

## Unconscious 901

Chapter: 901

“Does that mean that you are turning down a chance to work with the BRD Group? That’s rare. You know, everyone is craving for a chance to be associated with the BRD Group!” Sonia exclaimed, a dash of surprise tinging her words. She could tell that Ariana had crossed paths with Holden before.

She reasoned with her, “Business is business, life is life. A bit more pragmatism could be in order. BRD Group reigns supreme in the domestic media arena. Should you team up, it’s your ticket to quickly gaining visibility in the local market. And let’s remember, this is strictly a business pact. No need to personally contend with Holden. He’s a busy, enigmatic figure. We, the paparazzi, haven’t even glimpsed his shadow.

You might not even lay eyes on him during the negotiations. But the resources BRD Group brings are concrete and formidable.” Persuaded, Ariana nodded. “Very well, then. In the next few days, I’ll set up a media venture and enlist for the show.”

“Now we’re talking! Chin up and carve out that radiant future!” Sonia cheered, playfully intertwining arms with Ariana. She got a couple of liquor bottles from the drawer and said, “What say we toast to our prelude of success?”

In the mood for a celebratory swig, Ariana accepted the drink with a grin and teased, “You might not be able to outdrink me now!” “Oh? Let’s see who reigns as the Liquor monarch!” Sonia shot back.

And so, they indulged in drink and conversation well into the night, the alcohol having made its merry way into their systems. Sonia, the first to succumb to its effects, sprawled on the sofa, asleep.

Finishing her drink in a single swig, Ariana covered Sonia with a blanket. She then rose, intending to check up on her son. But as she approached, a burnt scent wafted from his room.

Baffled and anxious, Ariana quickened her steps toward Melon’s room.

As she approached the door, the unmistakable smell of charred surroundings grew stronger. With a surge of fear, she pushed the door ajar, only to have her heart sink at the sight of the flames.

A fire had broken out in the room, and in the midst of the chaos stood the one responsible, frantically trying to put out the flames.

Melon, caught in the grip of panic, found himself powerless amidst the fiery scene, his terror-stricken gaze locking onto Ariana. Upon seeing her, he stretched out his tiny arms, tearfully calling, "Mommy!"

Ariana found herself rooted to the spot, her limbs numb and unable to move.

The raging flames intertwined with memories of the past; images of the fire that ravaged their lives five years ago surged. The inferno consumed the room, and she could only kneel in despair and watch the event unfold, tears mingling with the heat, unable to save her baby girl.

"Why are you just standing there? Hurry up and douse the flames!" Sonia awoke amidst the ruckus, catching a whiff of the thick smoke. In a rush, she darted over and saw Ariana dazed by the door. Urgently, she propelled her into action, barking, "Get the fire extinguisher!"

Ariana snapped out of her stupor, seizing the fire extinguisher with Sonia. Together, they unleashed its contents on the fire, and luckily, the blaze wasn't overly fierce, yielding to their efforts.

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After quelling the fire, Ariana finally comprehended the close call they had just dodged. Her strength waned, causing the fire extinguisher to slip from her grasp, and she collapsed to the floor, shaking uncontrollably.

"Mommy..." Melon's voice quivered as he called out, tears in his eyes.

Ariana raised her gaze, tears unwillingly streaming down her face, and she drew Melon close, chastising him amidst her weeping.

Melon fought back his tears, grasping the gravity of his error, his eyes turning reddened. He hugged Ariana, admitting, "Mommy, I'm so sorry."

Ariana perceived the resemblance in his eyes to Theodore's, and despite her anger, she couldn't muster the heart to prolong his punishment. She held him tightly, sobbing, "Do you realize how scared you made Mommy?"

Holding Melon near, Ariana grappled with an influx of emotions surging through her heart.

She couldn't imagine going through the anguish of losing her child again, as the hospital blaze had snatched away her other child half a decade ago.

Chapter: 902

When Ariana was pregnant, she carried twins — a boy and a girl.

Regrettably, the girl's heartbeat was feeble, prompting immediate placement in an incubator post-birth.

During that time, Ariana was frail, unable to visit her daughter frequently, but she was fraught with worry for her.

Tragically, a fire erupted within the hospital. After securing Melon's safety, Ariana dashed back to rescue her incubated daughter. But facing the raging fire, her attempts to save her daughter, just ten days old, were futile.

