

Unconscious 21

Chapter 21

Ariana's resume didn't make the cut in the initial screening, yet Adrian couldn't help but be intrigued by the woman who dared to marry someone as fearsome as Theodore.

He was perplexed as to why Theodore, who was known for his ruthlessness, didn't dismiss her immediately but instead continued to let her be his wife. So, taking a risk, Adrian invited Ariana for an interview and convinced Theodore to be present.

It was supposed to be a mere amusement for Adrian, but he didn't anticipate that Ariana's performance would be so impressive.

Defying Theodore's wrath, Adrian said, "Sure, I didn't have your authorization to interview her, but her abilities speak for themselves. I'm only acknowledging her genuine talent."

Theodore sneered, but he didn't bother to answer.

Adrian let out a deliberate sigh, and with an air of incredulity, he lifted Ariana's resume and posed a question to Theodore. "What a hapless woman! She married you but knew nothing about the man she wedded. As the wife of the CEO of the BRD Group, she made a concerted effort to apply for an ordinary job interview. Why not offer her the position?"

Theodore's eyes remained fixed on the document as he spoke in an icy tone. "I have other plans for her."

Adrian placed the resume on the desk and gave a nod. "Alright, I understand."

From the corner of his eye, Adrian caught sight of Theodore's wheelchair. He asked with earnestness, "Are you genuinely disabled? You even came to the office in a wheelchair. I had to fabricate a story to the subordinates that Mr. Fredrick had a fall from his horse."

Theodore abruptly closed the file and gazed up at Adrian with a faint smile. "Feeling unoccupied, are we? I can assign some work to you."

Adrian let out an awkward smile and touched his nose. "No, thanks. I have a meeting to attend. I'll take my leave now."

As soon as the last word left his lips, Adrian scampered to the door, a knot of worry churning in his gut that Theodore might take his jest seriously.

After the interview, Ariana returned to the Anderson family's mansion. The whole place was quiet. In the garden, Judy was the only soul watering the plants.

Ariana paced around the house and realized Theodore was yet to come back. She slumped on the couch in the living room, feeling a tinge of boredom. Fumbling through her pockets, her fingers brushed against Adrian's business card. Her mind wandered off to him, and she began to fret.

Was Adrian's interest in her merely an attempt to trade her body for the job?

If it were, and she passed the interview, should she accept the offer or not?

If she didn't, she would be letting go of an excellent opportunity to prove herself. If she did, she would be a puppet in his hands.

These thoughts troubled Ariana, and she let out a sigh.

Living in this society was a daunting task, full of snares and pitfalls lurking around every corner.

With a despondent expression, Ariana took out her phone and searched for Adrian's information on the Internet.

Bored and uninterested, she skimmed through his resume and pictures before turning her attention to Holden Fredrick-the current CEO of the BRD Group, who Ariana suspected to be the same man as Theodore earlier.

Holden was a man shrouded in mystery, an enigma that left Ariana intrigued. Despite her best efforts,

she found no substantial information about him on the Internet-no past experience, no identity, and no photos.

But Ariana refused to give up. She scoured the depths of the web, determined to uncover even a sliver of information about the enigmatic CEO. And after a long and arduous search, she finally stumbled upon a grainy photo taken in secret by a paparazzo. Despite the poor quality, Ariana could tell that Holden was tall and had a strong, chiseled jawline.

As she studied the photo intently, Ariana felt a strange sense of déjà vu wash over her. It was as if she had seen this man before.

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“What are you doing?” Without warning, Theodore’s voice echoed through the living room, causing Ariana to jump and almost drop her phone.

She scrambled to put it away as he appeared behind her like a ghost. Trying to hide her unease, she rose from the sofa and chided him, “Why must you sneak up on people like that? It’s beyond frightening.”

Theodore’s frown deepened as he sneered at her. “If you didn’t do anything wrong, you wouldn’t feel

guilty,” he stated coldly, making Ariana roll her eyes inwardly.

As she prepared to leave, Theodore wheeled himself over to her with a casual air, his handsome

features indifferent. He sized her up as though choosing an inconsequential item.

Despite Ariana’s composure, she couldn’t shake the feeling of unease his gaze brought upon her.

“What’s that in your hand?” Theodore demanded abruptly, his piercing gaze trained on her.

