

## Unconscious 171

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Theodore was still in a foul mood. He picked up the coffee and took a sip, but it was so horribly bitter that he scowled and put the cup back on the table in revulsion.

“What even is this? Take it away.”

Horace moved the cup away from his employer obediently, but he couldn't help proposing, “If you think that Theodore Anderson as an identity isn't working out, why not give another identity a try? Maybe you'll get something you won't expect.”

Theodore calmed down when he heard this. He tapped his fingers on the table, lost in thought.

Half a month passed. The crew of the program, Miss Back, had already resumed shooting. After the first public performance was broadcast, Sarah won both on-stage site voting and online popularity voting. ©

The investment in this program was huge and increasingly rising.

The program was not only gorgeously filmed but also caused a lot of hot topics. In addition to the previous heat, Miss Back became the dark horse of the variety shows released this year.

Then two more public performances were recorded, and tens of millions of netizens were hooked and planned to watch them before they were broadcast.

Among the artists, Sarah and Elva were both highly anticipated to be the reigning champion.

Around this time, Ariana was at the recording site of the fourth public performance. Compared to the first time she accompanied Sarah to a recording, this time she was treated much better and with a lot more respect. She was not only offered proper food and drink but also beckoned to an agent's exclusive seat.

The only unfortunate thing was that that seat was arranged right next to Jasper's.

There was an audience watching off the stage, along with more than a dozen cameras set in different corners to capture all scenes of the public performance at any time.

Naturally, there were some cameras aimed at the exclusive seats of the agents to capture their reactions.

Even if Ariana and Jasper were hostile to each other, under the constant surveillance of the cameras, they had to force themselves to smile and behave.

"It seems you've had a good time recently. I can tell by your face; it's much rounder." Jasper's comment

was clearly meant to provoke her since he knew Ariana couldn't do anything to him now.

Ariana didn't reply and stared straight ahead, ignoring him. She did roll her eyes inwardly.

When she didn't respond, and since he was an arrogant person, he assumed she stayed silent

because of fear.

He turned to look at Ariana's lovely face and warned, "Don't get too full of yourself. Sarah may have

been in the limelight recently, but you'd better be careful. You know what they say. The bigger they are,

the harder they fall."

Annoyed, Ariana changed her posture, increasing the distance between them as much as she could

and moving farther away from Jasper.

Jasper thought he hit a nerve. He kept the fake smile on his face and prodded again, "Are you angry?

By the way, you must have seen my brother's recent scandal. As his wife, you must be heartbroken.

But I advise you not to put all your focus on your career. Don't work so hard just to win the bet. I

suppose if you lost his favor, the loss would outweigh the gain."

It was quite obvious that Jasper was good at provoking her. He only said a few words, yet he brought

up a bunch of horrible memories in Ariana.

Since she left without letting him know that day, Theodore never reached out to her again. She assumed he must have returned to Eleymond. Perhaps he had forgotten about her and was flirting with his lover now.

Ariana was annoyed at this thought, but she was more infuriated about being provoked again. She snorted and mocked Jasper, "Since you have the time to gossip, maybe you should be taking better care of your artist. Just look at Elva. There are dark circles under her eyes and blisters around the corners of her mouth. No amount of foundation can cover that."

Jasper glared at her and gnashed his teeth with hatred. Elva was the one most affected by Sarah's rising popularity.

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Both of them were singers who debuted at the same time and, thus, were consistently being compared all the time.

Five years ago, Elva had been not nearly as good as Sarah. But who could know that Elva was still no match for the current Sarah, who hadn't been on stage for the past five years?

How humiliating!

Elva was so wrought up about it that she kept begging Jasper to find a solution.

Jasper had thought he had an easy win by betting on Elva. He didn't expect that he would end up cleaning up the mess.

Jasper's eyebrow twitched, but he controlled his temper and snapped at Ariana, "Don't be too complacent. Extreme joy begets sorrow."

Ariana brushed him off. She thought Jasper was talking nonsense.

She focused her attention on the stage and saw that it was playing the behind-the-scenes footage of Sarah's group. It was playing in preparation for Sarah's group's stage performance.

Sarah was soon due to go on the stage for the next performance.