Helplessly, she witnessed the flames engulf the room of incubators, sealing her baby girl's fate.

These successive devastations nearly shattered Ariana, pushing her mental state to the precipice.

Only with the unwavering love for Melon and the support and encouragement of Sonia and Mitchel did she find the strength to endure.

Without their presence, Ariana could have succumbed Long ago. Amid these painful recollections, Ariana tenderly caressed Melon's head, tears coursing down her cheeks without restraint. Melon, seeing Ariana's tears, used his small hands to wipe them away.

Unable to hold his tears, he sobbed and uttered, "Mommy, please don't cry. I didn't mean to. I know today is also my sister's birthday, even though she's not here. An elderly patient in the neighboring hospital bed mentioned that burning things could reach those beyond. So, I wanted to burn a cake for my sister on our birthday."

From his earliest days, Melon understood he had a twin sister who departed shortly after birth. He was aware of Ariana's profound yearning for his sister. She drank a lot yearly on his birthday, shedding tears before a cake. Melon inadvertently witnessed this once.

Consequently, he often surmised that Ariana's sorrow would be alleviated if his sister were present. He believed that if he presented his sister with a cake, she would return briefly to visit Ariana.

Hearing Melon's words, Ariana's eyes reddened. She had not anticipated his perceptiveness to be so acute, his attention to detail so sharp. A pang of sadness tugged at her heart for him.

Her harshness from moments ago now weighed on her. With a twinge of remorse, she realized that he, too, had been scared out of his wits by the fire.

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In a tight embrace, Ariana held Melon and gently wiped away her tears before her contrite words flowed. "I owe you an apology, my dear. The tone I took earlier was inappropriate. Did it scare you? Are you hurt?"

Melon shook his head.

As her eyes lingered on the aftermath scattered across the floor, Ariana continued, "In the future, would you let me in on such endeavors? We can do it together. And remember, toying with fire alone is a perilous game. Do you hear what I am saying?"

“Yes.” Melon nodded obediently. His eyes still glistened with tears.

After offering her comfort to Melon, Ariana joined Sonia in her efforts to restore order to the room. Although the fire hadn't been serious, the idea of Melon sleeping alone did not sit well with Ariana. So she took him to her room.

In a soft hum, she managed to lull Melon into sleep.

Yet, sleep eluded Ariana herself. The return to her homeland rekindled years of memories, a cascade of recollections that kept rest at bay.

Chapter: 903 Yielding to wakefulness, she turned to her phone to check the news.

Time spent in distraction only led her to an empty search bar. An inexplicable feeling gripped her, urging her to type in the name Theodore Anderson.

For the first time in many years, Ariana dared to type that name on her phone.

Her eyes began to sting as she waited for the page to load, and felt an unexplained uneasiness.

But when she saw the results, she was thrown off.

Theodore's presence on the internet was virtually non-existent. There was totally nothing related to him! Feeling strange, she tried her name, the Anderson Group, even Darian Anderson.

Yet, nothing greeted her eyes.

The enigma was baffling.

Even if the Anderson Group had fallen, its luminaries extinguished, they had once etched their presence.

What was more, Darian's murder of his wife and Jasper's evil act of kidnapping had made headlines. How could all that information vanish within five years? It seemed that a nebulous void had swallowed them whole, leaving no remnants online.

Ariana immersed herself in futile searches, the clicks navigating paths that led nowhere. Finally, giving in to the pace of the digital age, she put the matter aside. She Lay back and hoped slumber would take her.

The sun heralded a new day for Ariana, Sonia and Melon to explore the magic of an amusement park. Melon's zeal was evident as he began the preparations early in the morning.

In the past, his health had curtailed his exploits to carousels and mascot snapshots. Today, he was granted access to exhilarating rides, a permission that ignited his spirit.

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Upon arrival, Melon's vivacity filled the air. Ariana and Sonia struggled to keep up with his pace, playing various types of interesting amusements.

Not long after, Sonia, the first to yield, slumped into a chair and beckoned with a feeble wave. "I surrender! Allow me to rest." "Alright, you keep an eye on him while I get some water for you." Then Ariana entrusted Melon to Sonia so that she could get some water.

