Intern 111

Chapter 111

The elevator doors slid shut behind them with a soft chime-but the silence that followed was anything but gentle.

Maya stood wedged between Ashcroft and James, with Damien beside her… too close. Close enough that every breath she took skimmed the edge of his scent. Close enough that the brushed silk of his shirt kissed her skin whenever the elevator shifted, setting her nerves on

fire.

Her heart was pounding again.

This is fine, she told herself. Totally fine. Just a short ride.

She didn't dare look up.

Not when her shoulder kept brushing his arm.

Not when every cell in her body had decided to memorize the precise heat radiating from

him.

Not when her chest ached with questions she didn't know how to ask.

Then-

"Ahhh!" Ashcroft stretched like a cat, arms raised in dramatic flair. "Man, I'm tired. Sticky. I think I'll freshen up first, then head to the beach. Could use some sun."

He stepped back with a little too much enthusiasm-and deliberately nudged Maya with his

elbow.

"Whoa-!"

She stumbled sideways-and crashed straight into Damien's chest.

Her cheek met the soft cotton of his shirt. Beneath that: heat. Muscle. The steady rhythm of his breath. And his scent-God, his scent-wrapped around her like smoke. Cedar. Spice. Something that smelled like midnight and danger.

Damien caught her instantly, his arm curling around her waist in one smooth, possessive

motion.

Firm. Protective. Like he'd been waiting for her to fall all along.

"Easy" he murmured near her temple, his voice low and deep, dark silk against her skin.

Maya froze.

Her hands were against his chest. Her heartbeat was thundering. And he didn't let go.

"Easy," he said again-closer this time, voice dipping lower near her ear.

A shiver raced down her spine.

"I-I'm okay," she whispered, trying to pull back.

But his grip tightened.

Just for a second.

Just long enough to burn it into her memory.

The feel of his arm around her.

The heat of his body.

The fact that he didn't want to let her go.

Then-

Ashcroft turned lazily toward them, a crooked grin tugging at his mouth.

"Hey…" he drawled. "Geesh. Get a room, you two. Though, technically-" he glanced at the elevator panel, "we're almost there. Just spare me and Horton some elevator porn, yeah?"

Maya's eyes flew wide.

Oh God.

She jerked back like she'd been caught in something far worse than a fall-face burning, heart spiraling.

But her skin still burned where Damien had touched her.

The elevator dinged.

They'd reached the penthouse level.

James stepped out first. Maya followed, flustered and wordless. As she passed Ashcroft, he winked-like it was all part of his grand matchmaking scheme.

The elevator opened directly onto a private corridor-sleek and opulent in a way that didn't need to try. Everything here was subtle. Powerful. Golden wall sconces glowed against smooth limestone walls, the floor beneath their feet a polished herringbone of dark teak. The

air itself felt stiller. Quieter. Exclusive.

Four doors total. Two on each side.

And at the very end-towering double doors with brass inlays.

The master penthouse.

Maya slowed.

This is his floor.

Damien didn't just own the resort.

He owned this level.

No one stayed here unless he allowed it.

Her eyes found her suitcase, resting neatly outside one of the suites. Her name gleamed in gold script on a tag hanging from the handle.

Right next to his.

Ashcroft gave a low whistle. "Nice placement. Right beside Big D's." He nudged Damien with a smirk. "You've got two bedrooms in your suite, don't you? Why bother separating at all?"

Damien shot him a look, cool and sharp. "Shut up."

Ashcroft just chuckled, unfazed. "Touchy, touchy," he muttered.

Maya glanced down the hall again.

He put me here.

He wanted me close.

There was no logical reason for someone like her to be placed in a VIP suite-not unless someone had made that decision intentionally.