Ariana froze, realizing that she still clutched the business card in her hand. Hastily, she balled it up and

tossed it into the nearby wastebasket, feigning nonchalance. “Nothing, just an advertisement flier that

was handed to me while I was out,” she replied, hoping her voice didn’t betray her nervousness.

“You went out today?” he asked, his tone inscrutable.

“Yes, I went out for a walk.” As Ariana tried to suppress her guilt, she swallowed hard and summoned

the courage to ask about Theodore’s well-being. “How are your legs?”

Theodore was taken aback by her concern, and a rare smile graced his lips. His response, however,

was dripping with arrogance. “It’s none of your business.”

With that, he wheeled his chair away, leaving Ariana feeling unsure of what to do next.

Yet, she couldn’t help but feel relieved that Theodore didn’t pry any further, as she was certain she

would have slipped up and revealed her interview.

The unexpected exchange left Ariana feeling uneasy and out of sorts, causing her to lose interest in investigating Holden's background.

After returning to her room, Ariana was eager to check the results of the interview from the BRD Group.

But as she read the short, polite message of rejection, her heart sank. At first, she was disappointed but then found the whole situation funny.

She chided herself for ever thinking Adrian was interested in her. She was back to her unlucky life, and failure was just a part of it.

The next morning, Ariana went down for breakfast and saw that Darian and Jasper had joined them at the table.

She sat beside Theodore and glanced at the trio.

Theodore's face was an enigma, but Jasper was grinning from ear to ear as if he had won a game.

With the confusion in her heart weighing her down, Ariana wordlessly poured herself a glass of oat milk. As she was about to take a sip, she chanced upon the empty plate in front of Theodore.

It was as if a switch flicked inside her head, and before she could even think, she gently pushed the glass of milk in front of him.

Theodore's indifferent expression softened ever so slightly, as he looked up at her and took a sip from the glass.

A strange, unfamiliar warmth spread through Ariana's chest, and she couldn't help but feel a sense of contentment. For the first time in what felt like forever, the tension in the air dissipated, and Ariana wondered if this could be a turning point in their relationship. Maybe she could try to be nicer to him, even if it was just by pushing his wheelchair for him.

At that moment, Darian placed his utensils on the table and started talking. "I have something important to tell you all," he announced, eyes flickering around the table. "Theodore is struggling to manage the company all by himself because of his health condition. We cannot continue like this."

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Ariana felt a lump form in her throat, her hands trembling as she clutched her tableware.

Her heart raced with nervousness, unsure of what Darian was going to suggest. Ariana had learned about the Anderson Group from Jasper, and she knew that it was one of the most prominent companies in the hotel industry in Eleymond. The group had almost a monopoly on high-end hotels in

the city, making it an incredibly successful business.

However, after Darian's father passed away and he took over, the company started to experience a downturn.

It was on the verge of bankruptcy before Theodore intervened, taking over the company and implementing sweeping reforms to revive its fortunes. Under his guidance, the Anderson Group even opened a subsidiary in the entertainment industry, which proved to be a smart move.

But now, it seemed as though Darian was trying to use Theodore's illness to push him aside and reap the benefits of his hard work.

It was clear that Theodore saw right through Darian's ploy. He calmly set his glass down and fixed his gaze on Darian. "Why don't you just come straight to the point and say you want to strip me of my power? There's no need for these fancy words," he sneered.

Darian was unable to maintain his composure any longer. He slammed his fist onto the table and bellowed, "Do you speak to your own father in such a manner?"

However, Theodore wasn't fazed by Darian's outburst. Instead, he turned his attention to Ariana, who

had stopped eating and was clearly distressed by the scene. "It's alright. Don't worry about it. Just finish your breakfast," he said, in a reassuring tone.

Ariana nodded absentmindedly, her appetite gone.

Darian's face turned red with anger, struggling to keep his emotions under control.

"Theodore, I appreciate all the work you've done for the Anderson Group, but after the accident, the company has been in a precarious state. Since you need to rest and focus on your health, why not let Jasper help out and ensure the company's stability? It's for all of our sakes."

Theodore sneered and replied cryptically, "That's a tough call for you."

But his expression soon turned serious, and his icy stare locked onto Darian. "I'll agree, but only on one condition."

Everyone looked at Theodore in anticipation.

Theodore's smile turned into a mischievous grin as he made his shocking request. "I want Ariana to work at the Anderson Group, too."

Theodore's shocking proposal left everyone at the table in disbelief, particularly Ariana. She wondered why he would drag her into their family feud.