Melon, however, was not done playing. His big, bright eyes Looked about and were instantly attracted to the colorful cartoon balloons floating nearby.

As Sonia rested, he seized the moment, slipping away stealthily.

Melon stood in silence, devoid of any coins in his pockets, his gaze fixed on the vibrant balloons before him.

Caught in the vendor's gaze, he became the object of her affection, compelling her to make a balloon in the Likeness of a pig, so enchanted was she by his endearing demeanor.

"Sorry, I must decline. My mother has strictly forbidden me from taking things from others for free," Melon declined with a polite wave, although his heart yearned for the balloon.

After contemplation, he emptied his pockets of all candies and asked expectantly, "Madam, might I barter these candies for the balloon?"

"Certainly, my dear. Your charm is irresistible!" the vendor responded, her heart melting at his cuteness.

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"Thank you, Ma'am!" With the prized balloon in hand, Melon's grin illuminated his face. He could hardly wait to return to Ariana and share it with her.

On his way, a flower nursery caught his attention. There, nestled in a corner, was a young girl muttering in a low voice.

She was counting, and her counting seemed askew, for Melon observed a leap from twenty straight to fifty as he drew near. A bemused smile graced his lips, and he inquired, "Engrossed in counting, are you?"

Unperturbed by his presence, the girl's gaze remained fixed downward.

Craning his neck, Melon saw the girl his age in a pink bubble skirt on the grass.

The sun was beating down fiercely, flushing her delicate face, which glistened with sweat. How long she had occupied this spot remained an enigma to him.

"Why are you squatting here?" Melon asked, his curiosity piqued. Still, the girl offered no response.

Undeterred, Melon extended the balloon toward her. "Should you deign to answer my question, this balloon shall be yours. What say you?"

At last, a reaction stirred in her. She raised her gaze, the balloon capturing her attention. Yearning lingered in her eyes, yet she remained in a contemplative reverie without uttering a word.

In the presence of this doll-like girl, Melon found her actions not peculiar but rather an intricate play of silence and introspection. An unexplainable kinship seemed to tether them, and he couldn't just place it.

Surveying the surroundings and finding no adult figure in proximity, Melon ventured, "Have you lost your way?"

The girl remained silent.

Melon pressed on, "Your silence shall be interpreted as consent."

Her unbroken yet still gaze bore into him, eyes blinking but devoid of words.

"Great! What about being my sister?" Melon's joy was evident as he clapped his little hands. "My mom shall delight in this new addition to the family!"

He then knelt, secured the balloon to her wrist, and stood up. The fact that she didn't protest made him happier. "Now that you don't object, I'll consider that a promise. So, consider this my gift to you."

Not a word was spoken, yet the girl did not refuse the balloon either.

And so, a sense of impending siblinghood filled Melon's heart, contentment at the thought of Ariana's happiness.

A woman's voice came as he reached out to take her hand in his.

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“Adele.” Adele? Was that her name?

Melon turned his head, studying the little girl and etching her name into his memory. Then, his attention shifted back to the woman drawing near.

Chapter: 905 The woman’s expression was marked by a slight frown. Her eyes scrutinized Melon with an air of disdain.

She appeared to be Adele’s mother. With that in mind, a wave of disillusionment crested within Melon. His aspiration to welcome a younger sibling had been thwarted.

Sonia’s anxious call momentarily reached Melon’s ears, jolting him to reality. Swiftly, he retraced his steps.

Yet unbeknownst to him, Adele, who had been ignoring him, now lifted her head, her eyes unwavering as she watched him leave.

Sadie obstructed Adele's view, her brow furrowing as she beheld Melon’s retreating figure. With a contemptuous smile, she remarked, “That boy was so unkempt, clearly a wild child with unruly behavior. In the future, steer clear of such kids.”

Adele remained impervious to these words, but Sadie had grown accustomed to her lack of reaction.

Sheltered under an umbrella, her face meticulously made up, Sadie looked down at Adele crouched on the ground, a genial smile on her lips. “Did you manage to count to a thousand?”

Adele shook her head, maintaining her lowered gaze and said nothing.

Inwardly, Sadie sneered, labeling Adele as a simpleton. But her face showed a gentle smile as she said, "What shall we do then? Your reward will slip through your fingers!"

Adele kept silent, still crouched on the ground, her fingers toying with the grass beneath her feet.