Since she was in no mood to argue with Jasper, Ariana began to watch the show intently.

Other than the first public performance, the later rounds required the artists to perform as a group.

Compared to individual performances, group performances valued the compatibility of tacit understandings and styles. Everyone was like a small gear in a bigger machine. The performers had to work together to complete the performance to perfection.

There were five members in Sarah's group this time, and the other four were either movie actresses or dancers. Therefore, Sarah was picked to be the lead singer and was responsible for the highest pitch during the song.

The show was on. The lights dimmed, and the audience hushed.

Then, the spotlights gradually turned from dark to bright, and the five silhouettes appeared in the mist created by dry ice.

Suddenly, a beautiful high note pierced the air without any accompaniment, which stunned the audience.

Sarah's beautiful high pitch was always steady and distinctive.

Even though Ariana had heard it so many times, she still got goose bumps.

The song the performers chose was a classic song from the last century. The original tune was a jazz song, but it was now adapted and reprised by the group to have a flavor of punk rock, full of life and energy.

The main chorus lit up the audience, and everyone began to sing along in enthusiasm, waving their

arms and smiling.

It could be said that no other group had the same amount of energy in the atmosphere when they put on their performance.

Ariana relaxed and listened to the enthusiastic applause, whoops, and cheers. With the audience's response, she could only assume Sarah would win again.

However, when she turned her head, she noticed Jasper smiling at her calmly. He said, "Don't be getting confident now. I dare to say that first place will be Elva's this time."

Ariana noticed Jasper's confident demeanor and \_ suspected something was amiss.

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As she surveyed the packed hall, she noticed that each member of the audience held two voting rights.

"Did you bribe the audience? Are all two hundred people here in your favor?" Ariana asked Jasper with a cold gaze.

Jasper, who was sitting cross-legged, leaning back with a hint of assurance, replied with a defiant

smile, "Who knows? We'll find out when the results are announced. Regardless, Sarah won't be taking home first place this time."

His smug expression only confirmed Ariana's belief that the audience was indeed on Jasper's side.

She was angry but powerless to do anything as the event was being recorded and could not be interrupted. All she could do now was hope for a fair outcome during the live final.

Elva's group was set to perform last, consisting of six members and performing a sexy melody.

During their performance, they would be doing a short pole dancing routine.

Despite being part of group performances before, Elva was not skilled in dancing and had only been assigned simple moves.

Ariana was curious to see how Elva would handle the pole dancing routine, as it was not an easy task.

Ariana had heard rumors of tension and disagreements between Elva and her teammates during the pole dancing rehearsal.

As she pondered these thoughts, she witnessed Elva lose her grip and tumble off the gleaming metal pole.

The audience erupted in a cacophony of shock and alarm.

"Oh no!"

Jasper's disbelief was palpable as he jumped out of his seat, removing his sunglasses in shock.



This was a major blunder and there was no opportunity for a do-over with so many eyes on the performance.

Ariana shot a triumphant look at Jasper and taunted, “Do you still believe this performance deserves first place?”

Jasper was at a loss for words, his face contorting with anger.

He had meticulously planned and prepared to secure a win for Elva, as long as she put in a solid performance. But he never could have anticipated such a massive mistake from this underperformer!

The audience was stunned when the host finally announced the voting results, crowning Elva as the winner. The host himself stumbled over the words, unable to hide his surprise.

After a brief moment of awkward silence, he attempted to smooth things over. “Even the most beautiful things have flaws. But I’m sure that those watching from home were just as captivated by this stunning performance as I was...”

Ariana let out a mischievous laugh upon hearing the host’s awkward attempt to cover up. She shot a smirk at Jasper, whose expression was grim, and teased, “You better start coming up with an

explanation for the fans after this airs. How did Elva manage to win first place despite her big blunder?”

With that, she gathered her belongings and made her exit.

Jasper was boiling with anger, with no outlet to release it. He vented his frustration by kicking the seat

in front of him, but lost his balance and stumbled forward, barely avoiding a face-plant. The

embarrassment only added to his anger.

