theodore Anderson. Luckily..."

"Clap!"

Without warning, a resounding clap resonated through the air, leaving a crimson handprint on the offender's cheek. In the blink of an eye, Ariana struck again, this time with a backhand.

"Even without parents, one should learn respect. If you lack that knowledge, I am more than willing to teach you." The two forceful slaps left even Marge astonished. She had never witnessed Ariana consumed by such fury before. Despite her elegance, Ariana's sneer and cold gaze betrayed the shadow of Theodore lingering within her.

A moment of silence ensued as bystanders reacted with confusion and annoyance, quickly encircling Ariana. They expressed their disapproval, demanding answers, "Ariana, what on earth are you doing?"

"I have been instructing this person on the value of respect," Ariana calmly replied. As the crowd closed in, Ariana's determination remained unwavering.

However, the numbers were against her, and she soon found herself overwhelmed by their collective assault. Amidst the chaos of shoving and pushing, her hair was pulled, and the items she held slipped from her grasp, falling to the floor.

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Desperately, Ariana struggled to regain control, her gaze fixated on the scattered documents, including something of great importance to her. She pushed people aside, fighting against their resistance, determined to retrieve what belonged to her.

However, those around her callously kicked the items away, preventing her from recovering them. They even attempted to deliberately step on her hand, but Ariana's quick reflexes saved her from further harm.

"What are you doing?" Marge shouted, her attempts to intervene proving futile against the overwhelming opposition. Ariana and Marge stood no chance against their aggressors.

Meanwhile, the rest of the onlookers stood by, their sympathies hidden behind their hesitant actions. Although they felt sorry for Ariana, they didn't do anything.

It seemed that the news that Ariana had offended Jasper had spread, so no one dared to stand out.

"Stop! What are you doing?"

Chapter: 759

Astern reprimand reverberated through the room, bringing an abrupt end to the commotion. Only Ariana, composed and unyielding, seized the opportunity to retrieve the fallen documents before raising her eyes.

It was Adrian.

Adrian's arrival didn't go unnoticed; many people in the room recognized him and immediately straightened up, no longer daring to watch whatever they were previously occupied with.

For those unfamiliar with Adrian amidst the group surrounding Ariana, his mere presence exuded an intimidating aura, causing them to fall silent and freeze in their actions.

Ariana patted the dust off the documents and stepped aside, making way for Adrian.

Donna, who had been quietly observing from the sidelines, could no longer feign ignorance when she saw Adrian approaching. She hastily took a few steps forward, positioning herself in front of him with a forced smile as she obsequiously inquired, "Mr. Perkins, what brings you here today all of a sudden?"

Adrian glanced at her and sneered, "What? Do I need to report my visit to you when I come to inspect my own company?"

"No, no, no. That's not what I meant. What I meant to say was that we were not informed about your visit. Had we been aware, we could have arranged a proper reception for you," Donna quickly clarified.

Under Adrian's gaze, Donna grew nervous, beads of sweat forming on her forehead. She swiftly Lowered her head and offered an apology.

Adrian paid her no mind, his mocking gaze sweeping across the faces of the people who had previously surrounded Ariana. He chuckled sarcastically, "Even in a company of this size, the common areas can be so chaotic. This blatant workplace bullying truly opens my eyes. It seems necessary to reorganize things from top to bottom."

A hush fell upon them, enveloping them in silence. No one dared to utter a word; it was clear that Adrian was on the verge of losing his temper. The fear of drawing attention gripped everyone in the room.

Just then, Donna interjected, seemingly attempting to take credit, "Adrian, you've got it all wrong. It was her mistake that led to her suspension, and she's no longer a part of SJ Entertainment."

Adrian's expression grew dark. He glanced at the identification card hanging from Donna's neck and raised an eyebrow. "Director? With the department in chaos, no one has come forward to intervene. Are you truly deserving of your position? The sheer absurdity of the company became painfully apparent. Perhaps it's time for you to start by reorganizing yourself," he added, his tone Laced with criticism.

Donna froze instantly, fear coursing through her veins as beads of cold sweat formed on her forehead.

Rather than pressing further, Adrian inquired, "Is Darian present?"

Donna breathed a sigh of relief and hurriedly replied, "Yes, he's here."

He's in the CEO's office. Allow me to show you the way."

She hustled Adrian ahead, and as they passed Ariana, he halted briefly, his voice softening, "My condolences."

