

Unconscious 771

Chapter: 771 Darian barked, his voice

He gestured at the priest on the pulpit and ordered his bodyguards, "Quickly, seize this Lunatic who is spouting such blasphemies!"

Regardless of his frantic and infuriated state, the bodyguards around him remained stationary, appearing to not have heard his commands.

Instead, they formed a circle around him. Darian recoiled in surprise, shouting, "What are you doing? Is this a mutiny? Don't forget whose money you're pocketing!" His black-suited bodyguards remained impassive.

The priest looked at him and with a serene smile, suggested, "Mr. Anderson, if you find this hard to believe, you may verify it yourself at the coffin. See for yourself whose funeral it is today."

Darian was dumbstruck. He glanced at the black coffin and felt a chill down his spine, but simultaneously, the prospect of Aimee being in it seemed too far-fetched to him.

He refused to believe it, so he bolted to the stage and peered into the coffin.

Upon seeing the occupant, he let out a shrill shriek, crumpled to the ground, and with a horror-stricken face, bellowed, "No! This can't be! It is impossible! This woman has been dead for fifteen years!"

Ariana was equally taken aback at this revelation. Given Darian's reaction, it seemed highly probable that the person inside the coffin was indeed Aimee.

As Darian mentioned, Aimee had been deceased for fifteen years, but his immediate recognition of her implied that her body was incredibly well-preserved.

Ariana recalled the difficulty faced by the pallbearers earlier when lifting the coffin. She speculated that it must be laden with preservatives, accounting for its extraordinary weight.

Was Theodore's ultimate objective in orchestrating this elaborate ruse to hold a belated, grand funeral for his mother?

Thinking of such a possibility, Ariana's heart raced.

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Jasper too realized that something was wrong and he was about to rush to stop the priest. However, before he could take a step forward, he was pressed to the ground by the bodyguards.

Bodyguards standing next to the Anderson family suddenly turned and surrounded them.

"What are you doing?" Jasper asked angrily as he saw the guards had their guns pointed at them.

Brielle, who was standing near Jasper, was also surrounded. At the moment, the couple was too terrified to move a single muscle.

Some of the guests who were also shocked and scared by the scene, screamed. It was complete chaos. The only person who managed to keep her composure was Ariana.

Some guests even tried to run away, but the entrance was heavily guarded, so no one could enter or leave.

At this moment, the priest's voice rang out, "Don't panic, everyone. Mr. Anderson just wants the funeral to proceed smoothly. You won't get hurt."

At the mention of Mr. Anderson, Ariana Looked around anxiously, in the hope of seeing Theodore somewhere.

However, he was nowhere to be found.

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The guests gradually calmed down as the guards did nothing more than point their guns at the Anderson family. One question puzzled everyone present though, who was this Mr. Anderson? Wasn't the Anderson family under control now?

A thought suddenly occurred to Ariana, and she turned around and looked at the entrance. Sure enough, she heard the sound of wheels rolling, and the familiar figure in a wheelchair appeared. It was Theodore!

Ariana was so excited that her whole body was shaking. She was overwhelmed with joy and couldn't help but run towards Theodore.

Seeing Ariana run towards the man in the wheelchair, the guests were stunned and began to chat aloud. "Is that really Theodore?"

"Isn't he dead? How can he be here now? Was it all just a hoax?"

"Probably! | mean, he looks fine."

Ariana threw the umbrella in her hand and ran towards Theodore, paying no attention to the discussions of the people around her. However, when she was still about ten paces from Theodore, she suddenly stopped.

Theodore was still alive.

The joy in his heart just now was replaced by anger. She clenched her fists tightly and stared at this man she hadn't seen since. In fact, it had only been a few days since she had seen him, but it felt like years. She was really mad at Theodore and now, she was not willing to take another step forward.

Theodore looked at the woman in front of him for a while. Then, he slowly stood up from the wheelchair and walked toward her. "W-What? His legs are OK too?"

“So the wheelchair thing was also a ruse?”

“Damn! Are we witnessing a miracle, or something else?”

The guests were all shocked. Ignoring the people around, Theodore walked calmly toward Ariana, his eyes fixed on her.

When their eyes met, everything seemed to disappear around them.

Finally, Theodore spread out his arms and hugged Ariana tightly.

His hug calmed Ariana’s anger in the blink of an eye as her urge to punch him disappeared as well.

