Intern 107

Chapter 107

The wind had picked up again, crisp and salty as the sun poured golden light over the open. deck. Glasses clinked. Laughter echoed from one corner of the yacht. The executives mingled in loose circles, drinks in hand, pretending they weren't still technically on the clock.

Damien and Ashcroft had rejoined the group a few moments ago-Ashcroft relaxed as ever, Damien crisp in a clean shirt that somehow made him look even more untouchable.

From the far end of the deck, Maya spotted them.

Well-spotted him.

He stood beside James now, speaking in low tones to Trina and the HR representative-Mary, if Maya remembered correctly. His expression was unreadable, all cold angles and executive

control.

Harper followed Maya's gaze, then elbowed her with a grin.

"Hey! What do you think they're talking about? Think he's giving the order to fire the Barbie mafia?"

Maya whipped her head toward her, eyes wide.

“Harper!”

Harper grinned shamelessly.

“What? Wouldn’t be the worst move. Reclaiming peace and quiet one Barbie at a time.”

Maya shook her head, voice softer.

“You and your big mouth. I hope not. Sure, they’ve been… unkind. But that doesn’t mean they should lose their jobs. Everyone’s just trying to survive.”

Harper sighed dramatically.

“You’re too good for this world, you know that?”

Before Maya could reply, a familiar voice cut in.

“Well, well. What a vision,” Ashcroft drawled as he sauntered up, drink in hand, sunglasses perched on his nose like he walked out of a billionaire beach shoot.

Harper beamed.

“Hey, good sir!”

Maya offered a small, awkward smile, suddenly very interested in the bubbles in her sparkling

water.

Harper leaned forward conspiratorially.

“So… what’s going on over there?” She tilted her chin toward the huddle.

“Come on, tell us. Is this the part where the high heels get exiled?”

Ashcroft gave an exaggerated gasp.

“What? You think we’d start a firing squad over brunch?”

Harper gave him a look.

He grinned.

“Relax. It’s nothing that dramatic. Just D wanting to make sure everyone stays in their lane.”

Harper shot Maya a look so smug it could’ve lit a flare.

Ashcroft leaned a little closer to Maya, his voice shifting to something gentler.

“How’s Jaime doing?”

Maya blinked, touched by the genuine concern in his tone.

“He’s… doing better. Healthier. The doctors said he’s been responding really well to treatment.

If the progress holds through the end of the month, they’re hopeful surgery can happen as early as next month.”

Ashcroft nodded, eyes softening.

“Good. Really good.”

A beat passed. Then Maya hesitated, chewing on her bottom lip.

“Umm… can I ask you something?”

Ashcroft turned to her with a smile.

“Of course.”

“Earlier, you said we’ve already met. But… I don’t remember meeting you before. How did we meet?”

“Oh,” he chuckled.

“Right. I forgot-they told you a different story, huh.”

He rubbed the back of his neck, then leaned closer, voice dropping low-almost too casual to

be casual.

“Well… you know that night when that piece of shit doctor kidnapped you?”

Maya stiffened, breath catching.

“That’s when,” he said.

“You were unconscious. It was Damien who carried you out of that place. Wouldn’t let anyone else touch you.”

Her eyes widened, heart pounding.

“He wanted to take you to the hospital himself that night,” Ashcroft went on.

“He didn’t want to leave your side for even a second. But it was too early. Too risky. We had to avoid… unnecessary disturbances. Headlines. Flashbulbs.”

Maya froze. Her mind reeled.

It was him all along.

The warmth of his coat wrapped around her shoulders. The faint scent of cedar and smoke. Steady arms that made her feel safe even in unconsciousness.

She swallowed.

“What happened to…”

Ashcroft’s eyes gleamed, knowing.

“That piece of shit?”

She nodded.

Ashcroft’s smile didn’t reach his eyes this time.