

Unconscious 891

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Turning around, she saw Sonia hurrying towards her. "You returned to the country without informing me. | could have picked you up," Sonia said with concern.

Ariana embraced her friend with a smile and explained, "I just wanted to come and see him first, so | wouldn't keep you waiting too long."

Sonia sighed, feeling sympathetic, and asked, "It's been five years. Haven't you moved on?"

Ariana let out a heavy sigh and shook her head, a bitter smile playing on her lips. "How could | forget?" Her voice carried the weight of sadness.

Sonia couldn't help but feel sorrowful for her. She changed the topic as they walked to the car. "So, how long are you planning to stay this time?"

Ariana took a moment to collect her thoughts, and then shook her head with a sigh. "Honestly, I'm not sure. All | wanted was to return here. As for how long I'll stay, it all depends on how things unfold."

As they drove away from the cemetery, Sonia's eyes fell on Ariana's luggage. Curiosity got the better of her, and she asked, "By the way, where is your son? You didn't bring him to pay respects?"

Ariana gently shook her head in response. "No, Melon's not feeling well. I've always told him that his father is a hero who had to go far away but promised to return on his eighth birthday."

The memory of her son's innocent questions about his father filled Ariana's heart with sadness.

Death was a tough topic to broach with a child, so she decided it would be best not to bring him along this time and to tell him the truth when he was older.

"Ah, is he safe alone at home?" Sonia inquired.

“He’s fine. Mitchel is with him,” Ariana responded.

At the mention of Mitchel, Sonia couldn't help but let out a sigh.

“He’s been a great help over the years.”

Ariana nodded, acknowledging Mitchel’s unwavering support. She was deeply grateful to him.

Five years ago, he had saved her baby’s life and took her abroad for treatment. Ever since then, he had been a rock, taking care of her child and being there when she needed him.

Ariana fell silent, gazing out of the car window.

The scenery outside seemed both familiar and strange, serving as a reminder of the passage of time.

Melancholy washed over her as she realized how much life had changed in the past five years.

As Ariana stared out the window at the streets, she suddenly realized they weren’t heading back home. Turning to Sonia, she asked, “Where are we headed?”

“To purchase a gift for Melon.” A glint of excitement sparkled in Sonia’s eyes as she replied, “It's been ages since I saw him.”

Checking the time, Ariana shook her head. “It’s getting late, and the evening traffic will be a nightmare. Melon must be waiting for

us.

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“Don't be troubled. Mitchel is there.” Sonia feigned anger. “Melon rarely visits, and as his godmother, I'm determined to show him some love. Come with me, let's find him the perfect gift.”

Despite her reservations, Ariana couldn't resist Sonia's enthusiasm and agreed to go along with the plan.

Arriving at a shopping mall that Ariana did not recognize, she asked in confusion, “Why does this place feel so unfamiliar?”

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After parking the car, Sonia took her into the shopping mall. While they walked in, Sonia explained, “This is the new chain mall under the Fredrick Group. You've been away, and they've been dominating the market lately, especially since Holden took over.”

As they got inside, Sonia filled Ariana in on the latest gossip and slyly pointed out a poster stand at the mall's center. Ariana glanced at the poster and saw a stunning woman but couldn't place her. She asked casually, “Who's that?”

Sonia replied, “That's Sadie Pierre! She's become quite the rising star in our country over the past six months. And guess what? She's Holden's newly announced fiancée.”

“Fiancée?” Ariana's eyebrows shot up in surprise. She hadn't expected Holden to tie the knot someday.

It had been five Long years since she had any contact with him. Now and then, she stumbled upon reports about him in financial magazines.

But he remained as elusive as ever, avoiding public appearances on TV and in the media.

“Yes. And the Fredrick Group is going all out for her, spending money like it’s nothing,” Sonia commented.

“Well, she does look very pretty,” Ariana responded with a smile, not putting too much thought into it.

They both went on with their chat as they strolled towards the elevator, and before they knew it, the elevator door shot open.

The mall was bustling with people during mealtime. Sonia pulled Ariana aside, urging, “Come on, let’s go in quickly. It’s crowded

now. As they stood near the elevator, another group of people emerged from the elevator. Ariana raised her head and in a fleeting glance, she caught a glimpse of someone’s side profile.