She realized that it hadn’t been easy for Theodore to put his plan into action. A slight accident could have ruined everything.

She had mixed feelings right now. On the one hand, she was happy that he was back, and on the other hand, she felt aggrieved to have had to go through all this.

Tears flowed freely from Ariana’s eyes and wet Theodore’s clothes. She was crying in his arms like a child whose favorite toy had been taken away, or a child who had finally found someone to rely on.

Feeling the Ariana’s tears on his clothes and skin, Theodore’s heart ached deeply. After crying for a while, Ariana raised her head and glared at him with red eyes.

“You finally came back,” she said with gritted teeth.

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Theodore's hand came to rest gently on Ariana's head; it was a touch meant to quell her simmering nerves, a symbol of his reassuring presence. He leaned in closer, his voice a mere breath against her ear.

"My promise hasn't slipped my mind," he assured her softly, "I said I'd introduce you to my mother, remember?" His gaze brimmed with an affection that radiated warmth, even in their chilly surroundings.

Despite the swell of emotions threatening to burst forth, Ariana managed to maintain her composure. She nodded, meeting Theodore's eyes with her own, affirming their shared understanding.

Together, they stood; their hands interlocked in silent affirmation of their united front. Ariana was braced for whatever drama might unfurl before them. She was resolved to weather every storm, every challenge, by Theodore's side.

Yet, as she held his hand, she couldn't ignore the subtle tremor that belied his seeming tranquility. Underneath the surface, a current of unease surged, a secret only she was privy to.

The silence in the crowd was as brittle as thin ice, but Theodore shattered it with a voice as icy as winter. "If anyone wants to go, I'm not going to stand in your way," he declared.

A ripple of surprise coursed through the gathered guests; glances were exchanged but not one of them dared to move.

They grasped the true nature of the situation; this was a private matter for the Anderson family. The icy warning in Theodore's words was meant solely for his kin. As the guests bore no grudge against him, they had no cause for alarm.

In the wake of the unfolding spectacle and the surprise arrival of Darian's ex-wife, curiosity wound itself tightly around each guest, holding them fast. They remained, captivated, desperate to witness the ensuing drama.

Theodore caught sight of their immobilized forms, their silence answering his challenge. With a subtle signal to the priest, he indicated it was time to carry on.

The priest nodded in response to Theodore's discreet cue. His voice, serene yet commanding, addressed the crowd. "We're going to deviate from the usual schedule today. Before the prayers, a confession will be made." His gaze sought out a particular figure, seemingly swallowed by the surrounding crowd.

Agasp echoed through the crowd as bodyguards moved towards Jasper. Seeing this, Jasper and his comrades froze, their bodies held hostage by their rising fear.

A burly bodyguard plowed his way through the crowd, his grip firm as he yanked Sharon from behind Brielle and Jasper. He marched her up to the coffin, her body a puppet under his command.

Jasper and his cohorts, crippled by fear, remained frozen, their heads bowed as if hoping to avoid witnessing the spectacle unfolding before them.

Sharon's panicked voice soared through the room, a desperate plea "Darian, help me!" she cried, but her words were abruptly muzzled by the cold threat of a gun aimed at her.

The priest, standing before her, held his scripture tenderly. He turned to her with a soft, resolute gaze. "Ms. Sharon," he said gently, "it's time for your confession."

Sharon dropped to her knees, shaking. She dared a quick look at the priest, her voice quaking, "Wh-what... What should I... confess to?"

The priest maintained his calm demeanor. "You're aware of what must be admitted." Her heart fluttered wildly, eyes darting from the priest to the coffin. Fear and reluctance washed over her like a chilling tide, her gaze darting nervously behind her.

Sharon was painfully aware of her less-than-reputable past, but to expose it before a sea of onlookers was unthinkable. How could she remain a fixture in high society if she admitted to her social climbing and secret life as a mistress?

A bodyguard nearby seemed to sense her hesitation. The chilling sound of a gun's safety catch being released echoed in the room, the gun now aimed directly at Sharon.

Recognizing the deadly seriousness of the situation, Sharon fell to the ground, her voice breaking. “I confess! | confess! | should never have been a mistress, or interfered with someone's marriage! I’m guilty! Please, I’m begging you, | confess!”

After saying that, Sharon looked up at the priest, hoping that she would be off the hook.