This fury lasted until the end of the recording. Jasper stormed backstage and confronted Elva, who was

making her way to the dressing room. He unleashed a barrage of insults. “What’s wrong with you? How

many times did you practice? Why did you still mess up? Do you realize how many people were

watching? If you can’t win first place without making mistakes like that, you might as well pack up and

go home!”

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His loud voice attracted the attention of the stars who hadn’t left yet.

Elva, being a well-known singer in the industry, had never faced such public shaming before.

Despite her strong exterior, the cruel scolding from Jasper proved too much for her to handle and she

broke down in tears.

Jasper's harsh words continued, "Why are you shedding tears now?

You didn't shed a single one when you made that mistake on stage."

As Jasper continued to berate Elva, his phone suddenly rang.

Snatching it up, he was met with the voice of his assistant, eagerly reporting, "Boss, as we've planned,

the news of Elva's victory over Sarah and securing first place has hit the top ten of the hottest

searches! It's all over the Internet!"

This announcement only added fuel to the fire of Jasper's anger, as he took it as a personal affront to

his reputation. "Are you kidding me?! Retract it now! Don't you have eyes? Can't you see the huge

mistake Elva made? How could you announce such news in this situation?" he bellowed.

Caught off guard, his assistant stammered, "Yes, yes, I'll retract it right away."

Just as Jasper was about to unleash more of his wrath upon Elva, he caught a glimpse of a stunning

and aloof woman bedecked with sparkling jewelry, striding into the hall, surrounded by eight burly

bodyguards.

Jasper's gaze was immediately drawn to the stunning figure that had just entered the room. Her

tailored, high-end ensemble showcased her hourglass curves, and her plump, perfectly shaped lips

were the cherry on top. She was a delicate beauty, reminiscent of a blooming peony.

Jasper had an eye for beauty, and he instantly recognized Jennifer Austin, the recent high-profile bride-to-be of Adrian, daughter of the renowned Austin family.

Just as he was about to approach her, Jennifer cast a disdainful gaze around the room, her voice dripping with ice as she demanded, "Where is Ariana Edwards?"

Jasper was thrilled to see Jennifer was here to confront Ariana.

The situation was shaping up to be intense as Jennifer brought eight bodyguards, ready to confront Ariana.

Seizing the opportunity to stir up trouble, Jasper stepped forward and introduced himself with a friendly smile. "Hello Miss Austin. My name is Jasper Anderson, second son of the Anderson family from Eleymond."

Jennifer gave Jasper's outstretched hand a disdainful once-over.

Her brows furrowed as she questioned, "The Anderson family in Eleymond? I only know Theodore Anderson. Who are you exactly, another young Mr. Anderson that I haven't heard of?"

Jasper's grin abruptly faded at Jennifer's question. However, before he had a chance to respond,

Jennifer eagerly asked, "Can someone please tell me where Ariana is? I need to have a word with her."

Jasper seized the opportunity to brush off his embarrassment and carried on as if nothing happened.

He offered to lead Jennifer to the lounge where Ariana was. "What luck! Ariana just stepped out; she might be in the lounge now. Allow me to show you the way."

Jennifer agreed and said, "Lead the way."

Meanwhile, Ariana was consoling Sarah, telling her not to take the voting results to heart.

"Just take it easy and get some rest when you return to the dormitory. Don't let the results of the vote get to you. Jasper rigged the whole thing, so it's not a true reflection of the audience's opinions."

Sarah nonchalantly grinned and stated, "No need to fret for me."

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It's just a result. What brings me joy is the journey. They're just deluding themselves."

Ariana, upon hearing this, smiled and comforted Sarah by placing an arm around her shoulder. "Don't worry, the finale will be live. They wouldn't dare do anything..."

Before she could finish speaking, the door was abruptly pushed open, catching Ariana and Sarah off

guard. They jumped to their feet, their eyes cautiously fixated on the intruder.

The sight that greeted them was of a stunning beauty, accompanied by Jasper. With the group of bodyguards behind them, it was obvious that they didn't come with good intentions.

"Are you Ariana Edwards?" the stunning woman asked in a frosty tone, fixing her gaze on Ariana.

Ariana was caught off guard. She couldn't recall having ever crossed paths with this woman and wondered why she was looking at her with such hostility.