In an instant, her heart skipped a beat, and she was left momentarily frozen. Without thinking, she called out a name, “Theodore.”

But the person gave no reaction and proceeded with walking straight ahead. “Theodore...” Ariana muttered to herself and instantly turned around to run after him. However, the mall was bustling with people, and just like that, the man vanished from her view.

Amidst the swarm of people, Ariana stood dazed, desperately searching for that all-too-familiar figure.

“Ariana! Ariana!” Sonia squeezed out of the elevator, worry etched across her face, finally jolting Ariana back to the present.

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It was at this moment that Ariana realized that her cheeks were unknowingly wet with tears.

“Are you alright? You dashed out of there and it completely freaked me out,” Sonia said with a look of genuine concern on her face.

“| think... | saw Theodore.” Ariana stood there, frozen, staring in the direction where the man had disappeared.

Sonia’s heart ached seeing her in distress. She handed Ariana some tissues and softly reassured her, “Come on, Ariana. People can’t come back from the dead, and Theodore passed away five years ago.”

Chapter: 893 “But I’m certain | saw him.” Ariana’s voice choked up.

“How is that even possible? It’s probably just your mind playing tricks on you because you miss him so much. You have to move on with your life. Try to let go as soon as you can,” Sonia gently comforted her.

Ariana clutched her chest, feeling a pang of sadness, and looked down.

Five years had gone by, but she still couldn’t fully come to terms with Theodore’s death. The car accident haunted her like a recurring nightmare.

Not wanting to argue with Sonia, she simply nodded and said nothing. Meanwhile, in another nearby elevator, Holden stood listening to his subordinate’s reports while looking outside. His face remained cold and impassive as he monitored a part of his business empire’s territory.

The elevator hadn't reached its destination yet, and Holden observed the bustling crowd outside. Amidst the cheerful faces, he spotted a woman standing at a distance, seemingly in tears. He gave her a quick glance but didn’t dwell on it, and nonchalantly shifted his gaze away.

“There’s a banquet tonight..

“Cancel tonight’s schedule,” Holden said coldly.

His subordinate was left hesitant. "Every single thing? But..." "Everything. | promised my child we'd have dinner together tonight," Holden responded, his expression remaining stoic and unyielding.

As the sightseeing elevator reached its destination, Holden and his crew stepped out, and there stood his fiancée, Sadie, with a glowing grin.

Holden wasted no time and asked bluntly, "What are you doing here? Where's Adele?"

"She wanted some ice cream, so | told the nanny to take her out to buy some," Sadie responded with a smile, trying to reach for Holden's arm, but he deftly avoided her touch.

Frowning, Holden said in a cold tone, "Adele still has a cough. How can you permit her to have something cold?"

Surprised, Sadie tried to explain, but Holden's irritation flared as he scolded her, "You should've been more careful with Adele, considering her condition. You shouldn't have let her out of your sight. Get her back here immediately." He then walked into the meeting room without saying another word.

Watching him go, Sadie's once-beaming smile faded.

She clenched her fists in frustration.

In Holden's world, the kid always came first. It seemed like she didn't matter at all without Adele around.

Resentment surged through her, fueling a deep grudge against Adele.

If it weren't for wanting to Look Like a loving mother to Holden, Sadie would have done away with Adele a long time ago. Feeling agitated, Sadie called the nanny and demanded, "Where did you take the kid? Bring her back right now!"

At that very moment, the nanny's voice sounded panicked over the phone, "Oh my God, Miss Pierre, something's not right! The kid vanished in the blink of an eye, and I have no clue where she went!"

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"What?!" Sadie exclaimed, her shock and anger bursting forth. She Slammed the table and rose to her feet. "How on earth did you manage to lose sight of the child? If you can't find her, you'll be in a real mess! Hurry and search for her!"

Anxiety gripped Sadie, knowing her own position would be jeopardized if Adele remained missing.

The nanny also freaked out and suggested, "Should we inform Mr. Fredrick? In such a huge mall, we might be able to find her faster with his help."

Caught in this dilemma, Sadie hesitated, fearing Holden's wrath if he discovered this. She quickly scolded, "No way! Don't tell anyone! Just find the child immediately!"

On the second floor of the electronics store, Sonia was in her element, enthusiastically picking out items for Ariana's son

Meanwhile, Ariana seemed lost in thought, unable to shake off the uncanny image she had glimpsed earlier. It was strangely familiar.

