of the news. atly, sitting back down at his desk, the weight of the conversation easing as his attention turned back to the documents in front of him. His gaze, however, was distant, clouded with thoughts that no one could read, Julian had already turned to leave, but after a brief pause, he couldnt help himself. He turned back and spoke with a slightly more probing tone, Dom, the way youve been looking our for the Sullivan family thats because of Paisley, isnt it? It wasnt until recently that Julian had learned the Sullivans were Paisleys real family something he hadnt realized before But now, obvious. it seemed Dominicks eyes narrowed, Iris expression hardening as he swiftly dismissed the notion . Youre overthinking it , he said , his voice cold and distant Sullivan Group is a business partner of Vanderbilt Group Julian wasnt so easily fooled. Dom, no matter what your reasons are for going out of your way to look after the Sullivan family, one thing is clear-you and Paisley are divorced. She made her choice, walked away without a second thought, even abandoning your son . Now shes back, and who knows what her game is? Julian, who had been friends with Dominick since high school , knew him inside and out and had followed him every step of the way The competition to inherit the Vanderbils family legacy had been erce, and the standards were impossibly high. Dominick had risen above them Hed started his rst business in high school , expanding it rapidly throughout college , and by his sophomore year, hed already taken his company It was inevitabile that Dominick would inherit Vanderbilt Group and become the head of his family, Julian, Joyal as ever, had entered the company alongside him, serving as his right hand man. Over the years, their band had deepened, 1/3 Dreame Read Romance. 935 PM dd. Chapter 5 transcending the typical employer employee relationship. They were more like brothers united by shared history, loyalty, and ambition. Julum, ever the persistent one, continued. And Marissa is a good girl . Over the years, shes really- Julun Dominicks voice cut through the air like a knife, sharper than usual. He turned abruptly, his eyes narrowing with a hint of annoyance. Twe told you already . Theres nothing going on between me and Mariva see her ava sister, just like Kayla. With that , he used his phone toward Julian , the device skudiding arross the desk. On the screen , the latest tabloid headline splashed in bold letters scandal Dominick about Dominick and Marissas relationship expression darkeneil even further, his tone frigid. What is all this nonsense? Contact the PR department, and have them clean this up His voice was thick with disdain, like he couldnt even be bothered to engage with the garbage the press was feeding the public . rst day of kindergarten was supposed to be a milestone, a step toward growing up. But for little Serena, it felt more like a punishment She had spent her entire life in the safery of Paisleys arms, and now, for the rst time, she was expected to spend an entire day without her mother Serenas emotions were a tangled mess.

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back the tears, just like Paisley had taught her.

The lump in her throat was hard to swallow, but Paisleys words

echoed in her mind , Youre a big girl now , Serena , Big girls dont cry .

If you do , the other kids will laugh Serena tried to be strong and hold

The absence of her mother and Maria made everything feel cold and

The other kids seemed con dent, laughing and playing while she just

She didnt want to do anything but g home and curl up next to her

But just as the tears began to well up again , something shifted in

Her big doe eyes suddenly locked onto a spot where the older children

My brother_ Serena whispered , her voice barely audible but

class, Grayson was happily running around the playground, kicking

the ball with carefree energy, when suddenly he felt someone fug at

the back of his shirt He turned sharply , irritated , ready to snap at

A little girl, her eyes wide and shimmering with innocent excitement,

Who are you! What are you doing grabbing my shirt? Craysons voice

He wasnt one for playing with girls , and the only exception was

Marias niece, Stella but that was only because hed promised Marissa

But there was something strange about this cheeky little girl in front

Despite his usual dislike for distractions , she didnt bother him that

Tm your linde sitter, Kenia Serena said, her voice bubbling with

excitement as she looked at him like she had just met her long lost

Youve got the wrong guy? He scratched his head, unsure Serena want

Ein sure of it , she smiled , the same bright , unwavering smile that

Serena remembered the portrait in Paisleys art stadio the one that

She had asked Paisley who it Parsley hart told her that at Serenas big

Sure, Corzystn looked a little older than the porture, but his features

She could tell, without a doubt, this was him You are my bestier,

Grayson studied her alusely las gaer softening as to make sense of this

There was no doubt that Before he could say anything more, a voice

interrupted them, my, what are you doing? stella approached them,

her eyes narrowing in suspacioni as she sale trayson talking to a lile

2/3 9:35 PM Chapter 3 Sonny Who is this kid? Do you know her? Stella

Looking at Serena, she couldn't help but step closer to Grayson, her

Grayson shook his head, his brows drawn together in confusion and

She says Im her brother, but I have no idea who she is Stella, who had

been watching the scene unfold with a growing sense of territorial

Her voice was loud enough for everyone nearby to hear You cant just

Her little chest heaved as she stomped her foot and shouted, But Im

She also wanted to hold hands with Grayson and reached her tiny

Hold my hand And then, something inexplicable happened.

him softened at the sight of her innocent determination .

Grayson, for reasons he couldn't explain, found himself reaching out

His hand closed around hers without hesitation, as if something in

With a sharp smack, Stella slapped Serenas outstretched hand away,

Go away, you bad liule girl, trying to call him your brother, Serena

She let out a small cry, holding the back of her hand to her chest, the

Stella hued, her tone dripping with disdain, Sonny, lets go back to

bad kids at school who try to get close to us for no good reason .

