Chapter 11 Julian had just stepped out of Dominicks o ce when his phone rang .

. He glanced at the caller ID and frowned . his expression tightening with barely concealed disgust .

The ringtone continued to echo in the hallway , the sound grating on his nerves .

After what felt like an eternity , he rally picked up .

smooth and friendly like always , a stark contrast to the contempt in his eyes .

Ms.

Sullivan , how can I help you ? his tone Brittanys voice , overly sweet and dripping with a ecded charm . . called through the line .

Mr.

Hale , hello , I wanted to thank Mr.

Vanderbilt for securing the lead role for me in the Im .

. Hes been such a huge help , and Id love to show my gratitude by treating him to a meal .

Could you pass that along ? Juliana eyebrows furrowed , a mix of irritation and something darker along in his chest .

He had known shed pull something like this .

Sorry .

Im afraid Mr.

Vanderbilt has been quite busy recently , Ms.

Sullivan , he replied , keeping his voice neutral , though the disapproval was unmistakable .

. There was a brief silence on the other end , Brittany clearly disappointed but unwilling to let go .

When will Mr.

Vanderbilt be free ? Im sedule anytime works for me Realizing she might have sounded too eager .

Brittany quickly backtracked .

Not just me .

Mr.

Hale .

My whole family we all want to thank Mr.

Vanderbilt for his generosity Her desperation seeped through the phone , and it deepened Julians distaste .

. He knew all too well the kind of game Brittany was playing Understood .

Ms.

Sullivan .

. I pass your message along .

. If Mr.

Vanderbilt nds the time , I will contact you Hearing that Julian hadnt completely shut the door on her request , Brittany hurriedly expressed her gratitude before ending the call .

Yet , the look of scorn on Juliana face remained unchanged .

. As expected , anyone associated with Paisley is cut from the same cloth .

. That entire family is all the same he thought with derision . Julian held little regard for Paisley , and even less for the Sullivan family .

. Paisley may have been away from Harrowfell for a while , but now that shes back .

. I believe her family has reconnected with her .

. In the grand , elegant living room of Sullivan Villa , Christina sat poised beside her daughter , a subtle gleam of expectation in her eyes .

So ? Did he agree ? Brittanys mood soured , though she hid it behind a light smile .

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Mr.

Hale said Mr.

Vanderbilt was too busy right now to meet .

But he promised to pass along my message .

Held back to me .

. Her voice faltered just a bit , revealing the frustration bubbling beneath the surface .

She had hoped for more .

. I need to see him now , not later The reality was , over the past few months , she had only seen Dominick twice .

Once at a charity gala , the other at a party .

. Both times , Ired been surrounded by others , with barely a moment alone with her , let alone the chance for a meaningful conversation .

Thats not exactly a clear rejection , so theres still hope , Christina said , trying to soothe her daughter .

Brittany nodded slowly , a reluctant comfort settling in her chest .

. She had no other choice but to believe that Mom , could we have misunderstood ? Misunderstood what ? Whether Mr.

Vanderbilt has any interest in me ... Brittany didnt want to admit it might be a misunderstanding , but the doubts gnawed at her .

If he was interested in me , why hasnt he made a move Why hasnt he called , asked to meet ? She had been waiting for months , hoping had reach out , but the phone never rang .

Every time she made the a ort to see for a meeting , she was met with the same excuse that he was too busy .

. And to make matters worse , she still didnt have Dominicks personal number .

Every time she needed to get in touch with him , it was through Julian , his assistant .

. It felt like a constant roadblock always one step removed from the man she wanted to get close to Christina furrowed her brows in thought , trying to reassure Brittany .

But if Mr.

Vanderbilt wasnt interested , why would he help you so much ? Why would he go out of his way to support our business ? They all knew the truth that with Sullivan Groups modest capabilities , becoming a Vanderbilt Group partner was nothing short of a pipe dream .

. 1/2 Chapter 11 Yet here they were Vanderbilt Group had not only become their largest client but also the primary source of revenue for Sullivan Group .

. In other words , the Sullivan family was surviving solely on the orders provided by Vanderbilt Group .

. Theres no such thing as unprovoked kindness or unsolicited support . Gregory Sullivan , Brittanys foster father , rally spoke , calm but deliberate .

If Mr.

Vanderbilt is going out of his way to do all this , he must have a reason . Both Christina and Brittany silently agreed with him .

. After all , in their eyes , businessmen were notorious for being pro t driven .

. Historically , the Sullivan and Vanderbilt families had no connection whatsoever and the two families were worlds apart .

. To them , the stadden generosity and attention from the Vanderbilt family feel were inexplicable , unless there was a hidden motive .

. And the Sullivan family , for all their aspirations , was well aware that their company had nothing of value that might interest Vanderbilt Group .

. Which left them with only one logical explanation Brittany .