Just as she was about to decline, Darian slammed his fist on the table and yelled, "This is ridiculous!

You're not taking this seriously!"

Jasper, who had been quiet until now, spoke up. "I agree. Theodore, you can't be so careless. You're risking the company."

Theodore's lips curled into a smile, but his eyes remained icy. "Ariana is not only my wife but also an Anderson. It's only natural for her to support her husband. And if Jasper, the illegitimate child, is allowed in the company, why can't my legal wife work there as well?"

Jasper's face turned red with fury at Theodore's words.

Unable to stand up to Theodore, Jasper turned his wrath toward Ariana with his degrading words.

"Ariana, it was you who figured out this bad idea for Theodore, wasn't it? But let's face it, as a woman, you know nothing. You should just stay at home and focus on bearing my brother's child and taking care of him, now that he's disabled and can't even manage without constant attention. Going to work at the Anderson Group will only cause problems, and you won't be the one clearing up the mess.

Ariana, shocked by the sudden attack, felt her anger surge within her.

Before she could defend herself, Theodore stepped in to put Jasper in his place.

Chapter 24

He spoke with a sneer. “Do you even know what you’re talking about, Jasper? Ariana studied at a prestigious foreign university and is fluent in several languages. Her performances won her numerous awards, and even before graduation, she received a multitude of job offers from renowned companies.

She interned in several international firms, and her resume alone outshines yours, Jasper. “

Jasper’s heart sank at the sound of those forceful words, leaving him defeated and unable to utter a single syllable. After all, it was because of Ariana’s excellence that he had a crush on her back then and tried his best to woo her.

Ariana looked at Theodore in complete astonishment, wondering how he could be so familiar with her educational background and work experience. It was as if he had read her entire resume and knew everything about her!

However, despite her surprise, Ariana couldn’t help but feel a warm sense of approval from Theodore.

Knowing that he had her back in front of everyone meant everything to her.

The tension in the air was palpable, and it seemed as if no one knew what to say. Just when it seemed like the silence would never break, Darian stepped in to mediate the situation. “It’s not impossible for

Ariana to work in the company,” he said. “I’ll make sure to arrange an easy position for her later on.

That way, she can go to work and take care of Theodore at the same time.”

Everyone present knew that Darian’s words were merely a formality, an attempt to brush the issue

under the rug and avoid any further conflict.

Theodore’s face was a picture of ease as he let the words flow from his lips. “All right then,” he said, a

glint in his eye. “The seat of the executive director for SJ Entertainment, a subsidiary of the Anderson

Group, is now available, and Ariana just so happens to be the perfect fit for the job. Although it’s a

director position, it perfectly aligns with Ariana’s area of expertise. I have no doubt that she’ll be able to

take it in her stride.”

“No way!” Jasper’s reaction was explosive; he rejected the proposal with a loud voice that bordered on

the edge of a curse.

It was no surprise, given that the executive director position for SJ Entertainment was the exact

position Jasper had been working toward, the very thing he had been waiting for.

SJ Entertainment had become the cash cow for the Anderson Group, and the executive directorship

was the pinnacle of power and wealth. With this position, he would have the power to not only lead the company, but also make a great deal of money. It was the best starting point for him to enter the Anderson Group, and a position he could easily be promoted from in a matter of years.

How dare Theodore offer Ariana such a lofty position!

Darian was not pleased with this decision and expressed his disapproval. "Theodore, have you thought this through? Ariana may be excellent, but she lacks the experience and expertise to handle such a pivotal role in the company."

Theodore was quick to retort, "And Jasper is experienced?"

His words were laced with sarcasm, causing Darian to fall silent.

As for Ariana, the sudden proposal was enough to induce a panic attack. How could she, with limited experience, be appointed as a director? Was Theodore setting her up for failure?

In a last-ditch effort to communicate her thoughts to Theodore, Ariana discreetly winked at him, imploring him to consider the consequences.

But Theodore remained indifferent to their reactions and proposed a bet. "Let's see who performs better. Ariana and Jasper will start as agents in SJ Entertainment, and whoever generates a profit of 5

million dollars first will become the director. The loser will be banished from the Anderson Group forever.”

Darian and Jasper burst into laughter as soon as they heard that proposition.

“Oh, Theodore! You are far too confident in your wife,” Jasper commented, his words dripping with undeniable contempt.