Sarah recognized the troublemaker immediately and quickly pulled Ariana behind her, whispering in her ear, "This is Adrian's fiancée, Jennifer Austin. She must have heard the rumors and come to cause trouble for you. You need to get out of here!"

As the realization of the dangerous situation set in, Ariana's heart raced.

The false rumors had put her in an unfavorable position and she would have no chance to clear her name with Jennifer and her imposing entourage blocking the only exit of the lounge. She felt trapped and uncertain of where she could escape to.

As Jennifer approached, Ariana found herself backing up until she hit the couch, with nowhere else to go.

Sarah, however, stepped forward, placing herself in front of Ariana in a protective stance. "Please, Miss

Austin, don't do this," Sarah implored.

With a condescending smirk, Jasper proclaimed, "Wow, what a sight! Ariana, I warned you to be careful

and avoid romancing any men. But it seems that you've made a grave mistake, and now his fiancée is

here to confront you."

Jennifer stood towering over Ariana in her high-heeled shoes, exuding an intimidating aura. It seemed

like she was about to unleash her fury on Ariana.

However, to everyone's surprise, Jennifer suddenly burst into laughter and reached out to embrace

Ariana. "Finally, I've found you!" she exclaimed, her joy unmistakable.

Ariana was bewildered by the turn of events, struggling to understand what was happening.

Jasper was stunned, left out at the door, unable to grasp what had just happened. He thought he was

about to witness a scene of the fiancée punishing the mistress.

But Jennifer was quick to shut him down, her voice haughty as she ordered, "You can leave. I don't

need you here."

As if on cue, seven burly bodyguards stepped forward, surrounding Jasper and forcibly escorting him out of the room.

With Jasper gone, Jennifer's demeanor softened, her kind smile now directed toward Sarah. "I need to speak with Ariana privately. Would you mind giving us some space?"

Sarah hesitated and gazed at Ariana with concern.

Ariana believed that Jennifer had no intention of causing her harm, so she gave a nod to Sarah and said, "You can go ahead. You still have recording to do."

Sarah reluctantly made her way out and told Ariana, "I'll be leaving now. Let me know if you need anything."

"Sure," replied Ariana.

Once the door was shut, Jennifer animatedly pulled Ariana over to take a seat and announced, "I've come here to present you with a gift from someone."

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She then signaled to the only remaining bodyguard in the room, who promptly produced an elegant box and offered it to Ariana.



The box's design was all too familiar to Ariana as it was the same one used by Holden when he sent her the necklace.

Ariana quickly declined, saying, "I don't accept gifts from unknown sources."

However, Jennifer wouldn't take no for an answer and pushed the box into Ariana's hands, insisting, "Just take a look first. See what it is."

Reluctantly, Ariana opened the box to find one of her mother's treasured possessions—the very necklace that had been sold! ®

Ariana's shock turned to disbelief as she gazed at the necklace in the box.

She couldn't believe that Holden, after she had offended him, would give her the necklace of her mother with such decisiveness.

"Do you know who gave it to you?" Jennifer asked with a curious look, intrigued by Ariana's innocence.

She wondered how Holden knew such a pure girl.

Ariana nodded. "But what does it mean that he's giving it to me all of a sudden?"

Jennifer took Ariana's hands in hers and said in a gentle tone, "It's his way of apologizing. He knows he was wrong and acted rudely toward you. He genuinely thinks highly of you and wants to make amends

by being friends.”

But Ariana wasn’t having it. After all that happened, how could she be his friend?

“As the CEO of BRD Group, he doesn’t lack friends. If he were sincere, why wouldn’t he show his face?

Every time he hides in the shadows or behind a mask!”

Jennifer was taken aback by Ariana’s words.

Jennifer was in a tricky situation because of her close ties with Adrian. She was privy to Holden’s

secret dual identity, and she knew that his actions of hiding behind the darkness or mask were all done

to keep his identity hidden from Ariana. But she struggled with how to explain this to Ariana, who was

clearly suspicious and confused.

After all, for those who didn’t know the truth, Holden’s actions of hiding behind a mask or in the

darkness might seem abnormal.

Facing Ariana’s suspicious gaze, Jennifer had to improvise a story. “It’s a long and complicated story.”