Undeterred by Adele's lack of response, Sadie continued, "It matters not; even if you've not counted to a thousand, Mommy still adores you.

The blueberry pudding shall be yours, regardless. But when Daddy inquires if you relished your time at the amusement park, you must say you did, alright?"

Sadie's voice retained its soft timbre as she extended a hand to lift Adele, clutching the blueberry pudding in one hand and the umbrella in the other. "Come on now, say you had a splendid time with Mommy."

Meanwhile, Sonia playfully pinched Melon's ear, reprimanding him, "In a place as crowded as this amusement park, how could you recklessly wander? What if nefarious individuals took you away? Your mother and I could be in really bad shape!"

"Forgive me, Godmother, I won't repeat it," Melon replied apologetically.

Sonia's words flowed smoothly, though in truth they were barely registered as Melon's focus was riveted on the flowerbed in the distance.

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Sonia detected his absentmindedness, a mixture of irritation and amusement bubbling within her.

Tracing his line of sight, Sonia saw a striking woman donning sunglasses, cradling a young girl, poised to depart.

Sonia knew her! That was none other than Sadie. Melon said, "That little sister was counting amidst the flowerbed, and her face was red from the sun's touch."

Sonia couldn't help but inwardly Lament Sadie's callousness. On such a sweltering day, she had left the girl there to count while she remained immaculately composed, radiating freshness.

Being a professional paparazzo, Sonia promptly got her phone, capturing a few snapshots of their retreating figures.

Soon, Ariana returned, and Sonia recounted the episode, "When I saw the little girl, she was sweating profusely and Looking at Sadie pitifully.

I felt sorry for her. She's so young, yet Sadie seems indifferent to the prospect of the little girl possibly suffering from heatstroke. It's truly unfeeling."

Ariana's mind conjured up the image of Adele at Sonia's words, a pang of empathy gripping her heart. An overwhelming rage surged through her, almost compelling her to go and get Adele.

Chapter: 906 However, the reality was cruel; it was a private matter, and outsiders held no warrant to intervene.

After taking a short break, the three of them decided to leave the amusement park. It seemed Melon also had enjoyed enough fun for the day, so it was time for them to go home.

But right at that moment, Ariana received a phone call.

"Now? I have to meet now?" Ariana sounded puzzled. Glancing at Melon and Sonia, she exchanged a few more words with the caller and hung up.

"What's going on?" Seeing that Ariana was in distress, Sonia approached her. "One of my business partners wants to meet right now," Ariana explained as she put her phone back into her bag.

Hearing that, Melon hugged Ariana tightly, nuzzling his cheek against hers, and said obediently, "Then, Mommy, please come back early. ILL miss you."

"Of course, sweetie." Ariana couldn't help adoring him and happily kissed his little face. She let Sonia take him away to look after him.

She then waved them goodbye and hailed a taxi to go to the designated meeting place.

Coincidentally, the meeting place was in the Central Building, which was located next to the former Anderson Group building. After many years, the Anderson Group building had been converted into a comprehensive office building.

When the taxi reached the destination, Ariana got out and stood in front of the building where the Anderson Group used to be. Looking up at the top floor, she felt a wave of sorrow wash over her.

She could imagine how Theodore had once looked down from the top of the Anderson Group building. However, right now, the glory had disappeared like a puff of wind, and everything had changed. It seemed that she was the only one left with a vivid memory of what had happened.

Remembering that she had an important appointment, Ariana shook her head to clear her thoughts. She smoothed out her disordered clothes to make herself presentable. Now that she had spent the whole day playing with kids, she could feel that her makeup had faded away.

She was still dressed in clothes adorned with cartoon characters, but there was no time for her to change. The only thing she could fix was her face. Wanting to freshen up her makeup, she searched through her bag but couldn't find a mirror.

As she looked around, she noticed a row of parked cars on the roadside. It seemed like the owners weren't inside. Without thinking much, she walked up to one of the cars, using its window as a mirror.

After fixing up her makeup, she was satisfied and left. She never noticed that there was someone inside the car, and that someone was observing every move she made.

The car window rolled down as soon as Ariana left, revealing the handsome face of Holden.

He had noticed her presence ever since she showed up in front of the office building.