“What do you say?” Theodore asked again, this time with a mischievous smile.

Jasper glanced at his father before saying, “I can accept the bet, but on the condition that Ariana mustn’t tell anyone that she’s your wife. Also, you mustn’t help her no matter what happens. We should play fair. Do we have a deal?”

Ariana badly wanted to chew Jasper out. She bit her lower lip to restrain herself.

She found him repulsively shameless. Everyone knew that he was the second son of the Anderson family. He would use it to his advantage, but he wanted her to keep her identity under wraps. How was that fair? Only a fool would agree to such a condition.

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“Deal!” Theodore agreed without asking Ariana how she felt about this condition.

It made her dumbfounded.

Now that they had struck a deal, Darian and the others left the dining room. Theodore wiped his lips and hands with a piece of serviette without looking at Ariana. He then went upstairs, still not sparing her a glance. Ariana stared at his back in a daze. Once she regained her senses, she went after him.

“Wait up!”

Theodore halted his wheelchair and spun around to look at her. “What’s wrong?”

“You should have asked for my opinion first. I can’t win the bet. Besides, I don’t even want to get involved in this.” Ariana frowned and added with a slightly annoyed tone, “I don’t understand why you dragged me into this mess. I’m not up to the task. You should tell them that the bet is off before-“

“Aren’t you looking for a job?” Theodore cut her off, toying with the ring on his index. finger.

“How did you know that?” Ariana’s eyes widened in surprise. His statement made her remember how he had showered praises on her during breakfast. Her suspicion quadrupled. And how did you know about my past? You had me investigated?”

Theodore snorted, “Am I wrong for wanting to know more about my wife, especially considering that we didn’t date or know each other before the shotgun wedding?”

"I knew it," Ariana murmured, pouting.

Her suspicion was correct. Sure enough, a cautious person like Theodore wouldn't allow someone of unknown origin to wander around him just like that.

"I know that you badly need a job. Anderson Group will be a good platform for you to start your career.

Think about it," Theodore said in a flat voice.

Ariana didn't need to be told that. She knew that the advantages of working in such a top company outweighed the disadvantages.

However, she didn't want to be a part of their family feud.

If Jasper lost, he still had his father backing him. On the other hand, she would most likely be abandoned if she lost.

Ariana thought it through and shook her head. "No, I'll pass. The stake is too high. I can't do it. Instead of going to war in SJ Entertainment, I'll look for a job elsewhere."

After a long silence, Theodore sneered, "You can't, or you won't? Is it because you don't want to ruin your ex-lover's plan?"

“What are you driving at?” Ariana got angry. “I told you before that I no longer have feelings for Jasper.

Stop linking me to him. I don’t care what happens to him.”

“Then prove me wrong. Beat him hands down!” Theodore stared Ariana dead in the eye.

He strongly believed that actions spoke louder than words.

As far as he was concerned, his wife and half- brother still had some lingering feelings for each other.

He felt that they wouldn’t have flirted in his bedroom on the wedding night if they weren’t still into each

other. “I don’t have to prove anything to you. This is bullshit!” Ariana declined, her voice raised.

“Let me be the judge of that, Ariana. Don’t you want your mother’s belongings anymore?” Theodore

uttered, his mouth curving into a smile. “If you trash Jasper in this game, I’ll hand them over to you.

Deal?”

The moment Theodore’s proposal fell on Ariana’s ears, she was caught in a bind. Her heart was at war

with itself, struggling to decide the course of action.

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Theodore’s offer was tempting. For a fleeting moment, Ariana found herself on the brink of agreeing to

the bet, but then she hesitated.

In the back of her mind, Ariana was certain that there was more than what met the eye, and she

couldn't help but suspect that there was a trap hidden within the offer.

Being a novice in the field of actor agents, she had no experience or connections. How could she compete with Jasper?

"If I'm being very honest, my previous internship experience doesn't qualify me for the job. I have never worked as an agent. I'm afraid that..." Ariana told Theodore, declining his offer.

But Theodore was not one to give up easily. He leaned in closer, his voice soft and coaxing. "I know what you are worried about. The competition in this field is all about resources. But with me by your side, what have you got to fear? Don't worry, I've got everything arranged."

Ariana was swayed by Theodore's assurances. Could it be that he was offering to secretly help her win the bet?

If that were the case, she had nothing to worry about.