Feeling disheartened, Ariana decided to take a break and wait for Sonia outside the electronics store.

As she sat on a bench, her eyes fell upon a cute little girl standing alone in front of a capsule toy machine, completely absorbed in the tiny toys inside.

The sight reminded Ariana of her own son, who would react in the same way if faced with such a machine. Thinking of her Little boy warmed her heart and lifted her spirits.

At first, Ariana hesitated to approach the little girl, but after waiting for a while without spotting any parents nearby, concern overtook her, and she walked up to the child and asked, "Hey there, little girl, why are you here all alone? Where are your parents?"

The little girl remained silent, engrossed in the capsule toys. Ariana peered inside the machine and grinned. "Do you Like the toys in there?" Finally, the Little girl turned her head to Ariana.

As their eyes locked, Ariana found herself completely frozen in place.

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Awave of indescribable familiarity washed over her, leaving her utterly puzzled. The girl's eyes were a sight to behold, shimmering with anticipation as they fixated on Ariana.

Likewise, Ariana gazed back, captivated by the young one before her, certain she had never encountered this child previously. Setting aside the inexplicable feeling of closeness in her heart, she gracefully squatted down and asked with gentle concern, "Do you know where your mommy and daddy are?"

Yet, the little girl remained silent, her head slightly lowered in reticence.

Ariana didn't feel a hint of annoyance. Instead, she gracefully rose to her feet and fished out some coins from her purse to feed the capsule toy machine. She deftly turned the knob, and in no time, two capsules of different colors emerged.

The little girl stayed by Ariana's side, her eyes glued to every twist and turn of the machine.

With a warm smile, Ariana handed the capsules to the girl and encouraged her, "Open them and see."

The girl took the capsules eagerly and deftly popped them open, revealing two small figurines.

“Wow!” Ariana couldn’t help but exclaim, her smile widening, “You’ve got two hidden editions! You're truly Lucky.

The little girl's face lit up with joy, a faint smile surfacing, revealing two adorable dimples.

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Seeing the happiness radiating from the child, Ariana’s spirits lifted as well, and she continued her gentle inquiry, “What’s your name? I’ll go to the information desk to find your parents.”

But the little girl remained silent, completely engrossed in playing with her figurines, as if oblivious to the world around her.

Ariana couldn't help but feel a pang of concern as she observed her behavior. Something seemed off, as if the little girl was living in her own world. Based on her reactions, Ariana began to suspect that she might be a child with autism.

With this realization in mind, Ariana crouched down again and gently spoke to the girl. “Hello, little sweet. Can you tell me how old you are? Do you remember your mommy or daddy’s name?”

Still, the little girl gave no response.

Ariana’s intuition grew stronger, confirming her suspicion. She made a few more attempts to engage the girl with the outside world, but the responses remained weak. It was almost certain now that the child was autistic.

Inexplicably, Ariana felt a mix of emotions, a pang of sadness followed by a surge of anger. How could this cute girl’s parents have been so careless as to let her wander around the mall alone?

Just as Ariana was about to give up on trying to communicate verbally, the little girl surprised her by taking off the small backpack she was wearing. She then pointed to a name tag on it.

Ariana's eyes lit up with excitement as she asked, "Is your name Adele?"

However, the little girl remained unfazed, continuing to play with figurines, completely unresponsive to Ariana's attempt to connect.

Still, Ariana couldn't help but be overjoyed as the little girl had responded to her question.

This was a promising sign for both of them. With a name now known, Ariana could announce it over the intercom and begin the search for Adele's parents. For a child with autism, engaging with others' questions marked a significant breakthrough, a possible step towards liberation from its grasp.

Inexplicably delighted, Ariana knelt down and spoke gently. "Adele, let's go find your mommy and daddy, alright?" She extended her hand towards Adele. Yet, just as this tender moment unfolded, a worried voice called out from behind, "Oh my goodness, Miss, I finally found you!"

Ariana glanced in the direction of the voice and spotted a middle-aged woman hurrying towards them. Her instincts kicked in, making her instantly wary.

With the recent rise in child trafficking, she was wary of strangers.

She positioned herself protectively in front of Adele and asked, "Who are you?"