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However, her silent plea for sympathy got pushed aside as the priest flipped through the thick scripture in his hand and didn’t even Look at her. He just calmly asked her, “You are done? Think carefully, for lying and concealing the truth are unforgivable before the departed and God.”

Sharon turned pale. She felt as if she was about to collapse.

With no way left for her to escape, Sharon glanced up at the gun held to her head.

She took a deep breath, knowing she had no choice but to confess her misdeeds.

“What | have done is immoral. | shouldn’t have knowingly seduced Darian, a married man.”

Sharon tightly clenched her sleeves as she confessed, “I shouldn’t have deliberately brought my illegitimate child to their doorstep and used every means to provoke Darian’s wife, driving her to madness.”

“| shouldn't have mistreated her son after she died.”

“| was the one who used to lock Theodore in a dark room alone. | would scare him and make him go without food for days. | would even let him get drenched in the rain so that he would fall sick. | take responsibility for my actions because it was my wrongdoings toward the poor boy. | wanted to drive him to insanity, so | inflicted pain and misery upon him.

Hearing her confess to such heinous crimes against Theodore, the crowd burst into an uproar, and some even hurled cusses at Sharon.

As for Ariana, who was standing alongside Theodore, she felt her heartache as she held his hand tighter, hearing about those awful memories of his childhood.

However, when Darian heard the cusses and whispers of people behind him, he felt infuriated. Unable to control his anger and humiliation, he shouted at Sharon, "You foolish woman! Shut up!"

However, there was no turning back for Sharon. With a gun pointed at her, she knew she couldn't get out of the situation unscathed. She had already decided to risk it all to save her own life. She paid no attention to Darian's warning and, in one breath, confessed everything she had done.

"I orchestrated the rape of Darian's other Lovers to secure my position as hostess. I even filmed the whole process and used the videos to blackmail them, forcing them to Leave the Anderson family. I was the one responsible for all these actions."

Sharon's crimes were that she had done many other evil things to anchor her authority in the Anderson family. There was no denying the fact that almost every woman who came close to that family or to Darian had a tragic outcome because of her.

As Sharon reached the end of her confession, she looked up at the priest with a pitiful expression, seemingly having no more words to say.

The priest took a look at Theodore and saw that Theodore nodded slightly, indicating that Sharon could go aside. Then he turned towards the Anderson family and said, "Next one."

As the bodyguards walked towards them, Brielle held her breath, hoping she wouldn't be the one brought forward. The moment she saw Jasper getting dragged out, she let out a sigh of relief and calmed down.

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Jasper got carried towards the coffin, where the bodyguards pushed him to fall on his knees.

“Why did you bring me up here?! Didn’t she already admit it?! | have no hand in this! | don’t even know who Aimee is. | have no connection to the grievances between them. It was all my mother’s doings! | am innocent in all this!”

Jasper kept pleading all about his innocence until they threw a report at his face. The color drained from his face as he saw the contents of the report.

Panicking, he saw the muzzle of the gun in front of him as he tried to argue against it. He immediately stopped talking and backed up.

Holding the report in his hand, he gritted his teeth and said, “It is true | am at fault. | confess that it was me who planned all the car accidents of Theodore. | devised the plan for the two car accidents. | also tried to assassinate Theodore when he was in a vegetative state.”

The crowd once again burst into an uproar. No one expected that Jasper would be so cruel. It was he who had caused a fatal accident on Theodore, not once but twice!

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After he finished confessing to his crime, the priest continued calmly, “Next is the last one, and also the most important person in confession.”

Without him saying who it was, everyone already had a feeling about the identity of the culprit as they all looked towards Darian standing next to the coffin.

The irritation brewing inside Darian was palpable, surging like a teapot on the brink of spewing steam. He was caught off guard by Theodore’s elaborate scheme, aimed at nothing but dragging his dignity through the dirt. Driven by fury, Darian’s voice rang out. “Damn it, Theodore! You are going to hell!”

“Bang!” In a split second, a gunshot echoed, a bullet embedding itself just next to Darian’s foot. Gasps of shock and shrieks of fear filled the air.

Startled, Ariana shifted her gaze to the shooter. It was Horace who had fired the shot.

Darian paled at the audacity of the act, his forehead glistening with cold beads of sweat. He looked taken aback, but quickly mastered his features, leveling a stern glare at Theodore. His voice was biting when he asked, "What are you up to? I'm your father! Are you planning to murder your own father? Don't you fear the curses that'll haunt you?"