After all, Theodore was still the CEO of the Anderson Group, and even though he wasn't present at the company, he had the power to pull strings behind the scenes.

Ariana mulled over the decision in her head. She realized that Theodore was merely using her as a

chess piece to outmaneuver Jasper.

She resigned herself to being obedient to Theodore's plan. After all, winning the bet meant she could retrieve her mother's belongings and put Jasper in his place.

Convinced, Ariana relented and said, "Alright, I'll give it a try."

After reaching an agreement, Ariana said her goodbyes to Theodore and went back to her room.

As she walked away, Theodore's demeanor changed from warm and welcoming to icy and calculating, a sinister glint in his eye.

Horace, who had been lurking in the shadows, finally emerged and voiced his concerns. "Boss, are you really going to let them run amok like this? Aren't you afraid they'll wreck the Anderson Group?"

Theodore sneered, "The more chaos, the better. I want to see these two former lovebirds go head-to-head."

"But Ms. Edwards is young and alone in the company. She won't stand a chance against Jasper,"

Horace pointed out.

Theodore's lips curled into a smirk as he thought back to Ariana's interview. "You never know. Let's just sit back and watch. It could turn out to be quite a spectacle."

The next day, Ariana marched into SJ Entertainment with confidence brimming inside of her. She

envisioned herself making a grand entrance into the company, with the hope of a fresh start.

However, as soon as she stepped inside the establishment, her optimism quickly turned to pessimism.

The woman responsible for her check-in appraised Ariana with disdain, her gaze feeling like ice-cold

water being dumped on Ariana's enthusiasm. "You must be Ariana Edwards, the new employee Mr.

Anderson arranged, right?" said the woman. "I'm Donna Scott, the department manager and also your

supervisor. I'll be arranging your work from now on."

"Ms. Scott." Ariana tried to put on a brave face and forced a smile, but Donna's hostility was obvious.

Donna turned her back to Ariana with a contemptuous snort, leaving Ariana to contemplate how she

would be able to survive under such unwelcoming circumstances.

Ariana followed Donna nervously, but to her surprise, Donna took her to the storage room.

Confused, Ariana asked, "Why are we here?"

Chapter 27

Donna's lips curled into a sneer as she responded, "A newcomer like you should start with sorting out

sundries. It will help you get familiar with the company quickly. And after that, you'll be heading to the

underground warehouse to lend a hand. It's the end of the year, and the warehouse is understaffed."

She crossed her arms, her tone dripping with condescension.

Ariana was taken aback. This was completely different from what she had anticipated.

Wasn't she here to compete with Jasper? Why was she reduced to a charwoman?

Ariana tentatively asked, "Excuse me, but wasn't my position supposed to be an agent?"

Donna's condescending smile grew wider as she replied, her tone thick with disdain, "Oh, I know what your position is supposed to be. But after reading your resume, it's clear that you're just a mere inexperienced newcomer. How can I possibly entrust you with the responsibility of managing our stars?"

Ariana was caught off guard by the unexpected obstacles thrown her way. She looked at Donna with a mix of confusion and disbelief. "But..." she started to say, only to be cut off abruptly by her unsympathetic supervisor.

"What? Do you have something to say?" Donna's voice boomed, causing the heads of other employees to turn and take notice.

"Don't waste your time thinking about your position. You're lucky you even got into the company with

your subpar resume. And as for your duties, every newcomer starts from the bottom, with no

exceptions. If you're not up for it, you can leave." Donna glared at Ariana with contempt.

Ariana knew that arguing with her supervisor on the first day would only make things worse, so she

forced herself to agree. "I understand. Can you show me to my desk?"

"Over there."

Donna pointed at a desk that was nothing more than a flimsy plank of wood propped up by a pile of

boxes.

"That's your desk from now on. Work hard, remember to talk less and do more," she said with a tone of

arrogance. "The workplace is not as simple as you think, even if you have connections."

Ariana watched as Donna raised her chin and glanced at her with a look of disgust before turning on

her heel and striding away.

Ariana was left alone in the cluttered storage room, her mind racing.

Was it Theodore's idea to put her in this menial position? Was he playing some kind of twisted game

with her? The more she thought about it, the more her head began to throb.

Reluctantly, Ariana resigned herself to the situation and with a deep sigh, she dropped her bag and rolled up her sleeves, bracing herself to clean up the untidy storage room. The room was a disaster area, with items scattered everywhere, some requiring a herculean effort to shift.