Ariana’s piercing eyes narrowed as she said, “Then cut it short.”

With a sigh, Jennifer decided to give her a brief explanation.

“Okay, I’ll tell you the truth, but please keep it a secret. Holden was involved in a terrible fire when he was only seven years old. The fire was so intense that it burned down the entire villa and left Holden with a disfigured face. He was rescued by a brave nanny, but it was too late to save his face.”

As Jennifer spoke, she realized that her story was becoming increasingly implausible.

The thought of the only heir to BRD Group having only a nanny and no bodyguards around seemed absurd.

However, judging by Ariana’s expression, it seemed she was buying the story. Was Ariana that easily fooled?

“So, he wears a mask because of the disfigurement?” Ariana asked, shocked by this new information.

Jennifer’s words seemed to ring true and Ariana felt remorseful for her past actions. She realized that she had gone too far trying to remove Holden’s mask last time and now understood why he wore a mask. No wonder there was no photo of Holden on the Internet. She couldn’t help but frown at the thought of having wronged him.

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“Exactly. Who wears a mask for no reason?” Jennifer replied seriously, hiding her inner laughter as she

thought about how easily Ariana had been taken in.

Ariana frowned, feeling guilty for having tried to uncover Holden's true identity in the past.

Jennifer continued, painting a picture of Holden as a misunderstood and mistreated man. "He only

keeps a low profile and distances himself from others because of his traumatic past.

The nanny who saved him from the fire later kidnapped him! Can you believe that? No one has ever

been genuinely kind to him; they only want to use him for his wealth and power. "

Ariana listened with empathy in her heart. "It's so sad," she whispered.

"Exactly," Jennifer continued, her tone sounding more and more genuine. "Holden has been betrayed

and used by those close to him, which is why he has become so guarded and cynical. But he actually

doesn't have any true friends, which is why he was testing you. He never meant to cause you any

harm."

Ariana listened silently, her mind absorbed by these new revelations.

"So, do you still harbor resentment toward him?" Jennifer queried with a hint of concern.

"Let bygones be bygones," she said, still a bit hesitant. "But anyway, I don't think we'll cross paths

again."

Jennifer could tell that Ariana was still annoyed, so she quickly ditched her smile and tried to ease Ariana's feelings.

"I understand that you're still upset. Holden can be rough around the edges, but that's just his way of navigating social interactions. That necklace in the box was purchased by royalty from another kingdom, but Holden was determined to retrieve it for you, knowing how important it was to your late mother. He really wants to make amends and be friends with you."

With Jennifer's words, Ariana cast her gaze down at the box in her lap and her features finally relaxed.

With a satisfied smirk, Jennifer noticed Ariana's change of expression. She was grateful for her talent of being able to craft convincing stories, particularly one about a lonely man with a difficult life.

She didn't think it would be difficult to evoke Ariana's empathy.

Ariana hesitated for a moment before holding up the box and asking Jennifer, "Why does this involve you? Does Holden really need you to do something as small as giving me a gift?"

Jennifer took a moment to come up with a reply before feigning tears and responding, "It's not just a small matter. It's very important to me. Holden's mood has a significant impact on the entire BRD

Group.”

Ariana was bewildered by Jennifer’s demeanor. She acted like a woman who enjoyed solving problems for the neighbors.

“Do you know Adrian, my recently betrothed fiance?” Jennifer asked, her aloof expression appearing strangely sad as she feigned sobs.

Ariana confirmed, “Yes, he’s the Vice President of BRD Group.”

Hearing this, Jennifer covered her face and cried, “Now he’s just a miner. How pitiful!”

Ariana, at a loss for words, patted Jennifer’s shoulder in an attempt to comfort her. “What happened?

Why is he just a miner now?” she asked.

Jennifer sniffled and replied, “Holden was so angry after you tased him the other day, and he took it out on Adrian for not stopping you. As a result, Adrian was sent to work as a miner

Ariana clicked her tongue and commented, “Just because of that? But Adrian had nothing to do with it!”

Jennifer took a deep breath, wiped her tears and gazed at Ariana with a sorrowful expression. Deep

down, Jennifer was cursing Adrian. If it weren’t because of that idiot who dared to make fun of Holden,

she wouldn’t have come here to make amends for him. Adrian deserved to go mining.