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The middle-aged woman nervously responded, "I'm her nanny, and this is our young miss." Ananny? Hearing this, Ariana couldn't help but doubt the woman's claim. When she looked down at Adele, she met her big eyes, and Adele was staring up at her in silence.

The middle-aged woman became even more flustered and exclaimed, "Oh, miss, please return with me. Master will be mad if he finds this out."

She moved to hold Adele's hand.

Ariana wasn't easily convinced. "Hold on. Can you prove that this child is part of your family? | can't just let you take her without any evidence. What if you're involved in something shady?"

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The woman's anxiety escalated, and she stomped her feet in frustration.

"No, | swear, | am her nanny! Young miss, say something, please!"

The woman desperately looked at Adele, but Adele said nothing and just stared at her.

Ariana's resolve solidified; she wouldn't let the woman take Adele away without proper verification. Determined, she said, "If you can't prove your identity, go find the police. Without evidence, | won't let you take her."

"You! Can you mind your own business? She really is our young miss!"

The woman's desperation grew that she became frantic. She feared that involving the police might cost her job. However, Ariana stood her ground.

They were both locked in a tense standoff.

Just then, Adele took a step forward, and extended her hand to the said nanny.

Understanding the unspoken message, the middle-aged woman handed her the ice cream she had just bought and said helplessly, "Little miss, eat just a little. Master won't be happy if he finds out."

From their interaction, Ariana could tell that they were familiar with each other. She stood uneasy on the side, not sure how to handle the situation. Before she could utter a word, the middle-aged woman walked away with Adele after casting a mocking glance at Ariana.

Ariana managed to force a sheepish smile and turned to take her leave.

But she couldn't shake off her concern for Adele's well-being. Leaving her entirely in the nanny's hands might not be the best option. The parents needed to be more involved.

Being a mother herself, Ariana couldn't help but worry about Adele. A growing sense of responsibility nudged her, pushing her to follow them and caution Adele's parents to be more attentive.

The nanny walked Adele to a corner. A woman was standing there wearing sunglasses and mask. She must be Adele's mother. With this in mind, Ariana approached the woman.

Meanwhile, in the corner, Sadie had been anxiously waiting for the nanny to return with Adele. Upon seeing Adele, she heaved a sigh of relief but quickly scolded her, "Why were you running around? What if you got lost?!"

Sadie sounded harsh. She wanted to unleash even more hurtful words, but she kept herself in check because she was in public. Sternly, she instructed Adele, "Hurry up and come with me!"

In that moment, Sadie suddenly heard a familiar voice.

"Ma'am, curiosity is a natural trait in children. You shouldn't be so hard on the little one."

"Who are you? Mind your own business!" Sadie impatiently retorted and turned around to face the person speaking. When she saw who it was, her pupils dilated in shock.

How could it be Ariana? Why did she return?!

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Sadie's first instinct upon seeing Ariana was to turn her face away so Ariana wouldn't recognize her. But she quickly remembered that she was wearing sunglasses and a face mask, and moreover her appearance had changed considerably from the past. So she didn't need to worry about being recognized.

So, Sadie turned back and boldly faced Ariana. "How is the way | raise my child your business?" she said arrogantly.

Ariana had originally planned to have a friendly approach and maybe exchange a few words with the woman. She really hadn't expected such a defensive and aggressive response from her. Moreover, the fact that the woman behaved like this in front of her own child left Ariana stunned.

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"As a parent, you should take better care of your child! How can you let such a young child wander around the mall alone? Do you have any idea what would have happened if she had met someone dangerous instead of me?" Ariana was obviously angry.

When Sadie heard that Ariana had run into Adele, she instantly became alert and carefully observed Ariana. As if afraid of something, Sadie held Adele close and took a step back, shielding the child from Ariana's view.

"What's your business here, huh?" Sadie shouted suddenly. Her voice became defensive, and she directly accused Ariana. "I think you have evil intentions. Why else would you follow us Like this? Do you want money from us?"

Without giving Ariana a chance to respond, Sadie turned to the nanny and instructed, "Quick, give her some money so she can leave us alone.

| don't want people Like her around me."

Her disdainful attitude gave Ariana a headache. Ariana decided she'd better leave this crazy woman alone, so she turned around and walked away.

Even though Ariana had left, Sadie still didn't calm down. Feeling extremely anxious, she subconsciously tightened her grip on Adele's hand. It wasn't until Adele cried in pain that Sadie came back to her senses.