The word 'father' seemed like a joke coming from Darian's Lips, making Theodore smirk. Darian was the last person who should wield that title. Theodore locked eyes with Darian, and the coldness in his gaze sent a shiver down Darian's spine.

He signaled Horace to retreat with a casual wave of his hand. "I'm not going to kill you," he chuckled, "That's too simple. But if you don't cooperate, I can't promise where the next bullet will land."

Darian could only seethe in silent fury. His stare bore into Theodore, his skin turning a sickly shade of white. His fingers twitched uncontrollably in his rising ire.

In response, Theodore subtly motioned to his bodyguard. Stepping forward, the bodyguard manhandled Darian, forcing him to kneel in front of the coffin.

The priest stood before him, brandishing a cross and murmuring solemn prayers.

"Merciful Father, guide the wayward Darian from the abyss of sin with your divine compassion, let Darian, the sinner—" "Enough!" Darian cut off his prayer, his mouth twitching with barely restrained irritation. He couldn't bear it.

He attempted to free himself from the grip of the bodyguard, but to no avail. With an upward glance, he shouted, "The Anderson Group is mine.

I am the head of the Anderson family! What audacity to treat me so!

You're all lunatics! I am the master of the Anderson family! You are all traitors!"

His enraged yells echoed in the room when abruptly, the chill of a gun barrel pressed into the back of his skull, cutting him off. Shock froze him in place.

“I'm not blessed with infinite patience, nor time to squander on you.”

Theodore's voice was cold as ice as his finger lingered over the gun's safety catch.

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Dread washed over Darian, sending a ripple of goosebumps across his skin. His body shook as the reality of the situation sank in.

He was well aware of Theodore's ruthless side.

Their relationship, once father and son, was now nothing more than a bitter rivalry. Today's events were clear evidence of Theodore's vengeful agenda.

The chilling realization struck Darian that while Theodore might not kill him here, he could inflict enough torment to leave him half-alive, a broken man.

His fists balled tightly, Darian bowed his head towards the coffin in a gesture of fearful submission. Through clenched teeth, he muttered, “I confess. I was wrong to listen to my mistress and abandon you, Aimee.”

Even now, Darian wanted to put all the blame on Sharon.

After saying that, he fell silent and pulled a Long face, as if he had to say that just to satisfy Theodore. Once Darian shut up, the atmosphere quickly turned awkward.

Everyone present held their breath.

Gazing at Theodore, Ariana felt worried and sad for him.

Now that she knew how awfully the Anderson family had treated Theodore, she was burning with anger and at the same time, she felt sorry for him.

Her heart ached even more when she remembered that he had had a nervous breakdown. She was aware that his condition required special medication for emotional disturbances. Her love for him was somehow getting stronger and stronger and she couldn't explain it. Maybe it was because of her pregnancy.

On the other side, Theodore squatted down in front of Darian.

Glaring coldly at the man in front of him, Theodore smiled and waved the barrel of his gun at Darian. "Which hand do you want to keep?" he asked coldly.

Seeing Theodore pointing a gun at him, Darian's face gradually became ferocious. He yelled at Theodore, "How dare you? I'm your father! How can you be so ungrateful?"

Before Darian could finish his words, there was a loud bang. Another gunshot had just been fired, and it was followed by Darian's scream.

Theodore didn't give Darian another chance to choose and directly shot his right arm. He stood up indifferently and looked down at Darian, who was covering his right arm and moaning in pain.

At that moment, the priest approached and said to Darian with a smile, "Now please continue to confess if you want to keep your left hand Please."

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Big drops of sweat ran down Darian's forehead from the pain. He was too weak to move, so the guards helped him kneel down in front of Theodore.

He felt excruciating pain in his arm, and a strong hatred grew in his heart when he looked at the coffin in front of him.

Darian hadn't expected that Aimee could still affect him even though she had been dead for so many years.

He should have gotten rid of everything related to her, including Theodore.

Alas, there was no point in having regrets now.

So many years had passed, and Darian still remembered the first time he had seen Aimee. She was the most dazzling of the crowd, and her every move and smile was enough to make men's hearts beat faster.

At that time, she had so many suitors, and it took him a lot of effort to get her.

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But his feelings for her had faded over time. The only thing he remembered now was her beautiful face when she was young. Theodore looked so much like her.

