



CJ saw Dean crossing the catwalk, heading for the sound booth. He removed his headset as Dean came inside.

“It’s a bloody good thing I’m not fearful of heights.”

“Can’t be in this business.” CJ rolled a chair his way.

“Have you seen Brandon? I can’t seem to locate the wanker.”

“No. Not since sound check. I don’t know him too well, but I can tell he’s a ladies’ man. He’s probably snagging a date for after the show.”

“You bloody soundmen ... in this business merely for the birds—aren’t you?”

“Well, he’s a good-looking kid. I can see him doing that, but no. Not all of us start out that way. When I was young ...” CJ paused and then chuckled. “Maybe you’re right.”

“Ahh ... yes. Youth,” Dean said, then sat. “You may not realize this, but I, too, was once a dashing young lad. My hair was frightfully black, and I had creamy white skin, very similar to Brandon as a matter of fact.” Dean rubbed his face and sighed, and thirty years flew by with one reminiscent gaze. “But I have the feeling Brandon has lived a pampered life, unlike most of us, and that’s what I wish to discuss with you.”

“Talk to me.”

“He doesn’t seem to push the envelope, CJ. Let some of your magic rub off, will you?”

“He seems pretty smart, even above average when it comes to sound gear. What’s the issue?”

“He possesses somewhat of a ... shall we say, a slight attitude. Have you noticed?”

“Yeah, he’s a little cocky. I figured he didn’t like me. I can live with that.”

“I suppose that derives from being short and all.”

“He lifts and totes just like everyone else, Dean. There’s no room for a diva on a road tour. I think he knows that.”

“Nuff said there, but he simply lacks intuition, which, as you well know, is a key factor for engineering a smashing show. I’ll need you to look past the pissing contest and get the monkey up to speed, CJ. Can you do that for me?”

“Sure. My only concern is his stutter. He gets a little excited and *bam* ... ‘It’s a—it’s a— it’s a ...’ Not the best way to announce a show, but what the hey.”

“Brandon is a West Hamptons mate. Grew up with certain amenities. I believe his father provided him with everything he ever wanted. It’s because of that he carries about a sense of entitlement. I don’t believe stress has ever been a part of his diet. I’m afraid he may be a bit spiteful of you, as well. You hold plenty of top-notch experience over his head.”

“Well, why did you hire this guy? You must have thought he could do the job.”

“I’m afraid I’ve misled you. He can certainly do the job, but I’m looking to get more out of him. Simply enlighten the lad, will you? Since his father and E were flat mates, he had an advantage in securing this position. I’m afraid he’ll have a tendency to be rebellious with a supervisor, especially one he’s envious of.”

“Listen. Dad’s not around. And as far as I’m concerned, nobody rides for free.”

Brandon came into the booth just then, stuffing a folded bev-nap in his wallet. “Hey, guys,” he said. “What time do you think we’ll be finished tonight?”

Dean glanced at CJ.

“We’ll be done in about three months,” CJ said.

Dean chuckled and stood facing Brandon. “So we’re fully aware of the logistics tonight, CJ will run this show and I’ll need you to listen and learn from the master. Are we clear on this, Brandon?”

“Yeah. I don’t see why, but I’m here, aren’t I?”

“Splendid. I must be heading backstage now.” Dean gave Brandon a pat on the shoulder and left the sound booth.

CJ wheeled the empty chair to the soundboard. “Have a seat, Brandon. It’s curtains in ten. You ready to sail?”