Dont pay attention to this brat , Aunt Marissa always says there are

She just came here, calling you her brother right away! She has

rst time something like this had happened.

If they couldnt reach Dominick, they try to get to Grayson, seeing

The most common method they employed was sending their kids to

And, more often than not, it was the girls who were pushed forward.

The idea of childhood sweethearts romanticized, idealized made it a

At rst , Grayson believed these kids genuinely wanted to be his

He realized they were only there because their parents pushed them to

The more this happened, the more Grayson grew disillusioned.

He hated all the fake smiles and forced kindness, especially from girls

who thought that being around him would bring them closer to his

After Stellas warning, Grayson turned back to Serena, his expression

His eyes, once neutral, now held an unmistakable coldness guarded,

Without another glance, he turned and grabbed Stellas hand, leading

Her eyes were wide , the sting of rejection raw and bitter in her chest .

blinked rapidly, but it was too late her tears were already spilling over

her back toward the classroom, his back Serena stood frozen, her

nal, leaving no

Dont come near me again The words were sharp and

small body trembling with shock and hurt.

She back straight and unyielding.

, the weight of his words sinking in E E

the same school, hoping to get close to him and, through him, to

rsthand how some families, especially wealthy ones, tried

winced, her hand recoiling, stinging with the force of Stellas slap.

hurt from both the slap and the harsh words sinking deep .

ngers trembling slightly, her eyes locked onto

Im Sonnys best friend and youre just a nobody Serena, her checks

ooding his thoughts.

She didnt have to think about it her heart just In the

lled

rst grade PE

from the elementary section were playing.

with wonder and longing.

whoever dared disturb him.

But what he saw made him pause .

stood there, beaming up at him.

was sharp, a little defensive.

hed look out for her .

of him.

hero Muster.

fared.

brother.

hadnt changed.

She remembered in clearly.

To not your brother.

Youre my brother .

Graysons Tattw furrowed, confusion

I know where y -yini ate and what you look like .

seemed to shine thuigh even her nervountiest.

showed a young lany who looked exactly like him .

Serena sail again, lier voice full of con dence.

strange little girl who seemed so certain.

girl from the kindergarten.

irritation.

I dont know her .

protectiveness, stepped forward.

go around calling random people your brother.

his She was stubborn and wouldnt back down.

his as if she wanted him to believe her .

to her, unable to say no to her.

But the moment was short lived .

her face twisted with irritation.

the classroom.

ulterior motives, for sure.

Graysons heart sank.

him as the next best thing.

common strategy to build alliances.

familys wealth and power.

suspicious, even a little disgusted...

Im not your brother.

room for argument.

hardening.

friends, but over time, he saw through the facade.

to attach themselves to the Vanderbilt name.

It wasnt the

He knew

Dominick .

be .

hand toward him, her

ushed with the heat of frustration, glared at Stella.

asked in a voice of inexplicable fear .

small hand instinctively reaching for his ..

She wanted to cry.

But it was so hard.

empty, and sie missed them.

sat there, feeling our of place.

She didnt want to play.

mom .

Serenas gaze.

The billionaire and his son want me back novel
Chapter 5

The pressure hung like a storm cloud, threatening to burst at any

Dominick, standing by his desk, slammed a thick stack of papers

His secretary, visibly shrinking from the anger emanating from him,

quickly bent to pick up the scattered papers, her hands trembling

Parker right away and have his team redo it she stammered, not

she bolted from the room, her footsteps hurried and frantic.

secretary with a quiet click, his eyes lingering on the tall, imposing

Dominicks posture was rigid, his brow furrowed in annoyance, and

the weight of his frustration seemed to settle in the room like a dense

Vanderbilt, he began with a knowing look, this is the sixteenth

Not one of them has caught your eye! Dominick tugged irritably at his

tic , his expression darkening , Whats your His voice was sharp , but

Julians eyes ickered brie y before he spoke again, his voice lowering

Dominick snapped his tone a little too quick, too defensive, Julians

Dominick froze for a moment, his eyes es narrowing as he caught the

glint of amusement or perhaps something deeper in Julians gaze After

as he yanked the tie from around his neck and tossed it carelessly aside

You got something to say, or you just want to keep playing games?

, his dememor becoming more businesslike

cially the lead for that series Dominicks expression

a beat of silence, Dominick turned away, his frustration boiling over

Actually, I do have something to say, he said, his voice lower now,

lips quirked slightly as he took a slow step forward, unfazed.

Julian Hale, Dominicks assistant, closed the o

fog Julian sighed, leaning against the doorframe, Mr.

oor with an almost violent force.

slightly as she did so TI go speak to Mr.

daring to linger any longer.

The moment she straightened.

gure of Dominick standing near the

proposal youve thrown away today.

Julian wasnt intimidated .

Is it her return that is a

Julian straightened

ertain level of authority.

Ive followed your orders .

Ive applied pressure on the investors.

shifted, his usual icy demeanor slipping back into place.

He gave a single, almost imperceptible nod, signaling his acceptance

tinged with a c

Ms.

Sullivan is o

I didnt say it was Paisley, he murmured.

Sixteen.

slightly.

ce at Vanderbili Group, the atmosphere was

ce door behind the

oor to ceiling windows .

ecting you ? Paisley has no e ect on me

Chapter 5 In the CEOs o

moment.

onto the

thick, the air heavy with tension.