

## A storm brewing

(Derek)

My phone started to ring out of nowhere, and I took it out of my pocket to see that it was Mom calling me. Great, such a good timing.

"Hi, mom," I said as I answered the phone. Olivia gave me a questioning look, but she kept quiet.

"Where are you?" Mom asked, making me frown. I didn't want to deal with her right now.

"I'm busy, Mom. Just... handling some things," I replied, hoping to brush off the conversation.

"Busy? Doing what?" Her tone was more curious than accusatory, but I could feel the pressure building which I couldn't deal with right now.

"Just some work stuff," I said, glancing at Olivia. She raised an eyebrow but stayed silent, letting me handle this call.

"Well, you really should come over this weekend. Your father and I have someone we'd like you to meet," she continued, her voice cheerful, as if she hadn't just interrupted my day.

I sighed, running a hand through my hair.

"Mom, I really..." I didn't get to finish what I was saying since she interrupted me.

"Derek, just hear me out. She's from a very respectable family, and we think she'd be perfect for you," she argued as if that would mean something to me.

"I'm not looking to meet anyone right now," I shot back, my irritation creeping into my voice.

"I just got out of a m..." If she doesn't stop interrupting me, I'm not going to answer her calls next time.

"I know, I know, but you can't just work forever. This girl has a good head on her shoulders. You'll see," she insisted. I groaned, hating the fact that I had to sit here and listen to this nonsense.

"Another time, Mom, I'm busy now." I didn't wait for her reply as I hung up the phone.

"That was rude," Olivia stated, making me sigh.

"Not as rude as I wanted it to be. I'm so f\*\*\*\*\*g glad you agreed to marry me; that way, I can get them off my back." It was getting tiring, to constantly listen to someone else try to dictate my life.



I'm an adult, living on my own and running my own company. I didn't want anyone to tell me what to do as if I was some unruly kid they couldn't control.

"That's going to happen often. I don't want to be involved in that Derek. You have to tell them that you're getting married." Olivia is right, I had to tell them. But how was I going to do that?

I leaned back in my seat, pinching the bridge of my nose as I thought about what Olivia said.

"Yeah, I know. I'll have to face them sooner or later," I muttered, looking at her. She was biting her lip, a small crease forming between her eyebrows. I could see that she was getting worried about this.

"They're... difficult, Olivia. They're not just any parents. They're one of the richest couples in Ohio, and they've always expected me to marry someone who 'fits.' Someone from a prestigious family, with connections, wealth the whole damn package." I explained.

Olivia wasn't part of their world, and honestly, I didn't give a damn about that. But my parents? They'd want to scrutinize her, pick her apart until they found something they didn't like and once they did, they wouldn't let up. They'd question

everything, from her background to the way she carried herself.

"I don't want you to be involved in this mess," I said, running a hand through my hair again.

"But you're right. They need to know about us, or they're just going to keep pushing me toward someone else." She didn't say anything, but the slight furrow of her brow told me everything I needed to know. She was starting to realize just how complicated this was going to get.

"And then there's Raymond..." I added, trying to explain to her about what she should expect.

"My brother. He's... well, let's just say he's not exactly the golden child in the family. He's a leech, always coming to me for money because our parents cut him off a long time ago. He's got this sense of entitlement and thinks because we grew up rich, I owe him something. It's a mess." Olivia's lips parted slightly and I could feel the tension between us rising.

I could see the worry in her eyes, and it hit me, she was starting to understand just how deep this ran. My parents, my brother... it wasn't just about us anymore. This was a minefield, and I was dragging her into it.

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"So... what are we going to do?" She asked.

I didn't answer immediately. How was I supposed to tell her that there was no easy way out of this? That no matter what we did, my parents would

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have their claws in us the moment they found out?

"I'll handle it," I said, trying to sound more confident than I felt.

"We'll go over there once we get married and I'll tell them about us. They're not going to like it, but they'll have to accept it." Olivia swallowed, looking



down at her hands, which were clasped tightly in her lap.

"And what if they don't? What if they don't accept me?" I don't even want to think about that part.

"They will," I said, though even I wasn't convinced. My parents were stubborn, and if they decided Olivia wasn't good enough. No, I couldn't let them do that to her. I wouldn't, not after what she had been through.

"Olivia, they're going to push, but work with me alright?" I reached for her hand, squeezing it gently.

"I'm not letting them dictate my life anymore. Not with you." She looked at me, her eyes filled with uncertainty. The silence between us stretched for a moment, thick with the unspoken fears we both had.

But before either of us could say anything more, my phone buzzed again. This time, I didn't even bother looking at it. I already knew who it was. Olivia gave me a small, strained smile.

"Guess we better prepare for what's coming." She said. She could have backed out of this, run for the hills. I don't understand why she was staying when I told her about my family.

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But I was glad that she was. Since I can take care of her the right way.

"Yeah," I said, glancing at her.

"But don't worry. Whatever happens, I've got your back." She nodded, but I could still see the worry in her eyes.

And deep down, I knew this wasn't going to be easy. My parents were about to be a storm we couldn't avoid and Olivia and I were heading straight into it.

The question now was, how long could we weather it before everything came crashing down?



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