Darian and Aimee used to love each other very much. They couldn't stand the thought of being separated, so he married her. Alas, some men couldn't commit themselves to one woman.

A few years after Theodore's birth, Darian started to get tired of Aimee.

At that point in time, Aimee no longer looked the same as when they first met.

After giving birth to the baby, her body began to change. She often cried in front of Darian during her pregnancy, which killed the image of the graceful woman he had made of her. Although she gradually got back in shape, Darian was no longer interested in her

After that incident, his dislike for her grew even more.

Frowning, with disgust and impatience in his eyes, Darian said through gritted teeth to the people behind him, "I just made a mistake like a lot of other men have made. I had an affair with Sharon over 20 years ago and Aimee found out. At the time, Aimee quarreled with me every day and she even tried to kill herself several times. I couldn't talk her out of it or control her. So I had no choice but to lock her in the mansion in the southern suburbs to prevent her from committing suicide. I didn't expect her to go crazy over it."

Theodore's thoughts drifted back to a recurring dream that had haunted him for over a decade.

In this nightmare, a woman he knew was crouched in a corner, clutching at strands of hair that now resembled dry, lifeless grass. Golden shackles bound her ankles as she trembled, mumbling incoherently to herself. The woman who once radiated life and joy now looked gaunt, her once-sparkling eyes were devoid of life.

Each time Theodore had this dream, he was jolted awake, a knot of fear in his gut and a stabbing pain in his heart. Yet the true villain of the tale still claimed innocence, and even had the audacity to say that it was all for her own good. The expression in Theodore's eyes frosted over.

As Darian continued to rant, he blamed Aimee for everything. "She did it to herself! Her sanity slipped away because she couldn't handle it.

I gave her all I could. She lived in a grand mansion in the southern suburbs. I supplied her with the finest food and even sought out the best doctor for her. She was the one who refused to comply with the treatment!"

His words twisted the truth, painting her as the needy one, the crazy one, the one clinging to him, and even suggested that she was trying to pin the blame on him.

Theodore regarded him coolly and scoffed, "No one is more aware of the true cause of my mother's mental collapse than you, Darian."

At his words, Darian, who had been so intent on maligning Aimee, seemed to grow anxious; an unmistakable hint of discomfort flashed across his face. With a stern expression, he confronted Theodore. “What are you implying? Do you really want to dredge up events from over a

decade ago? Did you not see for yourself just how mad she had become? ALL I’ve said is the truth, isn’t it?”

Darian stubbornly argued, refusing to acknowledge his wrongdoings. But Theodore wasn’t about to let him off easily. He signaled to the people around him, and moments later, a medicine bottle was presented to Darian.

Recognizing the bottle, Darian’s face whitened, a surge of panic washing over him. He couldn’t comprehend how the bottle, which he had ordered to be destroyed, was now here in front of him. Was it a replica?

He was sure he had perfectly executed his plans, carefully eliminated anyone involved, and left no trace of evidence.

“I don’t recognize this. Don’t think you can deceive me with some random bottle, Theodore!” Darian exclaimed, his face ashen, yet he remained steadfast in his denial.

Unruffled, Theodore responded, “This, Darian, is the evidence of your heinous act — the way you drove my mother to the brink of insanity.”

Chapter: 778 “What evidence? Don’t spew nonsense! You...”

But before Darian could continue his defensive tirade, Theodore interjected, “If it weren’t for you secretly poisoning her through the doctor, my mother would still be alive today.”

He stopped, fixing a sarcastic gaze at Darian. “And don’t flatter yourself. The moment she discovered your infidelity, my mother was done with you. Your constant indecisiveness sickened her. She wanted out, but you wouldn’t allow it. Fearful that she might expose you, you imprisoned her in that mansion for a decade. Can you even fathom the misery she endured during those years? Can you even begin to understand how she survived each passing day?”

Theodore's words echoed through the crowd, causing the guests to exchange disbelieving glances.

"Oh my goodness! How could Darian treat his wife in such a despicable manner? He is truly a horrible man," one of them exclaimed.

"No matter how strained their relationship had become, he simply should not have subjected his wife to such cruelty. How could he be so heartless?" another chimed in, his voice filled with dismay.

The people around them joined in, criticizing Darian for his actions. Ariana, meanwhile, felt her eyes well up with tears as she watched Theodore's tall figure with a heavy heart.