Ariana was momentarily taken aback, but swiftly donned a sorrowful expression. In an instant, her eyes reddened, and she bowed her head to wipe away tears.

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Once Adrian moved on, Ariana slowly lifted her gaze, discreetly studying his retreating figure.

Adrian seemed to have had a connection and friendship with Theodore in the past. Ariana wondered if he had any inkling of Theodore's plans, and if so, how much he truly knew.

She couldn't determine whether she could place her trust in him or not.

Lost in contemplation, Ariana couldn't shake the unease that clung to her, feeling trapped in a web of uncertainty where trust eluded her.

In the CEO's office, Darian Lounged in the plush office chair, a victorious grin lighting up his face. He toyed with the trinkets scattered across Theodore's desk, assuming the posture of a conqueror.

Meanwhile, he unabashedly rifled through Theodore's computer, scrutinizing the contents of various documents and files.

Aknock resounded through the door, and a man entered, clutching a stack of papers in his hands.

Chapter: 760 It was none other than Darian's trusted accountant within the company.

As soon as Darian spotted him, he promptly rose from his seat and inquired, his voice weighted with seriousness, "How's it going? How much funding have we managed to secure now?"

The accountant paused, just a beat, before he gave the dreaded document to Darian. "We've hit the brakes on any projects we could, and pulled our investments out of everything we could. But..." His voice wavered.

“We're still falling short of what we need.”

Darian's eyes squeezed together as he sifted through the numbers scribbled on the page. The sums they presented were dwarfed by the astronomical figures of BRD Group. Going head-to-head with BRD Group?

His odds were Looking worse than a snowball's chance in hell.

Anxiety, dark and thick, sank into Darian's gut. He felt like a mouse in a maze with no exit. The thought of BRD Group's bottomless pockets wrung an expletive from his lips.

“Why are they so fixated on this? It's not Like BRD Group needs it.”

His complaint was cut short by a knock on the door, and his secretary strolled in. “Mr. Anderson, Mr. Perkins is here.” What? Adrian was Here?

Surprise danced across Darian's face, and he shot up from his chair to meet the unexpected guest.

Just a minute ago, he was badmouthing BRD Group, and now he had to flip the switch and play a gracious host to Adrian. Darian's quick change in demeanor left his secretary's jaw scraping the floor.

Adrian didn't even glance at Darian, sauntered right past him, and plopped himself down in the president's chair. His pride smarting, Darian clenched his jaw and held back his ire.

Standing before Adrian with a smile that was more grimace than grin, he said, “So, Mr. Perkins. What brings you here without so much as a heads up?”

Adrian skimmed the room, and then waved an absent hand. “Everyone out. | need to bend Darian's ear for a bit.”

Once the office was empty of all but them, Adrian skewered Darian with his stare and got right down to brass tacks. "You must know that SJ Entertainment's stock took a nosedive recently, evaporating billions from its market value in a blink?"

Wearing a sheepish grin, Darian bobbed his head in a nod and began to reply in a sycophantic tone, "Well, about that-*

"I'm not interested in any cover stories," Adrian cut him off mid-sentence. Speaking without any sugar coating, he said, "I bought into SJ Entertainment because of Theodore's charm offensive. It wasn't really SJ Entertainment I was investing in, but Theodore. And now, with him gone and SJ Entertainment in freefall, I'm left holding the bag."

Adrian's candid lauding of Theodore in front of Darian was as good as a slap in the face. Shame washed over Darian, leaving him soaked in humiliation. Inwardly, he let loose a string of curses at Adrian, painting him as an meddler, and blamed him for the present mess.

But outwardly, all Darian could do was muster up a grin and placate, "Mr. Perkins, this was a curveball, no question. It's not what anyone wanted. But you don't need to lose sleep over it. My second in line, Jasper, he's got the chops too. Put your money on him, and it won't go to waste. Jasper will take the helm and steer the company back on course, making up for the lost market value."

As Adrian stayed mum, Darian couldn't quite read him. Trying to alleviate any concerns, he pounded his chest, making another pledge.

"What's more, I'll be returning to the fray myself, taking the reins. You have my word on it."

No sooner had Darian stopped talking than Adrian let out a scornful chuckle. Darian didn't need a decoder to understand the disdain behind that laugh. It was a dismissive gesture not only towards Jasper, but also towards him, Darian himself.

The room plunged into a silence so thick it was almost stifling. Caught in the headlight of Adrian's contempt, Darian fumbled for a response and came up empty.