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“What can we do to help your fiance now?” Ariana felt remorseful.

Jennifer took Ariana’s hands in hers, looking at her with a mix of sadness and hope. “I’m powerless in this situation. Holden is known for his stubbornness. Only you can help bring Adrian back.

If you forgive Holden, Adrian can return home.” After a pause, Jennifer added with a pained sigh,

“Think of it as not just saving Adrian, but also saving me. I don’t want to be in a relationship with a man who is far away, and potentially even covered in coal.” ©

Ariana was moved by Jennifer’s words and asked, “What do I need to do to show that I’ve forgiven Holden?”

Jennifer’s demeanor quickly brightened, and she spoke with eagerness. “It’s simple! All you have to do is unblock Holden on your blacklist and add him back as a friend.”

Ariana was skeptical and asked, “Is it really that easy?”

Jennifer picked up Ariana’s phone from the table, assuming it was hers and placed it in her hands. She smiled and said, “Of course. I promise that once you add him back and chat with him occasionally, he won’t bother you anymore.”

Ariana hesitated, looking at Jennifer uncertainly.

Jennifer blinked and held Ariana's hands cutely, begging, "Please do it."

In the end, Ariana relented. After all, she couldn't bear to refuse the gift of her mother's necklace.

Ariana found Holden's previously blocked account, lifted the block, and reinstated him as a friend.

Jennifer was beaming, her previously expressionless face now shining with a smile as brilliant as a blooming flower.

"Thanks, Ariana. Just don't let Holden find out that I spilled the beans about his situation. A man's pride is important. I wouldn't want to trigger another outburst," Jennifer warned Ariana.

Ariana quickly reassured her, "Don't worry, your secret is safe with me. I won't tell a soul."

Ariana was charming and innocent, which made Jennifer like her even more. She was fond of beautiful people and when she first laid eyes on Ariana, she felt drawn to her and wanted to be friends.

Additionally, Ariana was married to the boss, making it even more necessary for Jennifer to win her favor

Jennifer felt delighted about these thoughts and linked her arm with Ariana's. She said with excitement,



"It's a rare opportunity for me to be here. I've prepared a lot of things for you and the crew."

Ariana, looking a bit bashful, responded, "I'm just an agent. Don't you think it's too much attention?"

Jennifer understood Ariana's concerns and assured her, "Don't worry, I will take care of everything and make sure you don't have any problems."

At the recording studio, Sarah had just completed her session and was sitting idly, scrolling through her phone.

She grew anxious when she saw no messages from Ariana, who had been in the Lounge with Jennifer for almost an hour.

Sarah rose to her feet, ready to leave the studio and search for her agent in the lounge.

However, Elva stepped in her way and barred her exit.

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"Hold on, you can't leave yet. We're not done shooting," Elva said with a smug tone.

Sarah raised an eyebrow. "That's not your concern. Keep your nose out of my business."

Elva stood with her arms crossed, a smirk on her face. "Going to check on your agent, are you? Miss

Austin is probably giving her a piece of her mind. Better stay out of it or you'll find yourself in hot water."

Sarah simply rolled her eyes. “Elva, you’re still as insufferable as ever. You being gossipy will eventually be your downfall.”

Elva’s cheeks flushed with anger. “Don’t get ahead of yourself, Sarah. Your days of success are numbered.”

Sarah let out a carefree laugh. “We’ll see about that.” With that, she turned and walked away from Elva without looking back.

Just then, a group of people entered the studio, led by a group of black-clad bodyguards and followed by a team of uniformed chefs.

As Jennifer entered the studio, surrounded by her entourage, Elva quickly stepped forward to greet her before the other people could react. “Miss Austin, it’s an unexpected pleasure to have you here. May I ask what brings you to us?” she said in a faux-enthusiastic tone.

Jennifer responded coolly, “I’m here to visit a friend.”

As the others in the studio became aware of Jennifer’s presence, they all rushed over, vying for her

attention and trying to leave a good impression.

Sarah, however, was not in the mood to stick around. She was worried about Ariana's absence and intended to leave to find her.