In the past, even when Theodore relied on a wheelchair to move about, he had always held his head high. Ariana knew how deeply he cherished and missed Aimee.

Now, he was willingly exposing his wounded heart to everyone, a form of punishment that seemed unbearably cruel. Theodore bravely confronted Darian face to face, providing his testimony, yet Darian stubbornly refused to admit the truth.

He persisted in denying the allegations, his voice laced with obstinacy. "So, you believe you can concoct an elaborate story based solely on a medicine bottle? Theodore, I'm telling you it's pointless.

Do not make baseless accusations simply because of something that emerged out of nowhere! | have said it before, and | will say it again— | did not do it!"

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Darian vehemently denied the accusations, as if he genuinely believed in his own innocence. Theodore glanced at him and retrieved an audio pen recorder from his pocket.

With a sense of purpose, he pressed play, and a man's voice rang out.

“Put this into her medicine and ensure she takes it every day,” the voice on the recording said.

It was Darian’s voice, unmistakably.

Another voice, tinged with hesitation, spoke up. “But administering this medication could lead to mental disorders and hallucinations.” “Just do as | say! Keep it a secret. | will pay you fifty million dollars when it's done.”

This was what Darian had said when he instructed the doctor to drug Ariana, but he had never anticipated that the doctor would record their conversation.

Darian’s countenance turned pallid, his complexion drained of color. Before he could formulate a rebuttal, Horace approached, accompanied by a middle-aged gentleman in his forties.

At the sight of this newcomer, Darian staggered backward, as if beholding a specter, his expression etched with horror.

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This middle-aged man happened to be the very person who had spoken in the recording, the doctor named Santino Felton, identifiable by a scar on the right side of his face.

Fixing a cold gaze upon Darian, Santino then offered a sardonic smile and spoke. “I must apologize for disappointing you, Mr. Anderson. Your men pursued me relentlessly, and | ultimately met the embrace of the sea. To my surprise, | found myself rescued.”

“You! What are you talking about?!” Darian’s anger surged to such heights that his words stumbled upon one another, his entire body trembling with fury.

Santino sneered, his tone dripping with scorn, “Darian, you possess an exceptional talent for abandoning those whom you have exploited. You had pledged fifty million dollars as payment after | manipulated Aimee into a state of madness. Yet, you failed to honor your promise, instead dispatching someone to

end my life. | had envisioned a promising future, but you have shattered it. How do you intend to compensate me!”

Now, with the witness’s testimony and the presentation of evidence, the assembled crowd directed their gaze upon Darian.

Despite his face assuming an ashen hue, he remained obstinate, unwilling to concede, despite his growing awareness of the unfolding reality. After all, considering that Aimee had been dead for more than ten years, it was hard to find out the truth about her death! So he should just insist on denying Theodore’s words.

“How can | tell if this individual isn’t a puppet you’ve orchestrated to stage this spectacle?” he vehemently denied, attempting to deflect accountability. “Furthermore, Aimee was merely an ordinary woman, hailing from a humble background. She experienced a Life of opulence upon our union!”

Darian harbored no remorse for the actions he had inflicted upon his former spouse. In that moment, as his gaze fell upon the coffin, the only sentiment that pervaded his eyes was unadulterated hatred. “She was an inconsequential woman, incapable of bringing me happiness or advancing my career. Why should | have kept her?”

What was more, this was a disgrace for him to be accused in front of so many people.

The more Darian ruminated on the situation, the more his anger intensified. He bellowed at Theodore, his voice resonating with disdain, “You are undoubtedly her son, embodying her essence. The mere thought of your connection with her disgusts me! You are unworthy of bearing our family name! Henceforth, | disown you!”

Ariana couldn't bear the burden any longer when she heard Darian’s unrelenting refusal to show remorse, his attempts to tarnish Theodore’s reputation. Finally, she found her voice and spoke up. “You!”

She was on the verge of uttering a curse, but Theodore swiftly stepped in front of her, gently holding her hand. He turned around, enveloping her in a tender embrace, and whispered in her ear, “It’s okay, don’t worry.”

Theodore's words momentarily puzzled Ariana, until she considered that perhaps this was all part of his plan. She chose to remain silent, her anger still simmering as she glared at Darian.

Undeterred, Darian continued berating Theodore, accusing him of being unfilial. Yet, Theodore merely faced him, viewing his relentless attacks as being self-destructive. A light chuckle escaped his lips as he calmly stated, "Very well, I will sever our father-son relationship."