At this moment, Sadie turned to the nanny and asked angrily, "How could you leave the kid with a stranger? How long were they together? What did they talk about? Did you find anything wrong with that woman's behavior?" She bombarded the nanny with questions.

The nanny quickly shook her head and replied, "No, no! Miss, they didn't spend much time together, and they didn't talk much either. They just happened to run into each other and chatted briefly. There was nothing unusual."

Sadie felt relieved when she heard that Ariana and Adele hadn't chatted for long, and that Ariana didn't have any unusual behavior.

She thought that after all these years, Ariana couldn't possibly notice anything fishy.

Although she thought so, Sadie still reminded the nanny seriously, "From now on, I want you to keep a close eye on the child. You must make sure she doesn't have any contact with that woman ever again!"

Of course, the nanny was puzzled by the unusual order, but she still nodded in agreement. Not long after Ariana left Sadie, she ran into Sonia, who was rushing out of the store with a bunch of toys in her hands. Sonia spotted Ariana and immediately called out to her. "Quick, quick, help me carry some of these."

Ariana went over to help with the bags at once. The moment she came over, Sonia instantly noticed the angry look on her face. "What's wrong? What happened?" she asked with a frown.

Ariana sighed and explained, "I met a careless parent just now. I mean, that woman can't even watch her own child! She let her Little girl run around the mall alone and the worse is that she is very rude to her.

She even had the nerve to insult me after | took the girl back to her.”

She pointed to a distant figure and added, “That's her.”

Sonia glanced at the figure and exclaimed, “Wait a minute! Isn't that Sadie Pierre?”

Sonia, an experienced paparazzo who had pursued numerous celebrities, easily identified Sadie from behind. Sadie's fame had shot up ever since the Fredrick Group announced her engagement to Holden.

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Given that this mall belonged to the Fredrick Group, meeting Holden's fiancée here wasn't too surprising.

However, Sonia was taken aback when she caught sight of the child in Sadie's arms. She hadn't thought that Holden already had a child of this size, appearing to be around four or five years old.

“Well, well, look at that,” Sonia shook her head disapprovingly. “It was only six months after they announced their engagement, but their child appeared to be four years old. They hadn't even tied the knot. The rich sure have their own ways.”

“Poor thing, that child,” Ariana said, feeling empathy for Adele. “She might be autistic.”

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“What?” Sonia exclaimed. With a hint of disgust, she shook her head and said, “Maybe Holden isn't fond of this abnormal child, or perhaps he's hoping for a boy. That might be why he's postponing the wedding.”

Hearing this, Ariana frowned. While she didn't know Holden well, he didn't strike her as someone who would prefer sons over daughters based on their prior interactions.

However, from what she just witnessed, it did seem like Sadie was neglecting Adele. Could it be true that Holden didn't like Adele?

Ariana's heart swirled with a mix of concern and frustration as she couldn't help but worry about Adele. It had been five Long years since she last had any contact with Holden, and though she knew she didn't have the right to say anything, the feeling of compassion for the Little one lingered within her.

"Alright, enough fretting about other people's kids. Let's focus on your own little son. He must be getting all antsy at home now," Sonia suggested, trying to shift the topic. She could see right through Ariana's thoughts. She playfully pulled her along as they made their way outside.

Ariana stole a quick glance at the time and confirmed it was indeed getting late. This prompted them to pick up their pace. Shortly after, Sonia's car pulled up in front of a villa. Ariana had bought this villa for herself about two years ago.

As Ariana came out of the car, an utterly adorable little boy came darting from the villa. He had a tender complexion and exuded a natural charm, even at his tender age.

He dashed towards Ariana, threw himself on her, hugged her leg, and cheerfully shouted, "Mommy, you're finally back!"

Ariana burst into laughter and scooped him up. She planting a sweet kiss on his cheek as she asked, "Hey, did you follow Mr. Chadwick's instructions while I was away?"

"I did! But I still missed you so much. It's been a whole afternoon without seeing you, and I've missed you so much that my heart feels like it's going to break," Melon said, snuggling warmly into her embrace.

Ariana found it both amusing and heart-melting. She couldn't help but wonder where he picked up all these adorable words. Melon was always high spirited. He knew exactly how to steal people's hearts.