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Sitting leisurely in the car, Holden watched Ariana's figure grow smaller as she walked away. It was only when his assistant, Shawn Williams, reminded him of an incoming call that he came to his senses.

"Mr. Fredrick, there's a call for you." Holden diverted his gaze and rolled up the window again. He concluded the call in a few brief words before asking, "The woman just now... is she an employee of the Fredrick Group?"

Shawn felt perplexed. Holden had always been indifferent and unimpressed by anyone, including women. Why would he suddenly be so interested in a random woman? Nevertheless, he answered, "I don't think she is. I haven't seen her at the company before. She looks young, like a recent graduate. So, she is probably here for a job interview."

Holden listened without making any further comments before glancing at where Ariana had disappeared through the car window

Chapter: 907 "There's a meeting with our potential business partner in 15 minutes. Give me the information about the partner," he said calmly.

"The partner's name is Ariana Edwards. She just returned to the country, and her company has recently been established," Shawn explained as he handed the papers to Holden.

Holden glanced at the papers with a frown of disapproval. "How can someone with a newly established company and limited experience qualify for a partnership with us? How did you vet her?"

Shawn quickly replied, “She was recommended by Miss Bronte from the Bronte Group. She fully endorses Ariana. Although Ariana has a short domestic track record, her achievements in foreign investment and business development are remarkable. Miss Bronte believes she has great potential.”

Holden furrowed his brows and then tossed the papers aside and said, “Give her ten minutes to prove her abilities.”

Ariana strolled into the establishment, and Mandy Bronte hurriedly approached her. She was taken aback as she looked at Ariana, still in a cartoon T-shirt and jeans. “Oh my, do you grasp the gravity of the person you're about to meet? This is a heavyweight business partner with an influential background. They practically hold a monopoly over all global new energy projects. You Look a tad too casual.”

Mandy had been Ariana’s senior during her time abroad, and she was the one who planned this meeting for her.

Over the past few years, Ariana had dipped her toes into various industries, not just media and film ventures, but also burgeoning sectors, all reaping impressive outcomes.

With Melcorn’s energy industry in its fledgling stage, Ariana aimed to invest, yet her expertise fell short.

Recognizing Ariana’s capabilities and harking back to their positive rapport from college, Mandy aimed to assist her by creating this opportunity. She mobilized every contact in her arsenal to make it happen.

Cognizant of her casual attire, Ariana expressed regret, “I apologize. I was at the amusement park with my child earlier today. The invitation caught me off guard, and I had no time to change.”

Mandy let out a sigh, empathizing with her predicament. “It’s unavoidable. That boss’ time is precious, and securing this meeting was no small feat. Rescheduling of the meeting is not an option. Luckily, I have a formal outfit stashed in my car. You should be able to slip into it. Come with me and try, okay?”

Ariana nodded appreciatively and trailed Mandy to switch her attire. Once they were prepped, they waited together by the elevator door.

The building encompassed multiple floors, hence the elevator took time to descend. During this interlude, Ariana and Mandy engaged in conversation.

Ariana turned her gaze and unexpectedly locked eyes with a striking face at that juncture.

It was Sadie.

Ariana harbored no favorable sentiments toward her. So, without a flicker of emotion, she averted her gaze and turned her attention to Adele, who was standing next to Sadie.

Then, Adele's large eyes were affixed on her, unblinking.

Ariana's recollections darted to the scene Sonia had described earlier - Adele squatted under the blazing sun, engaged in her counting. A pang of empathy gripped her heart.

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Just as Ariana prepared to say something, Sadie subtly shifted her stance, obstructing Ariana's view while casting a hostile glare at her.

Her voice dripped with acrimony as she asked, "What's caught your attention? | found your behavior strange yesterday, and now fate has us cross paths again! Could it be that you have your eye on my child?"

Ariana regarded Sadie's remarks as baseless and irrational, prompting her to offer a sarcastic smile while avoiding confrontation.

To her astonishment, Sadie's resolve didn't waver. On the contrary, her aggression intensified, her finger pointing directly at Ariana. "Why are you here? You must have an ulterior motive. Are you a child trafficker?"

Chapter: 908 Before Ariana could respond, Sadie persisted, "Where are the security personnel?! Remove this suspicious woman at once!"