As a result, Ariana labored away the entire afternoon, sweating profusely and working tirelessly to restore some sense of order to the chaos.

Her muscles ached and her body was covered in a fine layer of dust when she finally emerged from the storage room. It was already late in the day, and most of the employees had already left the building.

Feeling exhausted, Ariana headed to the restroom to wash the grime off her body.

As she sat on the toilet seat, trying to calm her frayed nerves, she gingerly massaged her sore arm.

She then pulled out a tube of bright red lipstick from her bag and reapplied it to her lips, hoping to restore some confidence in her appearance.

Just as she was about to leave the cubicle, the sound of two women's voices from outside caught her attention.

"Did you hear about the new girl? She's been assigned to clean the dingy storage room!" One of them snickered.

“And I thought she had connections. Looks like she’s nothing special. Perhaps she’s just a mistress

that one of the leaders is fooling around with,” said the other with a haughty smirk.

The air was thick with malice and cruelty as the two women snickered at Ariana’s expense. “Perhaps

the warehouse manager? That bald, Hiram Watts? Hahaha...”

They thought they were safe to gossip in the privacy of the restroom, but their laughter was soon cut

short.

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With a sudden burst of courage, Ariana flung open the cubicle door, startling the cackling duo. The

laughter was suddenly silenced as the women gaped at Ariana in disbelief.

As Donna’s subordinates, they had long been accustomed to following her lead. Taking their cue from

Donna’s disdainful attitude, they too decided to taunt and harass the hapless newcomer, Ariana.

But being caught red-handed by the person they were gossiping about, they still felt a bit embarrassed.

As if unfazed by the rude and belittling remarks, Ariana approached the sink to clean her hands, but not

before retaliating with a sharp comeback. “Why don’t you continue? You’re right, I did land this job

because of my connections. I am, in fact, the paramour of a leader.”

Her words hung in the air, leaving the two women speechless.

Smirking slyly, Ariana turned off the faucet and uttered in a tone loaded with insinuation, "But let's not guess too lowly. I suggest you guess someone with more clout. Perhaps I am the wife of the CEO himself."

Despite the convincing delivery, Ariana's bold claim was met with ridicule and laughter.

"Ha! The very idea of you and Mr. Theodore Anderson together is a complete joke," sneered one woman. "If you really were with him, how come you were sent to the storage room?"

"Don't waste your time chasing after a cripple. Theodore's position is precarious. Why not aim higher and set your sights on someone like Hiram Watts?" The other woman chortled.

The fiery indignation roiling within Ariana was about to boil over. They even dared to belittle their boss.

Ariana's voice turned frosty as she spoke. "Mr. Anderson was recently in a car accident and is still recovering. Yet, you two find it fitting to start spreading rumors. Do you not fear your words may reach his ears? After all, Theodore is the eldest son of the Anderson family. Who do you think you are to gossip about him?"

One of the women, still unconvinced, retorted, "So what if he's an Anderson? He's just disabled. With

Mr. Jasper Anderson entering SJ Entertainment, Theodore will soon be ousted.”

Ariana couldn’t help but let out a chuckle. “Jasper? That buffoon is no match for Theodore. If he ever takes over the company, he’ll run it into the ground.”

The two women stared at Ariana in disbelief. “Are you insane? How could you say something like that about Mr. Jasper Anderson?”

“Believe it or not.” Ariana didn’t want to waste any more breath on them. She quickly washed her hands and made a hasty exit from the restroom.

At night, the Anderson family’s mansion was brightly lit.

Theodore sat at his desk scrutinizing documents with a pen in hand. A massive screen perched on the wall in front of him displayed a video call in progress. Horace’s face flickered on the screen as he reported work.

With a frown on his face, Horace hesitated, as if he had something more to say.

When Theodore glanced up, he caught sight of the uncertain fook on Horace’s face and understood there was more to be discussed.

Theodore hurled the pen away, pinching his nose, and asked, "What's on your mind? Speak up."

Horace took a deep breath and gingerly stated, "Everyone in the office is murmuring about your accident and disability. They are spreading rumors behind your back."

Theodore, unfazed, took a sip of water and replied in an indifferent voice, "Let them. Gossip is just that, no more."

Horace didn't stop there. "And, Ms. Edwards spoke in your favor today," he revealed.

Curiosity piqued, Theodore leaned forward. "Really? What did she say?" he asked, his eyes glistening with interest.