Darian's authority as a father felt repeatedly challenged by Theodore's casual and indifferent demeanor. In the midst of the onlookers, Darian's fury surged.

"Theodore, you heartless demon! May you burn in hell!" Overwhelmed by anger and shame, Darian persisted in his vehement berating of Theodore, disregarding entirely the fact that they were gathered for Aimee's funeral.

"Theodore, you are nothing more than an abandoned child of the Anderson family. Without our support, you are utterly insignificant!" Darian's face flushed with anger as he scolded, but just then, a police whistle pierced the air outside the cemetery.

He fell silent, his gaze fixated on the police car stationed at the cemetery's gate, fearing they might apprehend him. If captured now, there would be those who would covet the wealth and status of the Anderson Group, and his own glory and affluence would crumble to dust.

As the police officers made their way toward them, Darian's fear grew so overwhelming that he struggled to draw a breath. In his mind, it couldn't be happening, it just couldn't. There was no evidence connecting him to Aimee's death, and besides, she was gone for many years. No one could possibly accuse him of any crime.

Several uniformed officers approached the group, their words cutting through the tense atmosphere, "We have received a report accusing Jasper of intentional homicide and Sharon of defamation and intentional injury. Both of you, come with us."

Noticing the omission of his name, Darian breathed a sigh of relief.

Jasper's gaze met the policeman standing before him, leaving him in a state of disbelief. Desperate for assistance, he turned to Darian, urgency lacing his voice as he pleaded, "Dad, say something."

However, Darian nervously averted his eyes, evading any contact.

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The arrogance he once possessed had dissipated, replaced by overwhelming anxiety. He feared that speaking another word might result in the police taking him away. His lips remained tightly sealed.

Witnessing Darian's refusal to help, Jasper felt a profound sense of disappointment engulf him.

He recognized their relationship for what it truly was — a transaction built solely on self-interest, devoid of any genuine family affection.

He should have realized long ago that Darian was nothing more than a profit-driven businessman, incapable of fostering a true bond between himself and his son.

Jasper's glare pierced Darian, accompanied by scolding words, "Didn't you proclaim yourself as the master of the Anderson family? Weren't you the one who claimed to be a father? Why don't you save my mother and me? What kind of a human being are you?"

Even in the face of Jasper's reproach, Darian remained silent, withdrawing into himself. He hunched his shoulders, avoiding any glimpse of Jasper or Sharon.

It wasn't until the police escorted them away, their car slowly fading into the distance, that Darian couldn't hear Jasper's verbal assault anymore. He finally exhaled, relieved to have escaped.

However, as he lifted his head, his eyes met Theodore's meaningful smile.

Fear coursed through Darian's veins, instinctively knowing that Theodore wouldn't let him off so easily. Just as he mustered the courage to speak up and inquire, Theodore shifted his gaze elsewhere, diverting his attention.

"The ceremony goes on."

The priest nodded and commenced the burial of the coffin.

After the ceremony concluded, Theodore bid farewell to the guests, and the guards whisked Darian away to a secret place. Now, amidst the silence of the cemetery, only Theodore and Ariana remained.

Standing before the tombstone, they fixated on a photograph of a youthful, resplendent woman, an extended silence enveloping them.

Aimee's eyes, shimmering Like summer blooms, captivated Ariana as she 'looked at the photo.

She couldn't help but notice Theodore's resemblance to Aimee, particularly his striking eyebrows and eyes that mirrored hers. A wave of sadness washed over Ariana as she sensed Theodore's sorrow.

At that moment, a torrent of thoughts flooded her mind.

Theodore grasped her hand firmly and directed his words toward the tombstone, "Mother, this is my beloved wife, my cherished love. She is truly exceptional, and my love for her knows no bounds."

Although Theodore had expressed his love for her before, this declaration resonated with Ariana more deeply than ever.

She tenderly held Theodore's hand and touched the image on the tombstone.

Ariana's voice quivered, her eyes gleaming with determination. "I vow to stand by his side until death do us part."

Their voices dissipated into the breeze, leaving behind a serene atmosphere.

After a while, Ariana asked softly, “Was she imprisoned in that cage at the manor in the southern suburbs?”

That cage scared her. She could still recall the panic and despair that overwhelmed her upon seeing it. She couldn’t imagine the fear and anguish Aimee had endured during her decade-long captivity.