The security guards were about to step forward, but Mandy intervened, perceiving the lack of foundation for Sadie's accusations. She positioned herself before Ariana and said, "We are here for a pre-arranged business meeting."

She then presented the appointment details as proof.

Sadie scanned the proof, realizing that Shawn had set the meeting. Her composure nearly faltered, anxiety and apprehension washing over her.

Shawn was Holden's assistant, signifying that Holden must have given the go-ahead for this meeting. Implicitly, this meant Ariana was about to meet Holden!

Sadie felt a rush of panic as her heart raced frantically. She dug her nails into her palms, desperately attempting to soothe herself. She was determined to prevent Ariana from encountering Holden at any cost.

With her teeth gritted, Sadie quivered as she gestured towards Ariana and exclaimed, "You expect to cooperate with the Fredrick Group? That's 'laughable. You have the morals of an alley cat. You attempted to snatch my child at the mall. The Fredrick Group won't be doing business with someone like you."

Ariana's eyebrows furrowed in annoyance, though she held her silence.

The connection between this energy company and Fredrick Group explained their tight grip on the global market. It also clarified why her background check had yielded limited information about them.

Ariana was unconcerned with Sadie's accusations. But Mandy's anger flared. "It is for Mr. Fredrick to decide whether the Fredrick Group will work with her, not you!" she yelled, her face growing red.

Sadie bristled, her eyes flashing with fury. "I'm engaged to him! Why can't I have a say in his business matters?" She shifted her gaze to Ariana. "This woman even attempted to kidnap Mr. Fredrick's precious daughter. Once he discovers the truth, he won't work with her!"

Ariana marveled at Sadie's audacious skill for twisting facts and deflecting blame. Her ability to completely distort the truth was remarkable.

Ariana couldn't hold back any longer. With determination in her voice, she addressed Sadie, "It's quite evident that you're not concerned for your child's safety. A true caregiver wouldn't have allowed the little one to wander alone in the mall, nor scolded her for getting lost.

Moreover, leaving a small child out in the blazing sun for hours to count by herself seemed a lot like mistreatment, don't you think?"

Ariana's straightforward accusations caught Sadie off guard for a moment. How had Ariana come to know about this? She had taken great care to disguise herself, hoping to avoid being recognized.

For the sake of Holden, she had taken Adele to the bustling amusement park, putting on an act of a devoted mother. But once there, the sweltering heat made her reluctant to stand in the endless lines with Adele.

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So she left Adele by herself with a task to count to one thousand and then come look for her.

With that, she retreated to the shade, convinced that her clever disguise would shield her from being recognized. But Ariana saw through her disguise.

"Oh, you mistreated your child?" Mandy said loudly, making sure her words reached those nearby.

As their voices rose, touching on issues such as child abuse and trafficking, a sizable crowd began to gather around them.

Seeing the growing audience, a flicker of panic flashed in Sadie's eyes, although she battled to maintain a composed demeanor. "Obviously, both of you came here with malicious intentions, spreading these cruel falsehoods!" she asserted. "Security, escort these bitter women away immediately!"

As the security guards approached, intent on apprehending Ariana and Mandy, the two women put up resistance. In a forceful move, Mandy shoved one of the guards backward and declared, "We were invited here to discuss business! There's no valid reason for you to force us out!"

Ariana's anger reached its peak. "You're the one mistreating a child, and yet you try to portray yourself as the victim? It's clear you have zero concern for her well-being!"

Among the gathering crowd, whispers and murmurs began to spread. Many recognized Sadie due to her recent rise in fame. Ariana's allegations ignited passionate debates among them.

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In minutes, chaos erupted, with voices raised in loud arguments all around. Sadie's composure faded, revealing a malicious expression on her face. "Why did I even hire you useless security guards?" she shouted. "Get rid of these trespassers immediately!"

Just at that moment, a commanding male voice broke through the commotion from behind them. "Enough! Everyone stand down."

Everyone turned and watched Holden's assistant, Shawn, walk over.

Holden waited impatiently in the conference room. He had sent Shawn to pick up the partners he was expecting when he saw that they hadn't come yet. When Shawn arrived, he was stunned to find Ariana and Mandy in a heated confrontation with Sadie.

"What's going on here?" Shawn asked, watching the tense scene. Mandy quickly explained to Shawn how Sadie had accused them earlier. She was still angry and couldn't calm down at all. "We don't know why she's so convinced we have an evil plan in mind!"