Chapter 29

Horace repeated Ariana's comments, which he had found out about through his network of insiders.

"Jasper is no match for me..." Theodore's face lit up with a smile. "Did she really say that?"

Horace hesitated before speaking, carefully selecting his words. "That's what she meant."

He finally answered Theodore's question, although he believed the main point of Ariana's comments was to criticize Jasper, and not to praise his boss. Despite this, Horace felt he could not say that, and so he skirted around the issue.

Theodore's expression relaxed, pleased with Ariana's staunch support.

As they wrapped up their conversation, a faint sound coming from outside the door interrupted their discussion.

Theodore signaled to Horace that it was time to end the video call. "Let's call it a day," he whispered in a hushed tone. "If there's anything important that comes up, don't hesitate to inform me, especially if it's

regarding Ariana," he added, his voice serious and deliberate.

"Yes, sir."

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regarding Ariana," he added, his voice serious and deliberate.

"Yes, sir."

That night, Ariana returned home completely fagged out. She didn't have the appetite or strength to have dinner, so she went straight to her room. She took a hot shower and planned to go to bed extra early.

But as soon as she stepped out of the bathroom, she saw someone in her room.

"Theodore! What are you doing in my room?"

Ariana asked, startled.

“Your room? This is my house, so all the rooms in it are mine!” Theodore sneered, wheeling himself to the table. He poured himself a cup of tea and took the first sip. “Tell me how your first day at work went.”

Ariana could bet on it that Theodore was the one who asked Donna to make her clean the storage room. She sneered at him and said, “Why should I? After all, you already know how it went!”

Chapter 30

“How is that possible?” Theodore gave her a faint smile and asked, “Do you need my help?”

“Stay out of this. I can deal with it myself!” Ariana shot back with defiance. She then walked up to him and reached out to grab the teacup in his hand. “Get out. I have to go to bed.”

To her surprise, Theodore was much stronger than she thought. He did a slight move that caused her to slip and fall forward instead of taking the cup away.

A steady and firm hand grabbed her arm and lifted her before her face hit the floor.

“Whew! Thanks...” Shaken up, Ariana thanked him. She then stared at him in awe. How could a paralyzed man be so strong that he was able to catch and lift her?

She was a grown woman. Lifting her wasn’t an easy task even though she didn’t weigh much. How did

he do that with one hand?

Ariana's mind went back to the altercation she had with those women and the rumors that were making rounds. It was said that Theodore was paralyzed and could die any moment from now. But that didn't seem to be the case now. This man was very energetic!

At the thought of this, Ariana's eyes traveled to Theodore's legs.

His legs looked sturdy. There were muscles on them and they were well-proportioned, unlike the shrunken and weakly legs of other paralyzed people.

Ariana was still not standing upright. So, as she was lost in thought, her hand unconsciously fell on his massive thigh.

Paralyzed people usually had stiff thighs. However, Theodore's was supple.

Ariana even squeezed a little. She swore that she could actually feel the strength in his muscle.

"What are you doing?" Theodore's voice rang out, fraught with desire and arousal.

Ariana came to her senses. She looked up and met a pair of dark and beautiful eyes.

Only then did she realize that she was too close to him. Their noses were almost touching. They could feel each other's breath. If either of them moved an inch forward, their lips might press against each

other. As they held that gaze, a sensual energy crackled between them.

Ariana withdrew her hand in a hurry. She forgot that she hadn't gotten her balance back yet. She slipped again and fell headfirst into his arms.

Theodore grunted as he caught her shoulders with both hands. He queried playfully, "Why are you in such a hurry to throw yourself at me?"

Ariana's face flushed with embarrassment. She jumped to her feet and backed away. She noticed his eyes lingering on her body.

Following the line of his vision, Ariana's eyes fell on her chest. She found that her cleavage was showing through the bathrobe she had on. A wet wisp of her hair was stuck on it, accentuating the allurement of her fair complexion.

"Pervert!" Ariana screamed, covering her chest with both hands.

Theodore scoffed. "Huh? What makes me a pervert? Need I remind you that I'm your husband? Even though I'm currently unable to walk, my third leg is still working fine. Since you can touch my thigh, why can't I look at your cleavage..."

“You...” Ariana didn’t expect him to be so impudent.

“I’m not a child, Ariana. I know for a fact that

you just tried to seduce me.