But before she could, Elva noticed and called out, "Sarah, where are you off to in such a hurry? Don't you want to stay and chat with Miss Austin?"

The attention of everyone present was suddenly drawn to Sarah, and some were eagerly anticipating a scene.

The studio was filled with stunned silence as Jennifer walked over to Sarah, enveloping her in a warm embrace. "I've been waiting for this moment for so long," she gushed. "I'm your number one fan!"

Confused glances were exchanged among the crowd as Jennifer beamed at them, revealing the truth behind her sudden appearance. "I came here for Sarah," she explained. "I've been a fan of hers for a long time."

She then reached out to a bodyguard, taking Sarah's album in her hand and presenting it to the stunned singer. "Can I have your autograph, Sarah? I've been a fan for a long time," she said, eagerly holding out a pen.

Overwhelmed by the unexpected display of admiration, Sarah took the pen and signed the album, her smile growing wider with each stroke of the pen.

As Jennifer took back the signed album, beaming with joy, she leaned in and reassured Sarah, “Don’t worry, Ariana and I are tight. She just had to head back. You can just focus on your recording now.”

Sarah expressed her gratitude. “Really, you didn’t have to go to all this trouble just for me. Thank you so much.”

Jennifer replied with a smile, “It’s not trouble at all. I’m not lying. I’ve been a fan of yours since I was in school. I’ve been listening to your music for years and I’m thrilled to see you back on stage. I truly want to see you soar again.”

Sarah, moved by Jennifer’s words, grabbed her hand and thanked her.

The scene only fueled Elva’s anger, as she watched the stars who once fawned over her now flock to

Sarah and Jennifer, socializing and bonding.

Compared to the wealthy and well-connected Jennifer, Elva felt like a small fry in the entertainment industry.

Fuming with anger, Elva stormed out of the room and called Jasper, who she hoped would help her bring Sarah down. "Mr. Anderson, we need to do something about Sarah. She's becoming a threat,"

Elva said, struggling to keep her voice steady.

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But Jasper remained calm and assured her that he already had a plan in place. "Don't worry, Elva.

We'll take care of Sarah. And this time, it will be permanent," he said, with a hint of satisfaction in his voice.

Ariana returned to the hotel after a long day and was surprised to find a message from Mr. H.

She cautiously opened the message and saw the simple query, "Are you there?"

After a moment's pause, Ariana mustered the courage to type "Yes", and was surprised by the quick response from the other end.

A charming cat emoji appeared on her screen, making her burst into Laughter.

It was hard to imagine the stoic and haughty CEO sending such a playful emoji.

As she chuckled to herself, Ariana couldn't help but think back to Jennifer's words about Holden. The stories of a tough upbringing, lack of friends, and physical scars were far from the playful and

lighthearted persona on the screen before her.

After much consideration, Ariana felt a twinge of sympathy for Holden, despite his earlier transgression against her.

She understood that his miserable experience and lack of socialization had left him feeling self-abased and depressed, leading to his current demeanor.

As she continued to chat with Holden, she made a conscious effort to be more understanding and forgiving.

She sent him a playful emoji and expressed her gratitude for his return of her mother's necklace.

Holden promptly replied, "I only returned it to its rightful owner. No need to thank me."

But Ariana felt guilty for accepting the gift without compensation, so she asked, "I can't just take this for free. What was the cost? I'll transfer the payment to you."

Holden replied, "There is no need; consider it a way of apologizing for my misbehavior toward you."

But Ariana remained adamant. "That was the past, I have forgiven you. But I would like to pay for my mother's necklace."

This time, there was a long silence from Holden's side.

After waiting for a while with no response, Ariana decided to take a break and tend to her hair.

Upon her return, she was taken aback by a bill that Holden had sent her way.

The price was staggering and Ariana couldn't help but feel a pang of sadness as she realized her balance was not enough to cover the cost.

Why was she so poor? Ariana cried in her heart. ©

But she still went ahead and transferred what she could to Holden. "I don't have that much money at the moment," she typed back. "Can I make payments over time?"

To her surprise, Holden readily agreed, "Of course, take your time."

This exchange changed Ariana's perception of Holden.

She realized that she might have misjudged him, and he might not be as difficult to get along with as she initially thought.