Hearing that, Shawn shifted his gaze to Sadie and said, "Ms. Pierre, there's definitely a misunderstanding. These two ladies are our esteemed partners from Melcorn, whom Mr. Fredrick holds in very high regard."

Hearing what Shawn said, Sadie's face darkened momentarily. However, she put on a forced smile. "I see. My mistake then."

Sadie was pissed off and she clenched her fists so hard that her fingernails dug painfully into her palms. But even then, she maintained her good-girl facade perfectly in front of Shawn.

Shawn didn't say anything else. He glanced at his watch and then said to Ariana and Mandy, "Mr. Fredrick has been waiting. I'll take you there now."

Ariana nodded quickly. She was eager to avoid further conflict with Sadie, so she and Mandy followed Shawn into the elevator. Sadie's whole body trembled as she watched the elevator doors close.

She could barely suppress her rage.

That shameless, clingy witch, Ariana! She just wouldn't give up!

Sadie cursed under her breath, gritting her teeth as her mind raced.

What could she do now? She couldn't let Ariana meet with Holden. What if seeing Ariana jogged Holden's memory?

While Sadie was lost in thought, Adele gingerly touched her arm.

Feeling someone touching her, Sadie reflexively slapped the person hard without thinking twice or bothering to see who it was. However, aware of passers-by around her, Sadie quickly pulled herself together. Abusing Adele in public could put everything in jeopardy.

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Holden should never know about this. Sadie forced a smile and crouched down in front of Adele. "What's wrong, sweetie?" she asked softly. However, Adele didn't say anything. The little girl just hid her reddened hand behind her back and lowered her head.

A sense of disgust surged up in Sadie's heart when she saw Adele's action, but she maintained her fake kindness. She scooped Adele up and asked softly, "Are you missing daddy? Let's go see him."

Finally, Adele slowly wrapped her arms around Sadie's neck and rested her head on Sadie's shoulder.

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Sadie walked into the elevator with Adele in her arms. However, the moment the elevator doors closed, her smile vanished instantly.

She had assumed that Ariana would be devastated or institutionalized after what happened five years ago. But Ariana seemed to be thriving.

Sadie was seething, but she remained confident. It didn't matter that Ariana was back! The past was gone. Holden had long forgotten Ariana.

Now, she was the only woman in his life, and she had several trump cards to keep herself in that position. What did she have to fear?

A cold glimmer flashed through Sadie's eyes as she gently stroked Adele's hair.

Meanwhile, in the conference room, a tense Holden sat in the head seat, checking his watch frequently. The partners he was expecting were already nearly ten minutes late.

Just when he couldn't wait anymore, his phone rang.

Holden's brows furrowed slightly when he saw the caller ID. He nonetheless answered the call. Whatever his interlocutor told him instantly drained every color from his face. He hung up and stood to leave immediately.

Just then, the conference room door swung open.

Ashareholder entered from outside just as Holden was about to leave.

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He immediately apologized, "I'm sorry, Mr. Fredrick, something came up, and I'm late."

Holden appeared uninterested in dealing with him at the moment. He turned to another director and said, "Please handle everything, Mr. Waterhouse."

With that, he made a hasty exit from the conference room.

As Holden stepped into his private elevator, another elevator opened simultaneously, revealing Ariana and two others disembarking.

Ariana's thoughts were intricate, uncertain about the forthcoming interaction with Holden. She was curious about his appearance and wondered if he would be unmasked this time.

She had a hunch that someone in such a high-ranking position would possess profound insights beyond ordinary comprehension.

Moreover, with his troublesome fiancée, Sadie, Ariana foresaw that this collaboration would likely be quite vexing.

Upon entering the conference room, Ariana instinctively surveyed the room before fixating her gaze on the figure at the head of the table.

To her astonishment, a kindly and gentle countenance met her gaze.

Time had turned his hair gray, and his face bore the marks of years gone by.

Ariana was taken aback.

Could this man truly be Holden?!

Her mind went momentarily blank.

Just then, Mr. Waterhouse said, "Mr. Fredrick has urgent matters to attend to, so | will be in charge of the negotiations this time."

Hearing this, Ariana couldn't help but let out a relieved sigh.