Right at that moment, Sonia playfully chimed in, “Hey, Melon, do you miss your awesome godmother?” Melon tilted his head, putting on a show of thinking.

“Hmm,” Sonia went on, teasingly, “Well, even if you don’t miss me, that’s fine. It’s just a shame that all those cool toy robots, transforming cars, and figurines in my car will go to waste.”

“I do miss a pretty godmother like you!” Melon immediately replied, his eyes sparkling with delight. Sonia couldn’t resist his charm and pulled him into a tight hug. They both burst into laughter, relishing the joy of the moment. Just then, a figure approached them from behind. Sonia noticed, promptly straightened up, and held Melon properly. With a

formal tone, she greeted, “Hello, Dr. Chadwick.”

Ariana couldn’t suppress a soft chuckle as she observed Sonia’s demeanor in the presence of Mitchel. It was as though Sonia transformed into an eager student, meeting her revered teacher.

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Ariana turned around gracefully, offering Mitchel a warm smile. It wasn’t surprising, for over the past five years, Mitchel had honed an even stronger academic aura and achieved remarkable feats in the field of medicine.

After exchanging pleasantries, the four of them entered the villa. The table was adorned with dishes and a cake awaited them.

Sonia lovingly lifted Melon onto a chair, and together, the three adults sang a heartfelt birthday song, their hands clapping in rhythm.

Melon sat obediently, his bright eyes fixated on the tempting cake before him.

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Ariana carefully arranged candles on the cake, and as Melon closed his eyes to make his wish, they all showered him with heartfelt gifts, transforming the room into a jubilant display of affection

In a heartbeat, Melon found himself surrounded by a mound of presents, each one a symbol of love from his adoring family. But due to health reasons, he couldn't indulge in too many sweets.

Ariana allowed him a small, tantalizing taste of the cream from the cake, which only left him wanting more.

As all children are naturally curious, the more something is withheld from them, the stronger their desire to obtain it. When Ariana and Sonia momentarily left for the kitchen, Melon couldn't resist the temptation, and with a mischievous glint in his eye, he secretly reached out for a touch of cream.

But just before he could succeed, Mitchel caught him in the act. Firmly, Mitchel held the young boy and spoke seriously. "Do you want to live in the hospital and eat yucky medicine?" "No," Melon replied obediently, hanging his head and speaking in a subdued tone, quickly retracting his hand.

Ever since he could remember, he had been taking medicine and getting injections, spending most of his time in the hospital. Now that he finally had a chance to leave, Melon didn't want to go back.

Mitchel gently massaged his head, his voice tender as he spoke. "If you don't wish to, then be a good boy and resist the temptation."

The young boy obediently nodded, yet an undertone of melancholy lingered, causing him to lower his head slightly.

Observing Melon's disheartened demeanor, Mitchel couldn't bear it any longer and consoled him, "When your body is completely healed, you'll have the chance to savor it."

Melon's spirits lifted at the news, and he inquired with eager anticipation, "When will I be completely healed?" Mitchel gently stroked Melon's head, his expression softening with affection.

Melon's birth had not been without challenges; Ariana had been administered psychotropic drugs that affected the developing fetus, causing Melon to be born weak and fragile.

Thankfully, specialized drugs for such conditions were available in Melcorn, and Melon had been receiving treatment there. Over the past six months, his condition had stabilized, and he had finally stopped taking the medication.

In a vulnerable moment, Melon pulled at Mitchel's sleeve and pleaded, "Please don't tell Mommy | tried to sneak a bite, okay?"

Mitchel couldn't be easily swayed, but a smile graced his face as he replied, "Then you'll have to make a written promise that you won't sneak a bite again."

"Okay

Their agreement stood firm: whenever Melon made a mistake, he had to pen a promise.

" Melon readily agreed, showing no hesitation.

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Despite being just five years old, Melon had acquired the skill of reading at an early age due to having few playmates during his hospital stay. His brightness and impressive vocabulary matched that of an eight or nine-year-old.

After dinner, Mitchel received an urgent phone call, calling him back to the Laboratory. Meanwhile, Melon seized the chance to retreat to his room and craft the promise. Left alone in the living room, Sonia and Ariana tidied up while engaging in conversation.

Sonia let out a wistful sigh. "Mitchel is truly a good man. The way he cares for Melon speaks volumes about his affection for him." Ariana smiled and nodded, agreeing without a hint of denial.

Playfully nudging Ariana, Sonia couldn't resist a bit of gossip. "He treats you quite well too. Are you genuinely not considering being with Mitchel?"

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"Why would you think that way?" Ariana sighed helplessly, gently shaking her head. "I've said it before, Mitchel and I are just friends."

"Yeah, sure," Sonia replied, though she couldn't bring herself to believe it. Over the years, she had witnessed how Mitchel treated both Melon and Ariana. He would go to great lengths, enduring 16-hour flights, just to visit them in Melcorn. All these gestures convinced Sonia that Mitchel cared deeply for both Melon and Ariana. Even Melon seemed to adore Mitchel.

Realizing her thoughts had wandered, Sonia composed herself and advised Ariana, "So many years have passed, and you should consider starting over. Don't hold yourself back."

Ariana simply smiled, assuring Sonia not to worry. "You're overthinking things. My relationship with Mitchel is straightforward. He is my benefactor, and after all these years of being together, he's almost like family to me. I am grateful for everything he has done."

As Ariana spoke, her voice took on a somber tone, conveying the weight of her emotions. "I understand your concern for me, but I feel as though I can never truly move on from the past in this life."

With Theodore's passing, her soul seemed to have departed with him. Their child at that time had been a saving grace, providing the strength she needed to carry on.

Ariana forced a smile, turning her gaze towards Sonia. "You don't have to worry about me. Right now, all I want is to raise my boy and witness him grow up."

Sonia sensed the forced nature of the smile and longed to offer more comfort, but she found herself unsure of where to begin. This matter seemed beyond her ability to meddle.

“By the way, what are your plans now that you’re back?” Sonia swiftly changed the subject, gently wiping the table as she asked.

Ariana replied as she tidied up the dishes, “I plan to shift the focus of my media production work to our country. It’s already in the preparation stage.”

Throughout the years, Ariana had dedicated herself to investing in Melcorn, steadily amassing a substantial capital. Now, her heart burned with the ardent desire to return to her homeland and start her own talent agency.

“You really are a workaholic,” Sonia teased playfully. She knew that over the years, Ariana had become completely engrossed in her work and raising her child.

Ariana’s studies and certifications were exclusively centered on children, specializing in fields such as certified children’s nutritionist and children’s psychological counselor. She was resolute in ensuring Melon’s healthy growth.

Yet, Sonia also empathized with Ariana’s underlying need to keep herself constantly occupied, perhaps to ward off the haunting specters of past nightmares.

Sonia reached into her bag to retrieve an elegant invitation letter.

With a warm smile, she handed it over to Ariana, saying, “Here, it’s a new variety show presented by BRD Group. This exceptional show revolves around talent agents searching for undiscovered gems and nurturing them into artists under their own prestigious banners. Picture this: the agents will mentor and train the chosen amateurs for a brief period, culminating in a dazzling competition where they’ll showcase their singing and dancing abilities. The victorious team will earn the extraordinary opportunity to take part in BRD Group’s major production.”

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“It's truly a rare and magnificent chance,” Sonia continued, her voice tinged with pride. “As a renowned media talent myself, I was personally extended this invitation. If you're looking to expand your reach in the domestic market, you absolutely cannot afford to miss this golden opportunity.”

For many, collaborating directly with the illustrious BRD Group was nothing short of a dream come true. The prospect both tempted and filled Ariana with hesitancy, caught between desire and caution. After all, working with the BRD Group would inevitably lead her to encounter Holden.

Ariana's quizzical expression caught Sonia's attention and she asked, “What's up? Such a golden opportunity, not the sort a workaholic like you would readily pass up on.”

Ariana heaved a sigh. “Truth be told, I'm not much inclined to partner up with BRD Group, and encountering Holden is perhaps the last thing I want.”

Five years had slipped by without contact, rendering them strangers now. Moreover, Ariana had steered clear of anyone from her past associated with Theodore, lest it stir up the anguish and desolation in her heart.

Adding to this, her thoughts wandered to the little girl she had met at the mall earlier that afternoon. It dawned on her that if Sadie was treating Adele that way, it might be because Holden did not like Adele, who had autism.

This further fueled Ariana's predisposition against Holden.